

**LEARNING TO MANAGE OR MANAGING TO LEARN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF HOW
UNIVERSITY MANAGERS LEARN WITHIN THEIR ROLES**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Staffordshire University for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 2012

Abstract

In order to provide effective and sustained support for university managers as they learn to manage, more needs to be found out about the critical factors which underpin this process. Presenting the findings from an initial exploratory study within one institution, this thesis examines the perceptions of university managers, both academic and professional support, of how they learn within their roles. Although the study draws initially on HE based research, findings from the wider fields of management learning, professional learning and sensemaking are also incorporated as a means of recognising and then analysing the divergent factors affecting how managers learn to manage. To examine their perceptions, a series of semi-structured interviews is undertaken with a purposive sample of twenty-four university managers from a range of academic and professional support roles. These interviews are supplemented by a follow-up study with four of these managers, all relatively new into their current senior posts, an interview with a member of the Executive Team, an analysis of selected institutional strategic plans, and the completion of reflective journals by five of the original group of managers. The interview transcripts are initially deconstructed using Weick's (1995) seven characteristics of sensemaking, and then further analysed through the lens of the integrated conceptual framework, enabling a systematic examination of the data. The evidence collated suggests that these managers are 'learning to make sense of' a number of different issues such as their changing identities, the complexity within their roles, the institutional context in which they work and the expectations on them from others. Furthermore, to understand how university managers learn involves a paradigm shift which acknowledges that this process is no longer a formal acquisition of skills or knowledge set within a structured classroom environment. Instead it is a complex, multi-faceted and amorphous process, grounded in workplace tasks and impacted upon by the words and actions of others. Responding to the changing context of both the institution and the HE sector, this process of learning is constantly evolving, and, due to the differing characteristics of each individual manager, the way they interpret and make sense of it varies. In essence, this study offers the opportunity to rethink the way university managers learn, and questions the efficacy of conventional management development programmes to effectively support this process.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of people for the help they have given me in order to complete this study. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervision team, Professor Nick Adnett, Doctor Jackie Stephens and Doctor Kim Slack. I am extremely grateful for the support and encouragement they have given me during my journey through this research programme. Throughout this time, they have continued to provide advice and guidance, and have worked tirelessly to enable me to meet deadlines and stay focussed. Adopting a constructive and developmental approach, their feedback has been honest and insightful. Showing endless patience, they have made tutorials both stimulating and enjoyable.

My thanks must also go to all my interviewees. I am genuinely appreciative of the time they gave me, fitting me into their busy daily schedules by juggling their other commitments and competing pressures. Without exception, all of these managers not only showed a willingness to take part but also an enthusiasm for and an interest in my research project. Their generosity of spirit was a great encouragement to me, contributing to my determination to persevere towards completion.

I would also like to thank the administration team within the Business School. Their communication has enabled me to keep updated about research events, and their guidance on administrative procedures has been invaluable.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research is presented as an initial exploratory study of how university managers learn within their roles. Set within an institutional context, it focuses on university managers' perceptions of the process by which this learning takes place, seeking to establish their views on how this occurs, what habitually constitute enablers and inhibitors, and the extent to which sensemaking¹ is used. Within this first chapter, an outline of the research programme is sketched. To give background and context, section 1.2 seeks to explain how Higher Education is evolving, highlighting changes which have impacted on the actions and expectations of managers within this sector, whilst section 1.3 explains the institutional context. Section 1.4 then justifies the focus for this research and an overview of the methodology underpinning the collection and analysis of the data is provided in section 1.5. To aid clarity, section 1.6 offers working definitions for key terms used in this research, and this is followed by a skeletal portrayal of the contents of each chapter in section 1.7. Finally, the boundaries of the entire research programme are demarcated in section 1.8, prior to the presentation of a short conclusion in section 1.9.

1.2 Background and context: the pressure for change within the university sector

In order to contextualise and underpin the findings from this research programme, the researcher provides an overview of the evolving nature of UK universities "characterised by volatile change, rapid and massive flows of information, uncertainty and unpredictability" (Land, 2004, p.2). Indeed, in response to a continuous flux of social, economic and political pressures, the university sector has been increasingly subjected to change, a change which continues to affect the structure, mission and *raison d'être* of each institution. By origin, universities were meeting places for "collectivities of individuals" (Barnett, 2000, p.128) or "communities of scholars" (Henkel, 2002, p.30), who purportedly made a positive contribution to society by expanding the boundaries of knowledge through discussion, debate and research. However, the sustainability of this traditional image of universities built around the individual identities and pursuits of academics is now increasingly questioned, and the need for a more strategic approach is argued by some. McCaffery (2010), for example, advocates that, in the face of change, the university needs to redefine itself "as a concept and as an institution, to enable it, potentially, to fulfil a uniquely significant role that no other type of institution can properly provide in a free and responsible society" (p.26). Indeed, it could be argued that the 'significant role' for universities (ostensibly more as corporate entities rather than collections of individuals) is to make explicit contributions to society and the economy. Buckland (2004) supports

¹ Sensemaking- a process used by individuals to interpret and contextualise information gained from different sources in order to rationalise actions (either their own or others). It is an ongoing process and is often used to describe how individuals within organisations find out accepted and expected ways of working.

this move towards a more utilitarian and institutionally focussed view of universities, suggesting that they exist “to discover and generate new knowledge, to transfer it to society and to supply the manpower needs of various professions and trades” (p.245). Henkel (2005) echoes this view in claiming that the need to generate income has forced universities to “re-appraise and multiply their functions and relationships” (p.163) leading them to become “multi-professional organisations” (p.163). Stevenson and Bell (2009) also note this transition of purpose within UK universities, changing them from being “seats of esoteric learning to utilitarian contributors to the nation’s economic survival” (p.13-14).

A key theme running through the literature is how universities are under external governmental pressure to become more accountable, moving away from being self-determining, relatively autonomous organisations free to shape their own destinies, towards them making a greater contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of the nation. Essentially, there is a more explicit call by the Government for universities to depart from the single mission of enhancing the intellectual and discipline-based orientation of students and staff, towards making a more direct contribution to the commercial success of the country. Leitch (2006), for example, emphasised the need for universities to be in pursuit for world class skills, whilst the Higher Ambitions report (DBIS, 2009) called for them to become more responsive to external, customer driven demands, rather than institutional preferences for the direction of growth. More recently, at the same time as putting students at the heart of all their institutional systems and processes (DBIS, 2011a), the Innovation and Research Strategy for Growth report (DBIS, 2011b) signals the Government’s desire for universities to move away from having self-sustaining institutional missions to work in partnership with other organisations, “collaborating with each other and with external organisations to develop and commercialise knowledge” (p. iv).

This change towards universities becoming more accountable is, however, not welcomed by all. Whilst this resistance is neither new nor standardised, many accounts highlight the inherent tensions created by this change. Trowler (1998), for example, questions the extent to which change (especially top-down imposed change), might prevent the traditional debate amongst scholars which he believes is essential to a university aspiring to be a learning organisation, with “multiple, complex and shifting”(p.150) cultures rather than one central corporate culture. Barnett and Di Napoli (2008), on the other hand, allude to the way in which the externally driven changes have caused academics to question their identity, asserting, in particular, that “wider phenomena such as massification, accountability and marketisation aided these dislocations of identity” (p.5). Sometimes more polemic viewpoints within the literature portray a sense of regret for the cessation of previous practices and structures. Barnett (2000), for example, acknowledges the increasing trend towards

“supercomplexity” (p.75) within universities, and openly laments the onset of change, using emotively laden terminology such as “paradise lost” (p.1), “death and resurrection” (p.10) and the “end of enlightenment” (p.23). In a view supporting this desire to preserve more traditional ways of working, Rowland (2002) describes the development of “fractures or fault lines that divide aspects of our academic lives which we must struggle to bring into more productive relationships through contest and debate” (p.53), between areas such as teaching and research, managers and staff, teachers and learners, the nature of knowledge itself, along with the assumptions surrounding the fundamental purpose of higher education. Similarly, Lomas (2006) pinpoints the consequence of such changes in the increasing trend towards centralisation, manifesting itself primarily in a movement of the “locus of power” (p.244), particularly in post-92 universities².

It could be argued, however, that the nostalgia which characterises many of these portrayals falsely paints a rose-tinted view of the previous regime in many universities. These writers are unable to see any benefits in the newer ways of working, and typically anything which threatens the status quo is automatically rejected. In so doing, any possible weaknesses of traditional structure and practices such as elitism, gender-biased staffing policies or age-skewed promotional processes (Clegg and McCauley, 2005, p.31) are largely overlooked. It could also be anticipated that the views of many writers may well be affected by the type of University in which they work(ed). Linked to this assumption about the effect of the institutional context, Kok et al’s (2010) research in a wide range of UK universities found that whilst in all universities there was recognition of a move towards more managerialist regimes, it was in pre-92 universities where this was felt most keenly. However associated with this finding was the view that the situation was slightly ameliorated in traditional universities as staff felt better able to retain control of academic decisions. Newer universities, in contrast, appeared to be more receptive to change, and were also more focussed on improving practices. Perhaps what this research demonstrates is that perceptions are, indeed, likely to be affected by the institutional context, with some writers feeling quite passionate (and therefore not always neutral and unbiased) about how change might affect them. However, this research contradicts a comparative study of the management in academic subject departments within pre and post-92 universities over a seven year period in which Smith (2002, 2005 and 2007), found evidence of both differences and similarities. Whilst there were differences in role structures and implicit values and priorities, there were also similarities in perceptions of the difficulty of the role, the complexity of university systems and the frequently changing demands for the centre. This research therefore suggests that the polarisation of opinions and practices between pre and post-92 universities should not necessarily be assumed. What remains to be seen, perhaps, is whether,

² Post-92 universities, formerly polytechnics and colleges of Higher Education were ‘designated’, acquiring university status in 1992 as a direct consequence of the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992.

through time, there will be a coalescing of views and practices within the different types of universities as they continue to respond to external demands.

Superimposed on the change affecting working practices within universities is a continued debate about the change to identities. Whilst the emphasis differs according to the specific focus of each study, the prevalence of a requirement to accept changing identities is evident. For example, Taylor (2008), having contrasted the changing identities of British academics with those in selected other countries concludes that “[n]ostalgia for a golden era of academic identity, like any other object of grieving, will not provide a basis for renewal” (p.29). Echoing this, Delanty (2008) highlights the tensions and “pervasive change” (p.133) faced by academics where their personal sense of identity is at odds with the institutional contexts in which they work, whilst McInnis (2010, p.162) warns of the “external forces [which] are impinging on the values and work” of an increasingly fragmented and shifting academic identity. Further illustrating the change permeating other roles relating to academic practice, Rayner et al. (2010) question the pressures towards change facing the professoriate in the UK, whilst Shelley (2010) examines the fluidity of context and practice experienced by research managers. Having alluded to the “seismic changes which have occurred in the world of higher education” Henkel (2010, p.3) calls for a repositioning of identities to preserve traditional values at the same time as embracing these external pressures for change. Again, it is argued, the literature reveals a steadfast resistance to change, with little consideration of the possible need for it in the face of economic instability, reduced funding and increasingly uncertain futures. It is debateable, however, whether the resistance is to the change itself, or to the way in which the change is being introduced, and the consequent importing of managerial practices at the expense of traditional ways of working.

Such change can cause a tension of uncertainty within the HE sector. Indeed, early indications showed that the non-configuration of bureaucratic practices with collegial traditions led to a “limited manageability” (Lockwood, 1985, p.27), with universities expected to be “continually adaptive rather than cautiously so” (Martin, 1999, p.78). In essence, the continual wave of external policy change has caused a period of uncertainty and confusion, where “[T]hese pressures have made change a constant” (Dearlove 2002). As a consequence, the higher education landscape has become a less stable territory with continually changing priorities, depicting a “stratified system under strain from trying to deliver competing, contradictory, even conflicting objectives” (McNay, 2006, p.161). In a similar vein, Shattock, (2006) highlights how university policies have gradually been shaped by the imposition of regulations from external agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency, the Higher Education Funding Council, and the Office for Fair Access. Essentially this has led to an imposed “outside-in” rather than an “inside-out” approach (p.130) to developing their own processes, with the consequence of merely mirroring public policy making rather than responding to the needs of their

own institution. Rather than a polarisation of either the internal (inside-out) or the external (outside-in) derivation for university policies, Shattock does appear to advocate achieving a “balance between ‘inside-out’ and ‘outside-in’” (p.139). However, whether this is his genuine belief in the need for a compromise or rather a resignation that external directives somehow have to be accommodated remains unclear.

Thus, it appears that the onset of change in many of these institutions has led to a gradual move away from deep-seated traditional norms and working practices, causing inherent tensions and disquiet. Responding to the pressure for change within HE institutions, there has been a creeping introduction of stricter managerial regimes, with concomitant heightened expectations that managers will take greater control, despite, ironically, there being a “highly resistant anti-management culture-even amongst managers” (Archer, 2005, paragraph 23).

So, as collegial values have been forced to ebb, there has been an increased flow of power-driven cultures (Hellawel and Hancock, 2001), a strengthening of centralised control (Shattock, 2010) and a move towards “executively managed institutions” (Lambert, 2003, p.93). Such changes have not been welcomed by all and are reputed to epitomise the demise of collegial practices, “moving universities away from the collegial academy to the corporate enterprise” (McNay, 1995, p.105). Trowler (1998) challenges this type of “corporate culturism...imposing a monoculture for management purposes” (p.155), whilst Dearlove (1998) alludes to the dilemma and tensions facing academics reluctant to manage, stating that they “want to govern themselves but they rarely want to manage; they are often poor managers when they manage; and yet they deny rights of management to others” (p.73). This denotes an essential paradox within universities where academics neither want to manage nor be managed, thereby favouring the preservation of a traditional self-governance regime but set in a contemporary world which appears to ‘require’ even greater command and control. Parallel to this, there are indications of distrust between university managers and those they manage, with academics in particular seeing managers as having “limited or misguided vision”, and then the managers retorting that these staff exhibit a “stubborn unwillingness” to embrace change (Martin, 1999, p.78). However, it could be argued that the views of these writers are symptomatic of a bygone era in the evolution of HE, when the economic imperative for universities to survive in a competitive market-place was not so apparent; when their customer-base was less complex, and when their ‘performance’ against benchmarking criteria and league-table positions was not being constantly measured.

There is also less debate in the literature as to whether the above tensions are a normal, natural and healthy part of change within any organisation. In addition, it could be argued that some of these

writers paint an overly negative picture based on predominantly polemic reflections of an idealised way of working, using emotive language to describe the change within universities. This tends to be without a balanced consideration of whether new management practices might have the potential for introducing greater efficiencies, or more productivity from staff or greater alignment to external imperatives, irrespective of whether they are in agreement with them. Indeed, whilst Becher and Trowler (2001), for instance, portray “a substantial, often painful, impact on academic communities” (p.13) resulting in “changing landscapes and shifting territories” (p.15), they do not counterbalance this with what might be gained through this change. Similarly Duke (2002) stoically defends an “anti-management” (p.1) viewpoint in claiming that “...the key to managing the learning university is grasped in the paradox that it cannot be managed” (p.149), but does not attempt to suggest the potential value of some degree of management intervention to address changing pressures. Standing firm in his views against the encroachment of management structures and processes, Duke claims that “managing the learning university is irritating....It means letting go rather than tightening up, managing better by interfering less” (p.154) but does not entertain how this might need to be introduced within a contemporary university desperate for economic survival. This overt negativity is similarly echoed through other views, albeit largely polemic, which recount that the imposed change through increased management responsibilities has not only started to alter the working practices of academics, but has also made their roles more difficult. For example, Dearlove (2002) contends that academics who are now in management posts, either willingly or reluctantly, frequently “...lament the demise of an easy collegiality in the face of the rise in a harder managerialism that robs them of any control” (p.257). Rowland (2002) alludes to the dilemma and competing pressures within academic leadership roles, suggesting that academics should “be reminded of their academic values, rather than reminding academics of their managerial responsibilities” (p.58). It is apparent, therefore, that in all these views, there is a predominant focus on how the changes negatively affect their traditional roles as individuals, with an absence of insight into the contemporary needs of the institution, especially in an increasingly turbulent economic climate.

Taking a more balanced view, some writers do acknowledge the need for change but question the blanket adoption of strongly managerial practices at the expense of other possible options, especially in different institutional contexts. Middlehurst (2004) alludes to the variation in management practices within different universities, claiming that in traditional universities they were often an “unwelcome burden for academics” (p.267) whereas in post-92 they were often a “sign of status, authority and responsibility” (p. 267). Whitchurch (2006a), on the other hand, argues for greater clarification, stating that “not only is the concept of ‘management’ poorly defined and understood, but it has also been contested as antithetical to academic cultures and ways of working”

(p.8). Whilst fully acknowledging the advent of institutional change, McNay (2006) highlights the consequences of imposed managerial practices, warning that there tends to be “a strongly ‘corporate’ leadership’ separated from an operational workforce striving to retain the human face to the enterprise and collegial working of colleagues” (p.164). Similarly Brown (2010) cautions that it is “good leadership and management, rather than managerialism and blind bureaucracy” (p.36) that is needed to effect change. With, arguably, a more guarded optimism, Shattock (2010) contends that effective management is a prerequisite for successful universities, suggesting that it is part of an “institutional steering mechanism” (p. 29), although, paradoxically, advocating that it “should be exercised not from the top down” (p.194). However, Shattock (2010) is careful not to over-inflate the importance of management, seeing it as a contextual necessity amidst the centrality of teaching and research as core activities, claiming that:

“Successful universities are successful primarily because of their teaching and research, not because of their management, but good management, including good leadership, can over time provide the conditions in which teaching and research can flourish.” (p.1)

It is evident therefore, that change has become a constant within universities as they respond to increasing economic, social and political pressures, resulting in “a battery of mechanisms of audit and control generated by the state and instituted by senior and middle academic managers” (Kolsaker, 2008, p.516). Traditional ways of working have come under increased scrutiny, and there has been pressure for the pursuit of knowledge by individuals to be superseded in order to achieve corporate goals, thereby supposedly building “institutional capacity to manage in a faster-paced and agile environment with greater complexity” (Melville-Ross, 2010, p.3). A review of the literature does, indeed, reveal a tension between the demise of collegial ways of working, and the introduction of new managerial practices. However, this tension is often presented as if each of these practices should exclude the other, with no question of a compromise position. Importantly, much of the resistance to the advent of managerial practices is from a previous era when the economic climate was more clement. Of high significance, therefore, is the current economic barometer swaying in the Higher Education sector, leading to universities having to make institutional responses to a barrage of funding changes, differing student expectations, and more accountable research requirements. Whilst it is argued that all such challenges have to be met if universities are to weather current and anticipated future economic storms, the extent to which these have to be achieved through highly prescriptive and managerial ways is, perhaps, the residual contentious issue.

1.3 The institutional context

The institution in which this study is situated was, by origin, a mining and technical college which predominantly served the local community. This then became a polytechnic with a rapid growth in depth and breadth of curriculum provision, and a concomitant rise in the student population, symptomatic of an era of expansion in HE provision. It was given university status as part of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act and is therefore described as a post-92 university. Now further characterised as a teaching rather than research-led university, it offers a broad range of subjects and programme structures, from Foundation Degrees to Doctorates. With stated current values to widen participation and be as inclusive as possible, it has secured especially strong links with the local community over the past decade. Traditionally recruiting a significant proportion of its students from the local area, with implications for entry-grades and the types of award offered, the University claims to want to “diversify the student base” (Staffordshire University Strategic Plan, 2007-2012, p.3). However it has chosen to operationalise this through establishing more work-based partnerships with local employers and also forming the ‘University Quarter’ through close collaboration with two neighbouring colleges and the local Council. Although such ties to local activities can be seen as commendable in terms of reputedly forging and strengthening community links and contributing to the improved aspiration and access to HE for certain individuals, it could be argued that these are, however, symptomatic of a traditional preference within the institution for operating as “locals” as opposed to “cosmopolitans” (Gouldner, 1957, p.281). Whilst it is evident that there is a more explicit Executive-led strategic ambition for the institution to operate increasingly in a global marketplace, (Staffordshire University Strategic Plan, 2007-2012, p11), there are still residual ties to local projects and activities, thereby potentially continuing this legacy of localism derived from past ways of operating.

In order to respond to the vicissitudes of both internal and external demands, this University has continued to evolve its organisational structure. At the time of writing this thesis, the academic work within the University is divided into six areas, four of which are designated as Faculties, and the remaining two as Schools (a decision made by the University Executive team to allow these latter academic units to preserve identities within their respective professional communities). However, since 2004, perhaps indicative of a desire by academics not to totally conform to prescribed corporate structures, there has been a slight slippage in standardisation from these new structures in Faculties and Schools. Changes have also occurred in the senior management teams within the Services, where a series of small-scale restructures have resulted in new roles, changed responsibilities and distinctly different formats. However, it is worthy of note that a restructure of all Faculty management teams planned for 2012-2013 sees the re-introduction of these standardised structural arrangements, suggesting a resurgence in an Executive desire to re-emphasise a corporate allegiance not only

towards consistency but also conformity. Despite the difference in nomenclature and size of these structures, there has been a growing steer to standardise their practice so that they follow similar patterns and have an almost identical blend of teaching, research, administration and management. Indeed, it could be argued that this is evidence of a “strengthened steering core “ (Shattock, 2010, p. 194) which, although intended to achieve greater consistency and transfer of ideas across identical Faculty structures, could also pose challenges for those who not only value academic freedom but also respect traditional tribal landscapes and territories (Becher and Trowler, 2001, p.11).

Analysis of the University’s strategic plans between 1996 and 2012 (fuller details in chapter 4) show that rather than a specific regime change with a definite start and end point, there has been a gradual heightening of managerialist practices such as centralisation control and increased accountability. This planned re-focussed move towards the standardisation of Faculty structures is therefore not a consequence of a single regime change but rather of a gradually evolving managerialist regime. It is, however, worthy of note that this proposed restructure does coincide with the commencement of three new members of the University’s Executive team. Such a move towards greater standardisation could, therefore, be indicative of the newly formed Executive team’s desire to re-shape the University and exert a stronger influence over senior Faculty roles and responsibilities. In addition, and perhaps also as a result of the advent of new members of the Executive team, has been the re-titling of the Senior Management Team³ into the Senior Leadership Team, signalling a possible introduction of a new stance or approach. This change of title has not, however, been accompanied by an explicit change to the focus, modus operandi or remit of this group. As a consequence, it could be argued that the transition from ‘management’ to ‘leadership’ within this senior group might be in name only.

In addition to the Faculties and Schools, there are also seven Services which were historically established to ‘support’ the academic functions of the University in a traditional subservient mode rather than acknowledging potential equal value of their contributions to the work of the University. Each of these Services is responsible for a specialist function, some of which are directly involved with students and their day-to-day experience within the University, whilst others provide advice and support, to staff or students or both, in a more indirect way. Within the University, at the time of writing this thesis, the convergence of academic and professional support pay scales had already been achieved and common working conditions had also been embedded, a process which had the stated aim of providing a uniform, over-arching structure for the divergent duties and responsibilities of staff across the University. Aligned to this equalisation notion, one might expect to see increased

³ The Senior Management Team is comprised of all Faculty/School Deans and Directors of Service, along with all of the Executive Team.

homogenisation, with academic and professional support staff beginning to have similar experiences, including how managers within the university learn to manage. However, despite this stated aim of equalisation between staff groups, there still remains a distinction between them and a residual polarisation, evidenced through the continued use of very different role titles, committees and access to promotional posts. Indeed, analysis of the University Strategic Plan (2007-2012) suggests a continued inequality in terms of career development between academic and professional support staff, with posts such as readers, professors and Fellows available for the former but with an absence of parallel opportunities to reward the contribution of the latter.

Similar to the custom and practice in other post-92 universities, all the managers within the University are on permanent contracts and, furthermore, all have been through a formalised recruitment process of for their posts. In response to the strategic priorities declared by the Executive team in the University Strategic Plan (2007-2012), each area of the University has a designated senior management 'team', with the intention of providing working practices conducive to managing in a devolved way, albeit 'controlled' and steered from above. This move towards greater team-working may signal a potential tension for individuals (in particular some academics) who favour traditional individualist ways of working, juxtaposed with an Executive aspiration for all staff to make a greater 'contribution' to collective team efforts.

In order to facilitate these changes over the past decade, a more explicit and deliberate approach has been taken within the University to provide a training programme for managers. Aligned to the increased managerialist expectations, centralised control and accountability within the University, this management development programme was mandatory, funded largely through the Rewarding and Developing Staff initiative (HEFCE, 2000). Targeted at the top layer of managers within the University structure (approximately one hundred managers in total), this programme was centred on key University policies related to the management of staff, such as health and safety, grievances and appraisals. It was therefore designed to ensure managers conformed to corporate ways of working, following prescribed policies and procedures. Whilst by the start of this thesis, this programme had ceased to exist in its previous form due to the cessation of funding, the desire for managers to conform to policies and procedures remains. This has been reinforced through the continuation to date of a series of mandatory workshops in line with emerging institutional policies on topics such as work-loading, performance management or absence management.

Within the past two years, there has also been a renewed attempt to revitalise the provision of centralised development for managers, leading to the addition of a major cross-university

programme. However, the emphasis within this programme has been on leadership, not management, reflecting an Executive desire (detailed in section 4.3) to have an institutional differentiation between these two activities. Within the University, therefore, management has become synonymous with the carrying out of procedures and policies. Superimposed on this transactional function of managers' roles has been an Executive-led expectation for them to also 'lead' their staff in an inspirational and transformational way. To enable this, a new leadership programme for managers within the University has now been introduced, with the specific aim of developing individuals in order to be able to lead teams more effectively, and thereby elicit 'followership'⁴. Ironically in line with a 'managerialist' emphasis, this programme explicitly aims to import 'perceived' good practice from outside the HE sector, with an implicit assumption that University-based ways of working are either outdated or inadequate. This signals a strong Executive steer towards more "cosmopolitan" (Gouldner, 1957, p.281), outward-facing practice, with a clear intention to move away from perceived localised and institutionally-entrenched ways of operating and thinking. It could be argued, however, that this pursuit of leadership and followership is potentially at odds with the heightened control and conformity within the University through which choice, individualism and freedom are being replaced by managerialist restriction, team-agreed action and prescription.

In summary, therefore, this study is set within an evolving institutional context but where this evolution appears to signal both tensions and contradictions. There is an evident Executive-led aspiration towards greater conformity and standardisation, with a corresponding reduction in freedom of choice, individualism and traditional practices. There is also an evident move towards leadership rather than routine management but, ironically, set within a strongly controlled procedure-led managerially dominated institutional environment. Superimposed on this is a strong sense of an Executive ambition to move the University from a reliance on its well-established local roots to become more outward-facing, open to importing the perceived good practice and ideas from elsewhere, yet at the same time, policies to widen the student base reflect the tendencies of "locals" (Gouldner, 1957, p.281). Whilst a journey of institutional change is perhaps inevitable within an evolving HE environment, it could be argued that there are different ways in which this could occur, and that it will be the 'how' not the 'what' of institutional change which will determine success (however defined). Indeed, what needs to be questioned is whether the institutional context as portrayed above will facilitate effective leadership (as opposed to management) into the future, and of course, imbue a concomitant followership.

⁴ Followership is a consequence of leadership, denoting the qualities and actions of leaders which cause their staff to willingly want to follow them (as opposed to being ordered to do so)

1.4 Justification for the research and clarification of the focus

Despite this spotlight on the gradual change to more managerialist regimes, there is a paucity of research which focuses specifically on the *process* and extent to which university managers learn to manage in their daily roles within this evolving environment. Moreover, as will be evidenced in chapter 2, a critical review of the literature reveals that there appears to be an implicit assumption that primarily managers best learn to manage by attending structured programmes and development activities. Indeed, this signals, in particular, a lack of empirical data which interrogates ‘how’ these managers make the transition into adopting redefined management practices, as opposed to the increasingly wide range of evidence about ‘what’ their changed identities mean. In an attempt to deepen understanding, the extent to which university managers are learning to manage amidst heightened expectations of them to become more managerialist in their practice, the research reported in this thesis seeks to focus specifically on the actual learning processes. In order to do so, an inter-disciplinary approach is used, drawing on the separate but inter-related fields of higher education management, management education, development and learning, professional and workplace learning and sensemaking. As a result, an integrated theoretical framework is developed. By using insights from these different fields, a heightened focus is made on the various ways in which the university managers learn within their roles, either formally or informally. The context-specific complexities of how these processes occur in a university setting are then further extrapolated, analysed and given meaning. Much of the previous HE specific research tends to predominantly focus on either academic or professional support managers. This study investigates the learning processes undertaken by both these groups, examining where they differ.

The review of the literature presented in chapter 2 highlights a paucity of evidence which focuses specifically on the process by which university managers learn to manage. As a consequence, the primary driver for this research has been to examine this process more closely, offering contributions to an intellectual debate about the inherent enabling and inhibiting factors. However there has also been a subsidiary motivator to satisfy an aspect of the researcher’s own professional interest. In the capacity of providing learning opportunities to meet the professional (and management) development needs of staff within a university, the researcher felt that this could not be effectively done without an in-depth knowledge of the factors which relate to this process. Therefore, in addition to the contribution to knowledge, this research has implications for practice regarding the provision of effective support to the development of those learning to manage within a university context.

As the literature review which follows in chapter 2 reveals that there is a paucity of evidence about the specific process by which contemporary university managers learn to manage within their daily roles, the key focus of this research attempts to address this issue. Put simply, the primary research question to be answered is:

How do university managers learn to manage?

As a consequence, the empirical investigation undertaken within this thesis seeks to answer this question by identifying the salient factors involved in the process, illuminating and differentiating between the implicit and explicit development undertaken by managers in order to cope with their emerging duties and responsibilities.

Fundamentally therefore, this research investigates the different ways university managers learn and develop in order to 'make sense' of their roles, whether these processes are formal or informal, planned or ad hoc. Through deconstructing the perceptions of university managers about their day-to-day practice, it critically examines the link between learning and sensemaking, questioning the interplay between these two processes. It focuses on the in-situ learning which university managers undertake, and the extent to which they recognise the ongoing learning embedded within their jobs. As part of this, it questions the effect which contextual variables have on the day-to-day learning of university managers, and identifies the key factors which either contribute to or impede this process. This research also seeks to find out the extent to which university managers recognise and take responsibility for their own learning as they endeavour to 'make sense' of the demands placed upon them, seeking to ascertain the perceived locus of control for this process within an institutional context.

1.5 The research approach taken

Whilst the discussion presented in chapter 3 describes and justifies in detail the approach taken to developing plausible answers to the above research problems, a skeletal outline of the methodology adopted is given here to provide an overview. Based on the intention to interpret and finding meaning (or indeed, multiple meanings) in the evidence, the researcher selected a qualitative approach to the collection of data, ensuring that there was an alignment between the underpinning aims of the research and the methodology. This was in preference to a quantitative approach in which measurement, precision, causal links and generalisations would have been sought. Using an interpretative approach allowed the researcher to explore the richness of the working context of each manager, interrogating the intricacies of their in-role learning experiences and painting a detailed picture of their beliefs, values and perceptions of their worlds.

The collection of data was achieved through the following methods:

1) Semi-structured interviews with

- a) Senior academic and professional support managers (with follow-up study of a subset)
- b) A member of the Executive Team responsible for the development of staff

2) Documentary analysis of University strategic plans over a sixteen year period

3) Analysis of self-completed reflective journals by a subset of the original managers interviewed

It is worthy of note that in the initial planning of the data collection, the researcher considered that the semi-structured interviews with managers would be sufficient to illuminate their perceptions of their in-role learning. However, whilst this did reveal these perceptions, such an intensely mono-focal approach did not enable triangulation of this evidence against other sources or stated imperatives.

The decision taken to widen the data collection to include an interview with a member of the Executive, an analysis of strategic plans and the self-completion of journals therefore enabled a more comprehensive and balanced review of the evidence. Indeed, the eventual adoption of this multi-method approach “allows findings to be corroborated” (Denscombe, 2003, p.132) through triangulation and therefore, it is argued, enhance the quality of the data analysis.

To select the managers for interview and for the completion of reflective journals, a system of purposive sampling (Bryman, 2001) as opposed to random sampling was used. As explained in section 3.4.5, the researcher acknowledges that the use of this sampling method was selective, and therefore not representative of all managers. It did, nonetheless, ensure that the managers were from a range of posts, from different areas of the University, and therefore likely to exhibit a range of perceptions of their in-role learning experiences.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out in order to explore how university managers perceived their day-to-day learning in their roles. This concentrated on the deconstruction of the managers’ learning processes in order to illuminate the main factors involved. Semi-structured interviews facilitated “a kind of conversation” (Robson, 2002, p. 273) between the researcher and the managers, albeit within a framework of core themes of enquiry. Prior to commencing the main round of interviews, a pilot study of six managers was undertaken. This allowed for the interview approach to be tested, ascertaining whether the structure, content and emphasis were conducive to the eliciting of meaningful data. To add a temporal dimension to the research programme, a sub-sample of four of the managers were re-interviewed approximately one year after the first round of data collection. These were all managers who were new to their current senior management roles,

although not new to management per se. This helped to explore issues pertinent to these managers' early in-role development, and, moreover, clarify the extent to which they were still evolving in their pursuit of meaning.

The documents analysed as part of this research programme were a selection of strategic plans from the university where the research took place. These documents were deliberately selected to provide insight into the extent of strategic support for management learning within the host institution thereby providing triangulation to the managers' perceptions of their in-role learning. In total, four strategic plans were analysed covering a 16 year period. A hermeneutic approach to the analysis of the documents was used (Bryman, 2004, p.394) through which the researcher endeavoured to bring out the meaning of the text. Interpreting the documents in this way enabled an alignment of their analysis with that of the interview transcripts, achieving a congruence and compatibility in the treatment of the data across the different methods.

The reflective journals were completed by a sub-set of the original group of the managers who were neither in the pilot nor the one-year-on follow-up study. Cohen et al. (2011, p.268) argues that research which spans a period of time following a specific cohort can "suffer from problems of attrition". Indeed, by the time this self-completed journal was issued, ten out of the original twenty-four managers were no longer in post, and so the sampling was further restricted. Notwithstanding the difficulty presented by this restriction to the sampling through the passage of time, the essential rationale for the self-completion of journals by these managers was an attempt to facilitate the portrayal of any critical incidents in their day-to-day learning as this type of evidence had not emerged in the original interviews.

In order to examine the link between sensemaking and learning, one of the decisions taken by the researcher early in the process of data analysis was to use Weick's (1995) sensemaking criteria. This framework of sensemaking characteristics is not presented as the 'perfect model' but merely a means by which to interrogate the data, supplying a series of meaningful pathways along which to further explore the experiences and perceptions of the managers' learning within their roles. Essentially this provided the researcher with a structured approach to analysing how the managers 'made sense' of their experiences, creating a rich tapestry of multiple meanings. In effect, this was a process of "double hermeneutics" (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009, p.314) through which the researcher was trying to make sense of the managers' descriptions, at the same time as they were making sense of their own experiences.

One of the essential dilemmas for the researcher in this thesis related to undertaking research within her own institution. Admittedly there were advantages of this approach, such as having an intuitive understanding of the history and politics of the organisation, having an inherent awareness of the structure and roles, and also having easy access to potential interviewees by building upon existing relationships. Counterbalancing these advantages were, however, a number of disadvantages of being an insider (Robson, 2002, p.297) in the research process. Although the researcher was aware of these prior to commencing the research, it was as the project unfolded that they became more poignant. Engaging with colleagues did, indeed, present a range of challenges, such as having preconceptions, feeling that a prior relationship was being exploited to gain access to interviewees, the difficulties of remaining objective throughout the process, along with a need to remain both objective and neutral, even when issues were being discussed which related to the researcher's own daily role. Other issues such as the need to keep the evidence confidential also became apparent, and whilst this was not difficult due to the researcher's adherence to strong ethical principles, she was aware of the challenge it presented.

Linked to this, and perhaps pivotal to the issue of not only doing research within one's own institution but also of researching within one's professional area, was the professional/researcher dilemma. The need to juggle these two roles did, indeed, become very apparent as the research endeavour unfolded. Whilst evident within the data collection, it was not restricted to this phase. In analysing the data, for example, there were a few times when decisions had to be made to restrict what was eventually revealed in order not to compromise the reputation of others. This, it could be argued, potentially weakened the data, with certain insights having to remain undisclosed to the reader in order to protect interviewees. Admittedly this dilemma may also have been present if the research had been conducted in other institutions, but the researcher acknowledges that she probably became more acutely aware because of the possible consequences to existing professional relationships through being an 'insider'. Whilst all the data was anonymised by the removal of words and phrases which would have linked it to a particular person or subject/specialist area, there were a few key pieces of information which could have only been traced to particular role-holders. As a consequence, a small amount of data was excluded from the eventual write-up of the thesis.

Arguably, another example of the professional/researcher dilemma emerged during the seeking of critical incidents through the completion of reflective journals. Whilst this process may have been adversely affected by the professional/researcher issue, with only minor rather than major critical incidents being revealed, there may have been other explanations for this outcome. Admittedly, the interviewees having to 'reveal' incidents to a colleague may potentially have had an inhibiting effect,

but the process itself may also have contributed. Whilst having to write about incidents encouraged reflection, it may not have been the most preferred way for managers to disclose them (and, in addition, it could be perceived as an extra burden or imposition). With hindsight, the previous reluctance to also reveal incidents in the interviews could potentially have been overcome through prior warning that this would be a question.

In addition, the researcher recognises that a potential consequence of being an 'insider' within the research process was the heightened possibility of researcher bias. Arguably in conducting perception-based, qualitative research in any organisation, a researcher's own preferences, likes, dislikes and prejudices (latent or overt) may thwart the neutrality of the process and thereby adversely affect the validity of the findings. In conducting research in one's own organisation, there is also the possibility that the researcher might have a particular view on a strategic issue, a subject within the data set or an institutional regime. Whilst the researcher acknowledges this possibility, she is satisfied that in her design of the research, her conduct in interviews and her subsequent analysis of the data, she endeavoured to suspend any preconceptions in order to dispassionately reveal the findings which emerged.

Superimposed on the challenges of researching in one's own institution, the researcher also acknowledges the limitations of researching in just one institution. Indeed, researching within one institution, there is the possibility of context becoming more significant than any other factor, perhaps through a predominance of strong institutional values, expectations or cultural norms. It is also possible that an institution has a certain peculiarity, such as a high incidence of any staffing feature such as bullying, grievances or absences. An organisational culture promoting any of these might, therefore, colour the judgements of the subjects within the data set. Other institutional occurrences such as regime changes, leadership changes, structural reorganisations or imminent external interventions, for example, audits or inspections could, potentially, have an impact on the data. Within this particular study, it could be argued that the high incidence of staff working for one institution for a number of years might skew the findings. In addition, the possibility of subjects seeing someone's research project as an opportunity to either seek vengeance against an institution by being overly negative, or, alternatively falsely praising a regime change because they feel particularly positive (for example, if they have been recently promoted). Whilst either of these latter examples would also adversely affect the findings in multi-site research projects, within a single institution they could, potentially, have an even greater impact.

In addition, as further discussed in section 8.5, researching in a single institution prevents any generalisability beyond that institution, thereby limiting the potential contribution to knowledge of

any findings. However, linked to this future use of this research, the researcher, as an 'insider' was also cognisant of the potential dangers of being critically analytical and evaluative of practices within the institution. It is possible, therefore, that this may have affected the researcher's choice of words and phrases, and, as a consequence, diluted the eventual impact of any message.

1.6 Defining key terms

Acknowledging that definitions of terms tend not to be uniform either between researchers, amongst fields of study or indeed, even within different institutions, a clarification of key aspects of terminology used within this thesis is presented.

Academic manager- Whilst Deem et al. (2007) use the hyphenated phrase "manager-academic" (p.102), in contrast, throughout this thesis, the preferred term used by the researcher is 'academic manager'. For the data collected within this thesis, this is the term in used within the institution. Indeed, with reference to members of the data set, in the absence of designated academic departments within the institution, titles such as 'Head of Department' would not be appropriate. Furthermore, acknowledging a wide range of different roles within the institution (as indicated in table 3.1), the term 'academic manager' refers to an academic member of staff who has management responsibilities for either the curriculum and the staff who deliver it, or a project of work relating to learning and teaching. However, whilst the researcher noted that the term 'academic manager' was familiar and in use within the host institution, differentiating them from professional support managers (despite the efforts towards convergence through assimilation onto a single pay-scale as outline in section 1.3), she also acknowledged that within this institution, *academic managers* as a group are not homogenous as illustrated in table 5.1. This indicates variables such as background experience, previous management experience and qualifications of academic managers. Whilst not all these managers had followed purely academic or 'university-based routes into their current roles, as later analysed in section 5.3, their length of service shows a tendency to favour internal promotional routes to career progression. This, along with other inward-facing institutional working practices and responses evident in section 1.3, suggest a predominantly 'local' (Gouldner, 1957, p.281) characterisation of academic managers.

It could be argued, therefore, that due to the wide variation in roles under the broad title of 'academic manager', any study which uses the term may not have application to all role-holders within that category. Whilst this is acknowledged, the researcher also notes from the literature review some similarities between certain sub-groups of academic managers. Shelley (2009), for example, in an empirical study of research managers whose roles are clearly different to other academic managers such as Heads of Department, gives evidence of how they were facing changing roles, blurring of boundaries, increasingly divergent responsibilities and resistance from staff who are

resistant to being managed. There is similarity, therefore, between the findings in this study and those focussing on more traditional academic managers. Hence it could be argued that the findings from this thesis may have some relevance to other academic managers undertaking different roles, despite, on first impression, their apparent differences in focus and responsibilities.

Professional support managers- This is the collective term used by the researcher to refer to a wide range of managers in a variety of support roles. Some of these have management responsibilities for services and/or staff who directly support the student learning process, (and usually from within teaching-related areas). In addition, it also refers to managers in university service areas who either indirectly support the wider student experience, such as enrolment, finance or estates, or, alternatively, directly support the staff experience, for example, areas such as personnel or staff development. Whilst the term 'professional support manager' is in everyday use within the host institution and was therefore familiar to the interviewees, the researcher noted that a range of other terms for this group of staff exists within the literature. As a consequence, it could be argued that these terms are neither standard nor static. Lauwerys (2002) acknowledges an ambiguity arising from the "dual coupling of the terms 'administration' and 'management', whilst Bacon (2009) argues that the literature "misses a crucial distinction amongst professional managers, namely that between generic HE professionals and specialists from professions which exist outside the world of HE" (p.11). Whitchurch (2004), on the other hand, refers to "administrative managers" (p.281), and then uses the extended term "professional administrators and managers" (Whitchurch, 2006b, p.159), then changing to "professional support managers" (Whitchurch, 2007, p.1). Further refining the typology, Whitchurch, (2008a p.380), proffers the notion of adopting the terms "general managers" for those who work in faculties, schools or services; "specialist professionals" who have specialised qualifications and roles, and "niche-specialists" who develop roles such as research management or quality which are specific to the HE sector. Thus, the over-arching, term 'professional support managers' covers a wide variety of specialisms and a multiplicity of roles. Furthermore, it seeks to avoid a deficit connotation whereby there is "no clear definition for staff who are not employed as academics apart from the negative connotation of being called a 'non-academic'" (Wohlmuther, 2008, p.325).

Management- To understand the processes by which managers learn within the context of this thesis, a definition for the term 'management' has been sought. In his seminal works on the nature of management, Drucker (1979) asserts that management refers not only to the process by which a range of tasks are achieved, but it is also both a discipline and a group of people. This immediately highlights the inherent difficulty associated with any definition of management, as potentially it can refer to a number of different aspects. Naylor (2004), however, suggests a definition which has

particular relevance for this thesis as it not only takes account of context but also incorporates a blend of different variables, suggesting that:

“Management is the process of achieving organisational objectives, within a changing environment, by balancing efficiency, effectiveness and equity, obtaining the most from limited resources, and working with and through people.”(p.6)

This definition attempts to acknowledge the symbiosis between organisational and operational processes and highlights that this is dependent on the actions of people. Gosling and Mintzberg (2004) take this a stage further by emphasising the situational complexity of management, asserting that this is a key factor which needs to be acknowledged before the process itself can be fully understood. As a consequence they advocate that “management is neither a science nor a profession, neither a function nor a combination of functions. Management is a practice – it has to be appreciated through experience, in context.”(p.19)

Although not specifying the factors involved in this practice, Birkinshaw (2010) adds to the debate by emphasising the practical and situated nature of management, arguing that:

“Management is a social endeavour, which simply involves getting people to come together to achieve goals that they could not achieve on their own...the practice of management is context-dependent and as the nature of business organisations evolves, so too will management” (p.13)

Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, and crystallising the essential tenets of management in all these definitions, management can be viewed as a context-specific, dynamic, socially-determined activity, whereby objectives are achieved through other people.

Leadership

Whilst this study focuses specifically on the in-role learning underpinning managers and management processes rather than leaders and leadership, it is acknowledged that there is a blurring of the boundaries between these domains. Within the context of the empirical gathering of evidence within this thesis, managers were purposely asked about their daily experiences, with the focal emphasis on how they had learned to do them rather than any attempts to categorise them into ‘management’ or ‘leadership’ activities. However, within the analysis of the strategic documents (section 4.2) and the interview with a member of the Executive team (section 4.3), the term ‘leadership’ does occur, and so it therefore needs to be briefly outlined as a concept. It is evident within the literature that the terms leadership and management are often used either interchangeably or in unison, with the implied

assumption that the two go hand-in-hand. The Future of Higher Education Report (2003), for example, advocates “strong leadership and management” (DfES, p.76), whilst The Higher Education Funding Council for England (2004) promotes the need for developing “leadership, management and governance” (HEFCE, p. 34) as combined strategic priorities. To add further complexity, a review of the literature also indicates that a range of leadership typologies exist, such as situated, distributed and devolved ⁵(Bolden et al., 2008, Bryman, 2007 and Burgoyne et al. 2009). Therefore, generalisations on ‘leadership’ might overlook the possibility that these different sub-categories of leadership exist. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that the model of leadership in one institution necessarily replicates that in another.

McCaffery (2010) explicitly articulates some key differences between leadership and management, suggesting that effective leaders are great motivators, innovators and enablers, whereas good managers tend to be planners, controllers and administrators (p. 79). However, adopting a pragmatic stance based on experience, McCaffery also warns of the danger of over-exaggerating the differences, suggesting instead, that these areas can involve the learning of complementary skill-sets and competencies.

Aligned to this view, the researcher argues that these domains may not necessarily be polarised within the University where it is possible that both leadership and management can continue to co-exist.

Within the institutional context of this thesis, the evidence indicates that heightened ‘leadership’ is starting to emerge as a strategic intent, although the form that this will take has yet to be explicitly articulated. In section 1.3, reference was not only made to the Executive ambition for greater leadership from managers, but also to the institutionally differentiation between the transactional nature of ‘management’ and the transformational ambition for ‘leadership’. Whilst these align with McCaffery’s suggested differences (outlined above), it could be argued that, within the institution, these are, as yet, aspirational and still to be demonstrated in practice. Furthermore, the recent increased emphasis on ‘leadership’ within the University, along with the overnight transposition of the Senior Management Team into the Senior Leadership Team (as previously outlined in section 1.3) is suggestive of a title change rather than a radical overhaul of practice. Indeed, it could be argued that whilst possibly an Executive ambition to introduce a new approach to leading, motivating and inspiring others, current practice may be less developed. Essentially, this could be a sign of a mere structural and cultural repositioning as the institution embeds “leaderism” (O’Reilly and Reid, 2010, p.

⁵ Situated leadership aims to adapt to the particular needs of situations, tasks or individuals. Distributed leadership acknowledges that leadership can happen at all levels within organisations, and devolved leadership allows power, control and authority to be exercised locally (in departments) rather than centrally.

972) as a hybrid of managerialism, with the potential for causing some destabilising effects as new practices and values begin to emerge.

Learning- In seeking to define 'learning', the researcher explored a number of different fields and applied professional settings. It is apparent from the literature that definitions of learning vary, each with a different emphasis on one or a combination of skills, knowledge or experience deemed as essential to the process, and, moreover, the interdependence on the context to which it applies. For example, the seminal works of Kolb (1984) and Marton and Booth (1997) emphasise the importance of experience within the learning process, with its implicit iterative nature, without beginning or end. Mezirow (2000), Knowles (1998) and Tight (2002) on the other hand, stress the difference in approach when adults learn, and how their blend of experience and motivation leads to transformation and change. The seminal works of Schön (1983 and 1987) and the later research of Moon (1999, 2004 and 2006) highlight the integral nature of reflection within the process of learning, whether this occurs within or after, either formally or informally. Adding a different dimension, Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998 and 2000) focus on the social aspect of learning, suggesting that learning is integrated with finding meaning and identity within a given community of practice. More recently, Billet (2001, 2002, 2004 and 2006), Boud and Solomon (2001), Kyndt et al (2009), Marsick, (2009) and Sambrook (2005) proffer the notion that within the workplace, learning tends to be an informal process of gradually assimilating the required knowledge, skills and experience, it is also dependent on the existence of requisite conditions conducive to support this process.

Other differences in emphasis within definitions of learning also exist within the literature. Some focus on learning as a pursuit within individuals. Eraut (2000) for example, contends that: "learning is defined as the process whereby knowledge is acquired. It also occurs when existing knowledge is used in a new context or in new combinations." (p.114) In contrast, Bryans and Smith (2000) refute the individual ownership of this process, arguing that "it is important to see learning as significantly a function of the relationships between persons rather than something held as the 'possession' of the individual" (p.233)

Another dimension to learning is proffered through the way in which it can have transformative qualities, causing significant change not just in subsequent actions but moreover, in beliefs, viewpoints and perspectives. Mezirow (2000) contends that learning is best understood as "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience" (p.5) and therefore transformative learning necessitates a change in the way issues and concepts are viewed. Brookfield (2000) also echoes this in claiming that this type of learning occurs when there is "a change in perspective...an act of learning can only be called transformative if it involves a fundamental questioning and re-ordering of how one thinks or acts" (p.139). To add

another perspective, Kegan (2000) makes the distinction between informative and transformative learning and suggests that whereas the former is based on changes in a person's knowledge base, the latter type of learning penetrates further and is more sustainable because these changes focus on how a person knows. Additionally, Kegan claims that "both kinds of learning are expansive and valuable, one within a pre-existing frame of mind and the other reconstructing the very frame" (2000, p.49)

However, whilst acknowledging the respective strengths inherent within these different foci on learning and, furthermore, recognising the enhanced insight which they provided for the data analysis process, the researcher still sought a definition which had greater relevance to the development of managers highlighted within this thesis. This was eventually found within the field of adult learning. To this end, Mackerarcher (2004) provides a particularly poignant definition of learning, claiming that it is:

"...a process of making sense of life's experiences and giving meaning to whatever 'sense' is made; using these meanings in thinking, solving problems, and making choices and decisions..."(pp.7-8).

This definition has direct relevance to the learning process undertaken by the university managers. Indeed it extrapolates the key features which, in chapter 6, the researcher finally concludes to be a 'learning to make sense' process. Of particular importance in this definition is the way in which the prior experiences inform future actions, and the progressive nature of the inherent thinking, problem solving and decision making. Moreover, the integrated nature of the making sense, making meaning and making choices reflects the iterative nature of the process undertaken by the managers interviewed in this research.

Development- In attempting to define 'development', it is evident from the literature that it is used and applied in different ways, within different contexts, and has, arguably, an inherent ambiguity. To add further complexity, sub-sets of usage also exist from different fields, such as staff development, employee development, team development and organisational development. For the purpose of this thesis, however, the focus has been on the development of individuals, albeit within an organisational context. In seeking a definition, the emphasis varies as to which aspect of development makes it distinctive. Mankin (2009) alludes not only to the broadness of development but also "its longer term focus...concerned with the enhancement of an individual's personal portfolio of knowledge, skills and abilities" (p.36). Similarly, Marchington and Wilkinson (2008) highlight the enhancement of previous knowledge and skills, but claim that it is an "umbrella term and covers both training and learning" (p.344) incorporating a variety of activities such as coaching, education and informal interventions. In essence, these definitions suggest that development involves change and progression. McCaffery

(2010) also emphasises this notion of movement and change, but unlike other definitions, does not consider that development involves building on pre-existing knowledge or skills, stating instead that it is concerned with “the acquisition of something that is new: a new skill; a new way of seeing things; a new attitude; new feelings; a new level of consciousness...” (p.202). The inclusion of a process of ‘acquisition’ within this definition is particularly pertinent to the research reported in this thesis and helps to differentiate between development and learning, with the former implying the adoption of a new way of working, whereas the latter alludes to an internalised re-conceptualisation of meaning and understanding. The researcher does, however, acknowledge the potential for overlap between these two terms, and therefore proffers the suggestion that, within the context of this thesis, they are both part of a change and readjustment process as an individual evolves and grows. They neither compete nor are in opposition, but, instead, work in symbiosis towards the same end.

Sensemaking- A key focus of this research programme is the extent to which managers ‘make sense’ of their worlds. Sensemaking describes the process by which individuals attempt to find meaning in the situations they face, involving both a cognitive and an emotional response to various cues or stimuli. It is an interpretative process involving the construction of meaning based on experiences, focussing specifically on “the meanings people attach to the situations they encounter” (Allard-Poesi, 2005, p.176). Crucially, it involves individuals trying to decipher their own and others’ actions in order to understand and create meaning. It is about interpreting often a myriad of different factors, contextual influences and motives. Weick (1995) attempts to simplify this process by suggesting that “sensemaking is what it says it is, namely, making something sensible ... to be understood literally, not metaphorically” (p.16). Within the context of this research programme, it refers to an ongoing rather than a time-limited process which is “instrumental, subtle, swift, social and often taken for granted...turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serve as a springboard to action” (Weick et al., 2005, p.409-410). Schwandt (2005) argues that “sensemaking is seen as providing a connection between cognition and action” (p.182), and it is this ‘connecting’ characteristic which makes it a central component in this study of management learning within a university setting. Indeed, it allows for links and connections to be made, joining a range of atomistic experiences into a meaningful whole, thereby helping to ‘make sense’ of the managers’ experiences within the context of the university environment.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is structured into eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter:

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of previous relevant research. This draws on literature from different, yet not unrelated, fields. Initially, research on the theme of management in Higher Education is explored, covering both academic and professional support managers. However, in seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the process by which university managers learn to manage, a selective review of the literature relating to management education, development and learning is then undertaken, followed by a scrutiny of professional and workplace learning research. Sensemaking is then explored, and together with the latter areas contributes to the establishment of a conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology. It provides justification for the approach taken, critically reflecting and evaluating the decisions made as the research programme progressed. This chapter provides an overview of the methodological underpinnings of all aspects of the data collection.

Chapter 4 gives an insight into the strategic intent for the development of managers, drawing on a documentary analysis of a series of selected strategic plans from the University over a sixteen year period, combined with an analysis of the outcomes from an interview with a member of the Executive Team.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the twenty-four managers interviewed, focussing on their background, experience, length of time in role, previous training and their disciplinary/specialist origin. This chapter is intended to complement the institutional information given in chapter 4 so as to provide rich detail for the context of this study.

Chapter 6 focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data, providing a comprehensive interrogation within identified themes. This is facilitated by using Weick's (1995) seven sensemaking characteristics as an initial deconstruction framework, thereby providing a coherent structure in which to examine the data. A number of managers characteristic variables from the sub-groups identified in chapter five are also included in the analysis.

Chapter 7 further analyses the data in the light of the previous research and the key tenets from the conceptual framework. It aims to synthesise the evidence gathered from all the sources of data collection (interviews with twenty-four managers, interview with a member of the Executive, analysis of the strategic plans and reflective journals) in order to draw out broad themes.

Chapter 8 revisits the research questions outlined in section 1.4 and aims to provide plausible answers based on the emergent themes from the research. Through this approach, key findings are proffered, and the implications of these for the existing body of knowledge are presented. Implications for practice are highlighted, and an overview of the pilot initiatives already started is

given. The limitations of the research programme undertaken are also outlined, and then recommendations for further research are suggested.

1.6 Boundaries of the research

Whilst the limitations presented by the methodological approach adopted are discussed in section 8.5, some of the boundaries which the researcher initially set in the planning of this research programme are outlined below.

This research study is located within one institution. Given the constraints of working alone rather than as part of a wider research team or project, the researcher made the judgement that one institution would provide a suitable focus to explore the themes emerging from an analysis of the evidence. From the outset, the researcher does not intend that generalisations are to be made beyond the host institution. In essence this research takes the form of an initial exploratory study, a way of clarifying key issues on which to possibly build further research across a number of institutions and thereby widen the potential application of any key findings.

Having outlined in section 1.4 that the specific focus for this thesis was to find out how university managers learn within their roles, another boundary set by the researcher concerned the level of managers to study. Within the context of the university where the research takes place, the levels of management lie along a continuum, from first line (supervisory) managers, to middle and senior managers, and then to Executive managers. Superimposed on this was the decision to include a mixture of academic and professional support managers. In order to focus on both these two groups of managers, the two ends of this management continuum were deemed to be inappropriate, as first line managers were exclusively professional support staff, whilst the Executive team did not have sufficient numbers of each category of managers to make a comparison. Hence the researcher decided to focus on a broad cross-section of managers within the middle band, albeit all deemed as 'senior' managers within the University.

In an initial review of the literature on management in HE, the researcher noted a growing use of the term 'leadership', albeit not always with clarity of definition or application, and "the difficulty in distinguishing activities that are associated with leadership, as distinct from managerial or administrative activities" (Bryman 2007, p.4). Had the intended focus for the thesis been on finding out what university managers do in their roles, and perhaps providing an analysis of the integral skills, behaviours and attitudes differentiating management from leadership, then the inclusion of the latter as a key element would have been necessary. However, with the research enquiry being firmly on

interrogating how the managers learned within their roles, the focus remained on managers rather than leaders, and therefore, as a consequence, on management rather than leadership.

1.9 Conclusions

This chapter has laid the foundations for the analysis presented in the thesis. It has provided a contextualisation of the evolving nature of Higher Education sector, followed by a rationale for the key questions which underpin this research endeavour. An outline to the approach taken has been given, with then an explanation of the key definitional terms, the thesis structure and the boundaries for this research. Based on these foundations, the thesis now unfolds in the following seven chapters, each having a separate focus, but, in combination attempting to construct meaning about how university managers learn to manage and 'make sense' of their experiences within their daily roles.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

In order to better understand and support the learning of university managers within their roles, the researcher needed to find out the key factors which contributed to this process. The purpose of the literature review is therefore to critically evaluate current knowledge about how university managers learn to manage, and, as a result, dispel any myths or mistaken assumptions. It aims to establish the extent to which this theme of how university managers learn to manage has already been addressed within previous studies, to examine areas of divergent views and approaches and to highlight any evident gaps. Following this focussed review, there is a further refining of the research questions so that a purposeful conceptual framework can be established.

Initially the researcher assumed that this review would focus solely on the HE-based literature relating to university managers. However as the sections below reveal, although this body of literature highlights aspects such as the changes to the roles and identities of managers within HE, it does not examine in detail the underlying *process* by which they learn to manage within their daily roles, particularly in relation to non-programme based learning. As a consequence, the researcher deemed it necessary to look outside of the HE-based literature, exploring the wider fields of management learning, professional learning and sensemaking to gain insights into the complex array of factors underpinning how managers learn to manage within the workplace. The resultant literature review is therefore multi-disciplinary in nature, divided into discrete sections to provide a structured exploration of dominant themes and issues. As a starting point in a quest to understand the background, boundaries and prevailing factors which shape the learning of university managers, section 2.2 focuses specifically on management within UK universities. Incorporating literature from different yet related fields of knowledge, sections 2.3 provides an exploration of how managers learn and develop. Section 2.4 takes this a stage further by focussing on how this occurs within a professional context, and this is followed in section 2.5 by an insight into how sensemaking literature illuminates this further. Section 2.6 then seeks to refine the research questions in the light of the gaps and limitations evident within the literature, whilst section 2.7 explains how a critical review of these different strands of literature contributes to the establishment of an integrated conceptual framework.

The literature review was primarily conducted on journal articles, reports and books written between 1990 and 2011. The rationale for this timeframe relates, in particular, to the literature from higher education, which Bryman (2007) argues is set in the context of a continually changing environment, claiming that:

“Many writers on higher education make it clear that they view the higher education setting as having changed greatly over the last two decades.” (p.694)

As a starting point, the reviews in all the different subsections of the literature were commenced through using key word searches of online databases. In addition, the reference lists within journal articles were also searched and in this way, relevant books and chapters were revealed. A consequence of including books as well as journal articles is that the resultant literature review includes a mixture of theoretical, empirical and polemic writing. The researcher within this thesis felt justified in including all these sources as a way of providing a broader range of perspectives, even though some might not be research-informed.

Taking a snapshot from over two decades ago, in a UCoSDA report (1994), recommendations are made for the future management development of staff within the HE sector as it is argued that the “quality of provision in higher education is inextricably linked to the quality of its management” (p.20). This immediately signals recognition of the need to develop managers, both academic and professional support. However it is evident that the focus of the recommendations within this Report centred primarily on the development of managers by attending programmes, and even where “diverse responses to the special needs of individual staff members” is acknowledged (p. 21), it is suggested that this diversity is primarily met either through a choice of in-house, external, regional, national or international programmes. Indeed, notwithstanding the efforts to provide a diverse range of development workshops, an assumption appears to have been made that the answer to the problem of how managers learn to manage is through formal, programmes. This mirrors recommendations from an earlier report in the FE sector (McNay, 1989) where a range of programme-based management development models are presented. In both these reports, despite commendable suggestions of a variety of focussed programmes designed to address identified gaps in skills and knowledge, there is an implicit assumption that programme-based learning is primarily the solution to the problem of what managers need to learn. Indeed, the researcher in this thesis attempts to take this a stage further by not necessarily focussing on *what* university managers need to learn but rather *how* they learn. In the following sections, therefore, especially in the critical review of the literature on the subtle nuances of management and professional learning, there is a concentrated focus on what is thought to be known and not known about the process by which managers learn within their daily roles.

2.2 Becoming a manager in Higher Education

In reviewing the literature relating to the development of managers in universities, a feature which immediately becomes noticeable is that there is a tendency for research within the sector to focus on either academics as managers or professional support staff as managers, rather than on both of these

groups together. Although exceptions do exist, this has tended to polarise research in some areas, with a specific focus on one of these two groups. Whilst sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 maintain this separation and highlight the focal issues emerging from these two different strands of literature, section 2.7 returns to this issue, questioning the efficacy of this divide in addressing the problem of how university managers learn.

2.2.1 Academics as managers

In an endeavour to identify the extent to which previous research has addressed the underlying process by which university managers learn, the literature on academic managers is systematically reviewed. Whilst it is evident that there is a distinct concentration on their evolving working practices, there is less of a focus on the *process* by which their learning and development occurs. In comparison to the growing body of research on how the roles of academic managers are changing, there is far less on how they learn and develop in order to make these changes. This contrasts markedly with the literature from other countries where there appears to be more of an emphasis on the process by which academics are developed as managers. For example, the skills needed for academic leaders in American universities and the consequent development strategies to address these (Aziz et al., 2005, Hoff, 1999, and Wolverton et al 2005). Similarly in Sweden a need to focus on management development through the social construction of their experiences is advocated (Haake, 2003), whilst the adoption of a shared leadership model as a development strategy for universities within New Zealand is recommended (Yielder and Codling, 2004). From Australia, Moses and Roe's empirical study of heads of department (1990) is not only suggestive of their evolving management development needs to be addressed, but is also an early indicator of their changing perceptions of their roles.

Indeed, within the literature on academics who take on managerial responsibilities in UK universities, it is noticeable that there is a strong emphasis on the change to their roles, but *not* specifically on the process of learning or development which enables this change to occur. As part of the change depicted in the literature, there is an emphasis on their evolving identities as they embrace their new roles and responsibilities, typically moving away from collegial ways of working towards more managerial practices. However, rather than providing a balanced view, many of the studies portray this in a very negative vein, illustrating what academics have lost, the effect it is having on them and their attitude towards the encroaching managerialism. Depicted as much through polemic views as on empirical research, there is a heavy emphasis on the move away from collegiality and the need to concentrate on the adoption of new management practices (Becher and Trowler, 2001, Duke, 2002, Kogan and Hanney, 2000 and Lomas 2006). The focus from different writers does, however, vary. For example, based on primary research, Jackson (1999) highlights the increased pressure on academic

managers to scrutinise colleagues, whereas Prichard (2000) suggests that it is not only their identity which is changing, but also their language, observing that:

“...vocabularies, norms and systems of judgement through which the subject position ‘manager’ and the terrain that is required to be managed are produced.” (p.77)

Indeed, it can be argued that the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of the change facing academics as managers is emphasised, rather than a focus on ‘how’ they are learning to adapt. For example, a dominant theme running through the literature on the change required of academics as they become managers is a negatively portrayed perceived sense of regret, with a depiction of an enduring preference for past ways of working. As a result, the uneasy marriage and lack of synergy between academic and management responsibilities for academic managers is described as an “alien identity” (Henkel, 2000, p.238), with inherent conflicts and tensions between academic values and management-led demands, leading to a conclusion that “most academics who were managers were in the process of working out what it meant to them” (p.256). For some academics, albeit predominantly in older UK universities, taking on management responsibilities is “an unwelcome, even if temporary, interruption to the narrative of their career, a duty or a ‘community service’ ”, (Henkel, 2002, p.35) with a perceived refusal by many academic managers to move away from their traditional scholarly values and beliefs in order to accept a managerial identity. Viewed more positively, Whitchurch and Gordon (2010, p.134) take this a stage further by suggesting that a “trinity of activity is emerging” as individuals attempt to combine their academic interests, their specialist project tasks and their management responsibilities.

On reflection, it seems that this literature tends not to clearly distinguish between process and outcome, concentrating primarily on the latter at the expense of the former. Despite comprehensive detail on the changes leading to evolving roles for academics, there is still a predominant focus on the outcome rather than the underpinning learning process for this to occur. For example, whilst Hellawell and Hancock (2001) emphasise the “relative vulnerability” (p.183) of academics who become managers, and outline their destination of becoming “resource managers and fund-raising entrepreneurs” (p.191), they do not signal how this transition occurs. Similarly, Deem, (1998, 2000, 2003 and 2006) presents a number of empirical studies on the changing role of academics within the higher education sector, particularly the change as they adopt more management responsibilities. In addition, Deem (2000) describes how there is a reduction in academics’ power and discretion, leading to a “growing gap between senior managers and others” (p.4). Particularly poignant throughout her work is the way in which Deem describes the extent to which academics view the onset of managerialism in a very negative light, observing, for example, that:

“Manager-academics’ lives were described as involving long hours packed with meetings, mountains of paperwork and e-mail and the search for additional resources, with research marginalized and little time for reflection.” (2000, p.4)

It could be argued that Deem does not provide a balanced view on the heightening of management practices. Indeed, there is no comprehensive appraisal of any advantages of this type of change, nor a suggestion of any positive outcomes such as the need for greater efficiency or quicker decision-making as academic managers work within more complex university systems. Instead, Deem focuses on the negative effects of increased bureaucracy and accountability felt by the managers, along with the centralisation of power, the loss of autonomy and the heightened expectations to work extended hours in order to cope with administrative duties. As a consequence, there is a strong sense of the demise of a previous lifestyle, and attempts to replace it with management-led working practices and culture. Also portrayed is a top-down imposition of managerial practices, from which there is a “stress on management as an activity in its own right” (Deem, 2006, p.207), juxtaposed with a resistance from academics themselves to being called managers. In a similarly negative vein, Parker (2004) likens academics taking on management roles to a process of radical and degenerative change whereby a werewolf “looks anxiously in the mirror, checking for unusual face hair” (p.46). Again, aligned to the views of Deem above, there is an overly narrow focus on the negative aspects, with a total absence of the possibility that the change incurred might have positive outcomes for academic managers and their institutions.

At the heart of these studies are the perceived tensions felt by academic managers as they adopt new ways of working and become accustomed to hiding their previous identities (Hancock and Hellawell, 2003). This tension is heavily imbued in the literature. For example, linked to the concept of identity described above, in an empirical study of academic managers Bolton (2000) differentiates between them by their motivations towards their respective roles, either through “wishful thinking”, “entrapment” or the “good soldier” (p.59). Similarly, Deem et al. (2001, p.3) categorises academic managers into different types, with ‘career track’ managers evident in a minority of interviewees in post-92 universities, whilst ‘reluctant’ and ‘good citizen’ predominated within pre-92 institutions. However, signalling a change in perspective, in a later study Deem moves on from this overly restrictive and narrow categorisation into which all academic managers were supposedly divided, towards the possibility that their identities might be more dynamic in nature. More recently, Winter (2009) alludes to the almost inevitable onset of “identity schisms” (p. p.121) for academics who become managers, whilst Floyd and Dimmock (2011) suggest the typology of “jugglers, copers and

strugglers” (p.387) to differentiate between the perceived experiences of academics as they take on more management responsibilities.

Within the literature, another example of the perceived negative outcomes of change through the adoption of increased management practices is depicted by Hare and Hare (2002), albeit in a predominantly reflective account based on personal experience. In this account Hare and Hare provide examples of the way in which the academic manager’s role is becoming increasingly bureaucratic and time-pressured concluding that they:

“...are not well supported, they can be little more than caretakers- they can neither lead academically, nor manage significant change.” (p.36)

This experientially based account given by Hare and Hare provides an insightful portrayal of the changing role of academic managers, but it is questionable how generalisable this evidence can be as it is only based on their experience within just two pre-92 institutions. However, in another study based on empirical evidence, Smith (2002) adds a further dimension by specifically focusing on the effect which the type of institution has on the academic management role. This research compares the management of the same subject in two different universities, (one pre-92 and the other post-92). In particular, the academic managers’ respective roles, management styles, approach to decision making and the degree of academic autonomy are compared, but also highlighting the training which had supported this development. The study shows that although training is ‘offered’ in both universities, there is a reluctance to engage in it. It is also noted that only in the pre-92 regime is there a specific focus on academic leadership as opposed to diverse and generic management skills. Smith (2002) acknowledges the limitations presented by having only focused on one subject area and two institutions within this research, and consequently does not attempt to generalise any of the findings to the wider Higher Education community. However, in a follow-up study where the research is extended into different subject areas, Smith (2007) concludes that academic managers need further ‘support’ (albeit not using the term ‘development’ per se), claiming that they take on their management responsibilities with “varying degrees of willingness” (p.7). Thus, although Smith intimates that there is a need for ‘development’, the process by which this is purported to take place is not explored in detail.

Also evident within the literature is how the consequence of change affecting academic managers is their evolving use of language. For example, Henkel (2002) highlights this adoption of:

“...languages and practices of management have undoubtedly....it has meant finding ways to move between two worlds..” (p.39)

However, focussing through a narrow and negative lens, Deem and Brehony (2005) signal the pressure for academic managers to use “the practices and/or the language of ‘new managerialism’” (p.225), thereby adopting a language of performance, targets and league tables. This is not, then, learning to be a manager through enhanced skill acquisition or the enrichment of knowledge, but rather, learning how to work within and adopt managerialist language and ways of working. Taking this a stage further, Deem et al. (2007) suggest that academic managers are forced to become “tri-lingual” (p.138), whereby they are expected to speak the language of their subject, that of the higher education sector, along with managerialist phrases relating to performance, targets and audit.

Leading on from the research on changing identities of academic managers, two further studies are worthy of note as they begin to reconceptualise academic pathways into management. Strike (2010) in a study of the evolving career tracks of academics, identifies a ‘climbing frame’ (p.88) conceptualisation in which a number of different routes, including that of academics becoming managers, becomes more apparent. This signals a departure from more traditional linear career pathways of academics resulting as they take on management responsibilities. Similarly but with a slightly more pessimistic viewpoint, MacFarlane (2011) describes the rise of the “para-academic” (p.59) and the “unbundling” (p.60) of academic practice. Although the increase in management tasks is only one of a number of additional responsibilities causing a change of identity and practice, in combination they are perceived to be resulting in the “up-skilling” of professional support staff and the “deskilling” of academics (p.62). However, whilst both these studies pay considerable attention to mapping possible career pathways, neither of them outline the learning and development that might either underpin or be a pre-requisite for this transition.

Despite a predominance of anti-managerialist views within the literature, there are some contrasting perspectives, portraying more sympathetic interpretations of the adoption of modern management approaches in UK Higher Education. Holmes (1998), for example, acknowledges the need for management *where appropriate* but also indicates that there are boundaries that should not be crossed, emphasising that “...good university management means recognising and distinguishing what is best left relatively ‘unmanaged’ from what must be firmly managed” (p.110). This suggests an acceptance rather than a positive welcoming of the need for management, although it remains unclear as to whether the ‘unmanaged’ refers to processes within a university, to groups of staff or to both. Similarly, in a more optimistic vein, Ramsden (1998) accentuates the need for academics to

move forward and engage in the process of leadership with “vigour, energy and optimism” (p.3). However, rather than a plea to accept the whole-scale adoption of all management interventions, Ramsden is actively encouraging academics to shape and control the process for themselves. Elsewhere in the literature, there is also an acceptance of the need for managers to respond positively to new directions and ways of working (Bourner et al., 2000), along with increased integration of innovation and change within all areas (Hannan and Silver, 2000). Supporting this notion of the need for continual change, Warner and Palfreyman (2001) are steadfast in their views that universities must continue to evolve and promote “the role of managers in helping to achieve the continuous improvement, relevance and development of the system” (p.2). This is suggestive of a more positive perspective, accepting of the need for management tasks to be undertaken if improvements are to be made.

Clegg and McAuley (2005) take this optimism a stage further by firmly endorsing a more supportive view of the changes faced by academic managers. In contrast to the singular focus on managerialism within Deem’s work, Clegg and McAuley advocate “breaking with the simple managerialism-collegiality duality found in the higher education literature” (p.19), suggesting that this is an artificial polarisation. In addition to accepting the introduction of change as a potentially positive factor, they also note that there is also a tendency throughout the related higher education literature to ignore any negative aspects of the traditional collegial regimes, such as gender-biased practices, when they “look nostalgically backwards to an older, more elitist system”(p.31).

Mirroring the paucity of research on how academic managers learn and develop, there is also little research on the extent to which the subject background of academic managers contributes to this. However, whilst still not focussing on academic managers’ learning and development, the legacy of subject origin on the identity of academic managers is highlighted in some studies. These suggest the potential (but as yet relatively little researched) importance of subject-discipline backgrounds as a key determiner of academic managers’ identity. For example, in a comparative study of the responses to academic leadership within two different disciplinary areas, Kekäle (1999) argues that certain “sub-disciplinary orientations” (p.234) exist. Blackmore (2007) in a review of the literature relating to subject specific areas, suggests that whilst disciplinary differences are acknowledged in pedagogic and researched-based academic practice, they are not currently applied to the process of management development. As a consequence Blackmore notes that in terms of the development and changing identities of academic managers, further research needs to be carried out as “what such general terms as credibility, efficiency, vision and communication mean in different disciplinary contexts remains unexplored”(p.233). In addition, in a review of literature relating to higher education

management practices, Bryman (2007) also notes that disciplinary differences in the United Kingdom “have received much less attention than might have been expected” (p.20). Gibbs et al. (2008) further support this call for further research focussing on the influence of the disciplinary context of academic management identities and approaches, claiming that current research is “discipline blind” (p.417), because it either concentrates on senior or central management processes rather than the potential effect of the subject origin of managers.

Thus, whilst a review of the literature reveals a range of studies and views on the changing identities and roles of academics as managers, it does not help to explain the process by which they learn to embrace these changes. Indeed, it appears that there is much less research which focuses specifically on the *process* by which university managers learn to adapt to these changes. There are, however, some notable exceptions. For example, in a study which emphasises heavily the provision of management development through formalised programmes, Walker (1995) does acknowledge the contribution of managers’ non-formal learning, but emphasises that “much of the development which has taken place is not recognised as such because it has not been in the context of formal management training programmes” (p.135). Although Walker initially posits and defends an arguably overly simplistic model of management development, she does recognise the need for a more multi-stranded and strategic approach, citing Levy et al.’s (1989) work-based learning model as a framework to identify learning opportunities within the workplace. Whilst this study does not draw on empirical research and is intended to apply to practice in both further and higher education, it is additional recognition of the complexity of management development, and, indeed, the need to acknowledge the contribution made by different forms of learning, whether these are planned or opportunistic, overt or hidden.

Similarly, Middlehurst (1993), provides an early focus within the HE sector on the learning of university managers. Even though she uses the terms leadership and management interchangeably, she identifies a link between leadership and learning. She also posits the view that there is still strong resistance to learning by academic leaders as it challenges many of their firmly held traditional and strongly engrained cults. Whilst Middlehurst’s work is positioned more as a review of existing studies on this topic rather than as primary research, it offers a range of propositions such as the view that leadership can be learned, that learning to lead and learning are linked, and that learning for leadership takes place in a variety of ways. Although not empirically based, Middlehurst raises important questions about the idiosyncratic nature of learning and the responsibilities for this process, proffering the notion that related development needs cannot be met in one way and that individuals also have a responsibility for their own learning. Indeed, in a later study, Middlehurst

(2010) returns to this notion of a diversity of solutions being required to address the evolving development needs of academic managers, advocating a “multilayered enterprise” (p.223).

Also focussing on the process of learning, Knight and Trowler (2001) stress the importance of how this is contextualised and situated for managers, arguing that it is “something that could not be done by course attendance, even if courses are better than they are” (p.164), albeit advocating that there could be “obvious risks” with this approach due to the potential variation in the process. Although this study not only includes Canadian as well as UK data but also draws on research in secondary schools, it does seek to re-affirm that the learning of managers within HE is more than knowledge acquisition, and, moreover requires disturbing “some unexamined assumptions” (p.166). This is of particular importance to the researcher in this thesis which seeks to explore how university managers learn and thereby question some previously held assumptions about this process. Whilst their study might have limitations in application as it specifically concentrates on departmental leaders rather than all senior academic managers, it strongly advocates a re-conceptualisation around the process of management learning, calling for a “more subtle view of professional learning” (Knight and Trowler, 2001, p.174). In this way, it is of direct relevance to this thesis, providing confirmation of the need to explore wider than formalised management development programmes in order to find a plausible solution to the problem of how university managers learn.

In a study focussing firmly on the HE sector, Johnson (2002) seeks to interrogate the associated developmental processes from within a wider, multi-faceted empirical study of academic managers at different levels and from a range of institutions. In contrast to many other studies which concentrate on changing roles, this specifically highlights the learning of academic managers within pre and post-92 universities. In particular, it illustrates the tensions felt by academic managers through working in a constantly changing environment of “initial disorientation and surprise” (p.39) as they adjust to their new roles. This study also highlights a dissonance whereby the academic managers “express a great need for support in their learning and development as managers, and yet reject, or place little value on, that which is provided” (p.44). Indeed, a key finding from the study is the importance of, situated learning in the development of university managers which is “situated in contexts, a product of practice, gradual over time and the academic experiences incremental involvement in management tasks” (p.47-48).

Whilst referring mainly to the changing role of academics generally, Blackmore and Blackwell (2006) call for a more “holistic conceptualisation” (p.375) of their development to include leadership, management and administration along with teaching, research and knowledge-transfer. In a later publication, Blackmore (2009) alludes to the “patchwork of [development] provision” (p. 666) which

has emerged within universities, offering the ISIS model to differentiate between development which is either inclusive of all, strategically aligned to the needs of each institution, integrated within other initiatives or driven by scholarship. Through this model, Blackmore suggests an emergent tension between educational staff developers who prefer a more scholarly approach to the development of academics, as opposed to the strategic preferences shown when human resource staff provide “training”(p.674) which seeks to be inclusive of all staff rather than aligned to the needs of particular groups.

Deem and Brehony (2005) note the perceived paucity of relevant training for university managers across the sector, concluding that “their legitimisation is often based as much on their academic status and occupational position as on the mastery of the theory of management” (p.227). However, in recognising the complexity of providing appropriate training, Deem et al. (2007) advocate the need to continually reassess and re-define what is needed to support the role of academic managers:

“...resistant to any simplistic notion of ‘management training’ whilst advocating a more formal process of learning that is balanced alongside the ‘learning-through-doing’ experiences of many manager academics...” (p.159)

What further complicates the issue of locating studies relating to how university managers learn is the inter-changeability of management and leadership as concepts. For example, in undertaking a baseline study of leadership development in HE, Burgoyne et al. (2009) do not specifically differentiate between leadership and management, and allude to elements of both throughout the report. Whilst much of the findings remain rooted in strategy and policy development for ‘leadership’ (and arguably ‘management’) development, there is also a focus on programme development. Indeed, it could be argued that this study is premised on an assumption that the ‘development’ of either ‘leaders’ or ‘managers’ has to be through formal programmes rather than any informal means, as the latter remains largely ignored.

In conclusion therefore, in the opinions expressed within this literature and the evidence from some empirical research, there is a strong focus on the tensions caused by the changing roles of academic managers. Although there are some studies which emphasise how this change is occurring to academics as managers, few focus specifically on the actual process of learning within a contemporary university setting. In addition, there is a lack of emphasis on how they perceive their

in-role learning, what they find most useful to their learning in their daily roles or, indeed, how they would prefer to learn.

2.2.2 Professional support staff as managers

Continuing the focus on how university managers learn to manage within their roles, the literature on professional support staff as managers is now reviewed. A noticeable feature, similar to that on academic managers, is that it reveals far less on the actual development processes but instead concentrates heavily on identity and role boundaries. This focus is also evident in the literature from other countries which mainly highlights the tensions and conflicts within the changing identities of support staff managers, similar to those within British universities. Notable examples are from Australia (Conway, 2000 a. and b., Dobson, 2000, and Szekeres, 2004 and 2006) and Norway, (Gornitzka and Larsen, 2004). Also within this literature, there is an explicit attempt to move away from the demeaning 'non-academic' descriptor which traditionally only described what they are not, rather than what they are (Conway, 2000 b, p.14).

Mirroring the research focus on academic managers, the theme of changing identity within management roles is strongly evident within the literature on professional support managers within UK universities. However, in contrast to the literature on academics as managers, the evolving role of professional support staff as managers does not seem to be depicted in such a negative way. Some research also suggests that professional support staff managers are becoming increasingly heterogeneous, not only adopting varied roles but also having different motives and career aspirations. For example Dearing (1997 p.2) divides support staff into:

“...niche finders” (long serving staff who were generally not well qualified)

“...subject specialists” (more qualified and a mixture of long serving staff and newly appointed)

“...new professionals” (attracted by the variety of jobs but more committed to their careers rather than to the sector)

In addition, Holmes (1998) highlights the ever-changing, evolutionary nature of professional support staff managers' roles and identities, describing them as becoming “more chameleon-like- changing his or her spots to fit into and make a contribution to changing management teams and structures” (p.112). Despite this acknowledgement of the different motivations of professional support managers, there is evidence within the literature of a lack of role-clarity. This ranges from total

ambiguity at one extreme, to acknowledging the constantly evolving identity as part of general changes within universities at the other. For example, Gumpert and Sporn (1999) suggest that staff such as directors of finance, personnel or facilities “position themselves in an expanded role as managers having authority over a broader domain of organisational decision-making” (p.132). In contrast, Duke (2002) suggests that despite the renaming of some administrators as managers, they still continue to be subservient to academics, working at a lower level rather than as equals, and concludes that:

“...university managers- more traditionally called administrators- must live with inordinately high levels of role ambiguity and embrace paradoxical contradictions...leading from behind.”
(p.33)

The continual evolution within professional support staff managers’ roles is prevalent in other research. For example, there is evidence of “competing identities” (Whitchurch, 2004 p.283), whereby professional support staff are either too managerial when contributing to decision making or “going native” (p.283) when responding to the wishes of academics. In a later publication, Whitchurch (2006a) suggests that this fluctuation is indicative of the “state of permanent transition” (p.5) in which administrative managers work. In an earlier study Whitchurch (2004) uses the term “administrative managers” whereas in her later studies she refers to them as “professional managers”. This might be attributable to preferential semantics or, alternatively, it could suggest a change in belief, signalling a perception that their status and identity is becoming increasingly heightened.

Linked to this notion of changing identities, the issue of role boundaries between professional support and academic managers is another theme within the literature. However, there are contrasting views as to whether these are becoming less distinct or alternatively, whether they still remain separate. For example, whilst Lauwerys (2002) contends that there is an inherent ambiguity of duties caused by the “dual coupling of the terms administration and management” (p.94), Whitchurch (2006a) alludes to the lack of clarity between administrative, managerial and academic responsibilities, leading to the creation of “fuzzy boundaries” (p.11). Clarke (1998 and 2004) describes how the structure within universities is changing, not through a blurring of domains and responsibilities but instead argues that these are remaining separate, with clear boundaries between their distinct and quite separate ‘territories’. It is questionable, however, whether this type of seemingly simplistic representation can still be meaningfully applied across all UK contemporary universities with their increasingly divergent range of structures.

Elsewhere in the literature there is evidence of further change, suggesting a co-existence and a narrowing of the divide between academic and professional support managers. For example, Duke (2003) notes the benefits of moving away from the separate working practices of professional support staff and academic managers, claiming that “breaking down disciplinary barriers and also enhancing collaborative teamwork between classes of workers (administrative, professional, academic, technical) is one side of new management” (p.54). Whitchurch and Gordon (2010) emphasise the benefits resulting from this transfer, fluidity and “two-way traffic” (p.133). In addition, there is recognition of multi-professional teams where “professional managers will work more closely with academic managers on an equal footing” (Lauwerys, 2002 p.97).

In an empirical study focussing on role definitions and role boundaries within higher education, Whitchurch (2006b) claims that there are newly evolving hybridised areas where staff “not only work across boundaries but also contribute to the formation of new fields of knowledge” (p.159). Building on this earlier finding, Whitchurch (2008a) rebuts the sustainability of the traditional academic-support staff binary divide within university staffing structures, suggesting, instead, the existence of a new “third space” (p.377) which straddles academic and professional domains. Furthermore, according to Whitchurch (2009), professional support managers show a willingness to “interpret[ing] their given roles in a more active way” (p.2), suggesting a more open-minded approach to viewing their roles.

Bacon (2009), however, takes a different perspective, challenging the lack of distinction in the existing literature between generic HE professional support managers and more specialist managers such as HR, marketing and finance professionals who have often been managers elsewhere and whose presence in HE might be transient in nature. Whilst Bacon’s views are not research-informed, but rather drawn from his own experience of working in different HE institutions, he highlights a differentiation in a range of identities assumed by professional support managers. Bacon does, however, identify a narrowing of the divide between academic and professional support managers, claiming that they are “...coming together as part of an emerging profession of higher education manager” (p.16).

Thus, the literature on professional support staff managers within UK universities has a strong focus on the clarification of role identity and the evolving views on territorial demarcation and status. Although there are a small number of studies which purportedly highlight the development of professional support staff as managers, these tend to focus on career development rather than in-role learning and development. Moreover, just as the literature on the development of academic managers largely concentrates on aspects of their roles which are changing as opposed to *how* they

are being prepared for this change, an almost identical picture is portrayed of professional support staff managers.

A few exceptions to this are, however, worthy of note. Firstly, in a small-scale study of the development and career progression of thirty-four professional support staff, covering a range of management roles and drawn from twenty-four institutions, Wild and Woolridge (2009) conclude that “there is little evidence that HEIs are developing or realising the full potential of these staff” (p. 25). However, the use of the term ‘development’ in the context of this research appears to be focussed specifically on career development rather than their in-role learning undertaken to enhance their understanding of the tasks therein. Aligned to this, in the post-study recommendations, “further study and qualifications” (p. 27) is advocated along with other formal training, albeit accompanied by “study visits and guided reading”. This suggests a very traditional view of staff development and, with the exception of secondments and other temporary placements, there is little recognition of other informal learning opportunities afforded by the work itself. In a parallel study, Shine (2010) noted an anomaly between the high percentage of institutions reporting that training was provided for managers compared with a low percentage of respondents (managers) who believed that their skills had actually been improved as a result of such staff development interventions. This signals that there may be a difference between the espoused institutional policy on management development and the perceived management practice within universities, suggesting that managers themselves did not consider that there had been a positive impact of this type of formal learning.

Secondly, Middlehurst (2010) attempts to predict the future development needs of the ‘borderless professionals’ (p.233). Whilst not giving a precise prescription for the content of future development programmes for these HE professionals, there are suggestions that such a framework would require a “multilayered enterprise involving a variety of contexts, many different actors and a range of processes over time” (p.223).

Thirdly, in an extension to her main study of professional support managers, Whitchurch (2008c) interrogates (mainly through a questionnaire and subsequent interviews), the management development provision available for this group of staff. This aspect of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) funded research project concentrated on graduates from LFHE programmes, highlighting issues such as the reasons for attending, barriers and future intentions. Whilst this focus on course participants elicited insightful information relevant to the main study on the need to match evolving career pathways with equally evolving development, it is questionable whether it focussed sufficiently on the informal aspects of their development. Despite an acknowledgement of “less formal opportunities” (p.56), the focus was predominantly on formal, programme-based learning. As

a consequence, Whitchurch makes recommendations for “programme designers” (p.57), rather than suggesting that managers might need a better understanding of how their learning could be integrated with their work. Then through two in-depth case studies, Whitchurch (2010) explores in more detail the working practices prevalent within the “third space” identified in her earlier research (discussed above). Whilst this does not explicitly refer to this as learning, it does imply that learning (albeit disguised) takes place. Indeed, it suggests the emergence of three distinct processes of “contestation, reconciliation and reconstruction” (p.9), and in contrast to other studies, gives an insight into the way in which professional support staff develop within their roles. However, whilst offering an original perspective on the changes within roles, this still does not go as far as to provide a definitive insight into how these transitions occur, whether this is intentional or unintentional, implicit or explicit, reactive or proactive, taught formally or assumed through tacit understanding.

Thus, this literature indicates that although there is a strong focus on the creeping change affecting professional support managers’ identities and role demarcations, the underlying learning or development processes are not specifically emphasised. These are, at best, implied rather than made explicit, and therefore the answer to the research question within this thesis about how university managers learn to manage still remains largely unanswered.

2.3. How do managers learn and develop?

Having now completed a review of the relevant Higher Education literature, the key research questions relating to *how* university managers learn remain largely unanswered. To address this, the wider literature on management education, management development and management learning is now explored.

2.3.1 Management Education

Within the literature on management education, it is apparent that there is a lack of consensus about the nature, content and purpose of this type of programme-based provision. In essence, the literature reveals that there is a degree of disquiet about management education programmes due to their lack of application to practice. The available research about management education reveals a lack of consensus about its purpose, and it is also evident that management education as a concept is difficult to delineate, with a consequent absence of a widely accepted definition. For example, Fox (1997) typifies management education as an essentially theoretical study of management systems and processes within organisations, suggesting that “management education tends to be more theoretical, emphasising a body of knowledge” (p.21). This implies a scholarly emphasis, by which the subject is researched and understood, rather than translated and applied to practice. Indeed this ‘theory versus practical application’ argument is a dominant issue in relation to what management

education is perceived to be and for whom it exists. However, Thomas and Anthony (1996) allude to the tensions amongst providers of management education due to their divergent views on the ultimate purpose of this area, calling for a “flexibility of mind in order to cope with inchoate experience” (p.33). Similarly, Grey and French (1996) forecast a change needed for the future, refuting any type of approach which results in a “decoupling of management education from management practice” (p.6), and advocate that the existing provision should not be continued.

However, a decade later, this disquiet within the literature still exists, claiming that management education is still not ‘fit for purpose’, not only calling for change but with a more focussed emphasis on transferability into the workplace. For example, Mintzberg (2004) argues that management education, and in particular MBAs, are in need of review as they “train the wrong people in the wrong ways with the wrong consequences” (p.6). Mintzberg’s main argument rests on his claim that management is not a generic activity, and, furthermore, cannot be taught devoid of a work-based context and related institutional politics. Brocklehurst et al. (2007) take this argument a stage further by suggesting that it is not solely the MBA which is in need of reviewing, but the nature of management itself, claiming that “the future of the MBA cannot be separated from the future of management. If the MBA needs to be rethought then so too does management” (p.386). Ten years on from Grey and French’s call for change in the focus and emphasis in management education, Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) still contest the theory-based nature of management education, criticising its “abstract formulae, case histories and flow diagrams” (p.419).

Whilst the perceived failure of the management education curricula to prepare managers for managing is prevalent within the literature, there are different nuances. For example, Cunliffe (2002) is critical of the failure within management education to acknowledge levels of complexity within organisations which thereby prevent the “systemic application of theory and techniques to every situation” (p.35). Linked to the theme of the lack of application of theory into working practice, Quelch (2005, p.B19) claims that within formalised management education managers “learn little about how to analyse and solve complex messy problems”. Larsen (2004) supports this view, but instead of focussing on complexity, highlights the need to re-emphasise the value of experiential learning in management education. Whilst similarly dissatisfied with management education, Reynolds and Vince (2004) illuminate its over-emphasis on the psychological development of managers rather than their in-situ development within organisations. Still critical of management education, Brotheridge and Long (2007) then question its atomistic nature by raising the issue of whether these programmes are merely teaching isolated management topics, rather than teaching students to be managers (p. 840).

It is evident from this insight into the literature, therefore, that there is a degree of disquiet about formalised management education. The issue of whether management education programmes can prepare managers for the complex nature of the workplace is indeed, a dominant theme in this literature. However an important issue which needs to be raised is whether the accredited management education programmes referred to in this literature merely represent one type. Indeed, programmes such as the MBA are, by definition, business-related, focusing predominantly on generic models and theories which can be 'studied' by students rather than applied by practicing managers. It is possible, therefore, that other management programmes aimed primarily at education or social-science professionals might not only have greater relevance to the complexities of their workplace, but also might encourage reflection and self-analysis rather than the deconstruction of business-focused models and theories. Such programmes, it could be assumed, might have greater resonance with the diversity of some institutions where the unpredictability of staff behaviour or the sudden onset of unplanned change from external agencies is likely to thwart any following of formalised models, concepts or theories. Thus, it is argued that whilst traditional business-oriented management programmes might not be appropriate to support the learning of managers in some organisations, other formal education or social-science based management programmes may have a more realistic and empathetic application.

2.3.2 Management Development

Having highlighted in the previous section some of the tensions presented by debates around the content and intended target audience for management education, the researcher sought to include management development in a wider literature search to elucidate research which took account of the complexity of the workplace. Controversially, in his seminal works describing the nature of managerial work, Mintzberg (1973) questions whether managers do, in fact, need to be taught. Moreover, he points out that "the world is full of highly competent managers who have never spent one day in a management course" (p.188). Despite Mintzberg's initial reservations, a review of the literature suggests that structured development activities for managers are now ubiquitous. Views differ, however, on the extent to which management development is 'fit for purpose' with the debate hinging on its underlying purpose and the extent to which complexity can be mirrored through the various activities. Stewart (1999) proffers an explanation for this variation by suggesting that these do not "provide accurate descriptions of a given reality. They represent attempts to 'make sense' of an ongoing process of reality construction" (p.248). This implies that management development should be regarded as a continually evolving construct, rather than a process which has clear boundaries and definitive start and end points

As in the case of research on management education, there appears to be a lack of consensus as to the underlying purpose of management development. However, unlike 'management education' which tends to be programme-specific with related outcomes, management development is more varied. It is evident, however, that there is both an absence of a widely accepted common definition for the process of management development and agreement on the target audience. For example, Paauwe and Williams (2001), proffer the distinction that "We educate children. We train monkeys, dentists and doctors. But we develop managers" (p.90). This suggests that the way in which managers 'grow' within their roles is quite different from the commensurate 'development' process undertaken by others, and hence it requires a separate term. Importantly, Paauwe and Williams seek to determine whether management development occurs in "controlled artificiality or the controlled chaos of reality" (2001, p.90). To this end they note the increasing dominance of work-based activities in the development of managers, concluding that:

"...challenging job assignments, exposure to exceptional people, emerging from hardships are all times when managers feel they have learnt most and developed fastest." (Paauwe and Williams, 2001, p.97)

Reviewing this literature, it is also noticeable that the applied and functional nature of the management development process is strongly emphasised. There is, indeed, an evident perception within this literature that management development should be about improvements in work-based practices rather than just the change within individuals. Mullins (1999), for example, makes the connection between the enhanced capacity of managers and organisational performance, by suggesting that management development "is not only concerned with improving the effectiveness of individual managers but also with improving management performance as a whole and organisational effectiveness" (p.849). Along a similar vein, Doyle (2000) highlights the specific focus within management development on achievable outcomes, goals and targets, claiming that it is to "assist managers unlearn their old ways, change their attitudes, modify their management styles and update their technical /professional skills" (p.580). Defined in this way, a change of direction is implied, brought about either through responses to new demands, instigation of internal procedures or reactions to external directives. This indicates an inherent level of complexity in the process of development, further intensified by the dynamism of the background environment and the range of situational variables. Taking this a stage further Mabey (2002) focuses on improvement, with an emphasis on the shedding of old practices and embracing new ways of working and a dominant perspective focussing on enhancing the capability of individual managers.

It appears, therefore, that a dominant theme in the literature on management development emphasises that the process should be orientated as much towards the organisation as to the

individual. This suggests a contrast with management education research, which, according to the literature reviewed above, centres primarily on individuals. It could be argued therefore that the literature on management development signals a move away from the skill acquisition of individuals as an end in itself, towards an acceptance of a relational perspective whereby where the needs of the organisation are a key driver in the process. This alignment between organisational and individual imperatives suggests that management development should not “be limited to the development of the individual manager, but should be integrated within organisation development. Management development and organisation development are complementary activities” (Vloeberghs, 1998, p.50). Building on this organisational linkage, Jansen et al. (2001) attempt to relate management development to organisational development as a planned and controlled resource-based process, stating that “[t]he aim of management development is to have at its disposal the right type of managers and specialists at the right moment.” (p.106). Here the organisational drive within the process is explicitly defined, denoting a planned and purposeful intervention for the production of institutionally determined results, rather than for the development of managers as individuals. Furthermore, there is not only a notion of accepted standards to be achieved by managers, but also a degree of certainty within the desired outcome.

Cementing the link between individual (manager) and organisational development, Storey and Tate (2000) suggest that the needs of the latter should drive the content and shape of management development processes. Differing views as to the extent to which there should be such a corporate steer for management development are also evident within the literature. Indeed, Doyle (2000) warns that organisational influences such as cultural, social or political sub-systems could potentially militate against any management development intervention, causing it to fail through a “mix of self-reinforcing influences” which are “fragile and tenuous” (p.587), whilst Larsen, (2004, p.500) warns that centrally planned and fully controllable strategic interventions do not provide opportunities for “spontaneous, accidental, unforeseen and even unpleasant incidents”. Thomson et al. (2001) also cast doubt on the effectiveness of management development programmes alone. Instead they advocate the importance of the transfer and application of skills into the workplace, arguing that:

“No matter how elegantly planned and positioned corporately, the benefits of well-trained managers come from the grass-roots *practice* of management development.” (p.132) (italics in original)

Moreover there is evidence in the literature of the need to recognise and utilise a diverse range of opportunities and experiences in the management development process. For example, Thompson et

al. (2001) suggest that 'management development' is a multi-faceted endeavour, involving "a wider process than the formal learning of knowledge and skills, which includes informal and experiential modes of human capital information (p.10). However, the inherent complexity of management development is alluded to but expressed differently by others. Doyle (2000) refers to "the management development subsystem" of diverse activities whilst Storey and Tate (2000) acknowledge the existence of "higher order management development" (p198), incorporating both formal and informal development opportunities.

To add further complexity, Antonacopoulou and Bento (2004), adopt an interpretivist perspective to the process of management development. This implies that management development is not dependent on the accumulation of knowledge and experiences, but instead on the ability to 'make sense' of occurrences situated in their contextual settings. To this end they advocate that management development programmes need to change, but ironically through re-introducing an element of education, recommending that there is a need to "reinstate education as a fundamental feature of management development programmes "(p.95). Antonacopoulou and Bento's reference to 'management development programmes' suggests a formalised approach, where there is a planned and structured framework of activities. It is unclear, however, whether Antonacopoulou and Bento's reference to "education" refers to a more structured approach through formal (and possibly accredited) programmes or, alternatively, whether managers need to be 'educated' about the underpinning learning and development processes.

In summary, it is evident from a review of this literature that a fundamental difference between management education and management development is that whilst the former is programme based, management development emerges as much more diverse range of activities. In addition, management education tends to be oriented towards the individual whereas management development is often more aligned to the organisation. However, the literature also suggests that approaches to management development vary, with a diversity of activities and interventions. Moreover, there is a lack of consensus as to its *raison d'être*, structure and content and a frequent call to be "more searching and challenging in its quality and efficacy in a variety of contexts" (Doyle, 2000 p.588).

2.3.3 Management Learning

In seeking to explain the intricacies and complexities of how managers learn and, in particular, their juxtaposition of formal and informal learning, the researcher widened the review to include the field of management learning. Although this literature is less well-developed than that on management

education or management development, its strength in relation to helping to answer the key questions within this thesis is its focus on the complex nature of the process of learning. Indeed, within the literature there is broad agreement on the complex nature of management learning, although each writer emphasises a different aspect. For example, in his seminal works on action learning, Revans (1980) argues that managers will only learn “if they want to learn” (p. 252). Linked to this need for a desire to learn to be present, he also identifies “peculiar blockages” (p.253) in managers’ learning processes. In particular, he emphasises a fixation on past experiences through the “idolization of past successesor previous failures” (p.254), the “influence of charisma” from those who are successful, and the tendency for having an “influence to spontaneous action” (p.255). Whilst arguably over-simplistic in his analysis, with a tendency to make sweeping generalisations across all types of managers, his focus on blockages and prior experiences is worthy of consideration, signalling that their learning cannot be automatically assumed even if the optimum conditions existed.

Linked to the multi-dimensional and complex nature of management learning within the literature, there is an emphasis on context, informal learning and everyday experience. This adds a complementary dimension to the literature on management education and management development, opening up the potential to explain how (university) managers learn to manage. Fox (1997) highlights this link but also suggests a more appropriate positioning of focus on in-role learning, asserting that:

“...formal education and development activities are merely the tip of a learning iceberg. People, including managers and professionals of all kinds, learn in their everyday working lives and this ‘natural learning’ may be augmented.” (p.25)

Taking this a stage further, Storey and Tate (2000) assert that “learning is more ‘chaotic’ and unmanageable than hitherto supposed” (p.196), suggesting the unplanned, unpredictable and irregular nature of this process. Adding a further layer of complexity, Johnson (2000) highlights the importance of recognising the overlapping interplay of organisational factors affecting the decision making and learning of managers. In particular, Johnson suggests that management learning takes place within the context of a “‘cultural web’ [which] recognises organisational assumptions and political, structural, systemic, routine and symbolic artefacts” (2000, p.406). Antonacopoulou (2002) also argues that the “bulk of managers’ learning takes place in the workplace, as a result of their work and in-role activities” (p.3), thereby highlighting the everyday nature of this type of activity. In a later study, however, she does caution that there needs to be certain conditions for this learning to occur, and, moreover, a requisite level of freedom to learn (Antonacopoulou, 2006, p.465). Continuing on

this theme of contextualised learning, McKenna (2004) contends that management learning takes place within the context of a “complexity map...that recognises the essentially chaotic, conflictual and diverse nature of organizations” (p.383). This suggests that the learning processes of managers do not take place in a vacuum, but, more importantly, they are impacted upon by a number of competing variables or considerations.

Perhaps what is most noticeable in reviewing the literature on management learning is that in contrast to management education and management development, there is much more of an emphasis on informal learning through experience. This is aptly epitomised by research conducted by Watson and Harris (1999) and Watson (2001) in a variety of organisational contexts, adding to the debate on management learning by focussing on key factors which underpin this process. In particular, their focus is on adult learning, and they offer two different yet interlinked and complementary theoretical frameworks through the concept of the ‘emergent manager’ and ‘management pre-learning’. The former suggests a continuous journey of development, whereas the latter highlights the value of importing prior experiences (as opposed to formalised learning) into the role. Indeed Watson and Harris (1999) suggest that the symbiosis of learning and emergence mirrors a process of continual change whereby “the process of first becoming and then continuing to ‘become’ a manager is, by the same token, primarily a process of learning” (p.86). Defined in this way, management learning is in stark contrast to the programme-based focus of management education or the pre-planned interventions which characterise management development. As a result, managers are “making their worlds at the same time as their worlds are making them” (Watson, 2001, p.223), suggesting that managers are involved with “‘emergence’ both in shaping their personal sense of ‘self’ and in shaping their work through ‘organising’ work activities” (Watson, 2001, p.223). In contrast to much of the formalised and contained activities highlighted within studies of management education and management development, there is a strong sense of continual change. Furthermore, this is portrayed as a complex, confusing and largely undirected process and characterised by an inherent degree of “messiness” and “ambiguities” (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.3).

As a result of their research on managers in a range of different professions, Watson and Harris (1999) also argue that instead of specialist learning solely focusing on the management role, learning is imported into the management role from elsewhere, resulting in “life learning relevant to management” (p.103). This contrasts with the work of Schön (1987) (to be further discussed in section 2.4.2), which advocates the importance of profession-specific knowledge. In addition, building on the claim that the emergent manager is essentially an “emergent person” (Watson, 2001, p.226), the value of all their life and work experiences prior to taking on a management role is accentuated.

This complements the experiential learning concept epitomised by the seminal works of Kolb (1984) in which learning is perceived as cyclical in nature, combining a process of reflection and theorising. However, Kolb's 'experience' solely relates to a time-bound event within a cycle of development, whereas, in contrast, Watson (2001) favours the importing and use of experiences from different aspects of a manager's past, either from their family or leisure experiences or previous non-managerial roles. In addition he advocates that "rather general and basic 'life-skills'" (p.226) are given a high importance in each manager's subsequent learning.

Thus, through these studies on management learning, the multi-faceted nature of the process is more evident than in the literature on management education and management development. Included within the range of factors affecting learning is the importance of reflection, as opposed to the tendency to react immediately (Revans, 1980, p.255). Whilst purposely not having included a review of the wider generic literature on reflection in learning in order to maintain the focus on the multiplicity of management learning, acknowledgement is made here of the contribution of Donald Schön's seminal works on the reflective practitioner (1983 and 1987) to the wider debate about reflection within professions. Indeed, Eraut (1994) and Moon (1999) highlight the over-simplicity and confused terminology proffered by Schön, especially in the differentiation between reflection-in-action which is purported to occur during events and reflection-on-action which happens afterwards. They argue that the learning environment for professionals is often much more complex. Whilst Bolton (2010), Fook and Gardner (2007) and Jasper (2006) highlight the value in professionals integrating reflection as a way of coping with their roles, Moon (2004) takes this further by suggesting that it also gives them tools to work through confusion and is "a means of coping with situations that are ill-structured and/or unpredictable" (p.80).

In reviewing the literature which focuses specifically on the place of reflection in management learning, it is evident that the emphasis on how this can be achieved differs. For example, Raelin (2002) describes reflection as "periodically stepping back to ponder the meaning of what has recently transpired" (p.66), but, in relation to managers, questions whether this process is frequently thwarted by contextual barriers such as the excessive demands of the workplace. Gray (2007) adds to the debate about the nature of reflection, emphasising that rather than it being a predominantly automatic and reactive process, it involves an "active and purposeful process of exploration and discovery" (p.496). However, within the context of management learning, Gray takes this a stage further by suggesting that unless reflection has a critical element which involves challenging previous assumptions, learning will not occur and instead, "non-learning, then, can be a response to everyday

experience” (p.496). Weick (2002) echoes this argument, claiming that learning through reflection often necessitates being prepared to challenge and, sometimes, “disbelieving” (p.512) previously held assumptions, in order to see the value of new ideas or ways of working.

Through an empirical study of management learning, Cunliffe (2002), demonstrates how reflection is used, moving it away from a simplistic process to one of high complexity. In particular, Cunliffe attempts to “reframe management learning as a reflexive dialogical practice” (p.36), claiming that this activity is situated in practical activities rather than theory or concepts. Furthermore, Cunliffe contrasts the type of reflective dialogical practice experienced by managers with Schön’s (1983) reflection-in-action, observing that whereas the latter is based on finding meaning and connections through familiar patterns and processes, the former centres on exploring irregularities, dilemmas and contradictions. Thus, a major element in this type of reflexive dialogical practice is trying to make sense of complexity and confusion through experience, which Cunliffe purports to be a “messier process of making connections... in an area of muddy water” (p.42).

Another theme within the management learning literature is the way in which managers engage with their immediate environment and the people therein. Adopting a socio-constructionist perspective, it is suggested that managers can be considered as authors who can proactively and creatively script and shape their own environments. This suggests a move away from the formality of models and theories typically used in management education or development through which actions and reactions tend to be predictable. Boje (2003), for example, highlights the way in which managers learn to clarify through effective storytelling, whereas Holman et al. (2003) focus on how managers become aware of their changing identities, and how this relates to their communication with others. Shotter and Cunliffe (2003) also support the notion of managers as authors, “creating a shared landscape of possibilities” (p.20). This ability of managers to create and shape their own environment echoes an essential component of Weick’s (1995) sense-making process of enactment within ‘sensible environments’ (p.30), to be discussed in section 2.5. Shotter and Cunliffe (2003) extrapolate further by suggesting that the way that managers articulate their ideas to others is often through means of a “dynamic dialogical landscape within which all involved can find an orientation” (p.23).

In summary, it is evident that management learning is an emerging and diverse area, which takes account of a myriad of contributory factors. It can be argued that it challenges assumptions in the literature associated with management education and management development, offering alternative insights and different perspectives to the understanding of the in-role development of managers. In particular, it suggests greater recognition of the complex nature of management

learning which mirrors the complexity of their in-situ environments. Furthermore, it strongly signals the importance of everyday experience as a key factor in learning, thereby contrasting with the pre-planned, theoretical and time-bound interventions characteristic of much contemporary management education and management development. Endemic within the management learning literature is a process orientation, an acceptance of the legitimacy of focussing on the 'how' rather than the 'what' is involved in the development of managers, at the same time as acknowledging the importance of the situated and context nature of the process. The review of this literature identifies the multi-faceted nature of management learning and highlights the proactive engagement of individual managers in the pursuit of understanding. Furthermore, indicative within this literature is the view that management learning is a journey without beginning or end, a journey of multiple experiences, reflection and dialogue.

The researcher therefore concludes that the literature on management learning offers rich potential for throwing light onto the problem of how university managers learn. It illuminates a range of factors which may have previously been overlooked, and a stronger base outside of HE to inform how university managers learn.

2.4 Learning within a professional context

Having reviewed the literature on management education, management development and then management learning, a progressively closer focus on the process underpinning how managers learn becomes noticeable. In addition, especially in the management learning literature, the context of managers' learning appears to be a more prominent feature. In order to take this a stage further, the body of literature relating to professional learning is now reviewed. Much of this literature does not focus specifically on managers. However, the researcher decided that it could not be ignored if a more comprehensive review of current knowledge of how university managers learn to manage was to be made. This particular body of literature is diverse and wide-ranging and so the researcher has chosen to select those parts which she feels can be directly applied to managers as they learn within the context of university. For example, a review of the literature on informal learning is undertaken so as to ascertain its contribution to the process of management learning, thereby contrasting it with formalised management education. The importance of context is then explored through a focus on professional and workplace learning. Finally, a review of situated and social learning is included so as to highlight the contribution that these processes potentially make to managers as they learn within a university context.

2.4.1 Informal learning

Within the wider literature on professional learning, there is a growing body of evidence alluding to the importance of informal learning in work-based contexts, and is characterised by being unstructured, unplanned and implicit (Hager, 1998). Cross (2007), uses a travel analogy to illustrate this, differentiating between formal and informal learning, likening the former to a pre-planned bus journey which arrives at different stages for set times, whereas the latter is more aligned to a bike ride on which the individual can not only decide on the route but also the pace of travel. Similarly, Marsick and Volpe (1999) highlight the “predominantly unstructured, experiential and non-institutional” nature of this activity that is commonly integrated with everyday experiences. In contrast to the focus within the management education literature, informal learning now “occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria” (Livingstone, 2001 p.5), noting the limitless nature of informal learning which lies “hidden within informal dimensions of the iceberg of adult learning” (p. 26)

A further insight into informal learning is also given through the way it is sub-divided into intentional and unintentional pursuits. For example Berg and Chyung (2008) make the distinction that:

“Intentional informal learning activities are easier to observe, describe and research than those that are unintentional and more integrated into other tasks.” (p. 231)

However, in reviewing the literature, it is apparent that there is potential for confusion in the use of terminology. Indeed, the terms ‘informal learning’ and ‘non-formal learning’ appear to be used to describe the same process. For example, Knight et al. (2006) refer to non-formal learning, commenting on the need for this form of activity due to its ubiquity, necessity and durability claiming that:

“...non-formal learning is common, important and lifelong...non-formal learning is likely to be a more significant response than formal learning.” (p. 322)

In addition to this inconsistency between writers, it is also evident that the use of terminology presents opportunities for inconsistency by writers themselves. For example, Eraut (2000) contends that the term ‘informal learning’ can be misleading as it tends to refer to all types of learning which do not happen in a formal setting. As a consequence, he initially uses the term ‘non-formal learning’

as opposed to 'informal learning' for any learning which happens outside a formalised and planned setting, and then further expands this into sub-categories. Taking this a stage further, Eraut (2000, p. 115) attempts to deconstruct the concept of non-formal learning by differentiating between deliberative learning which is "time specifically set aside for that purpose", implicit learning for which there is "no awareness and no intention to learn", and reactive learning which is characteristically "near spontaneous and unplanned".

In contrast, rather than presenting formal and informal learning as being at two ends of a continuum, some writers emphasise the interdependent links. Indeed the blend of formal or informal activities and opportunities is a recurrent theme, acknowledging the need to consider the contribution of both these elements (Eraut, 2000; Knight et al., 2006, Livingstone 2001, Mintzberg, 2004 and Sternberg et al., 2000). Similarly, instead of highlighting the distinction between formal and informal learning, Malcolm et al. (2003) suggest that there are complementary inter-relationships between these two types of activity. In essence, they propose "an alternative way of analysing learning situations in terms of attributes of formality and informality" (p.313), which are closely related to other factors such as cultural, social, organisational, political and historical factors. Malcolm et al. (2003) also suggest that adopting this view of inter-relationships can thwart "misleading claims" and "unhelpful assumptions" (p.318) either about the distinction between these two types of learning or the superiority of one over the other. Similarly, Marsick (2009) echoes this notion of the inter-relationship between formal and informal learning, suggesting that whilst a separation of definitions for the two terms might "provide a clearer definition of the phenomenon conceptually - in practice, informal and formal learning are often inextricably intertwined." (p.271). She does, however, call for a "unifying framework" ((p.267) to enable the comparing and contrasting of information between different theorists.

In reviewing the literature, it is also evident that some of the research on informal learning is occupationally specific. For example Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2005), Jurasaitė-Harbison (2009), Lohman and Wolf (2001), McNally et al. (2009) and Van Eekelen (2005) focus on how the informal learning of teachers occurs, either experientially, through reflection or by adopting the good practice of others. Meirink et al. (2009) and Hoekstra et al. (2009) take this a stage further by suggesting that this type of informal learning by teachers is not only based on changes in practice but is also linked to a fundamental change in beliefs. Similarly, Gola (2009) also notes the importance of informal learning for the development of social workers, reinforcing the context specific, unplanned, often implicit and frequently experiential nature of this activity.

In conclusion, therefore, the exploration of research on informal learning provides insights into a much wider range of activities through which in-role learning occurs. Despite the inconsistencies

relating to the definitions between informal and non-formal learning, the researcher argues that this body of literature has the potential to offer insightful explanations for some of the non-programme based, in-role learning of university managers.

2.4.2 Professional and workplace learning

Continuing the review of relevant literature which might contribute to explaining how university managers learn, the area of professional and workplace learning is now explored. In his seminal works on professional learning, Schön (1987) advocates a seemingly simplistic view that learning within professions depends on the need for a specific and standardised body of knowledge, suggesting that each profession has a specific and accepted body of knowledge that this is “specialised, firmly bounded, scientific and standardised” (p.23). Eraut (1994), however, challenges this notion of a neatly defined body of knowledge within professions, claiming that acknowledging the context in which it is used and indeed how it is used are critical factors, attempting to differentiate between ‘codified’ or theoretical knowledge and ‘technical’ or practical learning (p.42). This debate of professional knowledge raises questions as to the juxtaposition of how learning takes place and whether this occurs as an integral part of the job or as a separate activity. Sharpe (2004) builds on this by emphasising the significance of how knowledge is ‘constructed’ as part of the learning process, moving away from the notion of a fixed knowledge base, arguing that “professional knowledge is no longer viewed as just consisting of a standardised, explicit and fixed knowledge base” (p.137).

Within the literature on professional learning, subtle nuances are also emphasised. For example, Engestrom (2001) takes the notion of professional learning a stage further by advocating the concept of “expansive learning” (p.137) whereby all knowledge, skills and tasks related phenomena continue to grow, suggesting an integral dynamic in the nature of all contributory factors within learning. Similarly, Sinatra and Pintrich (2003) also highlight the importance of recognising both intentional and unintentional processes inherent within professional learning. Knight et al. (2006), warn that lack of engagement in professional learning may result in a state of “professional obsolescence” (p.322), but then go on to suggest that non-formal learning is more likely to counteract this than formal learning.

In reviewing this literature, it is noticeable that research on informal learning and workplace learning is strongly intertwined. The workplace is deemed to provide a rich environment for informal learning (Boud and Middleton, 2003) and the importance of recognising the links between informal learning and working (Antonacopoulou, 2006). Similarly, Tjepkema (2002) alludes to specific characteristics of

organisations which either promote or hinder informal learning, a theme echoed by Gola (2009,) who, in highlighting the potential effects of a range of factors, concludes that the link between learning and workplace cannot automatically be assumed:

“Informal learning can intentionally be encouraged by an organization or may not originate at all, despite the subject operating in an environment that is considered conducive to learning”
(p.335)

Billett (2001) suggests that certain optimal conditions or “affordances” (p.209) must be present, building on the “learning curriculum” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 97) which is presented as a framework of activities situated in a workplace community, with shared values and understandings of accepted ways of working. Similarly Skule (2004, p.14)), suggests the following seven criteria for workplace learning to be effective:

- High degree of exposure to change
- High degree of exposure to demands
- Managerial responsibilities
- Extensive professional contacts
- Frequent feedback
- Management support for learning
- Rewarding of proficiency

Whilst still focussing on learning within the workplace, the emphasis within different studies varies, each highlighting specific aspects which have been found to underpin, contribute to or create barriers within this process. Ellström (2001), for example, highlights the economic benefits to the organisation of individuals continually engaging in workplace learning, whilst Ashton (2004) and Hodgkinson et al. (2004) focus on the differences in response and outcomes within workplace learning and Kyndt et al. (2009) explore the influence of personal characteristics such as age, gender and level of education. Through a different focal lens, Ellinger and Cseh (2007), Lohman (2000) and Neilsen and Kvale (2006) focus on the extent to which managers either facilitate or inhibit the workplace learning of their employees, whereas Sambrook (2005) and Schulz (2008) emphasise the informal and situated nature of workplace learning as important factors to be considered.

In reviewing the literature on the interlinked areas of professional, workplace and informal learning, the researcher therefore contends that the studies provide insightful nuances. In particular, they raise questions about whether individuals learn fixed bodies of knowledge relevant to their

professions, or alternatively, whether this is built up and interpreted within specific workplace contexts. Indeed, in trying to find a plausible solution to the question of how university managers learn, the researcher argues that the studies on professional and workplace learning can be applied to wider contexts.

2.4.3 Situated and Social learning

Within the literature relating to professional learning, the significance of situational factors is well documented, as evidenced by the seminal works of Knowles (1973) and then later by Brookfield (1986), Thorpe et al. (1993) and Kauppi et al. (1995). The recognition of context specific factors in learning is also dominant within other research relating to the study of commerce and industry, as evidenced in the studies by Senge (1990), Burgoyne and Reynolds (1997) and Easterby Smith et al. (1999). It can be argued that situated learning moves the locus of control away from individualistic, internalised, cognitive factors and instead locates it in the arena of social contexts, dependent on the interrelationship of different socially driven situational factors within a framework of co-participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As a consequence of this framework, learning is viewed as a feature of practice, resulting from the complex interplay of dynamic and sometimes unpredictable factors and, furthermore, the skilful learner is the one who can adapt to the differential expectations within a range of situated environments.

One of the dominant themes weaved through the literature on situated learning is the importance of becoming aware of the cultural aspects endemic within an organisation, and importantly, the need to learn this from others. This takes different forms. For example, the notion of 'serving an apprenticeship' in order to make sense of new cultures (Guile and Young, 1998 and Lave and Wenger, 1991), or going through a process of "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave and Wenger 1991, p.27) whereby newcomers learn through observing how other practitioners within that area behave. However, on reflection, there is an implied assumption here that new learners are a 'blank sheet', which contradicts Watson and Harris's (1999) claims cited in section 2.3.3 about learners building on previous experiences, and the exact nature of the process of legitimate peripheral participation described by Lave and Wenger is slightly ambiguous. For example the boundaries are difficult to define and delineate, especially in complex differentiated communities and, as a consequence, how and when the apprentice becomes the expert is unclear. In addition, the dynamic nature of communities is also evident and even at the stage of maturity and 'full participation', the process of learning continues. However, it could be argued that the value of legitimate peripheral participation

as a concept lies, perhaps, in its strength as a framework for analysing the process of learning. Indeed as emphasised in the cautionary note by Lave and Wenger (1991):

“...legitimate peripheral participation is not itself an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy or a teaching technique. It is an analytical viewpoint on learning.” (p.40)

In a study of professionals in the school sector, Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000) acknowledge the importance of learning within a social context, stating that:

“...learning is ubiquitous in ongoing activity...a profoundly social and cultural phenomenon, not simply a cognitive act.”(p589)

Bloomer and Hodkinson also advise caution by claiming that although learners take their cues for action from their immediate cultural environment, their disposition to learning is not a static state. This acknowledgement of the ever changing nature of situational factors does again reinforce the need to view learning not as a purely individualistic and predictable process but as a complex and reactive response to the given environment, system or community. Munby et al. (2003), however, contest the view that situated learning can usefully explain all learning which takes place in workplaces, suggesting that a metacognition of routines is vitally important for workplace learning to occur, focussing on how knowledge can be organised and stored to be of use in different work contexts. They do not, however, present this as an alternative view to situated learning, but as a complementary framework which allows the learner to blend their knowledge and emerging experiences into a meaningful whole.

Within the literature on social learning, there is a strong focus on communities of practice denoting that there is a set of social relationships, with agreed behaviours, values and norms for the carrying out of key tasks and duties (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Fuller et al., 2005 and Wenger, 2000). Underpinning this concept is the belief that learning is a social rather than an individual process, but unlike the structure within formalised teams or working groups, the establishment of communities of practice is essentially spontaneous (Lesser and Everest, 2001 and Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, organisations, particularly those stratified into a complexity of diverse functions are likely to be made up of a number of different communities of practice (Fox, 2000, Swann et al., 2002, and Wenger, 1998) with individuals having multiple memberships.

Although the social aspect of learning should not be used in isolation to explain the in-role development of university managers, there are certain aspects in this literature relating to communities of practice which are worthy of note. For example, it is argued that one advantage of communities of practice is their capacity to disseminate good practice and also display an agreed set of values and beliefs (Brown and Duguid, 2001, Mc Dermott, 2002 and Wenger et al., 2002). This generates the need for a transfer of a 'situated curriculum' (Gherardi et al., 1998, p.273) and the support for the development of workplace learning (Billett, 2004 and 2006). Indeed communities of practice are heavily centred on work-based and professional learning, where "professional learning is seen as the process of entry into that community of practice" (Sharpe, 2004, p.142). In this context, learning and working are considered as an integrated activity, with no abstraction or isolation of learning from work, (Beckett and Hager, 2002, Fuller et al., 2005 and Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson, 2003).

However, it is evident from a review of this literature that despite communities of practice offering a potentially powerful conceptual tool to analyse and understand work-based learning processes, it fails to align with and account for a number of factors. As a consequence, it is, perhaps, over-simplistic, and fundamentally does not fully explain the complexities inherent within organisations or the behaviour of all individuals who work within them. For example, Wenger's definitional indicators of communities of practice, i.e. sustained mutual relationships, shared ways of engaging, rapid flow of information, absence of introductory preambles, rapid set up of a problem to be discussed, a knowing of who belongs, an understanding of who knows what within an organisation, shared jokes and inside stories, jargon and shortcuts to information (1998, p.125) are not necessarily identifiable in every organisation. Indeed other contrasting viewpoints are evident, suggesting that the situation in practice is more complicated, and a number of different variables impact on the success or failure of such communities. Boud and Middleton (2003), for example, suggest that such communities are often much less defined and are 'more loosely coupled' (p. 200). In addition, Blackler et al. (2000), Contu and Wilmott (2003), Huzzard (2004) and Roberts (2006) argue that the notion of communities of practice largely ignores the internal political dynamics within organisations and how these can have a powerful effect on behaviour and decision. Handley et al. (2006) and Mutch (2003) offer a further contrasting viewpoint, not only contesting the predisposition for individuals to act in a certain way within communities of practice but also challenging the overriding assumption that they will automatically conform to the norms, values and behaviours expected of them. Importantly, the diversity of contexts and the differences in communities are not fully appreciated (Brown and Duguid, 2001, Handley et al., 2006, Lindkvist, 2005 and Pemberton et al., 2007) and variations such as 'fast and slow communities' (Roberts, 2006 p. 632) which describe the pace of growth and reaction within certain groups, are indicative of the types of complexity that are largely ignored.

From this review of the literature, therefore, although the concept of communities of practice potentially offers a theoretical tool to analyse the way in which individuals learn from and socially engage with each other, this review also suggests that a more complex array of situational variables needs to be considered which further impinge on the extent to which such arrangements are successful. Interestingly, Deem and Johnston (2000, p.67) apply the concept of communities of practice to the higher education setting, suggesting that academic managers and professional support 'administrators' not only have similar practices, but also share common values, beliefs and interests. Furthermore, the learning which takes place within these communities of practice is purportedly informal, and "relies heavily on what is done and what is said by people already established in those fields and on colleague expectations" (p.67). Taking on board the complexities and hidden assumptions within the literature on communities of practice and social learning, these provide a potentially rich source of factors to add to the equation of how university managers learn, suggesting that the extent to which they learn from others rather than as individuals needs to be explored.

Linked to professional learning and the way in which individuals attempt to find meaning in their roles is the notion of authenticity. Whilst it is evident from the literature that this is not only defined but applied differently, thereby remaining a "slippery construct" (Kreber, 2010, p.176), it offers additional insights into the ways individuals make sense of their roles and identities within a professional context. In addition, it also raises the question of whether or not individuals are being genuine in their 'performance' within their roles, or alternatively, whether they are merely adopting a persona. In this way it captures some elements that offer additional explanations about this meaning-making within roles, especially in complex organisational environments where there can be competing values and expectations. A common thread in the literature on authenticity is a sense of tension produced as a consequence of the individuals trying to establish their credibility through their own sense of conscience, juxtaposed with a pressure to exhibit expected ways of working. In this respect, Ball (2004) alludes to the "authentic professional" (p.4) who often feels tension in working within a performance-oriented culture of compliance, conformity and rule-following. Within this context, individuals are purported to develop a "values schizophrenia" (Ball, 2004, p.9) between what they intuitively know to be 'right' within their roles, competing against institutional expectations to outwardly represent corporate values which may be diametrically opposed. This pressure towards individuals having to constantly redefine themselves is exacerbated in organisational performance-oriented cultures where individuals' own values are often superseded by corporate goals (Ball, 2001, Ball, 2003 and Sikes, 2001) which can be monitored, measured and seen as outputs.

It could be argued that these views on authenticity present a biased perspective, suggesting that the preferences of individuals might be morally superior to those of the organisations for which they

work. There is also no consideration that some of the organisational needs for an increased focus on performance and outputs might be a necessity in terms of economic survival in an increasingly competitive environment. In addition, there is a suggestion that the views of individuals are polarised to those of the organisation, with no possibility of a continuum along which some individuals might lie if they are more sympathetic to corporate goals, even though they may not be totally wedded to them. However, notwithstanding this tendency within the literature to show an often biased and overtly negative view of organisations where managerial cultures predominate, these writers do offer a conceptual underpinning to examine some of the in-role tensions faced by professionals. Importantly, in the context of the research focus of this thesis, the concept of authenticity offers plausible insights into the dilemma facing managers as they embrace the challenge of adopting expected ways of working within an increasingly managerial culture, at the same time as trying to cling to their own values.

2.5 'Sensemaking' and the learning process of managers

Having reviewed the literature on management education, management development, management learning and learning within a professional context, it is evident that there is a growing recognition of the complex nature in which individual managers learn. However, to find further clarity on the enabling and inhibiting factors underpinning this process of learning and meaning-making, the literature on sensemaking is now introduced, not as a substitute for the other strands of management and professional learning and development, but as a potentially complementary aspect.

Sensemaking is neither a new nor a mono-disciplinary concept and has been cited in different fields such as psychology, sociology and management over the past few decades. It describes the process of new knowledge being integrated with what is already known, but with authors placing varying degrees of emphasis on the significance of the different components. Huff et al. (2000) and Sackmann (1992), for example, emphasise the importance of how new stimuli interact with established frameworks of knowledge. Flin (1996) and Starbuck and Milliken (1988) on the other hand, show how complexity can be reduced if the past actions are analysed for meaning. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) highlight the centrality of the individuals (as opposed to organisations) who are making meaning from their environments. In contrast, other studies emphasise the centrality of the team or organisation within the dynamics of sensemaking: for example, Brown (2000) highlight where it is used to legitimise actions taken by groups within organisations. Indeed, it could be argued that this focus on the individual echoes the management education literature, whilst the heightened emphasis on the organisation is similar to the emphasis in some management development literature.

Much of the literature on sensemaking is generic and thereby used as a suggested way in which individuals within organisations (rather than managers in particular) can find meaning by working through a complex array of factors which often start with confusion. In reviewing the generic literature on sensemaking, however, it is noticeable that there appears to be an overlap between learning and sensemaking, with the two terms either used interchangeably or one is included within the definition of the other. As a result, the link between these two terms is often implicit.

Mackeracher (2004), for example, highlights that:

“Learning results in relatively permanent changes not only in meanings and behaviours but also in the ways one goes about making sense, making meaning and thinking, making choices and acting.” (p.8)

In this interpretation, Mackeracher not only suggests a causal link between experience, cognition and action, but also highlights the iterative nature of this process which is continually changing. Learning and sense-making are therefore presented here as integral parts of the same process, a process which is constantly evolving as more information is gathered and assimilated to find greater clarity and meaning. Schwandt (2005) also explores the link between sensemaking and learning (particularly adult learning). Whilst claiming that both learning and sense-making are important in the development of individuals, Schwandt points to the strong emphasis on cognition in the former as opposed to the emphasis upon experience and action in the latter, arguing that:

“Sensemaking and adult learning may be cut from the same cloth; however the patterns of the final garment are somewhat different.” (2005, p.185)

Sensemaking and learning are therefore seen to be part of the process of understanding and finding meaning, a process which is “complex and non-linear, and encompasses informal ways of sensemaking that are often taken for granted” (Cunliffe, 2002, p.37). Taking this notion of complexity forward, sensemaking describes the way in which individuals attempt to find meaning to what is happening, including both a cognitive and an emotional response to various cues or stimuli.

Perhaps what is noticeable within the literature on sensemaking is that the process involves subjectively interpreting and finding meaning. This is in direct contrast to the theoretical and models-based approach characteristic of management education. Also in reviewing the literature on sensemaking, it is evident that there are different foci. Alvesson and Kärreman (2000), for example, emphasise the social aspect of sensemaking, promoting the centrality of interactions as a way of enhancing understanding, whilst Easterby-Smith et al. (2000) allude to the complexity of such learning processes within organisations which “do not happen in a vacuum” (p.793). With a combined focus

on complexity and the importance of interactions, Allard-Poesi (2005) claim that sensemaking and learning are “created and situated in the micro-politics of interactions, conversations and coordinated actions between people.” (p.170)

However, a recurrent theme within this literature linking learning and sensemaking is the need to find meaning from confusion. Mezirow (2000) presents this as an essential part of being human, claiming that it is:

“...our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid the threat of chaos.” (p.3)

Through the use of sensemaking, there is an acceptance that the starting point in a journey of discovery for meaning is not just from the unknown. Instead this journey can sometimes “start with chaos” (Weick et al., 2005, p.410). Furthermore, by using a sensemaking approach, experiences which cannot initially be explained, are drawn out of the “undifferentiated flux of raw experience and conceptually fixed and labelled so that they can become the common currency for communicational exchanges” (Chia, 2000, p.517). This signals that it is both normal and acceptable that confusion might occur when initially attempting to explain a certain set of experiences. Moreover, by adopting a sensemaking approach to this type of confusion, greater clarity could then be possible.

Another aspect of the construct of sensemaking is the way in which it takes into account both individual and contextual variables, as summarised by Schwandt (2005) stressing that:

“Sensemaking is seen as providing a connection between cognition and actions..., and the imbeddedness of the process with its context (p.182)

Linked to this, it is evident within the literature that sensemaking does not merely remain a cognitive process where meanings become clear but instead connects thought to action (Mills, 2003, p.35). Taylor and Van Every (2000) echo this focus on resulting actions by likening sensemaking to a mid point in a journey, suggesting that it is “a way station on the road to a consensually constructed, coordinated system of action” (p.275). Weick et al. (2005) reiterate the importance of the process resulting in action, emphasising the initial finding of meaning through “...language, talk, and communication. Situations, organizations and environments are talked into existence...” (p.409). In the workplace, this process of linking thought to action requires the continual interplay of thought, meaning-making and actions, “reconceptualising managers as ‘learners’ and their work as learning” (Schwandt, 2005, p.187).

However, Weick (1995 p.17) offers sensemaking not as a product in itself but as a process through which to work, and suggests that this concept has the following seven properties:

1. Grounded in identity: suggesting that individuals engaged in this process are fundamentally trying to clarify their own identity. This starts with a “self-conscious sense-maker” (p. 22), trying to understand their own position, their purpose within an organisation and how they should appear to others.
2. Retrospective: placing the emphasis on the need to look back on events, often using experience from the past in order to find meaning and understanding for the present.
3. Enactive of sensible environments: acknowledging that individuals are not only sensitive to the contexts they are in but also become part of them, contributing to the ongoing development and shaping of them.
4. Social: signalling that “sensemaking is never a solitary act” (p.40) but, instead, is dependent on the interaction with others and can take a variety of forms.
5. Ongoing: portraying a process with undefined start and end points, giving the sense that it continues to evolve through being continually shaped by new events and associated revised interpretations.
6. Focused on and by extracted cues: recognising that individuals work within given frames of reference, codes, procedures and language structures, all affecting the meanings given to occurrences and cues.
7. Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy: implying that the interpretation of events and experiences is dependent on the interplay of cognitive and emotional filters.

Whilst Weick does not make it clear whether all of these seven properties need to be present every time sensemaking is used to understand a situation, he defends this approach as offering a framework for “developing a set of ideas with explanatory possibilities, rather than as a body of knowledge” (p. X1).

Although much of the literature on sensemaking is generic in nature, studies which particularly focus on how managers use this process to understand and interpret their worlds have also emerged. Cunliffe (2002), for example, explicitly links the process of sensemaking to management learning, highlighting the informal, intuitive and often meandering ways in which managers endeavour to understand the complexities of behaviour, either their own or that of others. Such action is purported to be grounded in the reality of experience and forces managers to “frequently utilize these more informal and often taken-for-granted ways of sensemaking” (Cunliffe, 2002, p.40). The need for managers to ‘make sense’ of complexity is evident within the literature, a complexity which is ever-

changing, and in a “permanent flux and constantly being reconstituted in daily practice” (Rouleau 2005, p.1438)

The process of sensemaking by managers is not, however, purported to be an end in itself, and evident within the literature is the resultant act of “sense-giving” (Rouleau, 2005, p.1415). This focuses on how managers, having ‘made sense’ of an issue, purportedly then translate and reinterpret it for others. Building on the seminal works of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) and Thomas et al. (1993) which link strategic sensemaking and sense-giving within organisations, some later studies emphasise the importance of the use of language by individual managers (Craig-Lees, 2001, Johnson et al., 2003, and Samra-Fredericks, 2003) as they learn to become “interpreters and sellers of strategic change” (Rouleau, 2005, p.1414).

Related to this notion of the interplay between sensemaking and sense-giving within the organisations, there is also evidence within the literature of how sensemaking helps managers to deal with change. Balogun and Johnson (2004), for example, focus on the “cognitive disorder caused by change” (p.524). Within this context, middle managers use sensemaking as a way to resolve ambiguity amidst different interpretations which occur in a change process, sometimes in isolation but at other times creating “patterns of clustered sensemaking” with other managers (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, p.544). Maitlis (2005) also highlights how managers use sensemaking to help others interpret change, whilst Lüscher and Lewis (2008), on the other hand, allude to the paradox that whilst managers are expected to learn to facilitate how subordinates adapt to change, “they often struggle to make sense of change themselves” (p.222).

It can be concluded that within the context of this thesis, the literature on sensemaking adds a meaningful insight into the quest for understanding how managers learn. In particular, it highlights the array of situational variables faced by managers, the dynamic nature of their working environments and the importance of social learning and communication. Furthermore, sensemaking not only complements the literature on management education, management development, management learning and professional learning, but also allows for a greater focus on uncertainty and confusion, rather than pre-planned and concept-based learning. Importantly, it highlights how this process of finding meaning often starts with confusion, which contrasts markedly with the theoretical and structured emphasis evident in the management education literature. Including this body of literature thereby opens the door wider to an in-depth exploration of these elements under one framework to elucidate how university managers ‘make sense’ of their roles, how they learn what is required of them and how they are expected to respond to others within their complex

contextual environments. In reviewing the literature, there was only one example of where sensemaking as a concept had been applied to a university context. Applying Weick's characteristic of sensemaking to an organisational change process affecting academic leadership, Livio and Tomperi (2011) defend the use of this framework "simply because it makes sense"(p.2), allowing a deconstruction of actions in a meaningful way.

2.6 Refining the research focus

On initially embarking on this study of how university managers learn to manage, the researcher had a general overview of what the key focus needed to be. As stated in section 2.1, the purpose of conducting a review of the literature was to find out what was already known, or thought to be known, about how university managers learn to manage, and involved exploring studies both internal and external to HE. The multi-dimensional nature of this review was necessary as although the HE-based literature highlighted some important issues relating to the changing roles and working contexts of managers, it did not focus in particular on the underlying process of learning. The resultant exploration of the wider contexts of management education, development and learning, along with insights into studies within professional learning and sensemaking enabled a more pointed focus on a diverse range of factors potentially affecting learning.

Having completed this review of the literature, it became evident that finding a solution to the problem of how university managers learn to manage could be achieved through examining the diverse range of inherent enabling and inhibiting factors. This would necessitate drilling down to the minutia of detail from within the learning process itself. Questions which invited more fine-grained analysis were necessary, and hence, as a result, the following were developed to explore this issue:

- What is the process by which university managers learn within their daily roles?
- What are the key factors which assist or inhibit this learning?

In addition, what the literature review also revealed was that a more pointed focus would need to be made on the complex nature of how university managers learn to understand their evolving roles. In particular, the area of sensemaking provided the opportunity to explore this issue. Utilising a sensemaking framework not only offered the potential to develop a more in-depth understanding of the diverse underpinning factors involved, but also presented an opportunity to add an original dimension. As a consequence, the researcher decided to introduce a more pointed focus on sensemaking, asking:

-To what extent does sensemaking contribute to this process of university managers learning to manage?

In summary, therefore, the literature review revealed that despite some empirical research, there is still little known about the intricacies underpinning the process by which university managers learn to manage. As a result, the key challenge is to find out in more depth what this process is, what the contributory and inhibiting factors are, and the extent to which this involves elements of sensemaking.

2.7 Arriving at a conceptual framework

From the literature relating to management within Higher Education, there was a strong focus on changes to identities and roles for both academics and professional support staff as managers. This has tended to result in research focussing on one of these groups in isolation, rather than as a combined study to elucidate the perceived or actual differences. In addition, within the literature reviewed, despite the emphasis on management roles and identities in Higher Education, there was still a paucity of studies which focussed, in particular, on the divergent factors underpinning the *process* by which university managers learn.

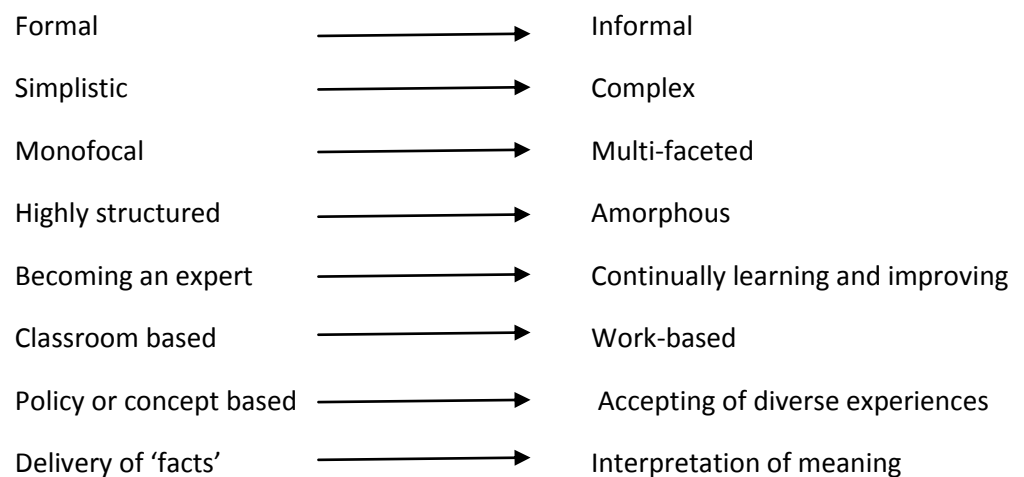
The review of the literature for management education, management development, management learning revealed a wide variation in definitions, foci and underlying aims. A lack of consensus and sometimes a blurring of the boundaries in the terms management education, management development and management learning was evident, with research in these areas appearing to be at different stages of evolution. In addition, the researcher also concluded that management education, management development, and management learning, either individually or taken together could not fully describe the 'messy' process by which managers endeavour to make sense of their experiences.

Due to the need to look wider than management education, management development and management learning to find plausible solutions to the problem of how university managers learn to manage, a review of studies in the area of professional and workplace learning suggested some possible answers. Perhaps what was most noticeable was the de-emphasising of traditional forms of programme-based learning (often characteristic of management education and some management development activities). Indeed, in addition to the different ways in which managers can be 'educated', 'developed' or engage in learning, an exploration of the literature on sensemaking went further to reveal the complexity of factors affecting managers' learning as they deciphered a myriad of factors affecting their daily roles. Taking a holistic view across all the different subsections within the literature review relating to the learning of managers in HE and also professional learning,

workplace learning, management learning and sensemaking, it became very clear that context is critically important. Indeed, the effect of workplace contextual variables on the learning of university managers could not be ignored within this thesis.

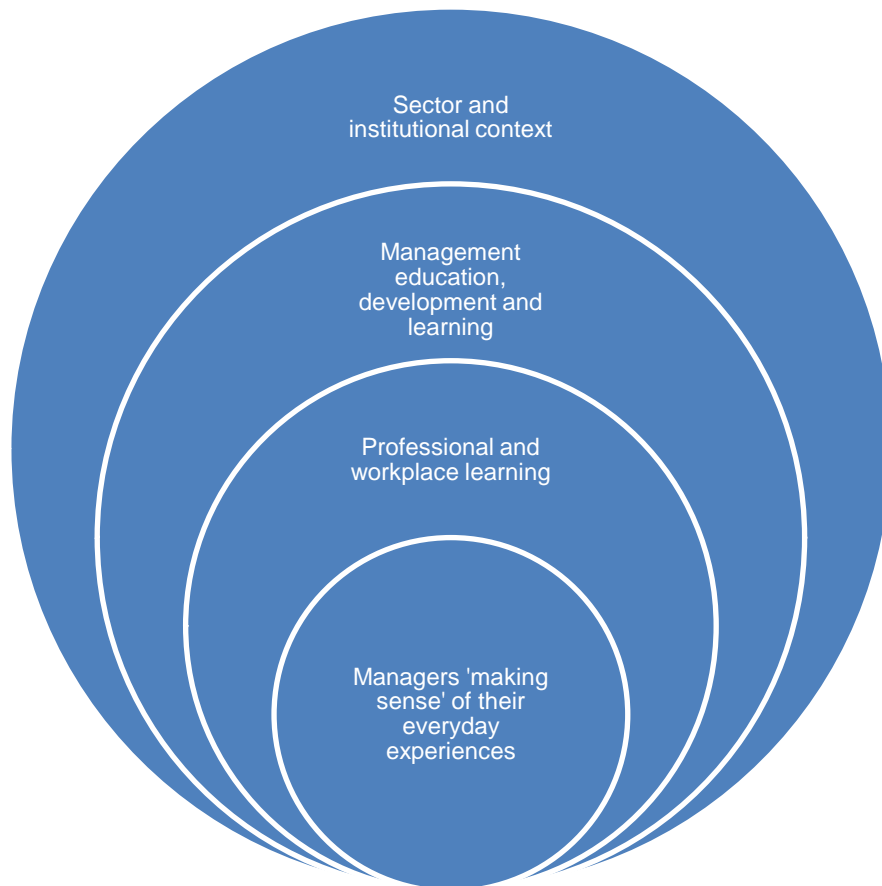
In essence, this review of the literature suggests that in building a conceptual framework to facilitate a thorough examination of how university managers learn, there needs to be acknowledgement of a diverse range of factors. Furthermore, the literature highlights the suggestion of a creeping change in the conceptualisation for how managers learn. Indeed, figure 2.1 illustrates that recognition needs to be given to the possibility of a paradigm shift from learning being largely programme-based, concept or policy driven and mono-stranded to acceptance that it may involve informality, ever-changing scenarios and the interpretation of complex factors.

Figure 2.1 Understanding how managers learn: a paradigm shift



Based on this review of the literature, this thesis therefore seeks to take a number of interrelated factors into consideration in order to understand how university manager learn within their roles. Establishing a frame of reference from both sector-specific and institutional contexts, it then examines the contribution of formal learning, informal learning, professional and workplace learning and sensemaking. These are then interpreted, where appropriate, with a number of different individual characteristics of the university managers in order to gain insight into their approach to learning within their roles. Figure 2.2 provides an overview of these factors, demonstrating the juxtaposition of these broad areas.

Figure 2.2 How university managers learn: a broad overview



Taking this a stage further, finding a plausible explanation for how university managers learn to manage undoubtedly requires a more in-depth interrogation through an unpeeling of these various layers. What lies beneath each layer is illustrated in figure 2.3. In combination, these factors provide a broad conceptual framework to explore the in-role learning of university managers, taking into consideration context, formal and informal learning and manager characteristics.

Figure 2.3 How university managers learn: a conceptual framework

HOW MANAGERS LEARN			
CONTEXT	FORMALISED LEARNING	INFORMAL LEARNING (including professional learning, workplace learning and sensemaking)	MANAGER CHARACTERISTICS
Sector variables	Taught programme variables	Informal learning variables	Inter/Intra-personal variables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University type (pre and post 92) Economic Political 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of accredited provision Underpinning theories and models HR policy-based training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insitu Nature of hands-on experience (i.e. task embedded /multi-dimensional Situated Workplace Timing: non-linear/ongoing Multi-dimensional Role contextual Tacit understanding Prior experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locals and cosmopolitans Willingness to learn within role Levels of confidence Career aspirations Style
Institutional variables		Inter/Intra-personal variables	Job-role related variables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional structures Staffing structure Leadership and management Norms and practices e.g. competition v collaboration Teams v individuals Role divisions Expectations Culture shifts Language 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction with others Identity construction Reflection Interpretation and meaning-making Shaping own environment Decision-making Chaos, confusion and complexity Proactive v reactive Picking up cues Being plausible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experienced v inexperienced Previous learning about management (formal and informal) Previous professional background Career stage Manager/ professional types e.g. reluctant, career-track, blended, unbounded

This integrated conceptual framework provides a detailed structure through which to examine the data in order to ascertain how university managers learn how to manage. In the following chapter, the methodology for this research is explained and justified, giving an insight into the approach taken and the factors leading to the decisions made.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the methodology underpinning this research. In section 3.2, a justification is given for the qualitative approach taken, followed by an outline in 3.3 of the triangulation of methods used. Sections 3.4 - 3.6 seek to give an overview of the three methods chosen; sections 3.7 and 3.8 highlight the issues of reliability, validity and ethics, whilst the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the researcher being an “insider” (Robson, 2002, p.297) are discussed in section 3.9. A justification for the approach taken to the data analysis is given in section 3.10, focussing specifically on the way in which the researcher has attempted to examine the issues emerging from the data, followed by a brief conclusion in 3.11.

3.2 Justification for the approach taken

From its inception, the intended focus for this research programme has been to examine university managers’ perceptions of their in-role learning. Based on the researcher’s underpinning epistemology of socio-constructivism, it is seeking to not only understand how university managers ‘view their world’ but also how they ‘construct’ their realities in relation to others. Rather than attempting to seek the measurement, precision and regularities characteristic of positivist research, the approach has been qualitative in nature, based on the researcher’s genuine desire to find meaning in the range of experiences described by managers. The researcher is accepting of the view that “interpretative research is not a quest for ultimate plausible, authoritative, verisimilitudinous and interesting analysis that enriches our understanding of social phenomena” (Brown, 2000, p.50), and therefore seeks to find meaning, or indeed, multiple meanings .

Morrison (2002) argues that a central tenet of the positivist paradigm is to establish regularities and causal connections within the data collected. In contrast within this thesis, the researcher endeavours to accept and celebrate the uniqueness of each manager’s interpretation, neither seeking to anticipate links nor advocate predictions. In addition, whereas the positivist regime is founded on the belief that “research should be based on empirical evidence and reasoned argument rather than opinion” (Mayer, 2001, p.29), the qualitative approach, adopted by the researcher within this thesis, welcomes and values the different perceptions and judgements of the managers. Furthermore, instead of being aligned to the underpinning belief of the positivist paradigm where “supreme confidence” in the data could be assured (Crotty, 1998, p.21), the outcome from the research process within this thesis is deliberately intended to be a rich tapestry of multiple meanings and perceptions of reality. The researcher argues that this might not conform to a “standard view of science” (Robson,

2002, p.9) and does not, therefore, result in the development of generalisations and causal laws. Moreover, the preferred qualitative approach is also not based on the underpinning scientific rigour designed to “explain, to predict and to control phenomena” (Onwuegbuzie, 2002 p.518), and neither allows for the replication of data across studies nor for the provision of an explicit reasoned explanation for human behaviour (Feuer et al., 2002).

The researcher is not, however, rejecting the positivist paradigm per se but merely outlining how it is not conducive to the exploratory investigation presented within this thesis. Based on the researcher’s epistemological belief that multiple realities can exist and that different interpretations should be analysed and qualified rather than measured and quantified, she aims to achieve an alignment with an appropriate methodology. Instead of perpetuating the paradigmatic divisions and factions with a “relentless focus on the differences between the two orientations” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14), the researcher supports a move towards a greater tolerance of their respective differences and recognition of:

“genuine ‘fitness of purpose’ of different local methods, in specific contexts, irrespective of whether they have been associated with ‘positivists’, ‘interpretavists’, lions, witches or wardrobes” (Rowbottom and Aiston, 2006, p.154)

Acknowledging that “positivism is not the only game in town” (Alexander, 2006, p.206) and recognising that for this particular study “science alone cannot provide exclusively what is needed” (Smeyers, 2001, p.206), the researcher contends that the interpretative nature of qualitative approaches offers an alternative and preferred regime. Within the context of this thesis, a major reason for this preference is the accepted central focus on the perceptions of manager, with an orientation to “behaviour-with-meaning” (Cohen et al, 2007, p.21) and to “develop an appreciation of the underlying motivations that people have for doing what they do” (Henn et al, 2006, p.149). In essence, this legitimises the scrutiny of a selected number of managers who are questioned about how they individually ‘make sense’ of their development experiences.

Qualitative research focuses on the interpretation of meaning from individual behaviour rather than the pursuit of generalisations and causal laws. Whilst it is suggested that this approach may result in data which is “fragmented into myriad incommensurable case studies which merely revel in their own uniqueness” (Smeyers, 2001, p.481), the researcher within this thesis argues that it is still possible to decipher some common themes. A key advantage of the qualitative approach reported within this thesis is that it facilitates an in-depth understanding of management behaviour, valuing different interpretations and with no attempt to quantify any degrees of difference. As a result, a complex

exploration and pursuit of meaning and rationale behind different phenomena influencing the in-role learning of university managers is facilitated. The researcher contends that this celebrates the uniqueness of individual experiences, not only accepting but valuing that the “aesthetic is encountered in the narratives we tell” (Silverman, 1997, p.239). Through this approach, the researcher endeavours to capture the rich detail within the context of situated, natural and evolving settings.

In this way, the depth of detail from individual cases examined within this thesis is a key feature, leading to the “richest and most rewarding explorations” (Gergen and Gergen, 2000, p.1025). Madill et al., (2000) allude to the limitations presented by subjective qualitative research, whilst Denzin and Lincoln (2003) advise that “objective reality can never be captured. We can know a thing only through its representations” (p.8). The researcher also acknowledges that the data collected could potentially be influenced by the managers’ own subjective interpretations, based on a myriad of perceptions, preferences, beliefs and values (Robson, 2002). A counterclaim to this argument is based on the notion that subjectivity can still contribute to “responsible research” (Edwards, 2002, p.157). Indeed, it is this type of ‘responsible’ approach which the researcher within this thesis endeavours to adopt. Within the context of this research, the researcher supports the view that “real science is not about certainty but about uncertainty” (Erickson and Gutierrez, 2002 p.21) as this aligns to each manager’s endeavours to find meaning in their own complex reality.

3.3 Seeking to triangulate the evidence

Whilst an examination of the perceptions of managers is the primary focus of this study, an endeavour to triangulate these views with other evidence has been made. Although in the initial planning of this study, the researcher had considered that a mono-focal approach of using interviews would be sufficient to illuminate the perceptions about how university managers were learning in their roles, the implementation of this strategy revealed limitations. For instance, whilst the perceptions of these managers could be illustrated through numerous examples, the researcher accepted that this evidence could not be given and interpreted in isolation of the working context of the University and its incumbent leadership direction or espoused corporate values. Cohen et al. (2011) argue that reliance on one method of data collection tends to provide “only a limited view of the complexities of human behaviour and of situations” (p.195), with the inherent danger of leading to “methodological parochialism or ethnocentrism” (p.196). Mindful of not wanting to give this type of ‘limited view’, the researcher therefore eventually sought to employ “methodological triangulation” (Denscombe, 2003, p.133) whereby the evidence from more than one method could be considered in combination.

Whilst the researcher argues that she was not attempting to utilise triangulation in a positivist way for cross-checking the data to verify or measure results, the combination of methods facilitated a contextualising of evidence and a means of achieving a more nuanced understanding of the perspectives of the managers about their in-role learning. To this end, the data was collected in three main ways:

1) Semi-structured interviews with a) 'senior' managers and b) a member of the Executive (the latter therefore enabling an in-method triangulation of views). A follow-up study of a sub-set of the original senior managers facilitated a degree of "time-triangulation" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.196). Whilst this latter aspect was limited to senior managers who had been newly appointed into their roles, it did allow a temporal dimension to the study, preventing the evidence from being fixed at one point in time.

2) Document analysis of institutional strategic plans covering a sixteen year period.

3) Self- completion of reflective journals by a sub-sample of managers to elicit critical incidents.

Sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 which follow provide a justification for the selection of each of these methods.

3.4 Interviews

As explained above, interviews were carried out with a) 'senior' managers and b) a member of the Executive. However this section relates specifically to the former, whereas the approach taken to the latter is given in section 4.4 of the following chapter.

3.4.1 Why interviews?

Having established that an interpretative approach was the one most closely aligned to the intended focus of this research programme, interviews were carried out with a range of senior managers, giving the researcher an opportunity to engage them in purposeful conversation which would not otherwise have happened, and to gain an insight into their unfolding 'realities'. In attempting to define the interview, the extent to which it was "a kind of conversation" (Robson, 2002, p.273) provided a useful starting point for clarification. However, the researcher argues that this reference to a 'conversation' is slightly misleading, with the mistaken assumption that it is a relatively easy, straightforward and naturally occurring process. Whilst the interview is a "flexible and adaptable way of finding things out" (Robson, 2002, p.272), it was neither easy nor straightforward. Indeed, Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) contend that the "complexity can sometimes be underestimated" and

interviews are frequently built on intricate “frameworks from which to plot out the developing themes” (p.143). As a consequence, the researcher concurs with the view that this interview cannot be regarded as a conversation which just happens as part of a chance occurrence and then freely unfolds. Similarly, Denscombe (2003) suggests that interviews are more than a conversation and “involve a set of assumptions about the situation which are not normally associated with a casual conversation” (p.163) such as consent, ‘on’ and ‘off’ the record agreements and control.

Taking this a stage further, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) focus on the interaction and knowledge transfer element within the interview, arguing that it is “literally an inter-view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p.2) This ‘interchange’ suggests a certain degree of equality, where there is an equal exchange of views for the mutual benefit of both the interviewer and the interviewee. In contrast, Cohen et al. (2007) contest this notion of equality between the interviewer and the interviewed, arguing that the respective roles and underlying motives differentiate them, resulting in “seeking information on the part of one and supplying information on the part of the other” (p.351). This view is also supported by Pole and Lampard (2002), with a focus on the difference in role and motives within the interview situation. However, whilst accepting that the interview is a “verbal exchange of information”, they stress that it is for “the principal purpose of one gathering information from the other” (p.126) and suggest that the responsibility rests firmly with the interviewer to plan, construct and convene the occasion. Hammersley and Gomm (2008) highlight the peculiar “interactional dynamics” (p.99) within interviews, claiming that in contrast to a normal conversation “interviewers usually offer no comment on the answers provided, at most only asking for clarification or elaboration” (p.99). Thus the researcher concludes that although the interview has conversational elements within it where views might be expressed, these tend to be from the interviewee, with the control for this process resting firmly with the interviewer.

The researcher also believed that interviews provided a means to access information which was not otherwise available, allowing for the collection of data which might not have been achievable to the same degree by other methods. More specifically, interviews allowed the researcher to gather data which sought, acknowledged and valued the views of each manager interviewed, as they saw it, from their perspective, in their world. Patton (2002) contends that this desire to accept and understand the views of interviewees is fundamental to the purpose of interviewing, allowing an interviewer to “enter into the other person’s perspective” (p.341). In addition, the decision to gather data through interviews rather than questionnaires was based on the researcher’s need to probe deeper into the responses of the managers interviewed. This level of information would not have been possible

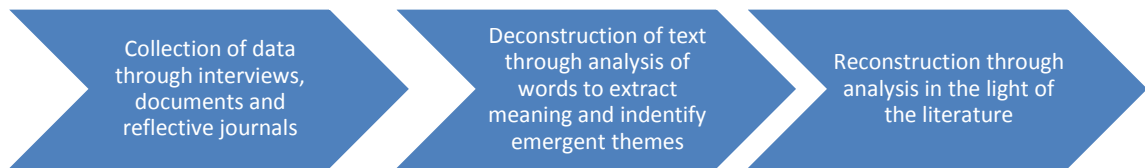
through the use of questionnaires, nor would the additional subtle nuances of tone of voice, facial expressions, or laughs, sighs and pauses be possible to capture. Interviews therefore gave the researcher the opportunity to observe and interpret far more than written words alone would have conveyed.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) stress that the knowledge which is produced within interviews “contrasts markedly with a methodological positivism conception of knowledge as given facts to be quantified” (p.18). The epistemological belief that new knowledge could be produced and then deconstructed through interviews was particularly important to the researcher, and therefore played a major part in the decision to use this as the method of data collection. Offering two contrasting metaphors of how the interviewer operates, one as a miner who finds existing treasure, and the other as a traveller who journeys along different paths and thereby constructs meaning. If an interviewer operates as the former, Kvale and Brinkmann contend that:

“...knowledge is understood as buried metal and the interviewer is a miner who unearths the valuable metal. The knowledge is waiting in the subject’s interior to be uncovered...” (p.48)

In contrast, using the traveller metaphor, Kvale and Brinkmann suggest that an interviewer is on a journey of discovery and “wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people he or she encounters” (p.48). In terms of the interviews conducted within this research programme, the researcher proffers the suggestion that she has adopted the “post-modern constructive understanding” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.49) of the traveller, seeking to construct and interpret meanings and make sense of the managers’ own pathways of development. However, although this opportunity to be involved in the ‘construction’ of knowledge was particularly attractive to the researcher, she challenges the assumption that the whole of this process occurs within the interview itself. Whilst acknowledging that the interview lays a platform for the interchange of views and the *eventual* construction of knowledge, the researcher argues that the managers sharing their perceptions with the researcher within the interviews is only the *start* of the construction of knowledge. Thus, whilst the researcher contends that the interview provides the building blocks for this ‘construction’ process, it is through the data deconstruction, analysis and then reconstruction in the light of the literature that the knowledge is eventually ‘constructed’ as illustrated in figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 The Construction of Knowledge



3.4.2 Why semi-structured interviews?

Within the context of this research programme, having determined that interviews would be the most appropriate method for finding out how managers approached their learning and development, the researcher needed to determine the type of interviews to be used. Pole and Lampard (2002) suggest that the decision relating to the degree of structure to be used depends on a number of different factors, including the topic being researched, the number and kinds of people to be interviewed, access to and location of the interviewees, the research funding (if appropriate) and the human and physical resources available. Adding another factor to the decision-making process for what type of interview to use, the rejection of unstructured interviews by the researcher was also a pragmatic decision determined by the desire to be efficient and ensure that all data collected could be of use in the research process. Whilst unstructured interviews allow interviewees to voice their opinion in a non-restricted way, and offer “maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate” (Patton, 2002, p.342), the researcher decided that this degree of freedom might potentially yield information which was interesting but not necessarily aligned to the research focus.

At the other extreme, structured interviews which are typically “based on a carefully worded interview schedule...and usually require short answers or the ticking of a category” (Wragg, 2002, p.148) were considered by the researcher not to be conducive to the more detailed exploration of how these managers ‘made sense’ of their everyday learning. Even though a greater number of interviews might have been possible through the use of structured and streamlined questioning to elicit short answers, this would not have produced the depth of information required, nor the opportunity for interviewees to consider a few topics in depth. Neither the unstructured nor the structured ends of the interview continuum seemed to fit the needs of the intended focus within this particular research programme. As a result, the researcher opted to use semi-structured interviews, as these appeared to be most closely aligned to the intended purpose, the researcher’s ontological assumptions about the managers’ emerging realities, and an epistemological belief in how to harvest the “natural language data” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.142).

By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher argues that she had the freedom to explore themes, with the opportunity to be “guided by the schedule rather than dictated by it” (Lyons and Coyle, 2007, p.42). In addition, the semi-structured framework of questions allowed for the probing as to why the interviewee held a particular view, thereby “elaborating points of interest” (Denscombe, 2003, p.167). Whilst the individualised nature of the responses was welcomed and encouraged by the researcher, it also posed challenges, necessitating skilful handling of the issues, opinions and localised practices which were disclosed. In contrast to the standardised output from a structured interview, the semi-structured format forced the researcher to have a “higher degree of confidentiality as the replies of the interviewees tend to be more personal in nature” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.144). The researcher therefore needed to protect both the anonymity and the confidentiality of the managers being interviewed, ensuring that their personalised individual responses encouraged through the semi-structured format would not lead to their identification or exposure (see section 3.8. for a fuller discussion on confidentiality and anonymity), or be used in day-to-day relationships.

3.4.4 The process of interviewing

Essential to the conduct of the interviews was the use of an interview guide which helped to provide a systematic and consistent form of inquiry. Rather than being a formalised template to prescribe the structure and content of the interview, the researcher utilised an interview guide in order to ensure that “the basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person” (Patton, 2002, p.342). Within this thesis, however, the researcher learnt that the format of the interview guide was a critical factor in determining the flow of the interview itself. Having developed and redeveloped the interview guide on a number of occasions within the pilot stage, the researcher eventually used a visual mind-map of the issues as an interview guide, as exemplified in appendix 3. This successfully moved the researcher away from the sequential listing of questions and enabled a more dynamic exploration of the issues. It also helped to link the questions together in an order emerging through the interview exchange, rather than as a result of a sequential listing which was pre-planned and prescribed. On reflection, the utilisation of the mind-map signalled the increased competence of the researcher in the refinement of her craft, being able to make judgements about the order of the interview, develop her interviewing skills to match the evolving research process and have confidence in the credibility of the ‘knowledge’ that was eventually created.

3.4.5. Sampling and deciding on a target group

In order to select a target group of managers to interview, some initial eliminatory decisions had to be taken. Within the University, a diversity of management roles exist, with varying levels of responsibilities. These range from 'first line' managers who are responsible for small teams of staff, project managers with budgetary but not staff responsibilities, senior faculty and service staff and the Executive team. The target group for the research within this thesis excluded the two extremes along this continuum of management responsibilities and roles, i.e. the first line managers and the Executive team and instead concentrated on a senior layer of managers, from Deans and Directors to project managers. These exclusions were aligned to the way in which these two groups were treated separately within the literature, resulting in the decision by the researcher to concentrate on broadly commensurate levels of academic and professional support managers.

The 83 managers within this senior group (excluding the Executive Management Team) were subdivided by the researcher into two groups: academic and professional support. The researcher's original aim was to interview an equal number of academic and support staff managers. However, in the end, the sample comprised thirteen academic managers and eleven professional support managers. This slight disparity within the data set was due to one manager from a professional support area categorising himself as 'academic', due to his previous background within a Faculty. Having reflected on the possible rigidity of the categorisation, the researcher decided to proceed with including this interviewee as part of the sample. This decision did not seem to have a negative impact on the data collected.

The selection of the interviewees was intentionally purposive. Bryman (2001) justifies the use of purposive sampling as it is "essentially strategic and entails an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling" (p.334). The researcher therefore intentionally sought managers who had a range of roles, were from different areas of the University, and were therefore likely to exhibit a diverse range of experiences. The researcher did consider the alternative strategy of randomising the sample as this method of selection might have achieved a similar variety of subjects. However, the absence of a guaranteed variety of managers within such a sample dissuaded the researcher from pursuing this selection route. Whilst acknowledging the widespread use of purposive sampling within qualitative research, Cohen et al. (2011) highlight its weaknesses, stressing that although this type of selection may meet the needs of the interviewer "it does not pretend to represent the wider population; it is deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased" (p.157). Within the context of this thesis, the researcher acknowledged such limitations of representation and potential for in-built bias. However the researcher's main aim was to achieve a

sample of managers who would be in a position to give in-depth information based on differences in experience. This was aligned to the researcher's own epistemologically based belief outlined in section 3.1, facilitating the eventual construction of knowledge.

Table 3.1.shows the profile of managers interviewed, all of whom were members of Faculty, School or Service senior management teams.

Table 3.1 Profile of the managers interviewed

	Deans	Directors	Team leaders	Project managers
Academic managers	1	4	6	2
Professional support managers		3	4	4

Using a specialist/generalist differentiation of roles (Whitchurch, 2007,p.380), five out of the eleven professional support managers held specialist roles within the University, whilst the remaining six were generalist managers not necessarily restricted to one particular type of management role.

3.4.6 Transcribing the data from tape to text

All interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.178) emphasise that this is not a simplistic process, contending that it is not merely a change from a narrative to a written mode but is, instead, a radical change in which much of the meaning and subtle nuances such as tone of voice and facial or bodily expressions can be lost. Hammersely (2003) argues that tape recordings should not be regarded as a direct representation of reality and, as a consequence, they "are not the same as the social interaction they record. They are selective" (p.759). In particular, Hammersley alludes to the active participation of any researcher during the process of transcription, whereby they can choose to stop and start the tape, slow it down or replay it. Within the context of this research programme, the researcher therefore became aware that transcription was not a straight-forward process through which the recording on the tape directly became the words in the text. Instead, the researcher acknowledges that she proactively made choices and selections, resulting in her becoming an active participant rather than a passive recipient within the process of data collection.

3.4.7 The interview phases

The interviews of the twenty four managers about their in-role learning took place in three distinct phases: pilot, main and follow-up.

The pilot phase. In total, six managers were included as part of the pilot in order to ascertain whether or not the proposed interview structure, content and schedule were likely to convert “design into reality” (Robson, 2002, p.301). All of these managers were deliberately selected as they were easily approachable; they were from different job roles, and it was hoped they might adopt a positive attitude to taking part in the research process. An equal number of academic and professional managers were purposely selected to take part in this pilot. These interviews took place within a two-month period, and the related processes and outcomes were evaluated to decide whether any changes to the interview content needed to be made.

On reflection, the researcher concluded that conducting a pilot of the intended interview questions proved to be a positive and productive stage within the research process as it enabled revisions to be made to her approach. For example, original ideas on the content, structure, sequencing and approach were refined so that the revised questions resulted in providing data appropriately focused and aligned to the key issues from the conceptual framework. In addition, the pilot was a developmental journey for the researcher in order to go forwards “with a greater sense of confidence” (Bryman, 2001, p.159) prior to embarking on the main body of interviews.

The main interview phase. The remaining eighteen managers were interviewed within an eight month period. This was to ensure a consistency of approach and to limit the effect of organisational issues which might present over a more extended period of time.

The follow-up phase. Further interviews took place with four of the managers. This gave a temporal aspect to the study, allowing for a closer examination of these managers over a set period of time. The researcher was keen to re-interview managers with whom she could explore certain issues that had begun to emerge, particularly in relation to making sense of their role and the effect of experience. Whilst these issues were common to many of the interviewees in the initial round of data collection, the researcher considered that those who had recently had a change of role might reveal especially insightful perceptions of their ongoing development. Thus, the managers for the follow-up stage were purposely selected due to their newness into post at the time of the original interview (although none were new to management), and therefore based on the researcher’s “judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristic being sought” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.156). However, in making this choice, the researcher was aware of the potential limitations that might result from such a restricted approach to sampling. For example, it was possible that there could have been differences in motivation levels, access to support and the perceived need to learn and develop amongst managers new to a role compared to those already established. However, weighing up these

potential limitations against the possible fresh insights into early in-role experiences, the researcher decided to go ahead with this selection criterion. In carrying out the follow-up interviews, the researcher noted that the interviewees seemed to more readily engage with some of the issues under discussion than in their first interview. For example, there appeared to be a greater readiness to explore the range of formal and informal development activities that they had undertaken and, as a result, the researcher reflected on whether the original interview had had the effect of “sensitizing them to matters that had hitherto passed unnoticed” (Cohen et al. 2007, p.216).

3.4.8 Reflections on own learning within the interviewing

Throughout the interview phase, the researcher was very aware of the development of her own practice. In essence, the researcher realised increasingly that effective interviewing was more than learning how to apply a set of skills and follow a specified method. Instead, it was about having the confidence to combine knowledge and skills of how to interview using “situated personal judgement” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009 p.82).

The researcher reflected on how her own learning had occurred. Being a lone researcher, there was limited opportunity to learn from directly observing other researchers. In-depth discussions with other researchers were possible and, indeed, did occur. These led to increased understanding, but sometimes they were neither situation- nor discipline-specific. Another means of learning employed by the researcher was self-initiated theoretical updating, providing a good understanding of the underpinning principles and procedures. However, one of the most effective means by which the researcher learned the craft of interviewing was through transcribing her own interviews, thereby going through a process of “discovery learning” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.48). At the outset, transcribing the interview tapes had not been the researcher’s intention, mainly due to anticipated consequences for her own time. Yet through engaging in transcription during the pilot phase, the researcher learned the value of being immersed in this process and staying “close to the data” (Denscombe, 2003, p.183). At this stage, the researcher was not focusing on the content but was, instead, analysing her own techniques within the interviews. For example, the researcher was able to hear when opportunities to probe deeper on certain issues had been missed, or to understand the significance of silences, laughter or nuances relating to the emphasis on particular words or phrases. This type of analysis helped the researcher to improve her approach, and, where appropriate, change her style in subsequent interviews. However, on reflection, the researcher acknowledged that a consequence of this was that there could be a lessening in consistency and reliability of method, with later interviews being conducted in a much more refined and efficient way in order to elicit purposeful information aligned to the research focus.

Kvale (1996, p.148-9) offers a list of ten qualification criteria necessitated in order to become a successful interviewer:

- Knowledgeable*- using extensive understanding of the interview theme
- Structuring*- providing an acceptable structure to the occasion
- Clarity*- posing simple and clear questions, free from academic or professional jargon
- Gentleness*- focussed, yet easy going
- Sensitivity*- hearing and responding to the many nuances
- Openness*- being receptive to new aspects introduced by the interviewee
- Steering*- gently controlling the interviewee towards intended research focus
- Critical*- checking for reliability and validity of the views expressed
- Remembering*- recalling earlier phrases and expressions
- Interpreting*- seeking to make sense of the interviewees' statements

To this list of interviewing criteria, Bryman (2004, p.325) adds:

- Balanced*- neither talking too much or too little
- Ethically sensitive*- being aware of ethical dimension of the interview

Neither Kvale (1996) nor Bryman (2004) suggest a hierarchy of importance within these criteria. In addition, there is no indication as to whether there is a grading of acceptability within each of these different facets. Within the context of this thesis, and based on her experience of the interviews undertaken, the researcher argues that two essential criteria are, however, still missing. Firstly, the ability to be *flexible* in approach seems to be an essential aspect necessary for the success of an interview. The researcher needed to be able to adapt her approach to the style of the interviewee, striking a balance between letting the interviewee meander down pathways of interest to them and keeping the focus intact. Despite attempting to standardise her approach and being consistent in her guidelines about the anticipated format for the interview, the researcher was aware of the differences in the reactions and responses from the interviewees. This led to interviews having different structures and varying lengths, which with increasing experience, the researcher concluded was appropriate and valid. Secondly, the need to be *reflective*, not only afterwards as part of the evaluative process, but during the interview. Indeed, the researcher argues that the ability to engage in this dynamic and experiential process of 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1983) and respond appropriately in order to make linkages in the information was more of a tacit way of knowing.

Rather than considering the distinction between qualified and unqualified in terms of research criteria, the researcher in this thesis offers a different position, likening her development to that of the "emergent manager" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.17) outlined in section 2.8 and thereby

becoming an 'emergent researcher'. Just as the developing manager is considered to be in a continual state of 'emergence' which has no definite start or end point, a similar evolving process within research practice is suggested by the researcher. This conceptualisation acknowledges that the interview environment during this research programme was dynamic in nature, and within a variety of settings, some tried and tested concepts and procedures were applied. More importantly, the researcher further argues that her approach was continually being shaped by the context in which the research was conducted, necessitating the development of skills and flexibility to be able to adapt and to change.

3.5 Document analysis

To provide a background context for the analysis of University managers' perceptions of their in-role learning, the researcher conducted a document analysis of the institution's strategic plans over a sixteen-year period. From the outset, the researcher was aware that whilst institutional documents such as these potentially provide a "rich source of information" (Patton, 2002, p.293), their use within research could present a number of challenges. For example, even though Denscombe (2003) considers documents as "data in their own right" (p.212), the researcher acknowledged the limitations of analysing such documents which may have been written "with a purpose" (Robson, 2002, p.351) and possibly for a different audience and context. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2011) raise the issue of whether documents can be deemed as reliable sources of evidence as they tend to "record the approaches adopted by policy makers and administrators, and so may privilege a top-down view of education"(p.253).

The researcher was also cognisant of the ethical issues relating to interrogating documents without having gained the permission of document authors even though these were all freely accessible resources, available on the University's internet site or document store. In addition, the potential for bias in the analysis of documents is also acknowledged, as "once located and examined [they] do not speak for themselves" (Cohen et al. (2011, p.253) but are dependent on the interpretation of the researcher. To this end, Pole and Lampard (2002) caution the danger of ascribing meanings to documents which are influenced by "a researcher's agenda and approach to interpreting them" (p.159). The researcher acknowledged that complete objectivity might never be possible, but through recognising the potential for this bias, she was sensitised to the possibility of it occurring, and endeavoured to analyse the text without pre-judging the intent, structure or meaning.

In essence, therefore, having considered all these limitations, the researcher concluded that an analysis of current and previous strategic plans not only presented the potential for elucidating key

factors contributing to the evolution of management development within the institution but also the opportunity for cross-validation of the emergent perceptions from other sources. As a result, the researcher was convinced that the inclusion of this documentary analysis would add value to the study through providing a contextual backcloth to the managers' perceptions of their everyday, in-role learning.

3.6 In pursuit of critical incidents through reflective journals

An area that proved problematic for the majority of managers when interviewed was the identification of a critical incident. At the time of the interviews, none of these managers were able to offer a particular example of an 'incident'. The researcher reflected on this and argues that it might have been for any number of reasons, for example, a reluctance to 'reveal' an incident to do with their own personal learning as managers, an inability to instantly select an appropriate example to give, a lack of understanding as to what was being asked, or that no single incident was viewed by the managers as critical to their learning and development. The initial rationale for including a critical incident in the interview was to encourage each manager to elaborate on significant points within their development, thereby presenting "an opportunity to go straight to the heart of an issue and collect information about what is really being sought..." (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.150). This was considered by the researcher to be an attractive and purposeful approach.

Opinions vary, however, on the exact meaning of a 'critical incident'. Patton (2002) likens it to a "major event" (p.439), suggesting a dramatic occurrence. Birley and Moreland (1998), on the other hand, describe a critical incident as "a crucial decision making point" (p.37) affecting how someone behaves or thinks. This latter definition was more aligned to the type of critical incident sought within this research programme. In contrast, Coleman and Briggs (2002) refer to the term "illustrative event" (p.157) rather than critical incident within interviews when trying to gain clarity and detail on specific issues, suggesting the use of less dramatic terminology with interviewees in order to access more specific detail on significant occurrences. To aid clarification as to what was expected, the researcher then tried further moderating her language in order to encourage the interviewees to describe such 'events'. However, irrespective of these changes in approach and terminology, the interviews failed to elicit information on 'critical incidents'. Even those who promised to email any examples of 'incidents' that they thought of afterward the interview did not do so.

At a later stage of the research and as an alternative way to gain insight into any such incidents or events, a sub-sample of five of the managers from the original data-set was selected to complete reflective journals. Whilst this sample was purposive and selected by the researcher to include

managers from different areas of the University and job roles, she was also aware that the sample size was, by this stage, reduced. Indeed, aiming to exclude those managers who took part in the follow-up interviews so as not to over-burden them, a further ten managers were by then, not in post, five of whom had transferred to different roles and the other five having left the University. A further minority of the managers were also unavailable due to either absence from work or the introduction of organisational change programmes which affected their availability. Thus, the “difficulty of sample mortality” (Cohen et al. 2007, p.216) became evident and needed to be considered in selecting the managers to approach to complete the reflective journals.

The researcher endeavoured to use the term ‘reflective journals’ rather than ‘diaries’, drawing a distinction between the two with the former eliciting a rich “insight into the thoughts, events and feelings that are considered important to an individual” (Henn et al. 2006, p.102), whereas the latter might have encouraged a sequential listing of daily events. Although potentially yield rich sources of data, Denscombe (2003) cautions that due to the retrospective nature of such sources, the evidence should not be regarded as “objective fact...[but] as a version of things seen by the writer”(p.216). Henn et al.(2006) echo this view, suggesting that such documents offer a “view or a picture of reality from an individual actor’s perspective” (p. 102).Whilst acknowledging this limitation, the researcher argues that the validity of data collected through these reflective journals could be equated to that evidenced through interviews, where the interviewees present ‘their version’ of reality. To assist managers in the types of ‘reality’ they might wish to reflect on in their journals, the researcher issued a written guide for the managers involved in this aspect of the data collection (see appendix 5). This also gave illustrative examples of what might be included, even though the researcher was aware that this strategy could potentially give ideas and cause “changes in behaviour” (Bryman, 2004, p.140).

The reflective journal was deliberately structured rather than unstructured, with the dual benefit of giving a framework to the managers completing them and to the researcher analysing the outcomes (see appendix 6 for the template designed for use). However, it can be argued that this method of data collection is not without its drawbacks. Despite journals appearing “tantalisingly attractive” (Robson, 2002, p.258) as they can potentially generate large amounts of data with minimal efforts by the researcher, there are risks associated with their completion. Undoubtedly, reflective journals “place[s] a great deal of responsibility on the respondent” (Robson, 2002, p.258) whilst Bryman (2004) highlights that the self completion of such documents can “suffer from a process of attrition” (p.142), as the people completing them might either become less enthusiastic or less diligent over time. In addition, a further risk and tension might be presented through the process of interpretation, as the “subjectivity and self-presentation may be more of a concern to the researcher than the ‘truth’ or comprehensiveness” of the content (Pole and Lampard, 2002, p.153). In addition, a ‘reflective’

journal assumes that the respondents know how to reflect, and although the written 'guide' (appendix 5) provides advice about how it should be completed, it cannot be assumed that all respondents engage in this process with equal amounts of competence, confidence or enthusiasm.

Within educational programmes the completing of reflective journals is acknowledged as enhancing students' learning, providing a means by which "...learning can be up-graded- where unconnected areas of meaning cohere and a deeper meaning emerges" (Moon, 1999, p.187). Similarly, reflective journals in professional practice might be enthusiastically promoted to assist "...aspiring professionals to learn how to learn...seeking to promote professional practice that is reflective rather than routine" (Thorpe, 2004, p.327). Thus, whilst the virtues of completing reflective journals in other settings are acknowledged, the researcher was cognisant that those within this research programme were for her own rather than the completers' benefit (even though the completers themselves might have felt the benefits to their own learning from engaging in this process). Therefore, the researcher was cognisant that the required commitment to the process of completion could not automatically be assumed.

However, despite these potential limitations, the researcher was keen to try this approach in the belief that a "learning journal is essentially a vehicle for reflection" (Moon, 2006, p.1) and it was through this process that she considered the revelation of 'critical incidents' might be achieved. Whilst reflective journals might be less contemporaneous than diaries due to the encouragement of a process (and possibly a period) of reflection, their required link to a particular timespan gives them a degree of currency. Thus, on balance, the researcher was accepting that the journal might yield valuable evidence and could, in combination with the other methods of data collection, contribute to the triangulation of the data and thereby provide a worthwhile addition to the research endeavour. Initially the managers completing the journals were asked to do so over the period of a month, not in a diarised way but instead, noting 'critical incidents' which caused them to reflect on their learning. However, due to this process of journal completion occurring between July and August when some might have been taking annual leave, the researcher suggested to the managers completing them that the period should be extended over a three month period.

3.7 Reliability and validity

3.7.1 Reliability

Reliability within research relates to the "degree to which a measure of a concept is stable" (Bryman, 2004, p.542). Cohen et al. (2007), however, advocate a degree of caution suggesting that it is "a contentious issue, for it is seeking to apply to qualitative research the canons of reliability of quantitative research" (p.148-9). For the interview data to be considered as reliable, the interview had be a consistent process and conducted in stable conditions. In this way, interviewees were given

the same opportunities to provide accounts of their experiences and perceptions on topics upon which the interviewer is focussing. The researcher acknowledges, however, that despite a series of pre-planned focal themes providing an over-arching framework (albeit within a semi-structured regime), the interviews were very fluid and dynamic occasions in order to capture each interviewee's different perceptions emerging from his or her version of reality. For the document analysis, the extent to which the documents (i.e. the strategic plans) could be considered as 'reliable' data is, indeed, questionable, as different authors were involved over the sixteen year period, with potentially different value systems and emphasis. In addition, the documents were also written for changing audiences over a period of time, with possibly different requirements in terms of style, content and language. Similarly, for the reflective journals, even though each respondent was completing a prescribed template, the researcher had no control over their environment, their moods, or their degree of motivation. Thus, it can be argued that although reliability is a "desirable property" (Pole and Lampard, 2002, p.292), it is not easy to achieve, within qualitative research.

Furthermore, the researcher noted several issues which needed to be taken into consideration in relation to the overall reliability of the process. For example, the researcher acknowledged that the timing of the interviews and the completion of the reflective journals within the University academic year could potentially affect the reliability, as different organisational pressures might have an effect on the responses given by interviewees. Interviews and journals completed in a particular month might be more time constrained than in others due to the conflicting pressures. Also the potential effect of institutional announcements, either positive or negative, could also affect the motivation and commitment shown by all involved. Acknowledging that the influences caused by these types of organisational issues could never be eliminated, an attempt was made by the researcher to ameliorate this by clustering the interviews into two particular time periods within the academic year, and the reflective journals over an extended period due to the probable taking of annual leave by staff over a summer period.

Within the context of this research programme, the researcher was also aware of the tension between reliability and creativity. For example, in the interviews, employing a semi-structured approach allowed the researcher to work towards the achievement of a compromise, having a framework of questions but yet with the flexibility to adapt subsequent threads of enquiry. Whilst attempts were made to make the data within the reflective diaries more reliable by giving the respondents an informative guide to their completion, it was anticipated that some might be more creative than others in their responses.

3.7.2. Validity

Validity within research relates to the extent to which evidence “measures what it purports to measure” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.133) and is fundamental to the “integrity of the conclusions” (Bryman, 2004, p. 545) generated from it. In contrast to research within the positivist paradigm where measurements and precision are expected to lead to a heightened degree of reliability, replication and the arrival at ‘absolute truths’, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that the pursuit of validity within qualitative approaches is much more complex. In relation to interviews, a common critique of this method is that the responses given may be opinion rather than fact, thereby potentially invalidating the approach. For example, Atkinson and Coffey (2002) and Silverman (2007) challenge the extent to which the data from interviews can genuinely represent interviewees’ beliefs or provide an accurate picture of their worlds. They remain sceptical as to whether accounts given in interviews can reliably represent reality. Furthermore, the neutrality of the interview situation might be questioned and as a consequence, the value of such versions of the ‘truth’ produced could be negated. Whilst not convinced of this type of critique of the validity of interviews, Hammersley and Gomm (2008) advocate that greater scepticism should be shown, not to disbelieve or doubt necessarily but to have a “heightened level of methodological caution” (p.99). The researcher therefore, concluded that it was possible that some managers being interviewed might exaggerate on issues, or might give responses which they thought would be expected or alternatively might hide their own personal beliefs in favour of more corporate-driven responses. Indeed, the researcher considered that all these deviations within the interviews might be possible. Hence the triangulation of the evidence through interviewing a member of the University Executive, conducting a document analysis and seeking further insights through reflective journals were all introduced to improve the validity of the data.

Similarly, in the completion of reflective journals, there was the potential for the managers to be influenced by perceived expectations of them in their respective roles. For example, they may have falsely reported any lack of self-doubt, replacing it instead with examples of in-role confidence and decisive actions, irrespective of whether these were genuinely felt or carried out. In terms of the document analysis, their perceived purpose could potentially affect the claims made or values espoused. For example, if written predominantly for external agencies and organisations, the language, content and style may be different to that destined for an internal audience.

As a result of these potential sources of invalidity, concerns over the extent to which the managers’ versions of their realities represented the ‘truth’, needed to be acknowledged. Within the context of this research relating to the conduct of interviews, the completion of journals and the writing of

strategic plans, there appeared to be a need for the researcher to find agreement in relation to what constituted 'truth'. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) advocate that instead of attempting to arrive at absolute truths, the "conception of defensible knowledge claims" (p.247). Indeed, the researcher argues that such 'knowledge claims' were merely the initial building blocks for knowledge, which only became knowledge when further analysed. Nonetheless, the researcher endeavoured to make sense of the many variations of the 'knowledge claims' that emerged from all sources of evidence and interpret them in the light of contextual variations. As a consequence, acknowledging the potential for all sources of evidence to have elements of invalidity, the researcher felt confident to defend the multiple and varied embryonic "claims of knowledge" from the evidence presented rather than uphold them as valid versions of the 'truth'.

3.8 Ethical considerations

A factor which remained high on the researcher's agenda within this research programme was the need to behave in an ethical way throughout the process. Although strenuous attempts were made by the researcher to mitigate the "insider researcher" element (Busher, 2002, p.80) within this research programme this still needed to be highlighted as a factor which could potentially lead to distortions. For example, the researcher acknowledged that her own prior understanding of the attitudes to management development provision within the institution led to decisions about how this could either be included or avoided within the interviews. Similarly, when analysing the documents, this was not done within a vacuum, and whilst the researcher endeavoured to interpret the words and phrases, it was not possible to do this devoid of an awareness of organisational politics and corporate issues. However the need for behaving ethically was not context-specific but was, instead, part of the researcher's endeavours to adopt an acceptable way of operating. In so doing, professional relationships outside the research project were preserved.

For the purpose of this research programme, the researcher's endeavours to observe ethical principles were in terms of a need to determine and adhere to a set of rules. An important ethical principle for the researcher was to gain informed consent from all the managers interviewed and from those completing reflective journals. The researcher argues that gaining 'informed consent' is neither straight-forward nor unproblematic, and raises the issue of where the control lies within an interview. For example, Mason (1996) questions the extent to which 'informed consent' gives interviewers the right to ask any questions, to use discretion in what counts as data, and to interpret it in whichever way they think fit, concluding that it may be "impossible to receive a consent which is fully informed" (p.58). Furthermore, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that informed consent is "an ethical field of uncertainty" (p.72), where there is a tension between needing to give complete

disclosure of every detail but yet acknowledging that interviewers do not always know the direction in which the questions will lead. The researcher would therefore argue that seeking and gaining informed consent was an important aspect within this research programme, and was, moreover, an integral part of the trust and relationship building which occurred at the start of the process. Control was ultimately shared, with the researcher laying the platform on which the ethical framework was built, whilst the managers decided on the extent to which they were prepared to engage.

In practice, gaining consent from the managers for the interviews was achieved through an initial email 'conversation' to explain the study, followed by an information sheet and consent form (appendices 1 and 2). The information sheet justified the reason for the research, explained the process, and outlined the reciprocal benefits. None of the managers who received this information refused to go ahead. However, on reflection, the researcher has since considered the extent to which colleagues might have felt obliged (perhaps out of politeness) to agree to participate. Indeed the researcher reflected as to whether these managers would have declined to take part if an 'outsider' had requested them to participate. Whilst for the document analysis, all these were publicly accessible, the researcher, through being an 'insider', noticed a slight feeling of unease caused by divided loyalties to the thesis and to the University as a professional manager. Indeed, Cohen et al. (2011) highlight the potential for insider researchers to be faced with "ethical dilemmas...where the material is likely to cast an unfavourable light upon the institution" (p.254).

Also within the researcher's ethical framework were the issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Although these two terms are often used interchangeably and both are concerned with separating the individuals' identity from their responses, Henn et al. (2006) seek to differentiate between them, arguing that:

"Anonymity ensures that a person remains nameless and unidentifiable. Confidentiality means that the researcher holds the data in confidence and keeps it from public consumption" (p.85)

In order to achieve anonymity, the researcher made considerable effort to protect the managers who were interviewed and who engaged in the completion of reflective journals, ensuring "that private data identifying the participants will not be disclosed" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p.72). For example, real names, job titles and identifiable areas of the University were removed from the transcripts and reflective journals so that complete anonymity, leading to "non-identifiability and non-traceability" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.442) could be achieved. This did not appear to detract from the data, but made the researcher become cautious about the direct quotations which could be used.

Potentially this weakened the narrative, by excluding some parts of the transcript and journals for direct use within the thesis. However the researcher concluded that this 'trade-off' dilemma was an inevitable part of the (insider) research process. On a couple of occasions, managers asked for further details about how the anonymity would be achieved, and the researcher gave examples about the level of information which would be released. This appeared to allay the fears of these managers, but also reminded the researcher of the potential anxiety that could be felt by participants within the process of research. It was noted by the researcher that this accentuated need for caution also affected her own behaviour in subsequent interviews, especially in the opening few minutes when the process was being explained.

On reflection, from the three research methods used (interviews, document analysis and reflective journals), the one which gave the researcher most concern in terms of ethical principles was the reflective journals. Requesting managers to write journals and, more importantly, encourage them to examine their reflections on critical incidents, some of which could potentially reveal their weaknesses, caused an ethical dilemma for the researcher. In particular, the researcher reflected at length as to whether the research 'need' to obtain this information justified the potential 'exposure' of the managers, albeit within an agreed code of confidentiality and anonymity yet, nonetheless, potentially causing anxiety. This undoubtedly felt more poignant through researching within one's own institution where the managers participating in the research were also colleagues. Furthermore this was exacerbated by the researcher's knowledge that all of these managers had not offered examples of critical incidents within their original interviews. As explained in section 3.6, whilst all of the managers interviewed had claimed that they were not able to think of any critical incidents, the researcher was aware that this response might be masking an underlying reluctance by some to reveal such information. The subsequent request for some managers to engage with journal writing for the purpose of this research had, therefore, to be handled very carefully, assuring the managers that both confidentiality and anonymity would be respected in order to allay any fears of potential exposure.

3.9 Researching within one's own institution

Robson (2002, p.297) outlines the advantages of being an "insider" such as understanding the politics, having an insight into how the institutional processes really work, appreciating the demands of different jobs and the developmental history of the organisation as a whole. In striving to give a balanced view, Robson then highlights the disadvantages in terms of the effect of hierarchy on the dynamics of interviewees, the ethical issues centred around the confidentiality of information, the long-term effect on working relationships between researcher and their colleagues and the difficulty

of remaining objective. However the researcher argues that other factors such as her own preconceptions about the development of managers also needed to be acknowledged, conceding that total neutrality, although desirable, would be impossible to achieve within one's own institution. Indeed, the challenges presented by being an "insider" were particularly apparent to the researcher in the data collection process. For example, in the interviews, there was initially a feeling of wanting to 'wear two hats', one of 'researcher' and one of 'practitioner'. This was evident in one of the initial interviews where inadequacies in a particular manager's induction had been highlighted. The tension felt by the researcher of wanting to 'just be a researcher' juxtaposed with feeling the need to make improvements in the light of comments made. Subsequent changes to some of the questions helped with this dilemma, enabling a more pointed focus on each manager's developmental journeys, rather than the deconstruction of their current needs. In conducting the document analysis, the researcher was aware that having an awareness of the idiosyncrasies and preferences of the various authors could potentially cause a distortion in the analysis. Whilst this was easy to acknowledge, the researcher concluded it was much harder to either overcome or ameliorate. Also with the completion of the reflective journals, the researcher was aware of the potential reluctance for managers to expose any frailties or self-doubt to a researcher who was also a colleague, possibly presenting more of a barrier than if the researcher had been collecting this type of data within another organisation, or anonymously through a self-completed questionnaire.

3.10 The approach taken to the data analysis

Within the data analysis, the researcher adopted a socio-constructivist approach in an attempt to find meaning and "transform [the] data into findings" (Patton, 2002, p.432). Having an epistemological belief that data from the interviews, from the reflective journals and from the analysis of the documents could lead to the *start* of the construction of knowledge, the researcher aimed to interrogate all this evidence collectively and in the light of the literature to find out how the managers made sense of their worlds. In the case of the interview and reflective journal data, the analysis focussed on the managers' interpretation of meanings based primarily on their perceptions of a range of experiences. As they described the vicissitudes of their approach to management, in effect they 'constructed' a reality through their choice of words and phrases. In this way, the interview and journal accounts needed to be considered by the researcher as newly created and individualised constructions of reality, acknowledging that each of the managers had selected their words and phrases according to their set of experiences from within their social contexts. Similarly, the analysis of the documents was a subjective process, dependent on the researcher's selection of words and phrases to either include, exclude, emphasise or de-emphasise in order to 'construct' knowledge and

meaning. The researcher used a hermeneutic approach to the analysis, seeking to “bring out the meanings of a text from the perspectives of its author” (Bryman, 2004, p. 394).

The approach used for the analysis of the data from all the sources (interviews, documents and reflective journals) was therefore to extract meaning and begin to create knowledge. In essence, although different sources of data were used, there was a commonality of approach. Indeed, the researcher’s focus and subsequent ‘construction’ was on the way the managers gave their accounts of reality. In the interviews and the reflective journals, based on their daily experiences, this facilitated a means by which they “tell stories about themselves and how they present themselves in talk” (Wetherell, 2001, p.187). As a result, the researcher accepted from the outset that the accounts could never be presented as value free and neutral. Furthermore, the ‘true’ meaning of each manager’s reality could only, at best, be regarded as their perceptions of their worlds and therefore their versions of reality. Tietze et al. (2003) use a spider’s web analogy to heighten the importance of the intricacies involved in arriving at a meaning through the interplay of words. They describe this as a very dynamic process involving “actively making /spinning their worlds and bestowing meaning onto them” (p.9). This suggests that although the words and phrases used by the managers already exist, it is the way in which they were ‘spun’ together which reveals the different realities. Tietze et al. further exemplify the dynamism of this process by clarifying how meaning through language can be manipulated and changed. They not only legitimise that certain aspects and dominant themes can be emphasised, but also highlight the inherent instability of accounts “dependent on context and perspective” (p.12).

The researcher also argues that the way in which the managers gave their accounts may not have been a conscious or deliberate act on their part. In all the sources of evidence, the researcher became aware that there was the potential for “elaborating the unintended consequences of the language that was used, tracing the ripples that discourses create in the pool of meaning into which they are tossed” (Tietze et al., 2003, p.114). This focus on language use, however, enabled the researcher to find a meaningful way of interrogating and ‘making sense’ of the data and “selecting from the range of linguistic resources available...” (Coyle, 2007, p.100).

As a consequence, the researcher acknowledged that this emphasis on language use was hers and not that of the managers (or the document authors). As a consequence, the researcher became increasingly aware that she was not a passive recipient of the interview transcripts, journal entries and documents. Instead, she became active not only through the process of analysis but ultimately in the construction of knowledge itself. The researcher therefore endeavoured to examine and

understand the interview transcripts, the reflective journals and the documents by identifying specific issues which later gave meaning and context to the development of the managers involved. In effect, the researcher was not merely documenting the social reality emerging from all the sources of data but actively interrogating, interpreting and constructing it.

3.11 Conclusion

Having explored a range of issues relating to the preferred use of qualitative methodology in general and semi-structured interviews, document analysis and the completion of reflective journals in particular, the researcher felt confident to proceed. The combination of these different approaches offered “a means of promoting methodological pluralism” (Cohen et al. 2011, p.254) and thereby adopting a “multi-strategy” regime (Bryman, 2001, p.452). This enabled the triangulation of data in order to compare the findings, albeit in an essentially qualitative paradigm (Bryman, 2004, p.275) where meanings were to be interpreted and constructed rather than verified. Adopting this approach yielded a wealth of information about the managers’ emerging beliefs set against the contexts in which they worked. Such contexts are now further explored in chapter 4 which follows, providing an institutional backcloth for the managers’ perceptions of their in-role learning.

Chapter 4: The Development of University Managers: A Strategic Intent?

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the extent of the corporate influence on the development of University managers. This contextual backcloth will be used to triangulate the evidence with the managers' own perceptions of their in-role development. A document analysis of the University's strategic plans over a sixteen year period is presented in section 4.2 to provide further insight into the context for management development. To examine the evolution of management development within the context of the University, in section 4.3 an analysis is then given of an interview with a member of the Executive Team. A summary of the emerging themes from both the interview with the member of the Executive Team and the document analysis of the strategic plans is then provided in section 4.4. As part of this, the researcher questions the inevitability of the institutional response to the 'need' for change.

4.2 An analysis of the University's strategic plans (1996-2012) focussing on the development of managers

4.2.1 Justification of the approach

All training plans have been localised within each Faculty and Service, and all have been required to align to the strategic direction of the University. As a consequence, for this research programme, the University's corporate-level strategic plans are now examined as these are the key documents which inform the ethos and practice of management (and its development) within the institution.

The researcher undertook a comparative document analysis of the University's strategic plans over a sixteen year period (1996-2012), exploring their structure and content to thereby set a context for the development of managers within the organisation. Essentially, along with the evidence collected from the interview with a member of the Executive Team, this analysis of the strategic plans provided a rich source of data to paint a contextual backcloth. Furthermore, seeking multiple sources of evidence in this way helped to ensure that the research was not mono-focal in terms of method or actors. All the strategic plans had been written by the Executive team of managers within the University, in consultation with selected others to provide specialist inputs from different functional areas. However, the composition of the Executive team had changed over the sixteen years and therefore the authorship of these documents was not consistent. To compare these strategic plans, an analysis of the words and phrases within the documents was undertaken in order to extract meaning. The researcher predominantly focussed on the strategic plans in terms of their "language and form in determining a deeper meaning" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 253). Indeed, adopting a predominately

interpretative focus not only allowed for a degree of commonality within the analysis of the data from all three sources (documents, semi-structured interviews and reflective journals), but also maintained a constructive alignment with the initial purpose of the research to find meaning in managers' perceptions of their in-role experiences.

Prior to analysing the content of the strategic plans, some changes in their design and presentation are worthy of note. For example, over the sixteen year period, these plans have increased in size and complexity, from twenty-one pages in the 1996-2000 version to fifty-nine pages in the 2007-2012 iteration, with the latter in four separate documents. The style and presentation of these plans has also become more elaborate, moving from solely text based to the incorporation of graphical and photographic imagery in the later documents. Indeed this is suggestive of a heightening of a strategic and business-oriented focus, with the multiple documents of the 2007-2012 University Plan perhaps reflecting an institution operating within a regime of "supercomplexity" (Barnett, 2000, p.75). Perhaps what is most noticeable within this university, however, is the way in which this 'supercomplexity' is being heightened by the input of an array of specialists who have contributed to the writing of the strategic plan, particularly in the 2007-2012 supporting documents, thereby suggesting a tendency towards the University becoming a "multi-professional organisation[s]" (Henkel, 2005, p. 163). Furthermore, the array of supporting documents designed and developed by different role-holders allude to Barnett's notion (albeit dismissive) that universities are becoming "secure in understanding that the more frameworks we have the better" (2000, p.83), steered by a diversity of views and increasingly re-aligned to external demands.

Thus, the researcher noted a difference in style within the documents over time. In particular, compared to the 1996-2000 and the 2000-2003 versions, the 2003/4-2007/8 and the 2007-2012 strategic plans appear to incorporate a more commercially-oriented design. Although the researcher considers that this may have been due to the increased availability of improved reprographic services within the University, it may also signal the perceived need to respond to growing pressure to "become businesses, marketing themselves and exporting education" (Dearlove, 2002, p.260), thereby becoming "outside-in" rather than "inside-out" (Shattock, 2006, p.130) in their response to external pressures.

4.2.2 Interpretation of the text

Purpose

Analysis of each of the strategic plans highlights the espoused purpose of the University. It is evident that this purpose has not remained constant but has, instead, slowly evolved. For example, in the 1996/2000 Strategic Plan, the subtitle of “Building a Learning Community” (p.1) makes the intentions explicit from the start, paving the way for a purpose-based statement:

“The purpose of the University is to provide educational opportunities to the highest levels *for those who can benefit*. In particular, the University, through education seeks to develop the personal, creative and analytical abilities of all members of the University, to provide skills in the application of abilities *to help individuals achieve their full potential*, to create the basis *for lifetime learning and personal growth* and to pursue scholarship and the discovery of new knowledge through research” (p.2, italics added by the researcher)

In essence, this is suggestive of a collegial, open and inclusive institution which seeks to support the development of individuals (including both staff and students) for the sake of their own personal ambition. It appears to be firmly rooted in a collegial and scholarly approach, supporting the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake rather than having a wider impact. This notion of a ‘learning community’ is further developed in the 2000-2003 Plan with a pledge that “...our business is to be a learning community, supported by scholarship and research”(p.1). A dilemma is also signalled between the need to look forwards but not at the expense of the past, claiming that:

“We are immensely proud of our history...This is a modern university, full of energy and innovation, and firmly rooted in a history of providing relevant and high quality learning and research opportunities.”(p.1)

The Strategic Plan 2003/4-2007/8 (p.2) also indicates a tension between remaining true to its former support of individual, personal growth, but then also needing to make a more explicit link to functional development and consequent transfer of this into the workplace. For example:

“At [this] University, our mission is to help you succeed...We have a long and proud history of offering opportunities for people to acquire through us the knowledge and skills they need for their lives and their work. In the rapidly changing context of Higher Education in the twenty-first century, we remain true to that cause”

“As a learning community we constantly seek to change for the better. This stems from our roots and a strong continuity with the past”

Indeed, despite the rhetoric of continuity, there are signals of a more explicit awareness of the need to respond to external pressures and, as a result, the plan states that the University's "academic provision will need to be market sensitive" (p.2)

Whilst the 2007-2012 Strategic Plan (p.3) claims to "build on past successes and "safeguarding our 'local' values and character", there is a clear sign of a requirement to have a change of regime. Indeed there is recognition of the need for different practices, acknowledging that "We are operating in a climate of constant change...in an increasingly competitive higher education environment" in order to "bring about the changes"(p.3). Most striking, however, is the change of language evident within page 3, with phrases such as

"...stand out from the crowd"

"...as a blue-print for ongoing progress"

"...going the extra mile"

"...in the global society"

"...market-facing and first choice"

Such phrases are suggestive of a move towards a more commercially oriented language, symptomatic of the "massification, accountability and marketisation" (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008, p.5) to which British universities were being asked to respond.

Values

In addition to the changing purpose of the University, a comparative analysis of the strategic plans between 1996 and 2012 shows a more explicit declaration of values which underpin the ways of working. Within the 1996/2000 Strategic Plan (p.3), the only declared values are those of being "open and friendly" although it proudly boasts that "such primary values have been retained over nearly four decades and can be claimed to be an intrinsic part of the University's culture...This way of working sustains the common purpose of the University". Similarly in the 2000-2003 Strategic Plan, despite claiming that "we set out our core and shared values"(p.1), there is not an explicit labelling of statements as values. However subsequently, within the 2003/4-2007/8 (p.2) Strategic Plan, the six values of Inclusion, Accessibility, Creativity, Partnership, Supportiveness and Excellence are not only declared but defined, with the commitment that the University "will work by and be known for" them.

A further fourteen values are then outlined in the 2007-2012 Strategic Plan (p.15-17) and these are categorised into “approach to people”, “approach to work”, “approach to delivery” and “approach to society”. However it is the way in which these values are given a heightened significance and, furthermore, appear to assume a strategic importance in line with the University’s direction which is particularly noticeable. This is evidenced by the statement that:

“The values of Staffordshire University are well suited to the changing higher education environment...By ensuring our values apply to every aspect of the way we work, we will maximise our reputation and competitive position both at home and overseas.”

In contrast to the 1996-2000 Strategic Plan, therefore, these values are not integral and implicit, but are explicitly declared and defined to have a strategic importance in order to maximise the University’s advantage in the market-place.

The development of staff

The development of staff has been a consistent commitment recorded in all the strategic plans. However the way in which this is documented suggests an increasingly strategic focus over the years. For example, in the 1996-2000 Strategic Plan (p.12), staff are reputed to be “the most valuable resource to the University and through their innovative approach to development provide its capacity to learn and develop”. This aligns to the notion of “Building a Learning Community” which characterised, and indeed was a sub-title for, that particular strategic plan. In addition, the development of staff was deemed to “recognise the individual nature of people and seek to give them every opportunity for self-development and personal improvement” which suggests a respect for individualism and freedom in terms of staff development.

This notion of staff being responsible as individuals is similarly echoed in the 2000-2003 Strategic Plan which pledges to provide staff with “opportunities to develop themselves to support students and to increase their own capability and professionalism.” (p.5). However, contrary to this individualistic approach, later in the document there is evidence of an intention to “establish a training and development strategy” (p.29).

By the time of the 2003/4-2007/8 Strategic Plan, the development of staff appears to be firmly part of a strategic drive to enable them to cope with change. Although no specific details are given in the Plan about how this is to be achieved, there is a definite commitment to “build an agile organisation

where all staff feel empowered to respond effectively and creatively to the challenges of the changing higher education environment.” (p.10)

The 2007-2012 Strategic Plan endorses this commitment to development by pledging that “We will be investing substantially in our community as we work together to bring about the changes” (p.3). Furthermore, this commitment to invest is then reaffirmed by the objective to “create a structured, targeted, flexible professional development programme that equips staff with the skills to meet the new change agenda” (p.26). This is a distinct move away from the individualised nature of staff development espoused in the 1996-2000 Strategic Plan, and is designed with the specific focus to “demonstrate increased levels of return on investment” and “equips staff with skills to meet the new change agenda” (p.26), thereby reflecting the University’s move towards being more business-oriented and performance focussed.

Management and leadership

The importance of teams is explicitly stated in the 1996/2000 Strategic Plan, even though the notion of team management and/or leadership is only implied, outlining that:

“The basic operation is through teams...the University has developed in a context which long ago made the cloistered academic style inappropriate and which more recently has demanded very close, carefully balanced team contributions to optimise resource utilisation” (p.3).

However, further on in the Plan, the need for effective management is explicitly given as an objective, outlining the value of managing “staff so as to encourage their full support for the corporate aims of the University” (p.12). This is purportedly to enable an “increase in the human resource management skills possessed by all those whose role is to supervise or manage other members of staff,” (p.12) although there is no specific indication about how this is to be achieved.

In the 2000-2003 Strategic Plan, the words ‘management’, ‘manager’ ‘leadership’ or ‘leader’ are largely absent. The one exception is in relation to the training and development strategy which suggests “incorporating a senior management development programme” (p.29).

Within the 2003/4-2007/8 Strategic Plan, the way in which managers are to be further developed is outlined as part of the University’s move to “build a culture that welcomes change” (p.11). Indeed, this plan explicitly states that “Our change capacity will be strengthened by structured leadership and management development programmes” (p.11). Worthy of note is that in contrast to the current

separation of leadership and management development as two different activities (apparent in EX1's views in section 4.3), this distinction is not explicitly made in these earlier plans.

Despite the 2007-2012 Strategic Plan being firm in a commitment to professional development generally, there is little specific on the topic of leadership or management development. This is slightly anomalous given that the content of the remainder of the document focuses heavily on the importance of setting targets and monitoring progress in order to "lead[ing] the way" (p.9), turn "vision into reality" (p.12) and be "guided by our strategic principles" (p.24). However, in the Human Resources business plan which supports this strategy, there is an explicit commitment to "develop capacity, capability and the confidence levels for effective leadership and management across the University in order to harness the empowerment, energy and engagement of staff in order to drive forward individual, team and organisational performance" (p.23). This statement encapsulates the increasingly strong strategic focus on the development of managers in line with the University's requirements. In contrast to the tone of the previous documents, it signals a deliberate move away from the notion of managers being developed for individual growth towards a regime which requires their enhanced capacity to lead other staff, wider teams and the whole organisation. Furthermore, it is highly performance-oriented, signalling an organisational need for managers to develop in order to exact results from others through their improved capacity to lead.

Language in use

On analysis of the strategic plans between 1996 and 2012, there is evidence of an increased use of externally focused, business-oriented words and phrases, indicating a change of direction and the introduction of new ways of working, especially in the 2003/4-2007/8 and 2007-2012 documents. For example, in the 1996/2000 Strategic Plan, the following phrases are suggestive of adherence to more collegial values and working practices:

"...great store is placed on ensuring that consultation takes place" (p.3)

"...that a culture be sustained in the University which provides a context of continued questioning..." (p.5)

"To establish a role for research which clearly secures an intellectual environment" (p.6)

"To ensure that the University provides an experience valued by students and which attracts them to study" (p.8)

"To seek to meet the general educational requirements ..." (p.8)

"To critically examine the traditional roles..." (p.13)

“To strike an appropriate balance” (p.14)

The multi-faceted notion of collegiality is reiterated in the 2000-2003 Strategic Plan, emphasising sharing, collaboration and respect for differences with phrases such as:

“...opening the doors of opportunity” (p.1)

“...encouraging debate” (p.4)

“...combining the power of people...” (p.4)

“...respecting the rights and dignity of individuals” (p.4)

“...research and scholarship will continue to underpin our higher education provision” (p.10)

“...promoting inter-school collaborations” (p.12)

In contrast, the language used within the 2003/4-2007/8 Strategic Plan signals a change. In particular, there is a much more explicit heightening of the importance of commercially-oriented terminology, as illustrated by the following examples,:

“Our business is to...” (p.2)

“...which anticipate and satisfy market demand...” (p.4)

“To take a national lead in offering...” (p. 5)

“Finite resources will increasingly have to be tailored...” (p.8)

“We will consider partnerships, strategic alliances...the effective delivery of our vision and our business proposition.” (p.9)

“...manage the impact of the factors affecting consumer choice and satisfaction including cost, brand, product awareness and reputation.” (p.11)

This use of business-related terminology is reinforced in the 2007-2012 Strategic Plan through an increased emphasis on new and progressive ways. For example:

“...innovative and creative ways...to new levels of success.” (p.3)

“...a re-modelled, integrated and vibrant Stafford campus.” (p.7)

“...this is a demanding vision.”

“...increased organisational flexibility...” (p.21)

“Business growth and diversification...” (p.239)

These phrases suggest a heightened focus on leadership in order to meet desired outcomes and there is also a much greater focus on staff performing to required standards. For example, there is an apparent need for staff to:

“...expand new ways of working...” (p.26)

“...support the strategic priority...” (p.26)

“...support effective synergy...” (p.26)

There is also an explicit call for staff to demonstrate “increased levels of engagement”, to have “reduced levels of sickness absence and unsatisfactory performance” and support “values-driven behaviour” (p.26).

Through this analysis of the strategic plans over a sixteen year period, it is evident that there is a gradual change in the purpose, values and language in use, signalling the University’s transition from being a ‘learning community’ for the benefit of individuals to an outwardly-facing performance-focussed business.

4.3 An interview with a member of the Executive Team

Having interviewed the twenty-four managers and also analysed the strategic plans for information relevant to management development, this data was then further triangulated with the views of a member of the Executive responsible for staff development. The coding used by the researcher for this member of the Executive hereafter within this thesis is EX1. This interview was semi-structured in format in order to remain focussed but also to allow for the expansion of certain issues. Whilst the questions were initially developed by drawing on the relevant literature, they then focussed in particular on how and why the development of managers in the University had been supported over the past few years, the extent to which this was changing and the key factors which were contributing to the change. Appendix 4 provides an outline guide for the line of questioning planned for this interview, albeit semi-structured in nature and resulting in a “kind of conversation” (Robson, 2002, p.273) about the evolving development of managers within the University. Where appropriate, the views of EX1 were combined by the researcher with evidence from the analysis of institutional documents pertinent to the development of staff.

EX1 explained that only in the past eight years had there been an explicit and deliberate approach taken within the University to provide a management development programme for all managers

(targeted by both grade and role), and this has been centrally organised through Personnel Services. Prior to that there had apparently been some training but not developed in a systematic or sustained way for the benefit of all managers. In justifying why this management development programme (known within the University as the 'MDP') had been introduced, EX1 explained that until that point *"there hadn't been any systematic development but it also coincided with some HEFCE funding"* (referring, on further probing by the researcher, to the HEFCE, 2000, Rewarding and Developing Staff in Higher Education funding). On further probing by the researcher as to why there was a need, EX1 proffered the suggestion that the introduction of this programme was:

"to do with the 'what' and the 'how'...focussing on how managers went about things-it was an issue...we recognised we needed to do something...it was about developing the performance of the organisation."

Thus, it appeared that the introduction of a formalised management development programme (the MDP) was as much to do with the availability of funding and the shaping of managers for them to 'perform' in line with the needs of the University, as opposed to developing them in response to their own individual needs. EX1 defended this strategic and organisational approach to developing managers, claiming that:

"I think it's a top down one, basically the University Plan... we've also taken advantage of other diagnostics which cut across the organisation. So Investors in People is a good example...we've got to raise the game now, fitting it into the agenda of the new University plan."

Indeed, phrases such as 'raising the game' are suggestive of a much more performance-oriented approach to the development of managers. On further questioning by the researcher about the organisation appearing to be more predominant in the process of informing the management development programme than managers' own perceived needs, EX1 asserted that:

"It wasn't a conscious ignoring of their wishes but there is sometimes the fact that managers don't actually know what they need...I actually think that managers often don't know what they are missing and therefore can't ask for it."

It was evident therefore, that EX1 considered that rather than responding to the perceived needs of individual managers, the introduction of a formalised management development programme had been aligned to perceived needs of the University. EX1 made reference to a University Executive Board Briefing Paper (2005) about the introduction of the compulsory MDP which showed that three

cohorts differentiated by level of role and grade had completed the initial programme; the total participants were recorded as 255 and that there had been a range of separate workshops for each of the participants to attend (see appendix 8 for details of the programme). The intended aims of the programme were:

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of management practice across the University;
- Develop required leadership capabilities
- Nurture a positive engagement with required change

However, EX1 explained that despite these original stated aims of the MDP, in practice, the programme which was delivered tended to be more focussed on policy training through which managers were shown how to carry out University policies and procedures such as health and safety, grievances and appraisals. In this way, management training had centred primarily on equipping managers with the requisite knowledge and skills to follow accepted ways of working. Indeed, EX1 admitted that this focus had evolved rather than being part of the original intentions for the programme, claiming that:

“Well if I’m honest, I don’t think that’s what was ever intended but...it became synonymous with policy training and that was it.”

In attempting to justify this ‘mission drift’ from the original aims, EX1 revealed that the MDP had been delivered primarily by two external companies, one specialising in training delivery and the other a firm of local solicitors, with the latter emphasising the legal implications of some of the policies. Further pursuing this evaluation of the MDP, the researcher asked EX1 if, in his opinion, the initial programme had been successful, and, in particular, if these aims had been achieved. EX1 stated that:

“It served a purpose in that we used the money wisely...I think it was successful in the sense that it improved their [the University managers’] understanding of how our procedures worked, but that of course is very different to putting it into practice...I think the MDP missed the point...It gave them what they needed to know but then they were left high and dry as to how to put it into practice in a sophisticated way.”

This admission that the MDP had “served a purpose in that we used the money wisely” is suggestive of a perfunctory view, albeit then followed by an admission that there was a lack of application by managers of the content of this programme into everyday practice. Linked to this, the use of the term “put into practice in a sophisticated way” also indicates awareness by EX1 that this transfer is not straight-forward, but, instead, requires managers to use refined judgements. To aid further

clarification, the researcher also asked about the inclusion of 'leadership' within the aims, and, in response, EX1 admitted a misuse of these terms, claiming that:

"If I'm honest, I think that 'leadership' and 'management' were being used inter-changeably...I don't think that there was a clear definition or differentiation between the two."

It was evident, therefore, that the programme which had been originally planned to both spend *"the (HEFCE) money wisely"* and to help support the development of the University managers had, perhaps, been over-aspirational, morphing into a different format and structure, affecting both the content and ethos of what was delivered. Whilst it became apparent that in the opinion of EX1, the initial attempt to formalise management development within the University had raised awareness about policies, it had not been felt to be successful in improving the practice of managers across the University. EX1 also indicated that this was compounded by a lack of systematic evaluation of the programme, other than the gathering managers' reactions at the end of each workshop which could neither indicate *"transference of learning or long-term impact"*.

Having ascertained from EX1 that this formalised mandatory programme had ceased in 2005 as all managers had by then attended all workshops, the researcher then probed further about how provision for the development of managers had changed since this initial programme. In response EX1 suggested that:

"I think we've got more sophisticated about our offering since 2005...So I think that's what I'm trying to achieve is that they've got the knowledge and then they can deploy it effectively."

This implied recognition by EX1 of need to have a more deliberate focus within management development through which managers could be equipped to transfer the skills and knowledge gained to their own particular situations. In addition to this, EX1 also emphasised that there needed to be a change in the thinking of managers so that this can be aligned to the needs of the University, advocating that:

"I guess what I'm looking for from our managers as well is that they're not just thinking about their area but that they're thinking corporately...."

When EX1 was asked to define what might be enhanced through the development of managers a number of skills and attributes were suggested. These were all indicative of a performance-oriented culture, with EX1 stating that:

“...it’s confidence. Managers need the confidence to lead...being really effective about managing people, processes, areas of work and really being efficient in that so that key performance indicators and performance objectives are delivered.”

The inclusion in EX1’s responses of terminology such as “*key performance indicators*”, “*performance objectives*” “*effective*” and “*efficient*” were, indeed, suggestive of a move towards a more managerialist regime. This apparent heightening of managerialism was then further reinforced by the suggestion that University managers should also focus on managing the performance of their staff:

“...realise where their role is and where their team’s role is in the overall setting of the organisations... translate high level objectives...leverage as much discretionary effort out of them...manage performance [so that] people in the posts have got to be delivering...”

Curious as to where these requisite requirements of managers were formally listed, the researcher asked EX1 if and where they were explicitly documented and he retorted that:

“Yes-that is actually a really good question- and it’s telling that I don’t have an immediate answer. I think we need to be more explicit...there needs to be something there to define what success really looks like.”

This signalled strongly that the skills and attributes viewed as necessary for managers were only implicit within the University rather than being articulated explicitly, either in written documents or orally. They were clearly articulated by this member of the Executive team, but this was juxtaposed by his admission that such information had never been documented or openly declared.

In terms of whether the development of managers should be supported through formalised programmes, the views of EX1 were slightly contradictory, suggesting ambivalence. Having initially advocated “*the packaging of the corporate message*” through organised programmes, EX1 then went on to suggest that it might also be “*a costly, heavy-handed thing to do*”. He then further qualified this by advising against the “*sheep-dipping*” used on the previous management development programme in favour of an approach which was “*completely individualised to the person...tailored to a specific person’s needs*” through interventions such as coaching “*based on real-life examples*”.

When asked about whether management development should be for separate or combined groups of academic and professional support managers, EX1 demonstrated further ambivalence. For example, he suggested that having combined groups “*reinforces corporateness*” helping to “*break up some of*

those cultures and values...and tackles some of the culture about whether one staff group is better than another". However, he also pointed out that *"the academic manager is starting from a very different point on their journey than the professional support staff, because it's perhaps been less of their intended career route."* As a consequence, he could also see the need for having separate management development provision to reinforce:

"...a benefit in terms of tapping into an audience and getting them to engage, so that they feel special...it gives them a very visible message and gets them involved... I think here and now it's right because we need to get them engaged and welcomed into the fold."

Here EX1's use of *"engage"* is suggestive of a belief that it is not just necessary for managers to attend courses but for them to become more in tune with what the University as an organisation requires of them as managers, and, in particular, to think corporately. Indeed, this perceived need for managers to *"engage"* links to the strong Executive steer in the 2007-12 Strategic Plan which calls for *"increased levels of engagement"* (p.26). Additionally, his aspiration for managers to be *"welcomed into the fold"* perhaps indicates a desire for them to be 'shepherded' into a separate world of management within the University.

Another line of questioning by the researcher focussed on whether managers needed to have an insight into the external drivers especially pertinent to the HE sector. In response to this and reflecting on the design of a recently introduced leadership programme within the University (see appendix 7), EX1 was adamant about the irrelevance of anything specific to HE practice, favouring instead the importing of preferred ways of working from the commercial sector, stating that:

"... there was hardly anything from the HE sector that we focussed on... the speakers were from different arenas...So it was about getting them to think that HE is not different and to listen to these leaders."

This clearly indicated EX1's preference for learning from practice outside the sector, indicative of a predominantly managerialist approach of introducing commercial influences to purportedly eradicate residual traditional ways of working and thinking within the University.

Indeed, it could be argued that EX1's preference for learning from practice outside the HE sector not only negates the notion of difference between academic and professional support managers, but also questions the view that there could be *"an emerging profession of higher education manager"* (Bacon, 2009, p. 16). Taking this a stage further, it can be inferred that EX1 did not believe or acknowledge that managers within the University were in any way different from those in other

sectors. In essence, they were neither academic, professional support nor HE managers but just managers, akin to those in any other organisation.

Returning to the earlier issue of the interface between management and leadership, the researcher questioned the distinction in terms of development provision. It was clear that EX1 had firm views on the need to differentiate between these apparently different aspects of development, explaining that:

“There’s two distinct strands...I think leadership is a big journey...we pushed the leadership agenda forwards... So yes we’ve separated them off.”

However, despite these firm views for separate development provision for managers, EX1’s views were again contradictory, professing clarity between management and leadership but yet admitting overlap, stating that:

“I think there is a clear differentiation between what is leadership and what is management. That being said, as a manager you have to have some leadership qualities in there as well. So yes we’ve separated them off, but I fully recognise that as a manager you have to have some leadership as well.”

This approach was justified by EX1 as a deliberate attempt to align managers to the current needs of the University, preparing them to take staff forwards in the required way and direction *“in terms of the number of changes the organisation is going through”*. Furthermore, his response strongly indicated a managerial focus on efficiency, performance and results through which *“KPIs and performance objectives are delivered”*. The purposeful nature of this type of managerial regime was emphasised, enabling strict conformity to established systems and processes with the stated aim *“to take people from one situation to another; get that followership happening”*, albeit in an obedient rather than inspired way.

In addition to EX1’s firm strategic view based on a strong desire to align the development of managers with the perceived needs of the University, it was interesting to note that he also believed that *“we have a lot of managers but we don’t have many leaders”*. When questioned further about this, it was, in fact, a comparative statement, linked to the earlier declared tendency of EX1 to only identify good practice from outside the sector. EX1 further qualified this by professing that:

“There is a tendency for our managers to be very insular. They look for the solutions within the University based on their previous experience, instead of looking outside to find best practice elsewhere.”

In terms of the future development of University managers, EX1 emphatically stated that there was a *"huge journey still to go on...we will need to take it much, much deeper into the organisation"*. However, he exhibited less certainty about exactly what needed to be done and how this was to be achieved, admitting that:

"I still think there is a way to go in terms of making sure that what is now in there is right...So I think there's still a trick there we need to work on – not quite sure what the answer is."

Thus, although from EX1 it was evident that the development of managers within the University continues to be evolving, some questions still remained unanswered. For example, despite a display of dissatisfaction with management development in the past, EX1 could not explain why there was a lack of explicit declaration about what an effective manager should look like. In addition, although he recognised the need to continue to develop managers, he revealed a latent uncertainty about exactly how this was to be achieved. In contradiction, he advocated *"pulling out learning from the formal programmes"* and transferring it into the workplace, but did not recognise the possibility of a reverse flow with learning starting from work itself.

4.4 Summary of the emerging themes from a consolidated analysis of the interview with EX1 and the strategic plans

From a collegial learning community to a market-led business

The views of a member of the Executive team responsible for the development of staff, coupled with an analysis of the University's strategic plans over a sixteen year period demonstrate a clear expectation of a move from a traditional collegial establishment towards a highly managerial, outward-facing institution, ready to respond to the vicissitudes of the market. Even as a post-92 organisation with longstanding and well-established vocational routes and links, this combination of evidence shows an aspiration for the University to have an increasingly stronger business-orientation with a utilitarian focus contributing to the economy (Henkel, 2005 and Stevenson and Bell, 2009). Indeed, the strategic plans between 1996 and 2012 indicate the Executive team's desire for change, affecting both the management style and the espoused purpose and values, whilst the views of EX1 show a preference for a corporate rather than individualist development of staff, and strongly advocate a more focussed allegiance to commercial values and orientation. However, whilst this might be symptomatic of an organisation with a "poor sense of institutional identity" (McNay 2006, p.163), it could be argued that it is merely indicative of a University now sensing the need to survive in a commercial marketplace where "universities will be under competitive pressure to provide better quality and lower cost" (DBIS, 2011a, p.2). Moreover, the language in use within the later strategic

plans echoes the managerialist words and phrases used frequently by EX1, signalling a perceived need to communicate and be accountable to a more business-led external environment. Linked to this, there is a strong indication through the declared purposes and values within the strategic plans of an increased pressure for the University to look further afield than just a relatively local, or at best, regional community. Indeed, the increasingly outward-facing strategic plans are mirrored by EX1's insistence on looking for best-practice leadership ideas from outside the HE sector, openly preferring these as examples of intended future practice for managers within the University. It also appears through the managerial messages declared both within the plans and by EX1 that the University is being re-positioned to respond to external directives, in the pursuit of world-class skills (Leitch, 2006) and the call to be more customer-focused and market-driven, thereby making a greater contribution to the economy (DBIS, 2009 and 2011a). Whilst symptomatic of an organisation in which "external forces are impinging on the values and work" (Mc Innis, 2010, p.162), it is the progressive increase in the number of the Executive-espoused values and their explicit, strategic alignment which is particularly noticeable. Indeed, this re-orientation towards the commercial world is repeatedly pledged by EX1 as the intended direction of travel for the University.

From scholarship to global business-speak

Perhaps the most noticeable change within the strategic plans is the language used, signalling a new characterisation of the University as an international business rather than a learning community, traditionally serving a predominantly localised community of both staff and students. This tendency is also strongly and consistently evidenced in EX1's phraseology. Whilst both sources of data give evidence of the inclusion of more business-oriented terminology as the University is purportedly "exposed to quasi-market conditions and discourses more commonly found in the commercial world (Kolsaker, 2008, p.513), what is particularly noticeable in this research is the predominantly Executive-led aspiration to move from collegial to more stringent management-focussed practices. As a consequence, there is a perceived need to adopt more recognised business language and to 'perform' in an increasingly outward-facing arena. Although in McNay's (1995) model of four cultures within HE (collegium, bureaucracy, corporation and enterprise) this aspect positions the University within the enterprise quadrant, the evidence suggests that there are still strong remnants of a corporation culture with the perceived need for conformity to business and performance-oriented objectives. In contrast to the previous collegial regime in which staff were "indulged as elite intellectuals" (Dopson and McNay, 1996, p.25), the University's strategic plans are suggestive of increasing control resting not with the provider but with the 'consumer'. Paradoxically, it could be argued that the move towards being more of an 'enterprise' does not give the University the freedom to be enterprising and make innovative decisions, but to respond to external demands for change.

Moreover, as demonstrated by the views of EX1, there is an increasing trend for good practice in terms of management development to be imported from non-HE contexts as current approaches by most University managers are perceived to be inappropriate. This suggests a generalist (rather than HE specific) view of not only management but also the development of managers.

From the development of individuals to the enhanced performance of the organisation

In terms of the commitment towards the development of staff, there is evidence that this has continued throughout the different iterations of the strategic plan, and this need is given heightened importance by the views of EX1. However, the evidence suggests that there has been a change in emphasis, with a desire to move from an individualistic pursuit of personal growth to a more focussed and centrally controlled activity, strategically aligned to the needs of the University in order to enhance capability, to 'perform' within a changing external environment. Whilst this centralisation and more strategic focus of staff development appears to be symptomatic of a change in the "locus of power" (Lomas, 2006, p.244) and, perhaps, indicative of a "strengthened steering core" (Clark, 2004, p.2), the evidence from the strategic plans also suggests that the trend for this has accelerated in the last decade. Applying Blackmore's (2009) ISIS conceptualisation which focuses on the extent to which development (albeit that of academics) is inclusive of the institutional agenda, is aligned to strategy, is integrated within the work of the university and incorporates scholarship, the evidence from this research programme shows a strong skew towards strategic imperatives. This not only suggests that the development of staff within the University has embraced a human resources rather than an educational development profile, but is also inclusive of those in both academic and support roles. Moreover, within the University this has increasingly resulted in a more structured, centrally-provided, policy-based approach to the development of managers, but with a more intended focus to raise leadership (as a concept) as it purportedly "*will continue to be a massive theme*" (EX1) to achieve high performance in an objectives-focussed and target-led culture. However, whilst the views of EX1 and the analysis of the strategic plans show a heightened desire to focus on accountability, efficiency and effectiveness (Morley, 2003 and Lomas 2006) and a concern for measuring and monitoring the performance of staff as human resources (Warner and Crosthwaite, 1995), it can be argued that these are, at best, aspirational rather than actual, and the extent to which they can be reflected in the practice of individual managers remains to be seen. The researcher concludes therefore, that whilst acknowledging the strong strategic steer to the development of staff in the strategic plans and the views of EX1, further research still needs to be conducted on the impact of this approach on the performance of individuals.

Reaching a conclusion

A combined analysis of the views of EX1 and the University's strategic plans indicates an expectation that managerialist practices and language are becoming increasingly dominant. Aligned to the change moving through the HE sector depicted in chapter 1, this reflects the University endeavouring to gradually move away from deep-seated values and norms. Furthermore, it signals an institution where the championing of traditional collegial values is anticipated to ebb (although, arguably not necessarily disappear), juxtaposed with an increased flow towards a more power-driven culture (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001), a strengthening of centralised control (Lomas, 2006 and Shattock, 2010) and a move towards a more executively managed institution (Lambert (2003). Indeed, an analysis of the evidence from both sources indicates that increasingly there is an Executive-led drive towards the adoption of key tenets of managerialism, with commercially targeted objectives and constantly evolving priorities. Within the University's strategic plans, through an analysis of the purpose, the values, the commitment to the development of staff and the language in use, it is evident that their authors depict the University as an organisation which is moving from being a learning community to an externally facing business. This is consistent with the views of EX1 and elucidates the Executive Team's desire for the University's gradual change from being "seat[s] of esoteric learning to utilitarian contributors to the nations' economic survival" (Stephenson and Bell, 2009, pp.13-14). Indeed, the analysis of EX1's views and the strategic plans indicate that the University is no longer focussing on the sustainability of its own community of scholars but, instead, on its position within the external market, where both expertise and good practice are reputed to lie. It is questionable, however, as to whether the move towards a more business-oriented approach is still aspirational rather than actual. Furthermore, it could be argued that the major challenge might lie in "bringing the big picture as seen by university leaders into line with the day-to-day reality" (Martin, 1999, p.78) of other staff.

The combined evidence from the analysis of the University's strategic plans and the interview with EX1 undoubtedly signals a strong Executive-led aspiration to change the culture within the University. It could be argued that some sort of change would be inevitable in the light of economic and political pressures for universities to become more efficient, more business-focussed and more responsive to evolving 'customer' expectations. However, the culture shift which has resulted in response to these changing requirements has been one of compliance, conformity and accountability. Perhaps the question which needs to be asked is whether this response was the only option or, alternatively, whether the desired outcomes could have been achieved by any other means? Indeed, reducing localised control in favour of conformity with tightly managed systems and structures is indicative of a "tight-tight" corporation culture (Dopson and McNay, 1996, p.25). It is questionable, then, whether this imposition of such tighter control is the most effective way to achieve the desired outcome of standardisation. It could, for example, be argued that a longer-lasting, sustainable solution might be

better secured through alternative approaches which retain the best practices of the past, although clearly not all of the past as it cannot be assumed that the totality of previous regimes was perfect. Letting go of *some* of the past might, therefore, be an inevitable consequence of the need for change, and, contrary to other views might not be the “end of enlightenment” (Barnett, 2000, p. 230). It is, therefore, the way this process is effectively achieved that perhaps needs to be questioned.

In addition, it could be argued that, despite the current focus on ‘leadership’ rather than ‘management’ as the preferred regime, as highlighted by the title change outline in section 1.3 and the views espoused by EX1 in section 4.3, the move towards greater conformity, control and compliance is more symptomatic of management (and managerialism) rather than leadership. The danger of such an approach is that ‘followership’ becomes more akin to reluctant compliance. If the University is to make the step-change required of it to respond to external pressures, an ethos which encourages risk, innovation and entrepreneurialism needs to be encouraged. Ironically, these seem to be the antithesis of the current push towards conformity, compliance and control. In addition, securing staff ownership and proactive engagement in improvement and change may be more difficult to achieve if the control is too tight, where, it could be argued, staff feel restricted rather than liberated, and forced rather than engaged. Indeed, it could be argued that perhaps what is needed is more aligned to Duke’s (2002) assertion of “letting go rather than tightening up, and managing better by interfering less” (p. 154).

So, it still needs to be seen, therefore, whether a regime of tight control and bureaucratic management will deliver the required results of improved efficiencies and increased outputs (teaching, research and enterprise) or, alternatively, whether there will eventually be increased “fractures or fault-lines” (Rowland, 2002, p.53) as the aspirations of an Executive team become (even more) detached from the rest of the University. Doing nothing and staying the same may not be an option for any university in the face of changing external pressures and parameters. Change is then inevitable, but, it is argued, that forced change with little engagement from others may be short-lived. Could, therefore, *effective* leadership and management rather than no leadership and management be the way forward? It is anticipated that this would require an ethos of trust and cooperation, traditional collegial engagement (but in collective rather than individualist agendas), and internal collaboration rather than competition. These tenets would be essential and may, indeed, lessen the requirement for a top-down and imposed way of ‘leading’ in favour of a more devolved, proactive, engaged and empowered senior layer of University managers.

As stated in section 1.4, the central focus of this thesis is to find meaning in university managers’ perceptions of how they learn within their roles. This combined analysis of the views of EX1, as a

member of the Executive team with responsibility for management development, with the University's strategic plans, therefore serves as an important backcloth against which to contextualise managers' perceptions of their in-role development. As a consequence, the research within this thesis is not mono-dimensional in terms of method or actors but draws from different sources of evidence. The analysis of both EX1's views and the strategic plans provide an insight into the espoused pledges and commitments of the Executive layer of managers. Together, these two sources of evidence give a firm indication of the requisite management regime, along with the integral values and ethos to which is aspired. The analysis of both these sources of evidence thereby provides an indication of the expectations of the Executive team about the direction and focus within the University, and undoubtedly shows a required move from a collegial to a more managerialist regime, with a concomitant heightening of emphasis on behaviour and thinking in line with a performance-dominated culture. Indeed, it is in this context that the expectations of University managers are set as they endeavour to learn within their roles. The evidence suggests that it is an environment where the performance of managers is expected to improve, even though there is a lack of clarity from EX1 as to what this should look like or how it can be achieved.

Chapter 5: Background information on the twenty-four managers interviewed

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an insight into each of the managers interviewed, focussing in particular on their previous background, years of management experience and formal and informal training for their role. A brief pen-portrait of each manager is provided in appendix 9. This information is summarised in table 5.1 below, followed by an analytical presentation of this summary data, and then a brief conclusion in section 5.3.

Table 5.1 Summary Data of the Managers interviewed

	Male or female	Length of service at the University	Time in current role when first interviewed	Management experience in career as a whole	Experience of working outside the HE sector	Disciplinary area or specialist /generic	Management qualification	Attended in-house MDP	Enrolled on senior leadership course by 2 nd interview or reflective journal
AM1	F	4 years	< 6 months	20 years	15 years	Business-related	No	Yes	Yes
AM2	M	< 1 year	< 6 months	25 years	25 years	Business-related	Yes	No	-
AM3	M	6 years	15 months	20 years	0	Science & technology	No	Yes	-
AM4	M	16 years	< 6 months	8 years	10 years	Business-related	No	Yes	-
AM5	M	20 years	2.5 years	15 years	0	Science & technology	Yes	Yes	-
AM6	F	20 years	2 years	30 years	10 years	Science & technology	No	Yes	-
AM7	M	14 years	13 months	20 years	10 years	Business-related	Yes	Yes	-
AM8	F	16 years	5 years	5 years	0	Arts or humanities	No	Yes	Yes
AM9	M	16 years	5-6 years	9 years	10 years	Arts or humanities	No	Yes	-
AM10	M	30 years	5 years	35 years	5 years	Business-related	Yes	Yes	-
AM11	M	10 years	4 years	18 years	8 years	Science & technology	No	Yes	Yes
AM12	F	20 years	2 years	15 years	5 years	Business-related	No	Yes	-
AM13	F	2 years	1 year	20 years	17 years	Arts or humanities	Yes	Yes	Yes
PSM1	M	2.5 years	2.5 years	10.5 years	8 years	Specialist	Yes	Yes	-
PSM2	F	21 years	2.5 years	2.5 years	5 years	Generic	No	No	-
PSM3	F	20 years	9 years	15 years	5 years	Generic	No	Yes	Yes
PSM4	M	10 years	6 months	20 years	15 years	Specialist	Yes	Yes	Yes
PSM5	M	20 years	8 years	12 years	0	Specialist	No	Yes	Yes
PSM6	F	6 years	3 years	30 years	24 years	Generic	Yes	Yes	-
PSM7	F	24 years	5 years	28 years	4 years	Generic	No	Yes	-

PSM8	F	10 years	5 years	20 years	10 years	Generic	Yes	Yes	-
PSM9	M	<1 year	<1 year	8 years	15 years	Specialist	No	No	-
PSM10	F	1 year	1 year	18 years	20 years	Specialist	Yes	No	-
PSM11	F	24 years	15 years	30 years	10 years	Specialist	No	Yes	-

5.2 Initial analysis of the summary data

Subject/Specialist background

Of the 13 academic managers, 6 were from business-related subjects, 4 were from science and technology subjects and 3 were from art/social sciences/humanities subjects. All the 6 academic managers from business-related subjects had gained a management qualification, although questioning within the initial interview revealed that this was to enable them to teach in that area (as opposed to manage in it). Of these academic managers, those with most management experience were from business-related subjects, with 5 out of the 6 having 15 or more years of management experience in their careers as a whole.

The subject area from which there was least management experience was art/social sciences/humanities, with 2 of these academic managers having less than 10 years of management experience. However, the other academic manager from this category had 17 years of management experience.

Bacon (2009, p.11) offers a specialist/generic categorisation for professional support staff. Specialists have (not surprisingly) specialist roles, qualifications and chartered memberships of professional associations whereas those in the generic category are not specifically qualified for one particular area or role. Adopting this categorisation, of the 11 professional support managers, 6 were specialists whereas 5 were generic.

Compared with the academic managers, there were less discernable patterns in the professional support managers' backgrounds. From the specialist group, there were 3 managers with 12 or less years of management experience, along with 3 having 18 years or over. From the generic group, their management experience ranged from 1 having just 2.5 years, to 4 having between 15 and 30 years. Similarly for the length of time at the University, although 3 of the specialist managers had worked for the University for 2.5 years or less, another had been there 10 years and the other 2 both had 20 or more years in service. From the generic managers, 2 had been at the University for 6 and 10 years respectively, whereas 3 had 20 or more years.

Length of service at the University

12 out of the 24 managers had been at the University for 15 years or more (5 males, and 7 females). 7 out of these 12 managers with the longest service were academic managers, and 5 were professional support managers. 2 out of the 24 managers had been at the University between 10 and 14 years. Taken together, 16 out of the 24 managers had been at the University for 10 years or more, perhaps suggesting a preference for seeking internal rather than external promotion, and indicating a tendency towards being “locals” rather than “cosmopolitans” (Gouldner, 1957, p.281) in their focus, outlook and/or career aspirations. 8 of the 24 managers (4 males and 4 females) had been at the university for less than 10 years, and from these, 5 had been there for 2.5 years or less (2 academic managers and 3 professional support managers).

With both academic and professional managers, there was a high correlation between length of service and management experience, suggesting that their time at the University had been in management/team leadership roles. There was one notable exception to this from a generic professional support manager who had 21 years of service at the University but only 2.5 of these were in her current management position. Interrogating the data further, it appears that this latter move had been self-initiated to give her more in-role challenge.

Length of time in current role

Due to a major cross-institutional restructure which had occurred just prior to the start of the thesis, along with a series of localised reorganisations which had happened since then, the majority of the managers had been in their currently titled post for 6 years or less. Only 3 managers (2 females and 1 male) had been in post for more than 6 years. These worked in areas of the University which had not been significantly restructured so as to affect their roles.

Management experience in career as a whole

17 out of the 24 managers (7 males and 10 females) had 15 years or more of management experience. Of these, 10 were academic managers and 7 were professional support managers. As the data set was comprised of senior managers within a post-92 institution where academic management posts were permanent rather than rotating (as in many pre-92 universities), it would be reasonable to expect that the majority of them would have a number of years of management experience.

As outlined in table 3.1 showing the profile of the managers interviewed, this was a diverse group of senior managers, ranging from Deans and Directors to Team Leaders and Project Managers. Typically those in more junior positions (albeit still identified as ‘senior’ but not Executive managers within this post-92 university) had the least experience of management. For example, the academic and professional support managers with the least experience were both in team leader or project

manager types of role. In contrast, 1 male academic manager had 35 years of management experience, 30 of which were at the University.

5 managers (3 academic and 2 professional support) had less than 10 years of management experience, and 1 of the latter category was relatively new to management with 2.5 years. Of the 17 managers with 15 or more years of management experience, 9 of these also had management qualifications. 15 of these 17 had completed the in-house, non-accredited management development programme which was compulsory for all managers. The 2 who had not done so joined the University after this programme had ceased to exist (as it was funded through the time-limited Rewarding and Developing Fund).

Experience of working outside the sector

Of the 24 managers, 20 had experience of working outside the sector. 10 of these were academic managers (6 males and 4 females) and 10 were professional support managers (3 males and 7 females). 5 of the academic managers and 10 of the professional support managers had been employed in the private sector at some time in their careers. 3 academic managers had no experience of working outside the HE sector.

There was a high correlation between the longevity of management experience and the length of time working outside the HE sector. However, in terms of whether subject/specialist background could be a causative factor in working outside the sector, the high number of managers (20 out of 24) made it difficult to find any patterns. Disaggregating the data further into a) over 10 years and b) up to and including 10 years revealed some differentiation:

Of the 3 academic managers with over 10 years experience of working outside the sector, 2 were from business-related subjects and 1 was from arts/humanities. Out of the 7 academic managers who had up to and including 10 years working outside the sector, 4 were from business-related subjects, 2 were from science and 1 was from arts/ humanities. This might be suggestive of business-related subjects 'requiring' more experience from outside of HE. However the small numbers do not allow for this correlation to be validated. Moreover, instead of a subject-related correlation to working in non-HE settings, it could be argued that as a post-92 university, for the vast majority of subject areas, prior experience of working outside the HE sector is increasingly encouraged and sometimes 'required'.

From professional support managers, a more discernible pattern in the data was evident, albeit focussing on very small numbers. 3 of the 4 professional support managers with over 10 years experience of working outside the sector were in "specialist" roles (Bacon, 2009, p.11). 4 of the 6 professional support managers who had up to and including 10 years working

outside the sector were in “generic” roles (Bacon, 2009, p.11). This might, therefore, be indicative of ‘specialist’ professional support managers gathering a wider range of experience in their careers, with their time in HE forming just a small part of this. Conversely, more ‘generalist’ professional support managers might stay longer in Higher Education as their skill-set might match a larger range of sector-specific roles.

10 out of the 20 managers who had worked outside the HE sector also had a management qualification.

Whilst the analysis of this data illustrates the divergent range of background and experience which may have contributed to their perceptions of events within the interviews and journals, it also raises questions about the extent to which either of the subgroups of academic managers and professional support managers can be described as homogenous.

Management qualifications and development

5 of the academic managers and 6 of the professional support managers had gained formal management qualifications. On further examination of the primary data, 3 out of the 5 academic managers with management qualifications were in business-related subject areas of the University. For these managers, the gaining of management qualifications was linked to their original teaching specialism rather than to their management responsibilities. Closer interrogation of the data also revealed that none of the management qualifications gained by managers within either group were specific to Higher Education. Of the management qualifications gained by the 11 managers, only 2 had been achieved in the previous 5 years. 20 out of the 24 managers had attended the previous mandatory management development programme within the University. The 4 who had not attended were not in post when this programme was delivered.

It is evident, therefore, that whilst a significant number of managers in both groups had management qualifications, the majority of these were neither recent nor specific to the HE environment.

5.3 Conclusion

The information provided in this chapter demonstrates that although the managers are categorised and coded into ‘academic’ and ‘professional support’, their background, previous experience and training is varied in nature. The evidence of this heterogeneity serves as a backcloth to the data analysis chapters which follow, contributing to the practices, values and beliefs of the managers interviewed.

Chapter 6: Data Analysis Stage 1: Initial Deconstruction of the Data

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to triangulate the data from the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals. From the twenty-four managers in the initial interviews, four took part in follow-up interviews approximately one year later. Five different managers then completed reflective journals with the aim of recording specific 'incidents' affecting their learning. Whilst the triangulation of the evidence from these different sources was possible under most of the themes explored, there were some areas which did not lend themselves to this type of analysis. For example, in section 6.6.1 where the journey into management was explored, this theme was neither returned to by the researcher in the follow-up interviews as it was assumed to be the same, nor did it feature within the reflective journals due to the focus on recent 'incidents'. Sections 6.2 to 6.8 systematically deconstruct the data through using Weick's seven characteristics of sensemaking, as outlined in section 2.5, in order to ascertain the contribution made by sensemaking to the learning of managers, at the same time as identifying factors which assist or inhibit this process. Although a review of the literature in section 2.5 did reveal that other writers examine sensemaking as a construct, what was particularly attractive about Weick's model was that it offered a framework of criteria which could be used to interrogate the data. However, in addition to this framework of criteria, some of the manager characteristic variables identified through the subgroups in table 5.1 were also used to identify any patterns in the data. This fine-grained analysis was conducted on the evidence from the initial interviews. The data from the follow-up interviews of a subgroup of recently appointed managers and that from the reflective journals did not lend itself to this type of pattern analysis as each of the manager's experience was explored separately in order to appreciate the range of multiple meanings. However, the background variables of all the subjects in the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals were part of the broader pattern analysis of the data from the initial interviews.

A brief summary of the emerging themes is offered in section 6.9. Findings from the in-depth analysis in this chapter are then discussed within the context of the wider literature and the integrated conceptual framework in chapter 7. Before presenting the findings, however, it is worth revisiting key issues which emerged from the literature review as a reminder about what might be expected if previous writers are 'right' (or at least, their views have application to the context of this thesis, taking into consideration the convergence of a varied range of literature sources into one study). Indeed, a review of the literature signalled that the learning of university managers is likely to be affected by a number of different factors, and that a single-stranded solution to this issue might not be appropriate. First and foremost, the learning of these managers is set within the context of HE, a

turbulent environment which might affect institutions and the demands they place on their staff. Superimposed on this sector and institutional context is the predominantly polarised way in which academic managers and professional support managers are written about in the literature, suggesting a difference in roles and identities. By implication, therefore, this might suggest that there may be a difference in their learning or their opportunities to learn. The formal/informal learning dichotomy was also apparent in the literature, with the questionable relevance of the former to contemporary management challenges, as opposed to the wide-ranging nature of the latter. Linked to this, the importance of the workplace as a potentially rich learning environment was evident, emphasising the possibility of a wide range of task-embedded and social learning opportunities. The extent to which all this learning might be captured through reflection was also highlighted, illuminating the benefits but also the barriers that might prevent it from becoming widely used. Last but not least, there was an insight into sensemaking, offering possible reassurance about the often complex, never-ending and evolving nature of this process which eventually can lead to a more comprehensive interpretation of factors in order to elicit meaning (or multiple meanings).

The analysis which follows will explore the extent to which these factors have application within this study in order to suggest a plausible explanation (or indeed series of explanations) for how university managers learn.

6.2 Identity

Aligned to Weick's broad category of 'identity', the extent to which the interviewees were learning to understand their roles and identify themselves as managers was investigated. Each interviewee's perception of his/her role was interrogated, and the expectations of them from others were examined.

6.2.1 Seeking to clarify their roles

In trying to learn the requirements of their roles, the majority of managers had discovered an inherent lack of clarity, with unclear boundaries and an absence of role definition. This was particularly apparent amongst academic managers who highlighted the unpredictability and reactive nature of their roles:

*"...fire fighting is very much the accepted view... you never have any idea from the moment when you come in on a morning to the last thing at night what you're going to face...
"...providing the monitoring, sort of the policemen on the beat" (AM4)*

"I just hurtled from day to day, dealing with what seemed the most urgent thing in front of me..." (AM8)

"...a lot of reactive activities which are fire-fighting crises of various sorts...." (AM9)

"...you can get very bogged down in a lot of the detail, and think "Should I be doing this?" (AM12)

All of these academic managers had been at the University for over fifteen years. As they were not new to the institutional systems and processes, it appeared that their searching for clarity was directed at their management roles. They were trying to understand their boundaries and become accustomed to a feeling of reactivity which dominated their roles. Furthermore, none of these academic managers had a formal management qualification, and so their in-situ learning was tacit rather than theory-based. All of them had, however, attended the previous management development programme at the University, and despite this focussing on accepted ways to carry out a range of formal procedures, it could be argued that this did not seem to have application to the unscheduled and erratic challenges that faced them in their daily roles. Their responses implied a constant searching to find clarity and meaning in the roles, suggesting unclear boundaries and undetermined role demarcation. AM11, an academic who had been in his current management role for four years still perceived an inherent conflict of competing demands:

"...you're obviously pulled in numerous directions still to represent your area."

This inner tension of being *"pulled in numerous directions"* resulted in AM11 not being able to proactively plan and own his workload and schedule. Furthermore there appeared to be a stoic acceptance of the predominantly reactive way of approaching his management role:

"...what I end up doing day by day and week by week is pretty much steered by what's coming up...sometimes reactionary...responding to changes in the University and demands of the Faculty." (AM11)

Indeed this allusion to *"what I end up doing"* typified the perceived reactive nature of the role from this and other academic managers as they were trying to individually make sense of their respective roles, clarify boundaries and pin-point their responsibilities. Taking this reactivity a stage further, another academic manager who despite having over twenty years of management experience drawn mainly from outside of HE, was still learning to adjust to being pulled in different directions within her management role at the University:

"People within my role are very much 'piggy-in-the-middle'- you get a lot coming down on us from management and we get a lot coming up from staff." (AM13)

The *'piggy-in-the-middle'* description of the management role being positioned between other layers of staff gave another dimension to the need to be responsive. It also suggested that this particular manager did not feel that she belonged to the management group. Added to this, there was the view that academic managers were adopting a role: for example, AM2, a manager who although new to the University, had held senior management roles elsewhere (including having his own manufacturing company). Irrespective of the diversity of his prior experience, he still indicated a lack of confidence in who he was, perceiving the need to adopt a different persona in his new role as a university manager:

"...well I think I'm acting as a manager"

Indeed, the significance of *"acting as a manager"* suggested an identity that was taken on but yet remained false, a way of behaving in which this manager perceived not to be genuine, despite his previous management experience. Linked to this need to 'act' in a different way, there was also the view that whereas academic managers had felt relatively confident in their previous academic roles, their new management responsibilities caused them to feel much more insecure. AM4, for example, who was new to his senior management role, having been an academic for sixteen years, did not appear to transfer any of this experience from previous roles into his new management position, suggested that:

"I think as a manager you suddenly find yourself in a role where that confidence disappears."

Similarly, AM9, despite having gathered curriculum leadership responsibilities over a number of years, did not appear to draw on this in his new role as a senior manager. Instead, he depicted the gradual evolution of his management role which *"sort of evolved... I knew that job needed doing"*. In this way, he not only showed a passive acceptance of the changing responsibilities and duties rather than a positive adoption of a new identity as a manager, but also indicated a role which emerged rather than was defined and shaped by him.

This lack of clarity about the role was not restricted to academic managers. However, although most professional support managers suggested that their roles lacked definition, they displayed a stronger sense of optimism. In particular, being managers meant taking responsibility and shaping their roles. For example, PSM8, a professional support manager whose entire career since graduating had been in management roles showed this optimism:

"...anything and everything!...In a way I was lucky that I developed the role-I shaped it...So if the role doesn't match my expectations, it's my fault."

In this example, the tone of the response indicated that an apparent lack of definition was considered an opportunity to control and shape the role in a positive way. Responses from other professional support managers suggested that they were prepared to accept the challenging and dynamic nature of the role:

“...having to muddle your way through” (PSM1)

“It was a real challenge...try to unravel a complicated string of things to really get a handle on what it was about...a jigsaw but it’s a moving jigsaw” (PSM7)

PSM 1, PSM 7 and PSM 8 (above) had all worked outside the HE sector, but in contrast to some with much longer external experience, they only had ten years or less upon which to draw. Only PSM 1 was in a “specialist” (Bacon, 2009, p.11) as opposed to a generic professional support role. In addition, they had all attended the previous functional management development programme aligned to carrying out policies. It is unclear, however, as to the impact of either of these two factors, but what is evident, is a sense of confidence, leading to a willingness to approach situations with optimism. Indeed, a view which also became apparent from professional support managers was the empowerment aspect of their roles, allowing them to shape not just their own role and development but also that of others:

“My role allows me to have an influence over things...to make a difference...” (PSM1)

“...successful management is about people ...it’s about enabling different parts of the organisation to achieve their goals... not just ploughing the furrow.” (PSM4)

“It liberates...you can start to realise visions, you can start to see people grow and learn and develop.” (PSM5)

“I find it a very empowering role here... creating the vision within the University ... the ability to shape.” (PSM10)

These were all “specialist” rather than “generic” (Bacon, 2009, p.11) professional support managers who, it is assumed, could draw upon and make comparisons with other (non-HE) sectors and different professions to inform their practice. It could be argued, therefore, that potentially they were more “cosmopolitan” (Gouldner, 1957, p.281) in outlook as they would be in external professional networks, and, indeed, three out of these four managers had ten years or less experience at the University. In addition, three out of these four managers also had formal management qualifications. This may have impacted not only on their perceptions about their roles as managers and their

willingness to learn, but also on the extent to which they were prepared to accept responsibility for capacity-building and performance improvement in their staff. In many of the interviews with professional support managers, their body language and enthusiasm for their roles was evident. This was epitomised by PSM6, with over thirty years of management experience drawn mainly from outside HE. This appeared to give her a calm self-assurance in the role, claiming that management is *“something I love doing...that’s what management is all about – being productive.”*

Whilst the perceived need for managers to search for clarification in their roles re-emerged during the follow-up interviews, it manifested itself differently. Despite an allusion to the reactive nature of their roles, both the academic managers who were new to their current roles had many years of management experience internal and external to HE, appeared to show a gradual acceptance:

“...you have to learn to deal with that frustration.” (AM1)

“I do think things ‘happen to you’ more as a manager...the unpredictability of that...because we are crisis workers...you come in with one plan and then you have to adapt to a different one.” (AM13)

PSM4’s twenty-five years of management experience appeared to make him comfortable with his new senior management role. He showed the optimism exhibited in his previous interview, positively accepting the variety and unpredictability associated with carrying out his new role:

“It’s a bit of an iceberg, with eighty percent of it sitting underneath the water...it’s just not text-book... it’s about people...dealing with individuals and different situations which don’t fall neatly into little boxes...” (PSM4)

Even PSM9, a manager with a strong commercial background who in his previous interview had stoically defended the need not to change, admitted having to *“learn to get my head around it.”*, indicating a gradual and ongoing process of ‘making sense’ which appeared to stand outside the boundaries of formal learning.

Within the reflective journals there was less explicit evidence of the managers’ musings over what it meant to be a manager. Indirectly, however, there were indications that some were still trying to work out their identities, albeit through different foci. For example, AM8, despite having had a senior academic role for a number of years, still displayed a residual tension about being a senior manager. The issue for AM8 was not about the work itself, but about the assumed identity through the title of a manager. Indeed, at the initial interview, AM8 emphasised that she disliked the title of manager, stating that it was *“...like something in sales-a meaningless phrase”*, and also professed to only admit

to being a manager “*behind your hands.*” This re-emerged in AM8’s journals, as indicated by her admission that she “sometimes fail[ed] to step into [my] senior role”. Here, however, it manifested itself not just in her dislike of the title, but in her professed reluctance to outwardly embrace her new senior management role.

A more latent resistance to assume a management role was evident from PSM5 who still showed remnants of an allegiance to his previous subject specialism. This was slightly anomalous as, having been at the University for twenty years he appeared to have enthusiastically ‘worked his way up’ into senior management. In his initial interview he showed a slight ambivalence in declaring that his management role was “*not a profession of choice...a second profession*”. Indeed, in his journal entries it became very evident that there was still a strong residual presence of previous technical responsibilities within his current senior management role. It seemed that PSM5 was experiencing (and possibly favouring) a dual-track career, one in his original specialist field and the other focussing on his management responsibilities. Alternatively, it might have been a consequence of a need for him to still have a ‘hands-on’ responsibility for his previous area. Either way, the entries in the journal resulted in being a synthesis of his diverse range of duties, and although there were specific and identifiable incidents drawn from his experience as a manager, these were not always separated from reflections on other parts of his role.

6.2.2 Learning to meet the expectations of others

Another theme which became evident from a wide range of managers in the initial interviews was that they had learned how they were being identified as part of the University management team with a collective identity rather than just as individuals:

“...commissioned if you like...on the side of management” (AM2)

“...you learn to have clarity about your role in terms of things like the hierarchy...you’re actually representing the organisation you work in.” (AM13)

“I have a greater sense now of the responsibility to present the University ‘line’- ‘the central party line’...now I feel that I am the person having to ‘deliver’ the position...” (AM1)

“I also had a few worries whether it was a kind of an ‘us and them’ type of thing and I had now crossed the barrier and I was now one of ‘them’ ”(AM3)

These academic managers were drawn from business-related, science and arts/humanities communities, and therefore disciplinary background did not seem to affect this perception of working more corporately. Whilst all of them had fifteen years or more of management experience, three of

these four managers also had over ten years of working outside the HE sector. There was less consistency amongst these managers relating to their previous management qualifications, with two having achieved one whilst the remaining two had not. The two who had gained the management qualifications had not done so recently, and so it could be assumed that, similar to the other two managers, their views were based primarily on management experience, but with a comparative understanding of working practices elsewhere.

AM3's reference to having "*crossed the barrier*" into a management position and being seen by others as "*one of them*" was a dominant theme among a few other academic managers. For example, one academic manager, despite having over twenty years of experience, drawn from curriculum leadership and health-care management roles, still seemed surprised at being labelled by staff as "*You're management*" (AM6). Furthermore, this also typified the tendency for managers to see themselves as having less of an individual identity but, instead, defined as part of a group, albeit not necessarily a homogenous one:

"...it does give you a sense of identity, with others doing similar roles." (AM3)

"...so that we can demonstrate that we are part of the chain." (AM9)

"...you do lose your personality to some extent, because you are following University policy. You are representing the University and if you don't like it you can't work for them." (AM13)

Needing to become part of the wider University was described by one academic manager as leading to a significant change, not just in his behaviour but moreover in identity:

"I've had to become a different person... I have to become more of a people person... That's something which I think I do need to be able to come to terms with." (AM4)

Being new into his senior management post, adapting to change implied that this manager was learning to behave differently, to move away from an individualistic approach characterised by his previous academic role and work within a more collective regime. Furthermore, the need to "*come to terms with*" possibly implied a stoic acceptance of this change, rather than a proactive and positive adoption.

From professional support managers there was less explicit negativity about being perceived as part of a management group:

"I understand it from that very much top level and strategic approach... we have a collective responsibility." (PSM5)

“...wear a University hat.” (PSM7)

“...joining the club- and that counts for a lot because when you’re in the club, you get to know things.” (PSM4)

This reference to a ‘club’ denoted learning to become part of a group, becoming accepted as a member and thereby gaining access to additional information. On further probing by the researcher, being a member of “*the club*” not only related to a feeling of belonging for this senior manager and of having inside knowledge about the organisation, but also the identity and recognition from others associated with that ‘membership’.

Another view which emerged related to a perceived change in reactions from other staff once these managers had taken on their management roles. In particular, they noticed a division between them and other staff, with a consequent change in the way others behaved towards them:

“Some people become less friendly towards you and quite hostile...” (AM1)

“There is a distinction, maybe there shouldn’t be, between management staff and those people not in that group. (AM2)

“Immediately I got the post I noticed a different behaviour from the people around me ...probably perceived me as somebody who they had to be a bit more wary of than before.”(AM3)

These academic managers each had twenty or more years in management posts and they had all worked outside the HE sector for at least fifteen years. They were, however, all relatively new into role, with each of them having less than two years in their current posts. On the one hand, it could be assumed that their prior experience of management and their knowledge of working practices elsewhere might inform their perspectives. Alternatively, their views might also be indicative of their awareness of the impact of this particular institutional context, with all its cultural expectations, norms and practices. Indeed, it is possible that this may have assumed greater importance than their prior experience in order for them to make sense of current ways of working, hierarchical processes and role-related divisions. Only one of these managers had a management qualification, and in the absence of a recent management development programme to inform how these managers carried out their new task-embedded duties, it is assumed that informal learning predominated.

Some academic managers also admitted a reluctance to announce their management identity to others. This was particularly evident from two art/humanities academic managers who had both been

at the university for over 15 years yet each had less than ten years of management experience. Both without management qualifications, these managers seemed to be gradually assimilating the requirements of their new senior management roles but with an evident reluctance to let go of their previous academic identities:

"...you don't proudly say you're a manager in academic contexts – you kind of admit to it behind your hands!" (AM8)

"When I go to other universities as an external examiner, the kind of collegial relationship with academics in management roles is very much built on that foundation...more a case of we're both academics who are managers." (AM9)

Learning to accept that now being in a management role they would be perceived differently by others was also highlighted by some professional support managers:

"It's restricting in a sense that there are preconditions about how you work and how you're seen by staff." (PSM5)

"...if you were seen to be going down and sitting in the tea room...it would take away your credibility I think." (PSM1)

Different views on how they were being perceived as managers were outlined by others. For example, PSM5, who had been at the University for twenty years, acknowledged the desire to retain strong links to his previous professional background, and thereby continue to be recognised by others as a member of that community. This was slightly anomalous as PSM5 had enthusiastically 'worked his way up' into his current senior management role, yet still exhibiting a clear wish to be part of a previous community. Furthermore, this manager questioned the confused and unregulated way in which staff become managers and are thereby expected to take on a new identity:

"I'm a [professional role] by trade, I'm still a member of the Chartered Institute ...It's bizarre that so many people end up in a management position but it's not a profession by choice."

Within the follow-up interviews, the process of trying to establish what their new roles meant continued and had two main elements: learning to understand their responsibilities and also learning what others expected of them, neither of which had occurred in a formal way. AM13, with over twenty years of management experience drawn from both inside and outside the HE sector, had an increasing awareness of the bureaucratic nature of her management role within the University:

"...glorified administrator...that's how it feels because you're in the middle of everything...they just think you sit in here!"

Similarly for AM1, the year since the initial interview had involved learning about what her role meant, both to herself, and to others. Despite not being new to management, with approximately fifteen years working commercially, including managing her own business, AM1 was still learning what it meant to be a senior manager within the context of the University, describing this as a gradual process:

"...getting used to the fact that not everybody's going to like you or agree with you...it's taken me a long time to reach the point of thinking that maybe it's no bad thing if not everybody likes you..."

"Getting used to the fact" appeared to be part of a process of a gradual realisation, a way of 'making sense' of her role and, in addition, the reaction of others to the way in which she was carrying it out. On further probing by the researcher, she was not basing this on her prior experiences of managing elsewhere. Consequently, the term "*reach the point*" was a deductive process which involved establishing what she was expected to do in her current role within the University environment, indicating a strong institutional dominance on her role.

This process of gradual realisation of what their new roles meant was echoed by PSM4, one of the professional support managers in the follow-up study. Even with many years experience in a number of different management roles both within and outside HE, PSM4 showed a desire to seek greater clarity within the role:

"...once you get into this level, people do look at you slightly differently...you have to behave professionally...other people have got expectations of you in the broader group"

This indicated PSM4's perceived need to learn contextually about the expected norms and practice within his new senior role.

Whilst there was less explicit evidence within the journals of reflections about role identity (possibly due to the focus on specific critical incidents and the learning from this process), PSM6 did ruminate over this issue. This signalled a desire to be accepted by other managers, especially those in academic areas. At the time of the initial interview, PSM6 had been in her current management role for three years, and prior to that had approximately thirty years of management experience drawn mainly from the retail sector. Despite this she still felt "*on the periphery*", indicating her awareness not only of role-boundaries, but also a feeling of vulnerability:

"I felt as if I was straying into territory that was not mine...this made me feel exposed..."

This was perhaps not only indicative of the context-specific nature of her learning as a University manager but also of the tensions experienced by staff whose roles lie at the boundaries between academic and professional support.

In summary, therefore, within the initial interviews, there was a range of evidence showing an apparent need to understand what their roles meant. Although practice varied, there was a difference between how academic and professional support managers had learned to view their identities. An emerging view from academic managers suggested not only a tendency to be uncomfortable with their unclear identities, but also an acknowledgement that this often meant responding to and meeting the expectations of others rather than shaping their own range of activities. Length of time working at the University did not seem to assist with this clarification of roles or identities. This was coupled with an evident reluctance to change, particularly as many had worked at the University for over fifteen years. Whether this was indicative of a lack of self-confidence in their abilities to make sense of their evolving roles or a reluctance to move forwards remains unclear. A contrasting view was exhibited by a range of professional support managers, both specialist and generic (Bacon, 2009, p.11). They viewed the apparent lack of definition as an opportunity to be proactive in shaping their roles. In relation to the extent to which their identities were determined by the University environment or others, there was a perception from many academic managers that they were viewed less as individuals and more as a collective member of a management team.

In the follow-up interviews and reflective journals it was apparent that this need to clarify roles was still evident, although there was less explicit differentiation between academic and professional support managers. As indicated earlier, the focussing of journal prompts on learning from specific incidents meant that there was less reflection on what their roles meant. Despite this there was some evidence of a residual reluctance to let go of past responsibilities in order to step into new management roles.

6.3 Retrospective

The second major area within Weick's descriptions of sensemaking relates to the "retrospective" (1995, p.24) act of reflection. Applying this characteristic to the context of this study, the evidence was analysed to ascertain the extent to which managers tried to reflect and learn from their experiences. The data was interrogated from a number of different angles, such as how and when this process of reflection occurred, the degree of formality or informality and the triggers associated with reflection.

Trying to find meaning from their experiences and actions through reflection, albeit informally, was evidenced by both academic and professional support managers. From academic managers, it tended to be a self-questioning critical analysis of their own actions:

"I would be really unwise not to [reflect] because the confidence is there at times but is maybe just on the surface whereas deep down it might not be." (AM4)

"I am a big fan of reflection... I will actually write it down if it is something that is really bothering me." (AM6)

"I reflect in relation to difficult decisions that I make, you know- 'Would I do that differently?'" (AM7)

"I probably reflect routinely all the time...on either individual things I've said or need to do... making me think whether it's [management] for me." (AM11)

Drawn equally from both business-related and science disciplinary areas, these academic managers had all worked outside the HE sector, albeit for ten years or less. Three out of the four also had over fifteen years of management experience and these were all males. They were experienced, therefore, in their roles as managers, and whilst cognisant of the value of reflecting, did not appear to feel the need to do this formally. Only one of these managers had a formal management qualification. So it would seem that they were largely relying on their prior experiences of management (within and external to HE) to inform and improve their practices, none of which had led them to formalising their reflections. Indeed, all these managers showed a willingness to learn informally, albeit in a reactive rather than a planned way. Their approach to reflection appeared to mirror this too.

Thus, the informal and ad hoc nature of 'reflection' was evident by these managers. However, despite an articulated belief in the value of reflection, there was less evidence of it as a planned and formalised process. For example, one academic manager who professed strong allegiance to his subject, mused about the extent to which he reflected. Whilst acknowledging that reflection was part of being an academic, he resisted a more structured approach due to lack of available time:

"Reflect? - worry! [laugh] The things that would trigger it are as often as not, the reactive day-to-day incidents that would come up....but that would make it sound structured and that there was a time set aside to do that- my time's not that free...but when I'm walking I do think through things." (AM9)

Other academic managers also stressed the informal and unstructured nature of the reflective process:

"...I'm a great thinker. I don't mean that I have great thoughts...I will look at many, many situations and think about them afterwards. I think I epitomise the reflective learner because I will always think afterwards" (AM1)

"... there is a lot of informal thinking it through, like "Did I handle that properly? Oh gosh, have I upset so-and-so?...you reflect all the time about your job..." (AM13)

This tendency to favour informal reflection was also mirrored by professional support managers:

"That's always the problem I've found with reflection...it's a hard job." (PSM4)

"...in an ad hoc way....it's probably not systematic, and it's not something I do every day, at least not consciously reflecting." (PSM7)

"The reflection at the end is so short lived because you're moving on to the next thing." (PSM11)

"I don't reflect often enough...Time is a key thing at the moment." (PSM9)

These managers were drawn equally from "specialist" and "generic" (Bacon 2009, p.11) professional support roles but their previous vocational training did not appear to have encouraged them to formally reflect as part of their learning. Only one of these managers had a formal management qualification. Three out of the four had over fifteen years within management, and these had also worked at the University for over ten years. Despite, in theory, being advocates of reflection, their situated practice of management seemed to be a barrier to these managers engaging more formally in reflection.

For some managers, an extrinsic trigger such as an appraisal was cited as providing the prompt for formal reflection:

"I know I only formally reflect at appraisal time." (AM5)

"Prior to appraisal I do kind of sit down and think 'What have I achieved in the past year?'...I wouldn't say it's not having time because you always have time— just spending two hours every day in the car!" (AM8)

Other managers (both academic and professional support) considered that learning from mistakes also prompted reflection:

"I had a disastrous time...I think everybody finds out much more from their mistakes than from things that have gone right...it's a longer lasting thing... forges you like steel." (AM3)

"...if you don't look back on how you do things wrong, I can't see how you'd progress things effectively."(AM1)

"...that's what is most crucial about reflection. It doesn't help you avoid mistakes every time but it's part of the learning process ...if the smoke clears enough, you get glimpses of brilliant insight and then it clouds again- that's the best you can hope for really!" (PSM5)

These managers, from both academic and professional support areas, all had over ten years of management experience, but none had a formal management qualification. Two of them had never worked outside the HE sector and so it could be argued that their endorsement for learning from mistakes was not coloured by customs and practice in other sectors. Their practice was more likely to be informed by learning to understand how to be effective within an evolving institutional climate, acknowledging when and where they had made mistakes. It could be anticipated that this would result in non-linear development where they would remain static as they learnt to understand where they had gone wrong, before proceeding to address any weaknesses. The reference to *"glimpses of brilliant insight"* from PSM5 also highlighted the opportunistic and sometimes transient nature of reflection within the process of development.

Within the first round of interviews, the researcher also purposely tried to ascertain whether specific 'critical' incidents triggered the process of reflection in managers. Despite changing the wording of the prompt, as explained in section 3.6 to better clarify what was sought, the majority of managers were not able to recall incidents which, to them, appeared particularly critical:

"Can't recall one." (AM7)

"I can't think of anything which is hugely critical." (AM5)

"I can think of times when I wouldn't necessarily describe it as a critical incident but I can think of some time when I have watched others." (PSM7)

All of these managers had over fifteen years of management experience, and all had worked outside of the HE sector, albeit for ten years or less. Two of these managers had management qualifications, but this increased knowledge had not led them to formally reflect on their practice. It could be assumed that their perceptions about the absence of specific critical incidents were, therefore, based on years of situated, task-embedded experiences as managers.

Single critical events or incidents either did not happen or alternatively, were not viewed as significant in these managers' learning. Indeed, a view was expressed that instead of single events, managers were more likely to experience a slow trickle of realisation over a number of smaller occurrences, resulting in a gradual build-up of awareness:

"There hasn't been a big "wow" one, but there have been a few that have been a "stock-take" (AM12)

"It's more a dawning realisation that we're not doing what we need to be." (AM5)

"I reflect all the time and I try to change. There's not one thing that sparked it for me – it can be a series of things..." (AM6)

These academic managers had all worked at the University for at least twenty years which may account for their preference to adopt a longer-term view, taking into account a number of incidents rather than seeing one in particular event as significant in their learning.

Within the follow-up study, although all the managers had claimed in their previous interviews to believe in the need to reflect, their subsequent responses varied. These ranged from recognition that reflection should happen, but did not, to a positive engagement with the process, albeit in an unplanned and ad hoc way. For example, AM1, who despite having many years of management experience from outside of HE, did not appear to draw on this to channel her reflections more formally. On further analysis, there also appeared to be a cognitive dissonance between AM1's belief in reflection and her practice. For AM1, rather than reflection being a formal and deliberate process, it was more ad hoc and opportunistic:

"I think a lot – probably too much for my own good sometimes! [laugh] I will also reflect on what I've done, thinking, 'Should I have said that?.. it can be a little bit debilitating sometimes!"

In his first interview, PSM9's views were influenced by his previous commercial background where there were *"intense demands on his time"* and thereby claimed that this prevented him from reflecting. This was reiterated in his follow-up interview, where he again suggested that a perceived lack of time stopped him from using reflection:

"I don't have enough time quite yet to add value to my role by standing back..."

Whilst expressing this consistency of views between the interviews about not having time for reflection, it could be argued that his subsequent comment of *"it's been a real rude awakening...quite*

a journey...I've moved quite a lot" suggested that he was reflective. Perhaps this anomaly related to PSM9's belief in the extent of formality as opposed to informality involved in reflection. His declaration suggested that he did not have time for the former, whilst his comments indicated engagement in the latter, albeit unknowingly.

This perception of not having time for reflection was also echoed by AM13 who recognised the need for reflection, especially in dealing with issues relating to staff, but appeared to struggle to find time to do this formally within the working day:

"...reflection played a huge part – when I had time! [laugh]- either in the car or in the middle of the night actually. I think when you're away from it you've got time and space, haven't you?"

Indeed, despite a previous vocational background in which reflection was reputed to be strongly embedded in practice, AM13 described how the transfer of this into her management role was not habitual. It could, therefore, be argued that there was a degree of ambivalence between AM13's belief in the value of reflection which was practised in her previous role and the extent to which it formally contributed to her current, in-role development as a manager.

This was also echoed by PSM4, a senior manager who, although new to his senior management role, had twenty years of management experience drawn from within and outside the HE sector. This previous managerial experience did not influence his practice in reflection:

"I do reflect but not formally...I do tend to sit back, and I prefer to consider than to just take the first action that comes to mind." (PSM4)

PSM4 was not, however, questioning the value of reflection but merely stating that it did not occur in a formalised way. Furthermore, he acknowledged 'being reflective' rather than spontaneous in his approach.

Within the journal entries, there was, as to be expected, evidence of a retrospective approach to their in-role learning. However, this varied in nature, and the different degrees to which the managers appeared comfortable with reflection became apparent.

AM8, a senior academic from a non-science disciplinary background, professed in her initial interview to *"reflect all the time"* and was *"always kind of reviewing things"*, albeit not doing this *"in a structured way"*. It was evident, therefore, that whilst AM8 claimed to believe in reflection and engaged in it frequently but informally, this did not result in any documentation of the process. Formally engaging in journal writing was, therefore, neither habitual nor integral to AM8's practice.

Despite this, however, her journal entries included copious detail which demonstrated critical analysis and an awareness of the need for change:

"I should have the confidence to allow her this perception, since that doesn't cost me anything."

"I think I should be more confident in my ability to deal with these situations"

"I've often felt that I'm not very good at delegating"

On analysis of the data, AM8's awareness of her development needs occurred when situations had gone wrong, and, on balance, there appeared to be more journal entries about such instances than positive ones. Moreover, at these times there also appeared to be a heightened sense of needing to learn, even though, ironically, her lack of confidence seemed to be a barrier to appreciating the potential for how reflection could enable this:

"I wish I could say that I had learned a clear lesson from this and I know how to behave in the future, but I can't. I think that perhaps I understand both myself and [name] better".

In terms of reflection, AM11 in his initial interview had considered that he did this *"probably almost all the time"*, sometimes on routine, day-to-day occurrences but mostly on his role, identity and career intentions. Similar to AM8, despite AM11's claims about the prevalence of reflection within his daily routine, none of this was formal or documented but instead took the form of *"just ongoing reflections"*. The researcher was aware, therefore, that asking AM11 to complete a reflective journal was a departure from his normal way of internalising his reflections, imposing not just a formality of structure but also a need to produce written outcomes. On an initial examination of the journal entries of AM11, perhaps what was most striking was the note-form style rather than free-flowing prose, and sometimes responding as if he was answering questions. This style of response may have reflected AM11's science-based subject background in which self-reflection may not have been prominent or frequently required. Indeed, the entries were analytical rather than descriptive, with AM11 demonstrating how his awareness of selected issues then led to a critical examination of his own actions:

"...partially satisfied in getting my point across."

"Be very direct when the need arises...but also intelligent about the staff and what makes them tick."

"I'm not good at this...it's made me think about how productive I am (am not) when working nine-plus hours a day."

PSM3 was also not accustomed to completing reflective journals. Her professed experience of reflection related to a very informal and infrequent process which culminated at the time of appraisals where she would *“take stock of what’s happened during the previous year, and work out what have been the high points and the low points”*. The resultant journal entries from PSM3 were brief rather than highly detailed, resembling answers to questions rather than free-flowing reflective prose:

“Knowledge of the individuals at the meeting.”

“Professional advice from two other areas.”

“Previous experience of managing a team.”

However, despite PSM3’s brevity of style, some entries showed acute awareness of pertinent issues, reflecting upon them in the context of self, others and the wider University culture:

“With hindsight I think I should have pursued the reasons why....I need to develop a clearer understanding of the role this person performs.”

“I have learned to be prepared for the same issues cropping up time after time...”

The researcher therefore posits the suggestion that these journal entries were perhaps characteristic of PSM3’s professional background which required brief reports with evidenced-based information tightly aligned to criteria prescribed by bodies external to the University.

Similarly, PSM6, with over thirty years of management experience, also adopted a focussed and succinct style to her journal entries. In her initial interview, she professed to being a keen advocate of reflection, albeit at an informal level, not only as part of her daily routine, but as a precursor for change:

“I stand back and reflect every day- when I made a slip, what did I do, why did it go that way....”

On analysis of her reflective journal, it was evident that PSM6 preferred to provide brief but highly analytical entries:

“There are ways of lying low within a large organisation. I should consider start-up formalities and their longer-term impact in greater depth.”

“Dealing with anger, dissatisfaction, negativity-experience I think.”

“Learning through my own mistakes, listening to other people’s techniques...and being honest?”

The researcher therefore suggests that PSM6's previous business-related professional background may have not only influenced her style of writing but also her focussed orientation towards the enhancement of processes and results through her reflection.

In contrast to the other managers asked to provide journal entries, PSM5, in his initial interview, had admitted to formally keeping a daily record of the reflections of all his professional, work-based activities:

"I'm pretty good at that. Mainly from my professional body who insist that we have this kind of development...so yes, I do reflect a lot really."

However, what became obvious on analysis of PSM5's reflections was the way these were a composite of all his experiences rather than just as a manager. As suggested in section 6.2.1, these reflections may be indicative of PSM5's dual-track career through which he adopted a very 'hands-on' approach to his original technical role, and, as a consequence might reveal that he does not always fully embrace the identity of a manager. The reflections were therefore an eclectic mix of experiences drawn from a range of situations, with an equally diverse style of writing, from short exclamations to insightful reflections:

"...so gracious and understanding- very sad - one of the most difficult things to do, but better for both parties that this happened."

"Harmony and proportion are important...Spotting imbalance, discord and helping to recalibrate is an important role for a leader/manager"

In summary, analysis of both phases of the interviews indicated that the bulk of managers' retrospective sensemaking through reflections tended to be a casual, ad hoc, reactionary process, rather than a deliberate and formalised activity to which dedicated time was given. This type of informal reflection was engaged in by both academic and professional support managers, by those with a varied range of management experience, both internal and external to the University. Neither previous management qualifications nor management training seemed to have 'trained' these managers in the process or value of formal reflection. Instead, 'being reflective' was, indeed, something with which a range of managers could identify as a normal practice within their daily lives, but it tended to be an informal and unstructured process. Furthermore, reflection was subsumed within other activities such as walking, driving and during daily work-related tasks. The predominantly individual rather than social nature of this retrospective activity also became apparent. However despite this informality, reflection was as a way of in-role learning, an activity in which they engaged to understand the meaning of events and either their own or other people's behaviour. In addition, reflective activity was often solution-focussed, with managers searching for

ideas about how to improve. The reflective journals showed a range of prompts for reflection, albeit undertaken by the majority as part of a research exercise rather than as a self-initiated occurring event. These were written in a variety of written styles, from succinct bullet points to free-flowing prose.

6.4 Enactive of Sensible Environments

Weick's (1995) third characteristic of sensemaking focuses on the extent to which people are actively involved in 'constructing' the environment in which they work through the establishment of rules, procedures and accepted ways of behaving. Within the context of this study, this characteristic was used to analyse the extent to which managers perceived that they learnt to shape their environment.

A view expressed by a range of academic managers related to how they had to learn to work within the accepted ways of the University. For example, AM3, a relatively new senior academic manager, but with over fifteen years of curriculum leadership responsibilities, despite this prior experience was now learning to work within the constraints imposed by the wider University:

"...once the institution has taken a certain path, they've got a strategic plan... you have to buy into the whole package rather than try to cherry pick the bits you like...you've got to do it."

A number of phrases used by this manager indicated that he was not part of the 'enactment' process for these decisions, such as *"the institution has taken a certain path"*, *"they've got a strategic plan"*, *"you have to buy into"* and *"you've got to do it"*. However, rather than a rejection of these ways of working, there was, instead, an acceptance. This view was similarly expressed by other academic managers:

"I've had to become a different person... into a wider recognition that this is what we do as a University" (AM4)

"I think there is a way to act... my greatest challenge is to satisfy the University's requirements of me... because they're more important than they used to be ...Universities have a culture" (AM10)

"When you have special events, you have to 'put a face on' sometimes... it's very difficult- and actually you don't really want to." (AM12)

All these academic managers had worked in business-related curriculum areas at the University for fifteen years or over. As only one of them had less than fifteen years of management experience, it could be deduced that this may have helped them to intuitively understand the institutional expectations of them in their roles. These years of experience may also have enabled them to comply with centralised demands from the 'University' rather than learning a skill or absorbing knowledge. In addition, only one had a management qualification (business based), and so despite all having attended the previous policy-based management development programme, it could be assumed that they were drawing on their experience of working at the University more than theory or policy in order to intuitively inform their practice as managers. It could be argued that this was slightly anomalous considering these managers' business-based disciplinary background which focussed on models, concepts and theories.

Being influenced by the University environment and adopting an institutional way of behaving was also expressed by professional support managers. Their views suggested that this was an accepted way of operating, implying a notion of conformity to expected behaviours:

"...to understand the culture – the culture is unusual unless you have come from another university." (PSM4)

"... understanding the culture of the University-understanding the culture is key, absolutely key...There's a bit of a cultural and historical legacy... (PSM5)

"... at the end of the day obviously you 'toe the party line'." (PSM8)

Irrespective of the role divisions between "specialist" and "generic" posts (Bacon, 2009, p.11) and the potential different perspectives this might cause, all these professional support managers had over 20 years of management experience which, it is assumed, they drew upon in order to better understand the changing University culture. As the only other training input common to these managers was policy-based rather than culture-based, it can be deduced that their experience was a major contributing factor to their learning as managers, enabling them to understand institutional (rather than sector-wide) cultural cues and requirements.

Some professional support managers made comparisons with other working environments:

"I worked in a very traditional university before I came here and there were set ways of doing things and set ways of responding to things. Here I think it's much more free thinking or much more disorganised." (PSM3)

"Being a manager in a university is very different from being a manager elsewhere..." (PSM6)

"Compared to elsewhere, it's learning what's expected of you here at the University." (PSM9)

"Your environment has to significantly influence your behaviours and approach, even if not your vision." (PSM10)

Three out of the four of these professional support managers above had been at the University for six years or less at the time of their interview. This may account for their willingness to compare the University with external practice. However, despite the relative recency of their external experience, they appeared to recognise that this institutional practice had to be learnt and adopted, rather than replaced with different ways from elsewhere. Three out of these five managers also had management qualifications. Whilst no reference was made to such qualifications in their explanations of their learning to find meaning in the institutional environment, it could be argued that this may have had hidden benefits in encouraging them to take a broader and less insular view of the culture change affecting their practice.

Similarly passionate views were expressed by other managers about the perceived imposition of managerialism within the sector:

"What the Higher Education community seems to be doing with its target driven culture and all the business speak around us, disengaging the people who are absolutely in control of making it happen... And a stronger management style coming in and saying 'You will, you will'" (AM11)

"I don't know any other sector where there is such open hostility between staff and managers – it's rampant – it's sector wide- it's almost open war – management, managerialism – I wonder why?" (AM8)

"... it's not just here – it's in Higher Education, it's in the public sector- it isn't the same as it was...there is definitely a sea change– there's an expectation that managers will do more- more or different, more managerial..." (PSM7)

Whilst drawn from both academic and professional support managers, all these managers had worked for the University for at least ten years and were noting the prevalence of externally imposed change on the University, bringing about increased tensions and divisions between staff and managers. None of these managers had management qualifications, and despite all having attended the previous mandatory management development programme, this did not appear to have prepared them for the current onset of change. It can therefore be assumed that these managers' awareness of the emergence of increasingly managed universities may have been derived from a tacit

understanding of their evolving working environment. It remains unclear, however, as to their actual source of comparisons of working practices across the HE sector.

By the time of the follow-up interviews, a noticeable change in the views of AM1 related to her perceived control about what she could do. Whilst new into her senior management role within the University, AM1 was not new to management, and had previously been a director in her own business. However in the follow-up interview, the potential for importing any of this prior experience seemed to be overshadowed by her perception of the control influenced by *'the University'*:

"I think I always knew what I thought my role should be, but what I couldn't have fully anticipated was the extent to which it would be influenced by the University... and what the likely impact of that would be."

Upon further questioning, it became apparent that *"the University"* referred to the Executive team, suggesting a growing awareness by this senior manager of still being answerable to another more senior group. This recognition of the control influenced by more senior managers was also evident in the views of AM13 during her follow-up interview, and was very striking in terms of her in-role development. AM13 used her twenty years of management experience drawn from outside the HE sector to make this judgement, contrasting it with her perceptions of the restrictions imposed by working within the University context:

"...it's not just as a manager, because I've been a manager for a long time. It's being a manager in this environment...it's also the accountability culture...the draconian, accountability, managerial sort of thing - managerialism where even managers at quite a high level are still having to be accountable for everything that they do, can't make decisions, can't have budgets- which I find strange really."

A similar view was echoed by PSM4:

"It's a very subtle transition...It doesn't come to me naturally to think in the ways that they are thinking...part of what you're expected to deliver..."

Probing for further clarification, the researcher ascertained that in this manager's reference to *"ways that they are thinking"*, the *"they"* again referred to members of the University's Executive team, contrasting with the claim in his previous interview that he felt he was *"joining the club"*, that of the senior management team. This suggested a new awareness that he still needed to respond to directives from an even more senior group, the Executive team. However, in contrast to AM13 above,

the tone of PSM4's response suggested there was more of an acceptance of the institutional context rather than perceiving it as a restriction:

"We're a service department and we're here to help the University achieve its goals...the University really dictates everything." (PSM4)

On further probing by the researcher, it became evident that this raised awareness occurred gradually and informally over time. Indeed, the in-role learning for PSM4 was not so much about acquiring new skills, knowledge or understanding but instead about learning to understand institutional expectations of him. PSM4 had held a consistent view over the two interviews about the anticipated and then actual impact of the institution on his role, alluding to '*the University*' as a separate entity, rather than accepting that he was part of it. Although his responses suggested a high degree of positivity, they also implied that he did not feel empowered to be part of the enactment of decisions about where the University was going, and, as a consequence, was merely following imposed directives. This is slightly anomalous as his language throughout the two interviews was strongly evident of operating strategically as a senior manager, using managerial phrases such as "*meeting the strategy of the organisation*" "*quasi-commercial appointments*" and "*public accountability*". The on-going learning for PSM4, therefore, not only involved becoming accustomed to thinking like a senior manager but, moreover, understanding the ways of thinking and preferences of Executive managers.

A more confused and less consistent view about his ability to control his environment was held by PSM9. Within his previous interview, PSM9, an ambitious professional appointed from outside the sector, had negated the value of needing to have HE experience, and instead, emphasised the benefits of his previous commercial background and being a "*different voice*". By the time of the follow-up interview, however, this was, paradoxically, juxtaposed with his new acknowledgement of a need to know how to manage within that environment. Whilst holding a consistency of views between the two interviews about needing to be different, by the time of the follow-up interview, PSM9 recognised that he needed to learn how to manage within the University context:

"...what I don't need is HE experience, but what I do need is some guidance on how I manage within the HE landscape...The learning will come from experience but it's like being pointed in the right direction." (PSM9)

Thus, unlike the other managers re-interviewed, PSM9 still appeared to defend the need not be absorbed into the HE environment, but was starting to acknowledge that he needed to understand how to manage within it.

Within the reflective journals, there was, in general, less explicit evidence of whether or not the managers felt empowered to make decisions and therefore control their environment. Although the accounts did elicit reflection about their context, these did not include as much information as the interviews on their perceived enactment of decisions. There were, however, some limited exceptions to this in the journals. For example, some of AM11's reflections showed his process of deciphering meaning about working within the University, indicating that even after four years in his current senior management post he was still becoming accustomed, through day-to-day experiences, of the constraints imposed from above. In particular, he showed that he was learning to understand how the actions of others, especially more senior staff, affected what he had to do:

"...some urgent work that needed doing for the VC."

"...insinuating that responses should be given now...in danger of compromising our reputation as a Faculty."

Consistent with her thirty years of management experience drawn mainly from a commercially-oriented business environment, PSM6's journal entries had a strong emphasis on the need to understand procedures, processes and culture within organisations:

"An understanding of organisational hierarchies..."

"...organisational behaviours play a major role."

"...an understanding of the corporate mindset."

This appeared to reflect PSM6's need to further understand how the University worked, having only been there for six years compared with her thirty years as a manager in a commercial environment. Journal entries from other managers demonstrated a willingness to take control as individuals in order to shape future consequences:

"I would make clear the consequences of such an imbalanced email." (AM11)

"I had to find a way to manage the relationship better." (AM8)

"Must show day in and day out that I care about staff." (PSM5)

"I would step in much earlier," (PSM6)

"...being clear what I expected," (PSM3)

In summary, bringing together the perceptions which emerged from the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and then the reflective journals, a predominant view from a wide range of managers, both academic and professional support, indicated that their experience helped them to understand how they were supposed to act. Indeed, they appeared to demonstrate an intuitive understanding (as opposed to an acquired knowledge) of the overall expectations on them, with some emphasising a greater impact than anticipated from the Executive team. There was also explicit recognition of a 'culture' determined by the University which dictated the expected behaviour of the managers. However, in contrast to Weick's view that that this was a process of enactment and creation of their environment, there was a view from many of the managers, both academic and professional support, that they were *following* rather than *leading* these expectations. Indeed, there was a widespread perception that such directives were being decided by 'the University', with managers not recognising that they may have a contributory role in the enactment of this process. Furthermore, the recurrent use of the phrase 'the University' suggested their awareness that some other decision-making authority was in control.

6.5 Social

Using Weick's broad category of 'social', the evidence was analysed to ascertain the extent to which managers used a more collective, as opposed to an individualistic approach to learning within their roles. Through the systematic deconstruction of the evidence, some dominant themes began to emerge relating to the social aspect of managers' in-role experiences, showing a clustering around the broad themes of belonging to groups and learning through observation and role-models.

6.5.1 Belonging to groups

The data was examined to ascertain the extent to which the managers felt they belonged to a community of managers within the University. In particular, it was academic managers who noted not feeling part of a group or sharing with other managers from outside their areas:

"People are very protective about their own areas and about the Schools and Faculties...we don't work together very well – we're working in bits of silos." (AM12)

"There isn't a feeling of comradeship really" (AM13)

"The whole structure of Faculties and targets actually dissuades you from collaborating because of the whole target culture...I'm not sure the University wants managers coming together...more divide and conquer!" (AM11)

All these managers, drawn equally from business-related, science and arts/humanities, had over fifteen years of management experience. Their sharing of this feeling of isolation amidst an environment of competition rather than collaboration suggested that it was cross-institutional rather than related either to their subject origins or their career stage within management. It did not appear to be gender specific, as two of these managers were female and one was male.

The negativity of AM11's tone reference "the University" suggested that he may have been referring specifically to those more senior managers, who, it was assumed, had decision-making authority. The use of the word 'conquer' also reinforced the dominance of competition rather than collaboration and collegiality. In essence, from a number of different managers, there was the view that they were by virtue of a vertical hierarchy reluctantly answerable to the 'University'. As a corollary to this, there was limited evidence of having responsibility in a horizontal sense to the University through other Faculties. Other managers also emphasised their perception of solitude:

"It is very lonely, and I don't think there is the support structure." (AM6)

"I think life becomes a little bit lonelier in the sense that we are maybe not able to engage with colleagues as much as you used to." (AM4)

"We are isolated...So it's a small bunch of trusted colleagues." (AM10)

The use of the phrase "*you're having to follow*" implied a sense of duty and an acceptance of the need to conform within a management role, linking to the discussion in the previous section which highlighted the paucity of engagement of managers in the enactment process to create their own environment. These managers had all worked at the University for at least fifteen years, and two out of the three also had over twenty years of management experience. Only one of these had a management qualification, and this appeared to have been gained very early in his career to enable him to teach in a business area. It can be assumed, therefore, that these managers' perceptions of isolation which negated collaboration within the University may have been more informed through a tacit understanding rather than formal means. In addition, as they were from different subject areas, their perceptions of isolation seemed not to be discipline-specific.

Acknowledgement was made by some interviewees from academic areas of the existence of a structured forum⁶ for senior managers. However, although the potential for such a forum to promote learning for managers was only implied by some, there was recognition of the value of a community for sharing and 'receiving' information:

⁶ This forum was set up for the top layer of senior managers within the University, both academic and professional support, and including the Executive Group. It was scheduled to meet approximately five times a year for full day briefing sessions on a variety of topics.

"...keeps you informed of developments that are going to impact on your daily management role." (AM7)

"Sometimes it's useful just to go in there and sit down and be given the information." (AM8)

*"So there's that kind of 'what's going on' kind of learning- I find that very useful ...not learning to manage, but just learning about the institution which allows me to manage better."
(AM10)*

Indeed, the value of the structured manager forums described by these interviewees was not primarily in relation to the improvement of their management skills or knowledge. Neither was it the chance to learn from each other as a community of practitioners in the form of peer learning. Instead, the main value of such forums alluded to by these interviewees was in the opportunity they provided for 'receiving information' to help their understanding of the context in which they were managing. However, AM3, a new senior academic manager, expressed mixed views about being included in this type of forum:

"The first time I went to one of those I suppose I found it to be quite flattering to be included in the group, but I also had a few worries whether it was a kind of 'us and them' and I had crossed the barrier and I was now one of 'them'."

Whilst having over fifteen years experience as an academic, this manager had only been in his current senior management post for fifteen months. His previous experiences as an academic, despite including a range of curriculum leadership responsibilities, did not seem to prepare him for joining this new group of senior managers. His reservations were not related to the potential value of sharing of knowledge or experiences enabled by such a formalised group of managers but instead to his unease about his sense of identity, as he grappled with the newness of his role whilst working within the context of the wider institution.

From professional support managers there was a contrasting view, with much more positivity around sharing with others:

"That's a really good sounding board...There's a feeling that we can talk quite freely [and]it's not going to get reported back." (PSM2)

"I think managers learn a hell of a lot from others..." (PSM6)

"I love the interaction and feeding off people," (PSM10)

"...bringing people together...being more consistent and more coherent as a group." (PSM9)

Three out of these four managers had been at the University for up to six years and so it could be assumed that they had learnt about the potential value of social learning from elsewhere, perhaps in a less inwardly competitive culture than their current institutional context. Three out of these four managers were also female. Whilst their acknowledgement of the benefits of learning from others was obvious, it is unclear due to the small numbers in this study as to whether a gendered propensity for collaboration could also be a factor in their learning.

However, despite this declared willingness to work collectively, the paucity of networking opportunities was recognised by some professional support managers:

“There isn’t a group at my level because they don’t seem to want to be a group from whom you could learn and meet with.”(PSM2)

“There are less opportunities now than there used to be- there definitely used to be a community of us- kept together and sharing.” (PSM7)

“There certainly used to be a community where we could learn a lot.” (PSM3)

“...the culture here is very parochial... it’s very ‘protect myself at all odds’”. (PSM8)

All these professional support managers were in “generic” (Bacon, 2009, p.11) rather than highly specialised roles. In addition, they had all worked outside the HE sector at some time in their career. Moreover, all these managers had over fifteen years of management experience, and had also worked for the University for over fifteen years. It could be assumed that, despite their experience of working within other organisations not being recent, it may still have contributed to their views which largely compared the paucity of current social learning opportunities with previous known hierarchies, structures or cultures.

The current organisational culture was also cited as an inhibiting factor to communities of managers being established:

“We do live very kind of silo lives unfortunately. There’s no great forum to share that kind of experience...It’s difficult to make sense of it.” (PSM5)

PSM5’s use of the term “silo-lives” suggested a perception of an organisational culture in which interaction with others from across the organisation was limited, resulting in a forced existence of self- sufficiency.

Within the follow-up interviews, it was evident that the managers had learned from other managers, albeit largely through informal means, and not in formal groups. Aligned to Weick’s social

characteristic of sensemaking, there were examples within the interviews of managers endeavouring to learn from others, either for support, reassurance or relationship-building. For example, AM1 was an experienced manager, although the majority of this had been gained from outside of HE and, moreover, she did not seem inclined to import this into her current role. Despite in her earlier interview AM1 professed having not talked to other managers, she now seemed to acknowledge the importance of this interaction:

"...others have been very good at providing reassurance...talking to other managers and realising that they're dealing with similar sorts of issues." (AM1)

Similarly, AM13, who although an experienced manager from outside of HE, felt the need to talk to others:

"I talked about it...I think you need a sounding board..." (AM13)

Here the use of the term "*sounding board*" suggested that this manager not only wanted feedback from others but also to test the credibility of her own ideas, linking to Weick's other sensemaking property of plausibility discussed in section 6.8.

The benefit of learning from others was also emphasised in the follow-up interviews by the professional support managers, both of whom highlighted the importance of 'networks' within this process of understanding their roles. Reiterating his espoused belief affirmed in his first interview of the value of "*joining the club*", PSM4 described how, over this first year, had learned primarily through observation, being a newcomer into a new senior management community:

"...watching them you can learn where they're coming from..."

"You can see different traits in different people...and you aspire to achieve what they achieve."

PSM9 also echoed this perceived value of learning from others:

"We're in a network of managers, and we do come together."

This initially seemed contradictory as PSM9 had remained adamant throughout both his initial and follow-up interview of that he did not want to learn about the University. However, on further questioning by the researcher, it was established that this group of managers was localised within his own area, and moreover, these were all staff appointed by him from outside the University. In this 'community' of managers all with similar background experience, they were essentially learning their roles, rather than becoming acclimatised to the University culture.

6.5.2 Learning through observation and role-models

Learning through informally observing colleagues (rather than formally through established groups) emerged as a theme in both academic and professional support areas, with managers giving a variety of examples of how this occurred within the unplanned, ad hoc informality of their daily roles:

"...you learn to learn from them...listening, learning when and how to dot your 'i's and cross your 't's...So in that sense it is osmosis." (AM10)

"I just vowed to never in a million years to be like that." (AM13)

"It sounds silly but it's watching people and how they react with other people and how they perform." (PSM3)

"I have watched others...and been so immensely impressed with her and really thinking 'Wow-she really is good.' " (PSM7)

These managers were drawn from both academic and professional support areas and had all worked at the University for fifteen years or more. In addition, they all had over fifteen years of management experience and evidently recognised the benefits of learning by watching others. What was less clear, however, was whether this was a necessity in the absence of other ways to learn, or alternatively, whether it added to these. Two of these managers had formal management qualifications, but as both had gained these over twenty years previously, it could be argued that these were unlikely to inform their management learning within a contemporary university context.

Other managers who had worked at the University for less than six years also emphasised the importance of learning from others:

"I do learn by watching what's happening around me... it's not been formalised."(AM1)

"You pick it up from peers...You see good practice, or what you believe to be good practice and you learn from that."(PSM1)

"You're always watching how people perform...If someone's good at something I'll take note and try to emulate." (AM13)

So, rather than this learning by observation being an acquired behaviour specific to the University and its culture, this might suggest an intuitive recognition by these managers of the power of social learning within institutions generally.

Observing the perceived poor practice of others also informed the learning of University managers. This was particularly apparent from a number of the academic managers:

"I learn more management skills from committees—I see how people don't manage their time, their arguments." (AM10)

"...you come across a situation like that you might think, 'I would never let it get like that.'" (AM9)

"...you learn from others and from the way that others do it badly." (AM2)

All three of these managers had worked at the University for more than fifteen years and they were from business and arts/humanities backgrounds rather than science. This could be indicative of a preference for this type of social learning in non-science disciplinary areas.

Analysis also showed that only a few of the managers in both the academic and professional support areas were able to identify specific individuals whose actions or approach had positively influenced their own development as managers:

"I learned a lot...I think we bounced off each other a lot which was a good thing to do." (PSM3)

"... a good role model is worth their weight in gold... managers learn a hell of a lot from others, in terms of role models in particular... the penny drops and then it becomes part of you - you don't get that out of a book." (PSM4)

Although these individuals acted as 'role models', the way in which they were described suggested that they did not necessarily present a 'perfect' model. Instead they were selected for a range of reasons and, furthermore, came from different contexts. For example, AM5, who had expressed a strong preference for learning through self-initiated reading around selected management topics, admitted to also being influenced by observing the practice of one particular senior manager:

"I had a lot of respect for the way they run things...A fairly blunt manager with whom I used to have stand-up arguments...Even if I didn't agree with them it was the fact that they did it in a certain way..."

This acceptance of the other manager's faults suggested that AM5 was willing to learn from this process of observation, even though he was not necessarily in agreement with all that he heard or

saw. Similarly, AM12, with twenty years experience at the University, albeit predominantly as an academic, saw the value of having a role model. She did not, however, expect this person to be perfect:

"I'm not quite sure whether that translates directly into admiration- it's not complete admiration."

Thus, in all these examples drawn from across academic and professional support areas, there was a suggestion that a role model did not need to be extra-ordinary, perfect in every action, or indeed successful in all areas.

In contrast to those respondents identifying a single role model, a view emerged from others that this could not be represented in one person. Instead, some interviewees described how specific parts or attributes of this 'ideal' role model could be 'constructed' from assorted elements from different people:

"I don't have one role model but I pick bits out of different people and put them into a role model..." (AM2)

"I'm not sure they're embodied in one particular person," (AM3)

"A role model is a hell of a thing to be- it's a bit like when you see these job adverts for a Dean which say they want a brilliant academic, great manager of people, great strategist – and you think Jesus, - superhuman!" (AM11)

"...maybe bits of different people. I wonder whether it's someone who just couldn't exist – this composite – like the ideal man." (AM12)

"...not in one person... you wouldn't need many people to put together to make your ideal." (PSM6)

All of these managers had over fifteen of management experience, and four out of the five had been at the University for up to ten years. Only two out of the five had management qualifications. This might suggest that over a number of years (but not solely within one institutional context), these managers had gained a tacit understanding that an ideal role model might not exist. Instead, they had assimilated a virtual ideal role model.

A noticeable tendency from a small number of interviewees was the desire to look outside the institution when asked about role models. Although also found in the professional support areas, this view emerged more strongly from the academic areas:

"One of the old matrons... it was her openness, her honesty...she frightened you to death...she was definitely a role model." (AM6)

"Outside of this University there is [name] who would be a role model, somebody I would look up to..." (AM8)

"Jack Welsh, James Dyson and Nelson Mandela... there are things they do that I think have clearly made them successful- and you do try to bring it into what you are doing..." (AM7)

Whilst all these academic managers (two females and one male) had worked at the University for fourteen years or more, they were drawn from three different subject areas. This might indicate that the tendency to look outside the University for good practice is not subject-related. So, whilst their longevity at the University might suggest they were "locals" (Gouldner, 1957, p.281), this may have been slightly ameliorated by their willingness to learn from external communities. Only one of these managers had a management qualification but as this had been gained in early career to allow him to teach a business-related subject, it was unlikely to inform his current learning as a manager. It can be deduced, therefore, that the learning of these managers about seeking externality may have been primarily a tacit understanding of the need to be less insular.

AM7's attempt to *"bring it into what you are doing"* suggests a belief in the transferability of selected aspects of different people, irrespective of their role, either within an institution or community.

Whilst this focus on the personal style of externals rather than specific management qualities may have been indicative of AM7's business-oriented subject background which typically showcased successful people, it was also a recurring theme in the examples given by other interviewees.

Similarly from professional support areas, there was some acknowledgement of the value of being part of external networks:

"...a theatre director...he was absolutely brilliant...he was coaching the best out of people, he was getting them to think in different ways....I just saw something...one of the best influences for me" (PSM5)

"There is a West Midlands network. We are our own support network where we meet and we really do share and benefit from each other." (PSM7)

Learning through observation continued as a theme in the follow-up interviews and took a variety of formats. Despite not alluding to the use of 'role-models' to impact on their learning during their first interviews, some of the managers in the follow-up study indicated that this had occurred, but

stressing the tendency to not expect any one person to exhibit 'perfect' qualities. For example, AM1 indicated a preference for learning through observation:

"I tend to work on the basis of bits from different people...probably because nobody's perfect... I tend to pick up on what I don't want to be like." (AM1)

Here, AM1's use of the term "*pick up on*" suggested a tendency to 'sense' certain issues, rather than learn in a formal way. Expressed differently, PSM4 exhibited a proactive approach to learning from others:

"You can see different traits in different people...and you aspire to achieve what they achieve."

In addition, PSM4 was building on the diversity of his previous management experience from both inside and external to HE, noted the value of learning from the mistakes of others:

"...particularly the mistakes of others...that's your opportunity to learn for free, isn't it?
[laugh]

Similarly, PSM9 also indicated in his follow-up interview a social dimension to his in-role learning. On initial analysis, this appeared contradictory as he had previously claimed to have been appointed to project a "*different voice*" and was generally dismissive of the need to learn about the University. However, it became evident that the person he 'valued' as a role model had also recently been appointed from the commercial sector. His in-situ learning, therefore, focussed on the skills or qualities of this person, not their experience as a manager within the HE sector:

"I've learned quite a lot from observing her. That's not to say I totally agree with how she's approached things, but she's taught me a lot about how she's approached it.... quite a good learning experience."

Learning through interacting with others was also evident within the reflective journals. Although this presented itself differently, a common theme was not in terms of learning *from* others but learning *about* themselves *through* others. PSM6, a very experienced manager with approximately thirty years of management experience, although mainly drawn from outside of HE, showed a need to still learn how to deal with others in the context of the University. The nature of this varied:

"...read' people more clearly",
"I need to listen to other people's techniques."

"I felt that I had been misled by the University's director..."

"...it is a very difficult in a job role which relies on other s(especially externals) taking appropriate steps."

Noticeably in some of the other journal entries was the way in which managers' interactions with other staff sometimes evoked an emotional reaction. For example, PSM3, a mid-career professional with over fifteen years' experience exhibited an emotional dimension to her largely intuitive dealings with others:

"I put off having the conversation for longer than I should because I thought it would be unpleasant. I felt very uncomfortable about the whole situation."

"To my total surprise, this became a very positive and non-confrontational discussion."

"I should try not to become frustrated as that doesn't benefit anyone..."

The way in which in situ, social situations meant learning about controlling emotions was evident elsewhere. For example, AM8 showed a range of emotional responses:

"I often find [name] difficult: irritating bossy and obstructive...so I have been wondering how I should have managed this situation."

"I became cross and irritated as time went on..."

"I felt bossed about and dug my heels in..."

"I allowed myself to become a child - cross and irritated and resentful of another person's needs conflicting with mine."

"It was an intensely frustrating meeting...I became bogged down in frustration."

AM8's journal entries also indicated that there was an exploration of feelings in these situations, having synthesised what she saw and felt with what she already knew. For example, she mused in a self-critical and solution-orientated way about different social situations:

"This was a situation that I handled badly I feel"

"I had to find a way to manage the relationship better..."

"I need to understand where she's coming from..."

Similarly, despite his eighteen years of management experience, many of AM11's journal entries showed he was still learning to become more aware of his own emotions:

"...aware that the staff member may also be 'playing me'."

"...not to deflect all your angst..."

"Annoyed. Frustrated. But explaining my concerns helped."

AM11's reflections suggest that whilst his initial emotions within social situations appeared to be reactionary, it could be argued that his subsequent reflections through journal entries presented a more considered response.

In summary, therefore, drawing on the evidence from the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals, it was apparent that many of the managers were learning about managing through others. This, however, presented itself differently, although with common connecting themes of attitudes to learning through groups, learning through observing others, and learning through role model qualities (irrespective of whether these existed intact in one person or in a number of selected or idealised 'others'). In addition, what became more obvious through the reflective journals was the way in which these managers learned about themselves through their reactions within social situations. They were not learning *from* others but *about* themselves such as how they reacted (often intuitively), how it made them feel and what they gleaned from this experience.

6.6 Ongoing

Weick's fifth category focuses on the way sensemaking is an ongoing process. Applying this to the context of managers' developing within their roles, the responses from the interviewees were analysed in terms of their journey into management and the extent to which they were using either formal or informal learning to understand different situations.

6.6.1 Journey into management

Focussing on how each of the interviewees' management careers had started, analysis showed that there had been a definite tendency from a number of managers to merely drift into management roles in a relatively unplanned way. This was particularly noticeable amongst academic managers, who claimed not to have had a deliberate and defined career path involving management. Explanations were given which suggested a type of 'stumbling into' management rather than a deliberate career choice which:

"I suppose it was a question of almost osmosis to start off with in that I was asked to take on a course management role, then a year management role..." (AM2)

"I've never had a career plan...." (AM3)

"When someone suggested that I might want to apply for this job, I thought it was really hilarious." (AM4)

"I've never mapped it out; I've never written it down....It does sound like I've drifted into this and made it up as I've gone along ...that's about right really! [laugh]" (AM5)

"I think I fell into it really – it wasn't part of the master plan." (AM6)

"I'd never really set out to be a manager... academic managers come into it unprepared... You suddenly find yourself responsible for things you've not been trained for..." (AM10)

Of the managers above, four had over fifteen years in management which, it could be argued, is difficult to see as an accidental straying into the role. Three of these four had worked at the University for over fifteen years, and so possibly a management route in this post-92 University might be interpreted by some as a potential career progression opportunity. Of the six managers claiming this unplanned entry into management, five of them were males. However, whether there was a gendered bias in their perception of plausible career progression routes (albeit unplanned) remains unclear.

Within the latter quote from AM10, the reference to *"suddenly find yourself responsible for things you've not been trained for"* typifies the way in which many of these academic managers depicted their journeys into academic management. However, for AM10, this appeared slightly anomalous as his original career outside of HE, his subject discipline and his subsequent divergent curriculum responsibilities within HE all related to management. Despite this, AM10 did not seem to acknowledge any of these as contributing positively to the challenges of his journey into management.

Whilst views on their entry into management were not so consistent amongst the professional support managers, there was much more positivity about the pathways they had taken. From some there was evidence of more planned career aspirations towards management roles, irrespective of the sector in which they worked:

"I joined with the intention of one day having a team of people...." (PSM1)

"I was very focused and very ambitious when I first started, and obviously the way you progress in your career, one of the things you usually do is managing or supervising a team of staff." (PSM3)

"I knew very early on in my career that I wanted the person's job above me..." (PSM11)

Two out of these three professional support managers had been managers for over fifteen years and had worked at the University for over twenty years. Both of these were female managers. Whilst they

were supposedly ambitious, neither had taken management qualifications or attempted to advance their careers through moving to different institutions, preferring, instead, to stay within one university. It can be deduced, therefore, that their early career aspirations for advancement may not have been followed up by proactive career development strategies.

From some other professional support managers drawn from different backgrounds (both public and private sector), a different perspective emerged as to how they had become managers within the University. However, whilst showing less career planning than other professional support managers, they were, in fact, very positive about the opportunistic nature of their journeys into management:

"I suppose I'm still trying to work out what I want to be when I grow up! [laugh] it wasn't really a planned step..." (PSM2)

"By mistake in a way... I just progressed – never a conscious decision 'Oh I'm going to be a manager'." (PSM8)

"...it's kind of a lot by default. As you progress through seniority, invariably you're given more management responsibility..." (PSM9)

"...if I'm perfectly honest I don't think any of my career was planned but with hindsight it looks very logical...but very career minded with a strong appetite to do more." (PSM10)

Three of these four professional support managers were females, and three had over fifteen years of management experience. From the four managers, however, there were no other discernible patterns, with variations in terms of length of time at the University, willingness to engage in formal accredited management development, and management type (generic/specialist). Whilst not specifically indicative of reasons for career development, this helps to illustrate the lack of homogeneity within the group of professional support managers. Indeed, despite professional support managers being unified under one broad heading, it is evident that there is variation due to their backgrounds and experience.

As briefly outlined in section 6.1, there was no evidence in either the follow-up interviews or the reflective journals about the respondents' journeys into management as these were neither returned to in the former (as they were assumed to be the same), nor did they feature within the latter due to the focus on recent 'incidents'.

6.6.2 Importing learning and practice from other parts of their lives

Irrespective of their different journeys into management, there was acknowledgement of the learning that could be imported from managers' prior experiences. Despite a range of previous management experience (as shown in table 5.5), analysis showed that this primarily related to non-work situations, drawn from both academic and professional support managers and broadly grouped into either family or leisure activities. In effect, these showed how non-institutional skills and experiences positively contributed to their learning as managers. For example, on further deconstruction of the data, it became evident that being part of a family had provided a positive learning experience for some managers:

"I suppose being the eldest of five you lead by being the eldest." (AM7)

"You don't start from a blank canvas at all, you bring a lot from life with you as a manager... sometimes managing staff is just like managing children." (AM6)

"... with having a young family... you've got to be organised and you've got to be able to persuade people to do the things you want them to do." (AM12)

"Having kids changed the way I worked...." (PSM10)

Of these four managers, three had at least fifteen years of management experience. Three were also female, two of whom had been at the University for at least fifteen years. It could be assumed, therefore, that career progression for some had been fitted in around family responsibilities, which might, in turn account for the length of time in one institution. All of these managers had at some stage in their careers worked outside the HE sector, but only one of these had done so for ten years or more. These managers had therefore been exposed to a wide range of factors which, it could be argued, had resulted in their sources of learning being multi-faceted. Indeed, their recognition of the blurring of boundaries between professional and family life could account for their willingness to import learning from different spheres.

In addition to family life, leisure pursuits were also emphasised as having contributed to their development as managers, with examples given from a range of different activities:

"I used to chair the Round Table...so I developed certain skills in chairing meetings." (AM5)

"I know that even now I am still playing [name of sport]and adopt a very clear leadership role" (AM7)

"I chaired toddler groups/play groups – which was actually far more challenging than any other group I have ever done- the politics were unbelievable! I do think you bring all those skills – life skills...." (AM13)

"It's not just how you manage at work, it's how you manage outside of work as well...management learning relevant to life." (PSM2)

"I've been captain of a few teams ...I've probably brought some of that in..." (PSM1)

Three out of these five managers had less than ten years management experience, two of whom had worked for the University for less than six years. This suggested that they were either still early in their careers, or alternatively their management careers (possibly as second careers) were still being established. This may account for their apparent willingness to not only learn within their roles but also their acceptance that this learning could be impacted upon by an eclectic mix of factors drawn from different sources.

The transfer of learning from previous work-based, non-management roles was not, however, widely acknowledged, apart from two academic managers who considered that prior experience contributed to their understanding and credibility. Both of these had 'worked their way up' within their careers, having had a number of roles with increasing management responsibilities:

"I have had some experience of all the roles of the staff who currently surround me.... I have done award management" (AM3)

"Credibility is important-coming from an academic role into managing academics is useful" (AM5)

In the follow-up interviews, views varied on the extent to which the managers were using their work-based background experience. For example, in contrast to AM3 and AM5 above who felt able to import their learning from previous roles, AM1, despite having had many years of management experience in a practice-based environment, did not indicate a propensity for using this learning in her new role. Similarly, within his follow-up interview, PSM4, who had worked at the University for over ten years, and prior to that had worked as a manager in both the private and public sectors, showed ambivalence in the importing of learning from his previous career paths. This appeared to be caused by his separation of his subject specialism from his new learning as a manager. When questioned about his professional learning, the transfer of prior knowledge and skills appeared to be those underpinning his subject specialism rather than his management practice.

In contrast, however, PSM9's practice was still, by the time of the second interview, heavily influenced by his commercial background in the private sector. This was particularly apparent through his terminology:

"...interface as a consultant."

"...solution delivery."

"Matrix management..."

"...stake-holder engagement."

From the reflective journals, there was some evidence of importing learning from either previous roles or different situations, both in academe and outside the HE sector. This was in response to a direct question about what knowledge, skills or experience they were drawing upon, and, as in the initial interviews, it was the latter of these that seemed to be predominant in informing their learning. For example, whilst AM8 had held a senior academic role for a number of years, her management role was less well-established. Evident within the journal entries was the importance to AM8 of learning from past experience:

"This knowledge came from experience, and from conversations with colleagues..."

"I knew from experience..."

"The skills that I found, just in time, have been acquired mainly through experience."

On analysis of the evidence, however, it is questionable how much of this experience related purely to management. Indeed, perhaps as a consequence of her years in academe exceeding those in a recognised management role, AM8 showed that she was using a tacit understanding of situations and *"drawing on all of the specialist knowledge and experience"*, rather than 'management' know-how.

PSM3, on the other hand, drew on her experience from previous employment outside the university sector. She had been in her current role for approximately eight years, but had, in the past, also worked for a local council. It was evident from her journal entries that her way of dealing with situations was often by using imported experience, some of which was non-managerial and outside the sector, suggesting an inter-cultural transfer of practice between different work-places:

"I drew on the experience I had acquired in a previous role where I dealt with local councillors."

In contrast, the way in which PSM6 used learning from her thirty years of management experience outside the HE sector presented itself slightly differently, using a very commercially orientated approach and concentrating specifically on the achievement of results. Her journal entries were therefore very focussed, directly answering the questions but with a strong managerial orientation towards performance and results:

"I should consider start-up formalities and their longer-term impacts."

"This made me feel pleased to have secured a preferred end-result, maintained a strained relationship and displayed influencing skills during a key negotiation of this project."

"...finding a route to unblocking project progress."

This was, perhaps, not only symptomatic of PSM6's current role where the achievement of targets and performance objectives were reinforced but also her own career history which focussed heavily on commercial management roles with a concomitant achievement-orientated-focus.

6.6.3 Views on formal learning

The extent to which training interventions had made a contribution to the managers' in-role learning was also explored. The absence of perceived appropriate formalised management training within the University was noted from observations such as *"I've never had any management training in HE at all"* (AM13) to concerns of the potential risk that such an absence might cause:

"I would have loved to have gone through some sort of programme... I mean someone should tell me what I should be doing." (AM1)

There was, however, a more widely emerging view which suggested a rejection of formal, knowledge and skills-based management development. This view was presented in a variety of formats, with different underlying reasons, ranging from a belief that management could not be taught, to managers favouring other forms of activity to enhance their knowledge or skills. For example, a view emerged that development of management skills or knowledge could not be achieved through attending courses, with little confidence in either the course content or its applicability to their own particular role or context.:

"Obviously I have been on training and done courses and their value? Less than fifty percent..." (AM2)

"I've not come away thinking 'Crikey! – that was an absolute revelation'... some of those rock solid theories about how organisations should be run are not necessarily truths." (AM9)

"I've never really had what I would say is really good formal management training... I've got to be honest I don't really relish it!" (AM10)

"...just because you've been on a course for a day or a week...doesn't mean to say that you'll believe them [policies] and say them with any integrity." (AM11)

"I don't think the courses have helped – I think it's more to do with experience. ...because you can't just learn that on a course." (AM12)

“...I know it’s dreadful, I work in education and yet I don’t study...but it’s just not for me if I can avoid it...” (PSM7)

From these six managers, some patterns were discernible in the data. Five of them had over fifteen years of management experience; five had been at the University for fifteen years or more, and five had worked external to the HE sector for up to ten years. Where these subgroups overlapped, three managers had over fifteen years of management experience, had been at the University for fifteen years or more, and had also worked external to the HE sector for up to ten years. Only two out of the six managers had a formal management qualification, and it is assumed, therefore, that the most significant factor in their learning was in-role and institutional experience, primarily within the University, but not exclusively so.

Indeed, opinions varied in relation to the perceived value of accredited management development programmes which had already been undertaken by the interviewees. For example, there was a perception that such qualifications had provided a useful foundation for their future development as managers, irrespective of the context in which they worked:

“I had very comprehensive management principles grounding from City and Guilds two-year course.” (PSM6)

“I did the Graduate Certificate when I worked for [name]. So that was useful because that gave me a very broad grounding in all things ... a real building block to everything else that’s come after.” (PSM8)

Both of these were female generic professional support managers who had over fifteen years of management experience. Whilst it could be assumed that their length of management experience might indicate a potential for in-role learning, their gaining of management qualifications could either show a valuing of formal learning or an aspiration for further career enhancement.

Indeed, there was a view that a management qualification was more useful for career-development than management practice. For example, PSM10, an ambitious career professional from the commercial sector who had been at the University for one year at the time of the interview, commented that *“My MBA gave me so many things...that catapulted my career...”* but then suggested that formal qualifications were only valuable in addition to ongoing experience:

“It’s all very well having MBAs and everything, but actually it is an add-on to the accumulation of all the experiences and the different behaviours and the different ways people manage.”

However there was also the rejection of any type of formalised management training due to its perceived lack of applicability to the intricacies of managing in a university setting:

“The theories and the case studies etc that I’ve looked at, I sort of thought – well that’s not going to help me in my work in HE- they’re just not HE specific.” (PSM3)

“I’m actually not sure those things can be taught... to have somebody to teach me how to manage? ...in academe... you’re dealing, by definition, with the unmanageable...” (AM8)

By the time of the follow-up interviews, three out of the four managers in this sub-set had attended an in-house leadership programme for senior managers, and so it was interesting to note whether they perceived this had had an impact on their learning. Within the initial interview, it became evident that despite AM1’s previous management experience from both internal and external to HE, it was her lack of management training that led her to question her ability:

“...you do this role but actually how qualified am I to do it and am I doing it properly?”

In the follow-interview, however, AM1 expressed a different view, indicating a preference for experiential learning:

“...no amount of training can make you good at doing this role; it can give you some useful tools for doing your role but actually doing it is the thing I suspect makes you learn properly.”

Having just started the in-house programme, this appeared slightly anomalous. When questioned, she indicated that the value of the programme lay not in its content but in other aspects such as *“having the space away is really important...talking to other managers and realising that they’re dealing with similar sorts of issues”*, thereby suggesting that she was learning in a situated and social way.

Within AM13’s follow-up interview, it became evident that her attitude towards formal training was also slightly anomalous. Although having gained a post-graduate management qualification (albeit two decades ago), the only example given of how this had helped her management practice was in relation to a heightened knowledge of employment law. Moreover, having indicated in the first interview her surprise at never having been offered any management training within the University, in her follow-up interview she then commented on having been ‘instructed’ to attend the in-house, leadership programme. Paradoxically then, by the time of the follow-up interview, AM13 interpreted this not as an opportunity but as an imposition which she perceived was a sign of her failings as a manager:

“...we were subpoenaed! [laugh] and I thought ‘Why am I being singled out? I must be terrible!’ But that was a bit weird, being forced to do it. You will develop!” [laugh].

By the time of PSM4’s follow-up interview, he had also commenced the in-house formalised leadership development programme for senior managers. Although acknowledging that this programme had been “*very useful*”, when probed further, the aspect which had had the most impact on his learning had been his leadership of a recent restructure. Thus, despite being qualified through an accredited management course, albeit over twenty years ago, and having recently attended a leadership programme for senior managers, PSM4’s perception was that the greatest impact on his learning appeared was through being exposed to challenging workplace tasks.

Unlike the other managers re-interviewed, by the time of his second interview, PSM9 had not enrolled on the in-house formal management development programme. However, he still professed intentions to enrol on some sort of formal management course, essentially believing that this would not only transform his practice but also his identity:

“I haven’t consciously changed into being a manager because I haven’t come up through a formal training route”.

As with the follow-up interviews, by the time the managers were completing the journals, some of them had or were in the process of attending the senior leadership programme within the University, and so the researcher was keen to ascertain the extent to which this impacted on their reflections, learning and intended subsequent actions.

Despite in her first interview admitted not wanting to engage in accredited management development, AM8 appeared to value the experience of having enrolled on the in-house leadership programme. Although initially this might appear contradictory to her earlier professed dislike of formalised management courses, it became evident that it was not the programme itself but the related activities of gaining 360 degree feedback and having coaching (both of which were mandatory parts of the programme):

“The experiences I’ve had on the Leading for Success programme, especially the 360 degree profile and the coaching sessions definitely helped me here.”

“I think I might finally be learning how to delegate- a combination of experience and reflection from my coaching sessions.”

Even though in his initial interview AM11 claimed that he had not “*had adequate management training*”, by the time of the follow-up interview showed a degree of ambivalence in his attitude towards formal learning. Indeed, he exhibited a keen desire to do so for his own subject specialism,

and yet this was not replicated towards the learning of management, even though, ironically, this was the major focus of his role. Furthermore, having enrolled on the in-house programme, there was neither explicit reflection on it nor evidence in AM11's journals of this affecting his approach. In addition, there were no explicit plans in AM11's journals of him intending to engage in additional formalised learning to support his management role.

In her initial interview, not becoming formally qualified in management was a decision taken by PSM3 due to the perceived lack of relevance of existing courses, claiming to *"never really found them beneficial for working in Higher Education"*. Despite this declaration, PSM3's journal entries indicated that she was attending the in-house leadership programme. However, the aspect which PSM3 documented in her journal as particularly useful was being part of a networking trio required of participants between the programme modules:

"...for mutual support...this has really helped me to view the University from very different angles and to bounce my ideas of leadership and management off others...I wish I had done it ages ago...It is so beneficial to be able to discuss the challenges and problems in a confidential manner without feeling 'silly'."

This not only indicated engagement in a different sort of informal learning but also a new-found preference for a social way of learning, not necessarily by attending the programme, but through the additional activity of an action learning trio designed to encourage ongoing engagement and shared learning through experience between participants.

Similarly for PSM5, whilst there was evidence in his journal of the impact of attending the programme for senior leaders, its most important value in terms of his day-to-day practice was from the one-to-one coaching coupled with using the 360 degree feedback information. For example, one of the journal entries describes a particular coaching session where a visual stimulus had been used:

"...the Visions Thing drawing today representing me on the top of a hill trying to lead team to top and promised world beyond."

This then resulted in a list of actions which PSM5 had agreed with his coach to implement:

"Talk to line manager about results and gap analysis. In meetings and one-to-ones, focus, concentrate and psychological presence- really improved on this."

6.6.4 Informal learning

In contrast to the lack of belief in the contribution that formal training could make to their development, there was a prevalent view amongst managers, both academic and professional support, that making sense of their roles was more effective through informal, ongoing learning, the nature of which varied. For example, in the initial interviews some alluded to being on a journey,

portraying a process of travelling or 'becoming' a manager rather than ever arriving at that destination:

"I'm still learning and again, it's a question of understanding and knowing people... on the journey of learning to be a manager." (AM3)

"I think I learn continuously." (AM7)

"Most of mine [learning], has not been formalised at all." (AM10)

"...most of my development has been informal..." (AM8)

"I'm still learning really – learning all the time." (PSM1)

"My own view is that formal qualifications have got me to where I am but now it's about doing the job.... It's definitely a journey ..." (PSM4)

Of these six managers showing a preference for informal learning, five were male. Four of the six managers had over fifteen years of management experience and had also worked at the University for over fifteen years. Whilst it could be argued that their length of service in one institution may have limited their opportunities for wider learning, especially in relation to contextual and cultural learning, their many years of management experience may have provided a richness of in-role learning challenges. Of the two professional support managers, both were in specialist roles and despite their stated preference for informal learning, both had management qualifications. It could be argued, however, that the acquisition of the latter might have been for career development reasons rather than to aid their learning as managers.

Others highlighted the task-based nature of the learning. Although varying in detail, these comments showed a belief in the value of learning through their routine (as opposed to 'critical') experiences within their daily roles even though there was no indication of the means by which this link was made:

"...most of the things I've had to develop have been 'learning through doing'." (AM5)

"...you just learned with experience...." (AM13)

"...learning on the hoof, learning from older people, or learning from more experienced people...it's been a case of almost osmosis." (AM10)

"It's experience rather than formal instruction... 'jumping in the pool without a rubber ring on'...I like to learn as I go along" (PSM2)

"...that comes with experience." (PSM8)

"It's just, I guess, my own experience of life which helps me manage people and I think it gives you a maturity..." (PSM11)

"Stiff gin and tonic! [laugh]....it is primarily intuitive- not the best way of doing it I'm sure - but we managed it!" (PSM7)

In contrast to the previously analysed male-dominated grouping of managers showing a preference for informal learning, six of the seven managers above were female. Five of these had over fifteen years of management experience. Despite declaring a preference for informal learning, three out of the seven had formal management qualifications. Whilst this may appear contradictory, all of these qualifications had been gained at least fifteen years ago and therefore it could be argued that they were not contributing to these managers' current development.

Within the follow-up interviews, there was also evidence of the importance of informal learning. AM1 had remained consistent between the first and the follow-up interviews in her belief about the importance of informal learning through experience:

"I just think it's learning with time... just having the general experience in the role."

She also indicated that this experience was enriched over time, as she moved from being a passive observer to an active participant, learning to make sense of a range of situational variables:

"You do feel as if you're sitting in the wings watching it unfold in front of you initially and then gradually you become part of it..."

AM1's adherence to the value in learning from on-going, role-based experience was echoed in her use of language, particularly in relation to dealing with the complex nature of the role:

"It's taken me a long time to reach the point of thinking..."

"...getting used to the fact..."

"...you start to see things a bit more clearly."

These phrases suggested that AM1's learning was a gradual rather than a sudden process. In essence, it involved 'making sense' of the situations she encountered. Moreover, these phrases indicated an informal process of implicit learning, with the generation of tacit knowledge through ongoing exposure to task-based challenges.

Along a similar vein, this ongoing learning through informal work-based tasks was also evident within AM13's narrative. In her initial interview it was evident that AM13's practice as a manager was informed by an eclectic mix comprised of a previous (of more than 20 years) formal management qualification, an array of voluntary work, parenting skills and experience in a variety of job roles. The transfer of knowledge through this multiplicity of prior learning streams appeared to have formed a solid base from which AM13 practiced as a manager. However what became very noticeable by the time of the follow-up interview was the extent to which AM13's in-role learning was heavily informed by the gradual gathering of experience over time:

"It takes a long time...I think it takes a year to two years."

"I'm a bit older...You learn to be a bit more pragmatic; it's part of your job really and you just have to deal with it... but I think there's something about lots of experience, you've seen it all before."

The strong dependency on learning through daily tasks such as leading a restructure rather than through explicit formal programmes with prescribed outcomes was also evident with PSM4's follow-up interview. However a key enabler to learning in this way was PSM 4's maturity of approach through which he showed willingness to not only exploit these opportunities but moreover to view them as positive rather than as burdensome impositions:

"...that's also the bit that makes it more interesting, and the people side of it, which is quite often where the complexity lies."

"It's a bit of an iceberg, with eighty percent of it sitting underneath the water..."

"...it's just not text-book... it's about people at the end of the day...dealing with individuals, different situations which don't fall neatly into little boxes..."

Indeed, PSM4's positivity about learning through workplace opportunities was epitomised in his additional comment *"that's your opportunity to learn for free, isn't it? [laugh] "*.

In contrast, however, the ongoing and informal learning which PSM9 underwent presented itself differently. In his initial interview, PSM9 did not appear to want to learn gradually but rather to have a quick-fix approach to solving problems. When questioned, this had been his approach used in the commercial sector, and mirrored everyday practices within that particular professional background. It was evident in the follow-up interview that PSM9 used a deliberately deductive approach to learning, and although he was aware that this was gradual and on-going, he highlighted the tensions caused by his previous background in the commercial sector where rapid results and outcomes were a normal expectation. The use of the term *"gradually get my head around"* suggested an ongoing approach, a

type of work-based learning which was informal yet intentional, gathered through a deliberate process of deduction. Furthermore, using a travel analogy, PSM9 explained how this had resulted in change, an experiential process of learning to make sense of his environment and his role within it:

"...it's been a real rude awakening...quite a journey...I've moved quite a lot."

"That's certainly something I've moved massively on- through experience and through trial and error- I need to make it work."

"I think it's probably more subconscious..."

Informal learning was also linked to increased confidence. Evident within the follow-up interviews was the perception from three of the managers that they were better able to understand their roles through an ongoing feeling of heightened confidence. This issue had not been explicitly emphasised in their initial interviews. Within the follow-up interviews, there was evidence of these managers needing to continually seek reassurance in their actions at the same time as gaining confidence in their approach:

"I felt quite insecure initially...I think my confidence has grown- I lacked quite a lot of confidence for certain things." (AM1)

"... but more than anything it's about confidence- I feel that it's a huge issue." (AM13)

"In terms of my development as a manager, I've now got more confidence." (PSM9)

The predominantly informal nature of learning was strongly evident in the reflective journals. For example, AM11's reflections were primarily born out of the ordinary, everyday events rather than momentous occasions, with the only exception being his examination of a series of interconnected staff disciplinary meetings over a *"potentially difficult issue"*. The evidence showed AM11 wanting to find a solution to this issue for the sake of his team, claiming that:

"I do not want this type of conflict to continue and need to resolve it as quickly as possible without major interventions".

There was no indication of drawing on previous training or needing to find out how to deal with this situation, just a desire to find a way forward. In this way, AM11 was adopting a transactional approach in which his role was *"acting as an intermediary"* (as opposed to being an intermediary). Indeed, AM11 adhered to a predominantly self-sufficient and ongoing approach to learning how to deal with situations as a manager, rather than a more detached regime from learning through programmes, despite having recently completed a University leadership programme. Whilst this appeared contradictory, it could be argued that this programme focussed on transformational leadership rather than transactional management, and in the day-to-day reality of AM11's role

portrayed through his journal entries, it was the latter rather than the former that he needed to employ.

Similarly, it was evident through PSM3's journals that learning through workplace tasks played a major role in her ongoing development as a manager. PSM3's current role in charge of a small team also had strong cross-institutional dimension which exposed her to a number of different experiences upon which she could draw:

"I drew on my previous experience of the types of issues which arise at such events and the questions I have asked in the past".

"...using previous experiences to suggest how things might be approached."

"I drew on my experience that it often makes sense to check things out for yourself..."

However, on closer analysis, the use of the words 'experience' and 'knowledge' were sometimes used interchangeably. As a consequence, 'knowledge' was not being formally learned but instead gleaned from experience of certain situations, giving PSM3 heightened insight and the ability to use an intuitive response:

"I drew on previous knowledge of...."

"...knowledge of the individuals at the meeting gained during my time at the University."

"...knowledge of what others have done in a similar situation."

Whilst this evidence clearly demonstrates PSM3's ongoing learning in her role as a manager, which reinforced her preference for this informal approach, there were indications in her journal entries of her turning to more structured development strategies. Although on initial analysis this might appear contradictory, the researcher posits the view that irrespective of PSM3's fifteen years in management roles, she was not only still in the process of emerging as a manager, but also being exposed to a widening array of development opportunities. For example, signalling her awareness of a skills and knowledge gap in particular situations which could not be filled with her prior experience, PSM3 had chosen to read around the issue:

"In terms of dealing with the stressful aspect, I drew on reading..."

"I'm reading a number of articles and a book on assertiveness."

"I did buy and read a small guide on having a difficult conversation which was very useful and helped me prepare the ground."

"I've been reading a number of texts ...and they have made me think again about the way in which I manage and lead my team."

The researcher asked for further clarification from PSM3 (post-completion) about this self-initiated development strategy of reading which had made her *“feel quite positive and motivated”*. PSM3’s response indicated that seeking information through reading not only enabled an immediate and accessible source of information, but was also a recommendation from her one-to-one coach (as part of the in-house leadership programme).

Informal, everyday experiences also contributed heavily to PSM5’s ongoing learning, as evidenced through his journal entries. None of these appeared to be momentous events, but the fact that they had been recorded might suggest that they were significant to PSM5. For example, reference to meetings was frequently made:

“Angst about meeting tomorrow - potentially controversial proposal - will prepare by knowing proposal inside out, by predicting questions and rehearsing responses.”

“Meeting went well - on board with proposals...didn’t press enough...”

“Difficult meeting with a member of staff... very sad - one of the most difficult things to do...Felt awful doing this, but it will allow for team readjustment.”

These meetings seemed to provide an unintentional platform of deliberative learning for PSM5 and rather than drawing on any specialist management knowledge, he used his tacit understanding of how to deal with such situations. In addition, similar to PSM3 described earlier, PSM5’s learning was also informed by reading (either text or web-based), occurring not as a result of an incident, but as part of PSM5’s evident continual thirst for finding out more information about issues he faced (both technical and management):

“This from Singapore-based Dipankar Subba’s Blog... where he argues...”

“Read Richard Donkin- the Future of Work.”

“Read Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes on the Cultural web.”

PSM5’s preference for self-initiated reading was, in fact, closely aligned to his own professional specialism which centred on such information sources. However, PSM5 was not accepting of all that he read, and he exhibited a critical admonishment of some of the literature which failed to help him make sense of his everyday, complex reality:

“I’ve often felt that ‘Leadership’ study or guides fall into the trap of mumbo-jumbo, new age mysticism and self-help for the self-obsessed...These either tend to be book-strap exhortations, cod psychology or self-help gobbledegook.”

Similarly, all of PSM6's reflections were indicative of an informal, work-based approach to learning. Moreover, PSM6's reflections resulted in stated intentions to change her practice which were characteristic of her previous commercial experience. Whilst PSM6 had taken an accredited post-graduate management qualification in the past (admittedly twenty years previously), and also regularly took part in a range of skill and policy-based workshops, none of the intentions to change itemised in her journal required a formal approach. Instead she focussed on intended changes to practice to be brought about through routine, in-role experiences:

"Ensure that I have more robust catch-up on personnel issues..."

"Minimise assumptions wherever possible..."

"Next time I would step in much earlier."

"Influencing skills are critical in professional circles and these are never fully learnt-more opportunity will always be worthwhile."

"Dealing with anger, dissatisfaction, negativity - experience, I think."

6.6.5 Learning from mistakes

Some managers, both academic and professional support, gave evidence of the belief that 'learning from mistakes' was an important part of their ongoing learning, contributing to their understanding of how they needed to 'perform' in their roles:

"...everybody finds out much more from their mistakes than from things that have gone right." (AM3)

"...I would be the first to admit that I have learned from my mistakes." (AM6)

"Just trial and error – and that really is it- and as you get to know people, you get to know what pushes their buttons." (PSM3)

"...you have to start to think about how you do things- and learn from your mistakes." (PSM4)

"...moments of great clarity, in a sense that 'I'm never going to do that again'." (PSM5)

"But out of every bad experience I guess you do learn." (PSM11)

Five of these six managers had over fifteen years of management experience. Three of these had also worked at the University for over fifteen years. Only one of the six managers had a management

qualification. It can therefore be assumed that the years of management experience provided opportunities to learn from task-embedded, workplace mistakes, some of which would be in the context of a single institution.

Learning through mistakes also continued as a theme within the follow-up interviews. For example, AM1 gave evidence that her ongoing learning at times involved a process of learning through mistakes:

"I deduced it really through trial and error..."

"If there's a bad experience, you tend to learn more from it than a good experience".

Similarly, consistent with his first interview, PSM4 demonstrated a very positive attitude to learning in his follow-up interview, and, moreover, recognised the learning opportunities provided when things went wrong. This was demonstrated through his use of terms such as *"you get to know how something's handled, what didn't go very well last time and what you can do"*, suggesting a more latent process of learning to understand or 'make sense' of daily issues within his role.

There was also some evidence of learning through mistakes within the reflective journals. The way these were described varied in content and style, some being brief and orientated towards making changes, and others being more ruminating and circuitous. For example, PSM6, using her business-oriented background which required the succinct documentation of information, gave a list of aide memoirs such as:

"Try to avoid..."

"Minimise assumptions wherever possible."

"...learning through my own mistakes."

A similar style was adopted by PSM3, again reflecting her professional background where brevity of information aligned to given criteria was expected:

"Next time I would shorten the phone call..."

"With hindsight I should have pursued the reasons..."

"I should be more open to ..."

"As a manager I should not be colluding with my team to..."

In contrast, perhaps mirroring her disciplinary background where discursive reflections were an integral part of a response, AM8 exhibited a more meandering approach:

"I wish I could say that I had learned a clear lesson from this and know how to behave in the future but I can't. I think that perhaps I understand both myself and [name] better".

"I've learned that I mustn't be thrown away by every single criticism, and must try not to take things too personally, while maintaining the ability to reflect critically on my own behaviour."

In summary, triangulating the views in the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals, there was evidence of a predominance of in-role learning which appeared to be both continual and informal, and included learning from mistakes. This built upon different journeys into management, with some professional support managers showing their firm intentions to become managers in stark contrast to the chance and unplanned entries into management by some academic managers. Learning was imported from a variety of other spheres such as family life and leisure pursuits, from where a range of experiences had informed their practice. There was less declared evidence from managers, however, of importing knowledge, skills or experiences from previous non-managerial roles within their career histories. Furthermore, from a wide range of both academic and professional support managers there was a keen preference shown for informal learning through experience, rather than formal taught courses based on management skills and knowledge. Despite initial reservations by the managers about the value of attending formalised management development, most acknowledged the positive impact of having attended the in-house senior leadership programme. However what became apparent was that the aspects deemed to have had the strongest and most lasting effects were the additional components such as the 360 degree activity, the one-to-one coaching and the informal trios, rather than the content within the formal workshops.

6.7 Focused on cues

Weick's sixth characteristic of sensemaking relates to the extent to which people in organisations look for 'cues' from their working environment in order to make sense and further understand their own and others' practice. Within the context of this study, it was used as an avenue of enquiry to analyse whether or not managers were picking up cues from around them which informed the way they learned and developed within their roles.

On analysis of the data, it became apparent that the type of language used was a major cue to inform the managers' learning. Indeed there was a pervading view that managers perceived the need to learn a specific language and 'speak' it in order to be able to communicate with others. This was related to Weick's social aspect of sensemaking, explored in section 6.5. The evidence indicated that the way in which this occurred varied. For example, some academic managers, whilst acknowledging that they had started to use a different language as managers, did not see this as a conscious act.

Instead they believed that it was a process that gradually became habitual and therefore a normal way of operating:

"I went away and read some books on it. I guess that helped me with the management jargon" (AM3)

"It happens so insidiously that you don't realise... we very quickly fall into these acronyms – they drive me nuts!...You've got to be so careful with the language you're using so we can very quickly fall into the trap."(AM6)

"I try to avoid it generally because I dislike jargon, clichés, catchphrases and buzzwords, but I do catch myself using them of course!" (AM8)

"...we do speak management speak but it's probably so part of me that I never think of it. I probably speak it without knowing it." (AM13)

Three of these academic managers were female with over fifteen years of management experience and two of them had worked at the University for at least sixteen years. This combination of management experience and longevity of service might suggest a gradual and tacit understanding of the need to adapt to certain cultural shifts, such as speaking a new language of management, irrespective of whether they agreed with it or not.

For some professional support managers, there was a sense of inevitability in adopting a different language, an acceptance that it was something which managers just had to do:

"Basically the language has to be learned, not changed...it's part of the territory, it's part of the language we all learn at work." (PSM5)

"People are feeling challenged by some of the language that comes down from on high...it's not a language people are comfortable with or understand what is meant." (PSM7)

Both these professional support managers (one male, one female) had worked at the University for twenty years or over, and so whilst they could be characterised as "locals" (Gouldner, 1957, p.281), it could also be argued that their experience had enabled them to accept and adapt to the evolving culture of managerialism within the University.

In addition, PSM6 drew on her thirty years of management experience (largely from outside the HE sector) in highlighting how the use of management language was not only determined by the nature of the work but also by an expectation in more business-oriented environments for a 'jargonised' way of communicating:

"I think you do start to speak a language, especially in terms of and as soon as you look at strategic work....I'll hear people say 'We've got no strategy for this' or 'Who holds the can for this?'" (PSM6)

From both academic and professional support areas, some interviewees explained they had learned how to use management language appropriately in specific contexts, and with certain staff. In particular, they had learned either to translate management language or to avoid it altogether so as not to alienate themselves with their staff:

"I try and avoid it as much as possible... Also I try to avoid using language in a context where it's not going to be understood. So there's language I would use at a senior management meeting that I wouldn't use anywhere else." (AM8)

"...it's interesting in meetings with staff sometimes I have to change words I'm going to use..." (AM13)

"I do feel sometimes buzz words actually detract from the communication." (AM10)

"When I talk to people within central committees they expect to hear that [management language] from senior staff.... It then needs to be translated when dealing with academic staff." (AM5)

"As a manager I try to keep it very healthy and my staff are the first ones to tell me if I'm using corporate speak. I'd be ridiculed and burned and tortured if I say too much!" (PSM5)

Three of these five managers had not only worked at the University for over fifteen years but also had over twenty years of management experience in each of their careers as a whole. Of these five managers, three had never worked outside the HE sector. These patterns indicated a potential for introspective management learning within a single institution, and for some, little insight into non-HE practices. However, their years of management and institutional experience also appeared to prepare them to adapt to (and possibly survive) increased managerial requirements, for example, the local translation of management language for their staff.

However, from both academic and professional support areas, a minority of interviewees contested the view that there was a management language to be learned but instead proffered the opinion that there was an institutional dominance determining how language was being spoken more generally:

"I don't think my vocabulary has changed in any way.... But what I am seeing is a change in vocabulary emphasis in the University generally." (AM7)

"... 'we need an idiot's guide' to the University, because we talk a different language." (AM12)

"You don't know the language, you don't know the culture- you don't even understand the acronyms." (AM13)

"I don't necessarily think it's a management vocabulary – I've got members of my team who would use certain words" (PSM8)

All four of these managers had over fifteen years of management experience. Two of them had worked at the University for less than six years, thereby potentially explaining their propensity for making comparisons with external customs and practices rather than focussing solely on the University's ways of working.

Analysis of the data from the follow-up interviews of the two academic managers revealed that there was neither explicit reference to nor increased use of managerial language. From the two professional support managers, however, there was clear evidence of a managerialist use of performance-orientated language. For example, PSM4, who had worked at the University for ten years, but prior to that had been fast-tracked as a manager within both the public and the private, seemed to have built upon his already established and familiar managerial terminology with phrases:

"...organisational cultures and processes...you have to start to understand those and contextualise the issues."

"As an organisation we could leverage more if we planned it better."

"...high level of commitment, with ownership from each member of the team."

Within his follow-up interview, PSM9 also further consolidated his previous position of being imported from the commercial sector to bring about change within the University. In his initial interview he had articulated being proud to be a *"different voice"*, this mission continued in the follow-up interview where he did not exhibit a more HE- based language nor show signs of adjusting to a university culture:

“...solution development to meet client needs.”

“...trying to harden up our position.”

“...forging a relationship management ownership.”

Thus, whilst both these managers were using more performance-oriented and strategic-focussed language, it was only PSM4 who appeared to be taking a cue from the University. PSM9, in contrast, was endeavouring to import external influences into the University.

In summary, therefore, from the different sources of evidence, a major cue which informed the managers' learning was the language used in the University. Whilst this was evident within the initial and follow-up interviews, it was not, however, explicit within the reflective journals, suggesting that it was more evident as a spoken rather than a written language by these managers. Within the interview data, opinions differed on the extent to which managers felt that they had to learn a specific language. Some academic managers showed, at best, only a tolerance for using such language, whereas from professional support managers there was more acceptance shown. Learning a specific management language was seen by some as a deliberate act, whereas others considered it to be a more subconscious and gradual assimilation. As a result, for some, it became a way of speaking that they insidiously found themselves doing. Another aspect which became apparent was the need by a number of managers to translate certain aspects of management-focussed language in order to communicate effectively with their staff.

6.8 Driven by Plausibility rather than Accuracy

Weick's seventh characteristic of sensemaking focuses on plausibility, suggesting that it is not about accuracy but instead about adopting an approach that can be believed in by others. Within the context of this thesis, the researcher focused the analysis on the extent to which managers within the University learned to behave in a way that would convince their staff to believe in them. Although approaches differed, for a wide range of managers the way they behaved was part of managing expectations and establishing relationships built on trust:

“It was just about setting out my stall...I let them know what they can expect from me ...It's quite clear, almost ground rules I'm setting up – not written down but they're there...” (AM6)

“... there are certain recognised bits of management where you are expected to treat people in a certain way...it's just a sense rather than anything else.” (PSM3)

"I manage knowing what it's like to be on the receiving end – I manage with that empathy...it's about how to handle people...I don't profess to be a management expert but building the trust with them." (PSM11)

"You have to establish yourself by what you do and how you conduct yourself – professionalising an approach – it's what it's all about-that kind of a reputation." (PSM4)

Three out of these four managers had worked at the University for over fifteen years and also had at least fifteen years of management experience. Only one of these managers had a management qualification. It can be assumed, therefore, that their perceptions about in-role plausibility were based largely on informal learning through their own task-embedded and insitu experiences as managers.

With only eight years of management experience in total and therefore still at quite an early stage in his career development as a manager, PSM1 considered that to be believed in by others, it was not only necessary to put on an act but also to sometimes think differently. This suggested that his learning to be a manager was about assuming the role of a different person:

"There is definitely an act, a persona, which you have to maintain, because with that comes increased credibility in some ways...you have to think like a manager."

There was also a perception from some managers that being credible was dependent on possessing certain skills or qualities. On further interrogation by the researcher, these had been either learned intuitively 'on-the-job', through watching others or through making mistakes rather than formally through workshops. In essence, this appeared to result in a tacit understanding by these managers:

"It is about being able to make decisions, and by and large, sticking to them..." (AM1)

"...one of the secrets of management probably is not to mess things up." (AM4)

"...the recognition that you have to make decisions very quickly and not sit on things." (AM5)

"Diplomacy, time management, prioritisation, and one of the most important ones of all is knowing when to let it go- knowing when not to do anything!" (AM8)

"...my philosophy s just listen and learn...you have to be good at what you do and some managers aren't- they've been promoted beyond their level of competence." (AM10)

“You need to have a series of techniques, not necessarily an understanding of management theories but different ways of doing things, empathy, understanding.” (PSM5)

From these six managers (four males, two females), four had worked at the University for at least fifteen years. Three out of the six had never worked outside the HE sector and only two had management qualifications. Whilst their experience of working at the University may have contributed to their preference for informal and in-role learning, it could also be assumed that this might lead to them being overly introspective. Conversely, this experience could account for the way they seemed able to intuitively blend the institutional cultural requirements with the need to be plausible to their staff.

Another view which emerged was that some managers believed their credibility with staff was linked to subject knowledge and/or experience in a specialist area, either academic or professional support:

“I think part of how I do what I do is because I have quite a breadth of subject knowledge in the area that I manage.” (AM9)

“You do have to have a knowledge base, I’ve always believed it’s about having credibility in the eyes of those that you either teach or manage.” (AM6)

“I think you need your traditional management skills in terms of people and strategy etc, team building and leadership. The other side of it is that you have to have good [subject specialism] experience.” (PSM4)

“The thing I always bring into the role of being a manager is that I have come up through the ranks.” (PSM11)

Similar to the managers above, there was also a predominance of University-based experience within this group, with three out of the four having worked at the University for at least fifteen years. None of these three had a management qualification. As a consequence, these managers’ stated belief in their in-role credibility needing to stem from subject knowledge did not seem to extend to them having management knowledge for their roles as managers.

Rather than a sudden realisation of what needed to be done, comments from some professional support managers showed that building up this credibility was a gradual but cumulative process:

"...it has been a slow accumulation ...there is no magic bullet to this- there is no single solution... there has never been a Damascene kind of moment...it's been an accumulation of skills and knowledge from experience." (PSM5)

"I've been around for a long time and you develop skills and pick things up as you go ...it was very much initially kind of aaaaah!...make some sense of this lot." (PSM7)

In analysing the interview data, it was evident that managers were aware of the impact of effective communication on their credibility. Although there was a range of practice and the emphasis placed on different aspects varied, there was a definite acknowledgement of the cues picked up through the process of communication:

"The only way you get respect in an academic kind of environment is by listening and learning from other people... listening to them and gradually learning." (AM 2)

"Keep talking to people...all that kind of knowledge about product and people." (AM8)

"But at the end of the day, my philosophy is just listen and learn. You're never too old to learn." (AM10)

"Listen to your staff. Listen to other people." (PSM7)

"Get out and talk to people as much as possible...I think a lot of work is not what you know but who you know that can help you to get where you want to be." (PSM8)

Four of these managers had over fifteen years of management experience, drawn from both the University and other organisations. As a result, it could be assumed that their perceptions about the importance of communication were based on experience from different institutional work environments. Whilst three of the four managers had formal management qualifications, two of these were not recent and were linked to their business-related disciplinary origins. It could be deduced therefore, that much of these managers' learning was informal, based largely on their in-role experiences.

In the follow-up interviews, one theme which emerged was the importance of making other staff aware of how they would operate as managers. Although united under this common theme, the evidence presented itself differently. For example, despite having had many years of management

experience in a practice-based environment, AM1's confidence was linked to her making herself credible with her staff:

"...it's really in setting out our stall...getting everything lined up, so that everyone was aware what was going on..."

In contrast, however, within the wider community of other senior managers, AM1's perception of her own actions displayed sustained doubt:

"I've been really petrified if I've spoken in a meeting and I've thought it's not gone down well."

Whilst the pursuit of greater credibility was also evident in AM13's follow-up interview, she linked this to age and experience. AM13, a late career academic manager with over twenty years of management experience drawn mainly from outside of HE, displayed a more self-assured confidence which she attributed to being *"a bit older...you learn to be a bit more pragmatic... I've felt more confident"*. This increased confidence also led to AM13 learning to meet the expectations of other managers, thereby earning their respect and becoming more credible, *"...without making them think that you can't cope...you try to be a caring manager but you have to deliver"*. However, this signalled a possible tension between how she wanted to appear as opposed to what she needed to do for the University.

The need to be plausible to others was also evident in PSM4's follow-up interview. Even though he had twenty years of management experience (from both inside and outside the HE sector), he described how in embracing his new senior management role, he had felt the need to prove himself to others in order to be credible. This had happened at two different levels. Firstly, having recently been promoted from within the Service, he described how he had felt it necessary to show his own staff that he had made the transition into his new senior post, explaining that he felt compelled to *"...display the right characteristics; do the right kind of work; take the right kind of actions"*. In addition, he observed that:

"...people do look at you slightly differently, and you've got to be aware of that, and behave yourself!" [laugh]

Secondly, however, PSM4 acknowledged the need to be credible to his new senior management colleagues from across the University:

“...the ability to influence, and to establish your new credibility, and to gain trust from other people.”

“...just to establish yourself within that peer group...other people have got expectations of you now in the broader group.”

Evidenced differently, whilst PSM9 also acknowledged the need to be credible with others, it was on a more localised level. Despite in his initial interview fiercely defending the need to be different from others because his team had been *“deliberately set up not to be the same as the rest of the University”*, there was evidence of his growing awareness of the need to be plausible. This was not, however, contradictory as this plausibility was solely aimed at his own team rather than University-wide. In the follow-up interview with PSM9, he showed that he was beginning to understand the need to be plausible to his own staff as a manager, and that was linked to the extent to which he was trusted:

“...that comes down to your ability to establish your credibility, and to gain trust from people... you have to behave yourself professionally...if you want people to do the right thing, then they won’t do it if you’re not doing it.”

“...it’s about trying to create that honesty and reality...”

“...it is kind of having a consistent framework. I need to set out the ground-rules about how we’re going to work.”

Similar to the other sources of evidence, although the issue of plausibility was not strongly evident in all the reflective journals, it was marginally discernible in some. As in the interviews, the need to be plausible was not in terms of decision-making but in the way they appeared to other staff. However, in contrast to the examples of plausibility cited in the interviews (albeit implicit rather than explicit), all those in the reflective journals involved their own staff rather than in relation to University-wide perspectives. This could be explained by the focus of the reflections being drawn from day to day incidents rather than from wider issues. However, the way that these examples emerged differed. For example, PSM5 had been a manager at the University for twenty years, having moved into a senior management role after a succession of different roles in his original specialist areas. This manager habitually reflected formally, resulting in a protracted ‘stream of consciousness’:

“Telephone call to ...in India-very professional.”

“Will do more of this...”

“Must show day in and day out that I care about staff.”

This suggested PSM5’s awareness of the need to be plausible, and his use of reflection to further stimulate his ideas, not necessarily searching for answers but, at times, asking further questions.

An implicit need to be more plausible became evident in other journals through suggestions for future learning. For example, AM8, building on her many years of experience as a senior academic, suggested that as a senior manager she needed to *“take myself (my ego) out of the picture...and be much clearer about my expectations”* and *“the value of taking time to plan and of listening with an open mind”*. Similarly, AM11 reflected on how his actions could be improved after dealing with a number of staffing issues, and concluded that *“being emotionally intelligent”* was a key to his credibility:

“One key to being a good manager is not to deflect you own angst- a skill I am trying to develop.”

In summary, whilst being plausible was less explicitly discernible than Weick’s other sensemaking characteristics, there was some evidence of it in the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals. Through all these sources, learning to be credible was discernible by the way in which the managers were trying to signal to others how they would operate, in addition to meeting the perceived expectations of others, either of their own staff or other managers. In all these sources of evidence, however, it tended to be implied rather than explicit. For some it was through learning to manage the expectations of others by being transparent about their approach. For others it related to the extent to which they felt they needed to demonstrate certain skills and attributes in order to be credible to others. Alternatively, for other managers, both academic and professional support, it was about having subject knowledge or specialist experience in order to be plausible, although this was only evident in the initial interviews with the wider sample of twenty-four managers.

6.9 Conclusions

Triangulating the evidence from the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals provided a rich and interwoven tapestry of data. Using Weick’s seven characteristics of sensemaking as an initial deconstruction framework provided broad, overarching headings in order to search for meaning, or rather, multiple meanings. Superimposed on this, the data was then analysed through the lens of the conceptual framework (figure 2.1), using an array of variables relating to context, formalised learning, informal learning and manager characteristics. In addition to the interpretation of meanings from each of the managers (through their interviews, follow-up interviews and reflective journals), the data from the initial interviews was further analysed to identify any

patterns. This helped to further interrogate the data and offer additional insights into possible factors contributing to managers' learning.

In particular, this revealed that the managers' length of service and their management experience appeared to most frequently present a clustering within the data, from which different interpretations were then offered. The issue of the managers' length of time in their current roles was, however, skewed due to an organisational restructure resulting in most of the managers being in post for an equal length of time (less than six years). As twenty out of the twenty-four managers had all worked outside the sector, this needed to be further disaggregated to reveal any patterns. Twenty of the twenty-four managers had also attended a compulsory management development programme, and so whilst this was still included in some of the analysis, the link between this and their learning was less evident. Any clustering around management qualifications was highlighted, although this tended to be used to further explain other patterns rather than as an isolated variable. The subject origin of academic managers and the specialist/generic categorisation of professional support managers did highlight some residual issues linked to background. A male/female clustering was evident in some parts of the data, although this was not consistent throughout the analysis.

Through the triangulation of the data from the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals, the complexity of the managers' in-role learning process became evident. Although responses varied, acknowledging the multiple meanings made of their divergent experiences, a number of broad themes began to emerge from the data. These themes all centred on how the managers were 'learning to make sense of' everything they experienced, everything they saw, and everything they were immersed in within the University culture. In essence, being a manager involved 'learning to make sense of' their working context, their journey into and through management, their identities, their practice in the context of others and their ongoing, informal, everyday activities. These themes are now further analysed in the light of relevant literature in the following chapter.

Chapter 7-Data Analysis Stage 2: A synthesis of the findings in the light of the literature review

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to synthesise the findings from the data analysis with those from the literature review. Whilst the main focus of this analysis is on the perceptions of the University managers through a combination of the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals, this data is also juxtaposed, where appropriate, with the evidence from the interview with a member of the Executive, and the analysis of selected institutional strategic plans. The findings resulting from these combined sources of evidence then inform the conclusions and implications for practice and further research in chapter 8.

The data has been presented through a number of broad themes which centre on how the managers were 'learning to make sense of' of their experiences. These themes have then been further subdivided using variables from within the conceptual framework relating to context, formal learning, informal learning and some other manager characteristics. Presenting the data in this way highlighted the interrelationship of a range of different factors involved in how university managers learn, reinforcing the paradigm shift from it being simplistic and monofocal to complex and multi-faceted. Through this reconceptualisation, it is evident that the learning of these managers becomes less about the embodiment of recognised models and theories and more about the ongoing interpretation of meaning within an evolving contextual setting.

7.2.'Learning to make sense of' the working context

7.2.1 The changing institutional context

A major finding from the evidence in this research was that the learning of University managers did not happen in a vacuum. Instead it was strongly dependent on context, and, in particular, the institutional context. This, in turn, was part of a wider HE sector context, responding to economic and political pressure to react to change, to meet the needs of 'customers' and thereby survive as a viable business venture. Triangulating the evidence from all the different sources, it became apparent that the University's chosen response to sector-wide pressures to change was to become increasingly business-oriented, in pursuit of delivering world-class skills (Leitch, 2006), under pressure to contribute to the economy (DBIS, 2009 and 2011b). As debated in section 4.4, the extent to which this was an inevitable consequence of these external pressures or, alternatively, an Executive-led desire to exert greater control, is questionable. However, irrespective of the underlying rationale, the University, like many other post-92 institutions, gradually adopted an ethos of "performativity" (Ball, 2003, p.215) where, it could be argued, monitoring, measuring and managing assumed lives of their own. What became evident through the analysis of the data was that, working within this context,

University managers had to learn to decipher a range of cues. Learning to manage, then, became a contextual activity dependent upon different influences, either assisting or inhibiting this process.

On reviewing the evidence drawn from the different sources, what became increasingly clear was a pervasive dissonance between the desire from some managers to cling to traditional norms and values and the aspiration of an Executive team to drive forward change. The analysis of the strategic plans and the views of EX1 made clear the strategic intent of the University. Managers were expected (by the Executive) to become more corporate rather than individualistic, more commercially and outward facing rather than content with traditional ways of working, and more standardised in their practice rather than governed by a legacy of academic freedom. Whilst the evidence from the interviews and the reflective journals did not suggest a firm resistance to any of these changes, some (particularly academic managers) seemed, at best, to tolerate rather than positively welcome them. Professional support managers did appear more accepting of the need for these changes and from both groups of managers, those with many years of service showed a strong tendency to favour previous ways of working. It could be argued, therefore, that this latent dissonance might be revealing a difference between “institutional rhetoric and everyday reality” (McCaffery, 2010, p.109). This appeared to result in a gap between how managers viewed their worlds and how Executive aspired to how they thought it should be. Whether this was symptomatic of a time lag between strategic intent and actual practice is yet to be seen.

Why then, it could be questioned, did managers not more actively and explicitly show their unease at the institutionally imposed ways of working? Analysing the profiles of managers gave evidence of a strong tendency of managers to work for the University for a number of years, thereby remaining as “locals” (Gouldner, 1957, p.281) who characteristically stayed the same, accepted and adopted insular practices, and rarely aspired to move on. This compared with a relatively new Executive team in pursuit of rapid change, innovative practice and improved results. Within this context then, University managers came under increasing pressure to learn to read the institutional strategic signals, acknowledge the new directives and speak (and translate) an adopted language of managerialist change. Many of the managers did, indeed, exhibit a passive acceptance of the inevitability of change and all that it entailed. In contrast to Gouldner’s (1957) assertion that academics represent ‘experts’ and are more likely to be “cosmopolitan” (and thereby move on) as opposed to non-academics being predominantly ‘non-expert’ and “local”, this characterisation was not evident in this post-92 university. There was a strong tendency from both groups to remain at the University, despite any disquiet (albeit largely latent) they had about current practices. Perhaps, then, the answer lies in other attractions or career satisfaction criteria such as employment stability, availability of internal promotions, family-friendly institutional policies and a favourable terms and

conditions. Such alternative career success variables (Nabi, 2003) might explain why these managers were either 'tolerant' or 'accepting' of the institutionally imposed managerial conditions.

It was within this context that the University managers were learning to make sense of their roles, gradually moving from collegial ways of working to expected norms and practices reflecting a more centrally-driven managerial approach.

7.2.2 From collegiality to managerialism: new expectations, norms and practices

As a consequence, a shift in culture was happening within the University. Despite awareness by many of the managers of this change, the evidence suggested that it was not openly welcomed by all. Indeed, supporting the findings of Deem (2005 and 2006), some of the academic managers within this study exhibited a tolerance rather than a welcoming of imposed managerial directives. They were learning "to 'do' managerialism" (Deem and Brehony, 2005, p.227), something they believed to be inevitable, albeit regrettable. However, adding to previous studies, the evidence within this research suggested the contrasting finding that some professional support managers appeared to have a greater level of acceptance that such a way of operating and behaving was necessary. These managers were more prepared to adjust to the changing requirements and expectations of the University, thereby learning in an adaptive way (Ellström, 2001 and Fenwick, 2003). Furthermore, the intricate blend of informal learning was aligned to a form of "horizontal learning" (Knight et al., 2006, p.333) whereby individuals contextualise and widen the scope of their learning through experience within the workplace as opposed to a more vertical progression through the acquisition of new skills and conceptual understanding. Moreover, for some, it was about learning to think differently, based on cues from their working environment. This provides support for Watson's (1996) assertion that the actions of managers are determined by value-oriented "lay theories" (p.323). Whilst they were adopting a 'context of use' approach (Eraut, 1994, p.30), this was not so that they could be professionally socialised into this environment but to 'learn about' it instead.

Also through a triangulation of all the evidence, it was apparent that there was pressure on managers for their priorities to become strategically aligned to the needs of the University rather than themselves as individuals. The evidence suggested that this was largely an Executive-led way of working, designed to enhance organisational capability (Blackmore and Castley, 2006, and Blackmore, 2009) and to improve efficiency and effectiveness (Morley, 2003 and Lomas, 2006). Further extending the findings in these previous studies, the evidence within this research indicated that the on-the-job learning for many managers was about making attitudinal adjustments to the cultural expectations, values and norms, albeit exhibited differently by academic and professional support managers.

Views expressed by a range of managers, both academic and professional support, suggested an endemic awareness of the managerial culture which was gradually impacting on their behaviour by the inculcation of expected managerial norms and values. These perceptions were, indeed, reinforced by the increasingly heavy emphasis on a commercial orientation evident in the document analysis and also the views of EX1. The managers' perceptions showed an acute awareness that their working environment had changed, and indeed, was continuing to change. However, whilst the University strategic plans showed that the development of policies was becoming more externally driven through externally imposed "outside-in" directives (Shattock, 2006, p.130), the views of the managers interviewed did not largely show evidence of this. Instead, the perceived major drivers impacting on these managers originated from 'the University', which, on analysis meant the Executive layer of managers. Indeed, adding to previous studies, strongly evident from both academic and professional support managers within this research was a tendency not to perceive themselves as the instigators of these tightened regimes. Despite being senior managers themselves, they did not consider that they created these rules, norms and ways of working. Although this manifested itself in a number of different ways, there was a tendency to attribute causation to "*the University*" for the heightened managerialist regimes, with this term often left nebulous although sometimes referring explicitly to the Executive management team. Whilst definitions of 'senior managers' may vary between institutions, this evidence appears to contrast with the view that such a steer in HE is driven by middle and senior managers (Kolsaker, 2008), but is supportive of the argument about the strong disconnect between a corporate leadership team and the rest of university staff (Deem, 2006 and McNay, 2006).

7.2.3 Decision making: followers or leaders?

This perception of not being part of the decision-making process contrasts with some findings from the wider management literature. For example, the managers interviewed in this research were neither "making their worlds" (Watson, 2001, p.223), albeit at a time when their worlds were being constructed around them, nor "creating a shared landscape of possibilities" (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003, p.20). In contrast to Weick's assertion that they would be part of the creation of their environment, with all its rules, norms and conventions, many of these managers perceived this as something that had been determined by others, and they therefore just had to learn to comply. In effect, they were restricted and disempowered professionals, sandwiched between their own staff and the Executive team of managers. Furthermore, according to the perception of many of the managers interviewed, the University and its culture were not of their making, and their challenge was to learn to work within it. Contrary to Weick's assertion that individuals should be "enactive" (1995, p.30) of their environment instead, these managers were learning how to react to the

expected norms and behaviours endemic in the culture of senior management in this institution. Whereas Weick's claim that an individual would have an active part in the creation of his/her environment, in contrast there was a lack of evidence from both academic and professional support managers that they were proactive drivers of this process of enactment. Furthermore, rather than just a centralisation of decision-making (Lomas, 2006), the evidence from this research indicated a one-directional hierarchical chain of decision-making from the Executive team down to other managers.

Thus, implicit within the evidence was a dissonance between the perceptions of the managers and 'the University'. Whilst it could be assumed that these managers had the capacity to challenge decisions and thereby become part of the policy-making process, working within the context of this post-92 university, they either felt they could not, or, alternatively they chose not to do so. This is consistent with Kok et al. (2010) who, in a comparative study of traditional and new universities, found that in the former, there was still strong involvement of academics in decision-making whereas in the latter, new agendas for improvements in corporate performance assumed greater importance. Within the context of this post-92 university, the learning of the managers appeared to be strongly focussed around compliance, conformity and acceptance of the collective need to make changes, even at the expense of their own individual needs. In addition, they were learning to understand the boundaries of their roles, with the concomitant limitations that this posed on their decision-making powers. Whether these restrictions were perceived or actual remains unclear, but their sense of place within the hierarchy, from both academic and professional support managers, appeared firm.

7.2.4 Learning the language

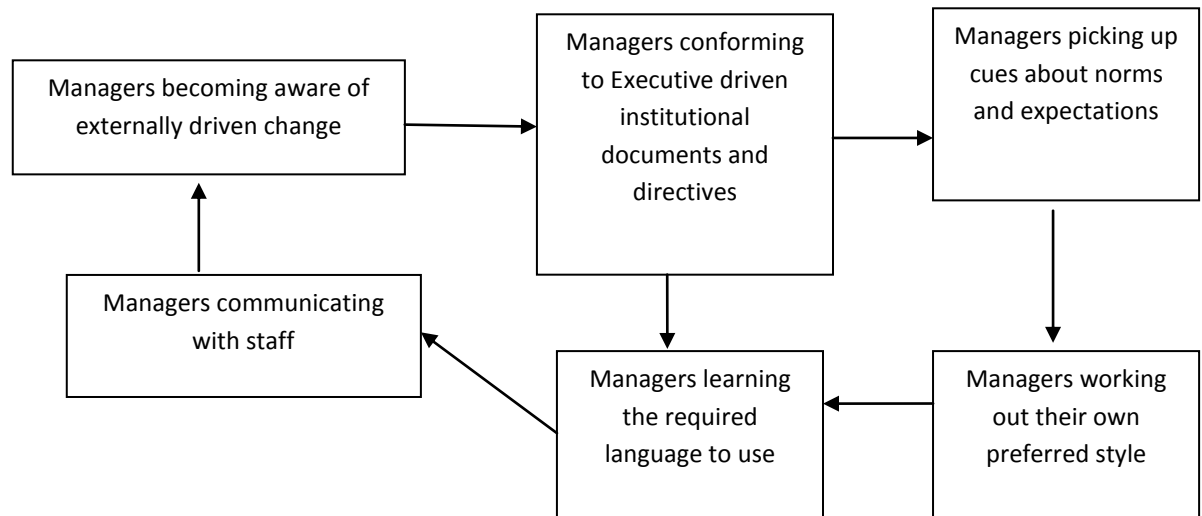
The triangulation of evidence showed the use of managerial language in both oral and written data. Over time, the University strategic plans increasingly echoed market-led discourses (Kolsaker, 2008), and there was the repeated use of performance-oriented language in the responses of EX1. Similarly, the extent to which the managers perceived they needed to adopt a specific management language in order to communicate with others was highlighted. Although responses varied, there was a greater positivity from professional support managers about the adoption of managerial language, whereas views from some academic managers exhibited a mere tolerance of, rather than a willingness to embrace this type of vocabulary. For these academic managers, the adoption of managerial language was much more a subconscious act; they did not intend to use such language, but sometimes found themselves doing so inadvertently. For other academic managers it was in knowing how and when to use such managerial language, which supports a tendency towards tri-lingualism (Deem and Brehony, 2005), thereby learning to juxtapose subject-based, HE context and management-derived

phraseology. Further enriching previous studies, evidence from a sizeable minority of both academic and professional support managers suggested that they were learning to anticipate the effect on the staff who 'received' such messages. Their learning, therefore, was recognition of the need to 'translate' corporate messages. They were learning to be aware of how and where this type of language was used, indicating an acknowledgement of its insitu suitability and likely impact on the audience, "acting from, and working on their own sense of themselves as they talk" (Holman and Thorpe, 2003, p.21). From both academic and professional support managers, other views were expressed which suggested that rather than being management focussed, the difference in language use may have been attributable to changes either within the institution or, alternatively, the wider sector. This echoes the need to consider whether it is the institution or the HE landscape and its associated language which is changing (Deem and Brehony, 2005). Furthermore, it raises questions about the perceived evolving nature of Higher Education environment imposing a constancy of change (Dearlove, 2002). The increased use of managerial language, therefore, was not only another indicator of the inevitability of transforming elements (Clark, 2004), but also of the marketisation of education within the sector (Grove, 2011).

7.3.5 Mapping complexity

It was evident from the findings that the managers' ways of learning to make sense of their working environments was dependent on the interplay of a complex range of factors. On analysis, these strongly displayed many of the characteristics of a cultural web of understanding (Johnson, 2000) such as routines, stories, symbols, power structures and organisational structure, and although less evident of specific institutional systems in use, this may have been a consequence of the data collection focus rather than actual absence of this. Within the cultural web of the University, the learning of the managers was context-specific, requiring them to decipher the internal institutional cues and the external drivers for change, at the same time as juxtaposing these with their own preferred styles of management. On an on-going basis, University managers were learning to work in a world of perceived 'supercomplexity' (Barnett, 2000), which neither sector-wide nor institutionally, was of their making. Furthermore, their working environments formed a complexity map (McKenna, 2004) from which they searched for clues about the direction in which to travel. Adapting McKenna's (2004) model of complexity maps, figure 7.1 illustrates the means by which some of University managers were learning to make sense of their environments, suggesting a continuous flow of cues and interactions which inform their understanding of their contextual worlds.

Figure 7.1 A complexity map of environmental cues for University managers



7.3 'Learning to make sense of' the journey into and through management

7.3.1 Aspiring to manage?

Fundamental to the approach to learning taken by all of the managers within this study was the way in which they had come into their roles. This affected their perceptions about what they needed to do in their roles, and their degree of willingness to positively embrace their new identity (to be discussed in section 7.4). Evident within this research were the differences in career aspirations between academic and professional support managers. These either encouraged or inhibited their adoption of a positive attitude towards undertaking their role. For example, the journeys into management of the majority of academic managers were purported to be unplanned, and were more of a chance occurrence. In essence, many of these managers had stumbled into management rather than viewing it as where they wanted or intended to be. This unplanned entry into management and the concomitant reluctance to positively embrace their management responsibilities shown by many of these academic managers adds to findings from other research in the HE sector. For example, adding further support for Henkel's (2002) findings of the unwelcome taking on of management responsibilities by academics, this research showed how in some managers it occurred more from a sense of loyalty rather than from a belief in its value. However, whilst Smith (2007, p.7) alludes to the "varying degrees of willingness" in which academic managers in pre-92 universities approach their roles, the analysis of the data within this research programme suggests that this was also characteristic of academic managers in this post-92 university.

7.3.2 Differences in type

Although this research programme did not attempt to characterise the different types of academic managers as “wishful thinking”, “entrapment” or “good soldiers” (Bolton, 2000, p.59) or, alternatively, “career track managers”, “reluctant” or “good citizen” (Deem, 2001, p.3), it was the unplanned nature of many of the academic managers’ entry into management which was particularly striking. On analysis, and in view of the fact that they had all applied for their current management roles, this seemed contradictory. Indeed, the insistence by some of the academic managers on viewing their journey into management as a chance occurrence or something which happened to them because of circumstances rather than as part of their purposeful or planned career aspirations appeared slightly anomalous. This disparity between these managers’ perception of their journeys and their actual routes into their management roles appeared, for some, to result in a reluctance to give up their old identities in order to adopt the new ones expected of them by more senior managers, forcing them to follow a new pathway and concomitant ways of working, albeit unintentionally. Whilst Strike (2010) alludes to the seemingly deliberate and proactive (albeit different) career trajectories of academics, this research programme demonstrates that the entry of many of these academic managers appeared largely haphazard and reactive.

From professional support managers, there were generally more positive views expressed about their respective journeys into management. Although the findings varied, overall there was more evidence from these managers of the planned nature of their career intentions for management, resulting in a more positive engagement with their role requirements. For example, some of the more ambitious and focussed professional support managers epitomised “new professionals” (Dearing, 1997, p.2), aspiring to succeed in their careers rather than in HE in particular. However, such planned career journeys were not universal amongst all professional support managers within the sample, with some showing less conviction about the planned nature of their careers, although they could neither be described as “niche finders” nor “subject specialists” (Dearing, 1997 p.2). In contrast, these other professional support managers appeared to be more opportunistic in approach, having proactively applied for a range of management posts which became available within the University, showing more affinity to work “cross boundary” or “unbounded” (Whitchurch, 2008, p.383), with resultant non-linear career trajectories (Whitchurch, 2009).

7.3.3 Drawing on previous experience

Another contributory factor to the process of learning to make sense by the managers within this study was their previous experience. However, when questioned, there was recognition from a range of academic and professional support managers that their practice as managers had been informed by experience largely drawn from outside of work, either from their leisure pursuits or from their

family circumstances. As a result of this, their development as managers did not start with the commencement of their roles. Instead their early or “pre-learning” (Watson, 2001, p.223) as managers was more gradual in nature, a journey with an indeterminate starting point, importing skills and knowledge through a process of continually developing and evolving within their role. The evidence presented in this research programme supports the notion that instead of learning which was specific to managers, there is “life learning relevant to management” (Watson, 2001, p.230) drawn from a myriad of non-work activities. However, in contrast to Watson’s claims about the importing of skills from previous non-management work, there was little recollection of this type of work-based transfer of learning from the managers studied within this research. Indeed many of them seemed to be ‘compartmentalising’ their learning within specific roles, and therefore did not appear to recall any bringing forward of pre-existing skills and knowledge from other workplace roles undertaken. Instead, however, there was a greater propensity for managers to transfer learning from other areas of their lives such as being on external committees or holding positions of responsibilities within leisure activities.

Thus, the different routes taken by managers into their current roles had an impact on their subsequent learning. The career intentions of these managers, their journeys into the role and the degree to which they recognised prior experience upon which to build, affected their willingness to embrace their roles and the learning of its requirements. For some, this resulted in inhibiting their acceptance of the prevailing ethos concerning management behaviour, whilst for others it paved the way to a more positive engagement and their further development.

7.4 ‘Learning to make sense of’ evolving identities

7.4.1 Becoming accustomed to their new roles as managers

Another major finding within this study was the way in which University managers learned to cope with their new in-role identities. This tended to occur as a consequence of them undertaking their roles, rather than through formalised learning. A key part of the learning process for these managers was becoming accustomed to their roles and the continual search for what these meant. This necessitated trying to understand the amorphous nature of these roles, dealing with the uncertainty sometimes caused by the roles’ inherent lack of definition and boundaries, and the reactive approach required in response to the needs of others. It was also learning to understand their own changing identities, what was expected of them and how they were perceived by others. The process of learning to make sense of their evolving identities undertaken by these managers mirrored the “contestation” phase (Whitchurch, 2010, p.10), characterising the adjustment made when individuals are becoming accustomed to their roles. However, whereas Whitchurch uses this description to

explain how individuals needed to learn to optimise their potential within “third” spaces of university life (2010, p.1), some of the managers within this research programme reported tensions inherent with this adjustment. For example, they were learning to make sense of new roles and expected ways of working, to understand how others perceived them and how to adopt a changed persona. In essence, these managers were learning to make sense of working in “a state of perpetual tension” (Whitchurch, 2010, p.11). Further extending the concept of a “trinity of activities” (Whitchurch and Gordon, 2010, p.134), the researcher contends that many of the managers interviewed within this research programme were often learning to make sense of the third space of management, juxtaposed with their subject specialism and a typically widening portfolio of other duties.

7.4.2 The tension of role ambiguity and uncertainty

Although practice varied, it was evident that there was a difference between the way in which many of the academic managers perceived their respective identities and how most of the professional support managers viewed theirs. In effect, this inhibited a positive approach to learning in some of the former whereas it enhanced it in the latter. For example, many of the academic managers appeared to be uncomfortable with the inherent lack of definition within their seemingly ever-changing roles. Characteristically, their roles appeared to be amorphous in nature and lacked clearly defined boundaries. Whilst this echoed the findings of other HE based research, such as Deem et al. (2001) Henkel (2002) and Johnson (2002) which depicted change, confusion and uncertainty within academic managers as they faced their evolving management responsibilities, the inclusion of the contrasting views of professional support managers within this research programme added a comparative dimension.

In addition, as similarly described by Deem et al. (2007), the evidence presented in this research programme demonstrated the tensions of conflicting pressures faced by some of the academic managers as they reacted to a myriad of changing demands. They no longer prioritised their individual goals but instead had to respond to the needs of others, either their own staff or the ‘University’. The evidence of confusion and a search for role clarification experienced by some academic managers closely aligned to the proposition that “most academic managers were in the process of working out what it meant to them” (Henkel, 2000, p.256). However, the triangulation of the data in this thesis not only unpicked this further by exploring the means by which these managers engaged in a gradual process of ‘making sense’ of who they were and what they needed to do, but also illuminated the impact of the University context on evolving job roles and identities.

Furthermore, whilst MacFarlane (2011) alludes to the “unbundling”(p.59) of traditional academic roles due to the rise of “para-academics” through which professional support staff take on some of their roles, in this research it was the taking on of more managerial responsibilities that appeared to

have a destabilising effect on the identities of academic managers. Applying Floyd and Dimmock's (2011) typology of academics in positions of managerial responsibilities, there was less evidence of "jugglers" (p.395) who actively enjoyed the challenge of academic leadership, but more of "copers" (p.395), staying in the role through a sense of duty, sometimes without enjoyment of the challenge. Indeed, as evidenced below, it was from professional support managers where there were more "jugglers" who positively rose to the challenge of having changing identities, thereby adding a potentially different application for Floyd and Dimmock's study.

7.4.3 Seizing the opportunity to shape own role

Previous research on university professional support staff found evidence of role ambiguity (Duke, 2002, p.33, 2003, p.51, and Lauwerys, 2002, p.94), conflicting identities (Whitchurch, 2004, p.283) and a need to work in a state of 'permanent transition' (Whitchurch, 2006a, p.5). The evidence from this research programme suggested that many of the professional support managers had similar experiences. Importantly, however, strongly evident in this research programme was the way in which, in contrast to some academic managers, professional support managers tended not to view their changing identities as negative, but instead as opportunities. Indeed, whilst acknowledging the inherent uncertainty, they saw this lack of prescription as an opportunity for shaping different aspects of their roles. From some, there was a definite sense of optimism and enthusiasm for their management roles, enjoying the chance to take control of their various daily tasks at the same time as accepting that they were working for the greater good of others and for the 'University', and learning to adjust to "uncertain futures in more fluid environments" (Whitchurch, 2008a, p. 376). This greater sense of optimism from the professional support managers contrasts with the compliance expectations voiced by many of the academic managers.

7.4.4 Becoming authentic managers?

The triangulated evidence from the managers interviewed along with the views of EX1 and the analysis of the strategic plans did suggest a dislocation, especially in terms of the extent to which managerial ways of working were to be embraced. This appeared to present a dilemma in terms of the managers' sense of authenticity within their roles. Primarily, there was a disjuncture between what managers wanted to do (or indeed, felt they ought to do according to their principles and values), and how they were 'expected' to behave. Whilst this tension was evident from both academic and professional support managers, there was more acceptance of it amongst the latter group. Indeed, for them, embodying such ways of working or speaking the language of management was more an accepted (rather than contested) consequence of their roles which they personified as an "authentic professional" (Ball, 2004, p.4). Whilst some professional support managers still showed a residual legacy to stay close to their original specialist vocational areas, there was a genuine

engagement with and support for the managerialist practices incumbent with their current roles. In contrast, academic managers exhibited more articulation of their unease at being expected to behave differently, resulting in them learning to 'put on an act' rather than embody the values and expected ways of working as a genuine belief in their appropriateness. For some, picking up the corporate cues (especially those emanating from the Executive team) involved accepting a need to conform. This meant learning to play the game, follow the rules and produce the desired outcomes which could be monitored and measured. As a consequence, there was a residual potential for dissonance between how ideally they wanted to appear as genuine authentic individuals with strong beliefs grounded in traditional collegial ways of working, and the 'performance' they were required to put on as a manager, exhibited through changed language and/or behaviour. There was, indeed, evidence that this presented a "values schizophrenia" (Ball, 2004, p.9) within their roles as managers which had the potential to cause them disquiet and unease.

However, it could be argued that, for some, learning to be an authentic manager within the context of the University meant making a step change from being an authentic academic trained to challenge rather than to accept. Importantly, it was the way the managers were required to interpret information which perhaps legitimised them to their staff, thereby enabling them to retain some feeling of authenticity rather than falseness in their roles. Essentially this allowed managers to interpret the corporate cues and messages in order to understand the institutional agendas, and transmit them in an acceptable way for others. Becoming an authentic manager, then, meant deciphering the institutional cues, assimilating this information, and then translating it to be acceptable for their own staff. Whereas some academic managers might still be 'acting' more than genuinely 'personifying' the values which professional support managers seemed more inclined to embrace, it could be argued that these were all survival strategies as they learnt to manage within a changing institutional context. Moreover, parallel to the assertion that authenticity is a "multiple-dimensional and complex phenomenon" (Kreber, 2010, p. 176), when linked to academics' teaching roles, the findings within this thesis also hint at this wide-ranging nature for managers. Indeed, these managers were learning to be true to themselves (albeit differentially displayed), to their own staff and to managers above them. Whilst these 'demands' were sometimes in tension, these managers were, over time, learning to accept the parameters of their roles, learning how to be plausible to others and learning to play within the rules of the (management) game in order to engender a sense of in-role authenticity.

7.4.5 Finding their own management style

Despite the perception of not being able to create their own worlds, there was a view from some that they could decide on their own personal style. As a result, these managers were finding a way to deal with the tensions and requirements within their roles, not through an open process of “reconciliation” (Whitchurch, 2010, p.11) but by learning to use and develop their own preferred style. On closer analysis, this did not appear to be determined by gender or subject discipline, with both male and female managers displaying equal tendencies to adopt a style according to their own preferences, and from managers drawn from a range of subject areas, both science and humanities based. As a result, even though they did not perceive that they were enactive of their environment, some of the managers, both academic and professional support, felt that they had the freedom to adopt a style and approach with which they were comfortable. For some this appeared to counterbalance other internal or external impositions on their working contexts. Thus, whilst they were learning to play within the rules of the game (Antonacopoulou, 2002), this was enhanced through feeling empowered to adopt their own approach and style rather than write their own rules.

7.4.6 A disciplinary matter?

On analysis of the data, there was no explicit reference to the influence of discipline backgrounds affecting identity, as found by other researchers (Blackmore, 2007, Bryman, 2007, Deem et al., 2007, and Gibbs et al., 2008). In contrast, there was occasional reference by both academic and professional support managers to the importance of either their personal credibility stemming from previous background experience in a particular area or their residual allegiance to professional ties and associations. However, from their recollections of the way in which they dealt with issues (either subject based or professional), there was no evidence that this background experience influenced their style or approach to management.

7.4.7 The normality of confusion

Within this research programme, it was evident that both academic and professional support managers continually sought clarity about establishing their personal sense of self (Watson, 2001). However, unlike Weick’s (p.20) proposition that individuals make an intentional search to clarify the “ongoing puzzle” of their identities within their evolving roles, the evidence from this research programme suggested that for many managers, this process was largely unintentional and instigated frequently as a consequence of confusion. The way in which the majority of managers learned to work with a lack of clarity in their roles was strongly evident throughout this study. Indeed, for many of the academic managers, this resulted, at times, in them working in a largely reactive way, either in response to other staff or to the apparent complexity of the problems encountered. Whilst Deem et al. (2007) acknowledged the inevitability that some management practices would be reactive to the needs of others, this research programme highlighted a feeling of confusion which was less apparent

in previous studies about HE management. However, some non-HE management literature indicated that a “chaos of reality” (Paauwe and Williams, 2001, p.90) was to be expected, concluding that much of management work is relatively chaotic and unplanned (Mumford, 1997) and, indeed, often “starts with chaos” (Weick et al., 2005). As a consequence, the evidence supplements findings in other non-HE literature which highlights the complex and context-specific nature of management learning (Mezirow, 2000 and Storey and Tate, 2000), and the inherent confusion caused through day-to-day raw experience (Chia, 2000). These research findings therefore add to the wider management literature by highlighting the normality rather than the peculiarity of confusion faced by the University managers as they learned to make sense of their evolving daily roles. In addition, within the follow-up interviews, there was emerging evidence that these managers were learning to cope better with complexity and confusion, indicating their gradual acceptance of this as a normal part of their roles.

A key component of the learning undertaken by these managers was about learning to make sense through confusion. Whilst MacFarlane (2011, p.62) alludes to the deskilling of academics who take on management responsibilities, this research programme has offered the opportunity to examine how this contrasts with the experience of professional support managers, many of whom positively embrace confusion and identity change. Furthermore, whereas Henkel (2000, p.39) highlights the tensions of academic managers who move between the two worlds of lecturing and management, this research programme has not only illuminated the challenges of this journey but also its unwelcome features for some. For both academic and professional managers, the learning along this journey has been an integral part of their roles rather than an adjunct, equipping them to live with, rather than fight against, confusion. Furthermore, as part of this gradual and ongoing adjustment to their in-role identities, some of these managers were learning to make sense of the lack of clarity incumbent within their management roles, thereby gaining greater confidence to carry out their respective responsibilities.

7.5 ‘Learning to make sense’ through others

7.5.1 Structured social learning

The evidence indicated that University managers learn within a social context, particularly that of the University. However, whilst Weick (1995) claimed that the process of sensemaking “is never solitary because what a person does is contingent on others” (p.40), the way to which these managers were ‘learning to make sense’ through social means was both varied and selective. There was a range of enablers and inhibitors impacting on whether this learning could be achieved, for example, the organisational structure, pressures of job responsibilities and the perceived competition between departments within the University were all cited as actual or potential barriers to managers sharing

their experiences and learning from each other. Linked to this, a key finding was a reluctance to learn from other managers through formalised groups. Indeed, there was no evidence that these managers were actively seeking to “develop networks that enable them to contextualise problems” (Whitchurch, 2010, p.13), at least, not formal ones. They were therefore not actively seeking to “reconstruct” (Whitchurch, 2010, p. 12) their identities through being part of a formal cross-university group with other managers. A seemingly preferred strategy for social participation (Wenger, 2000), was in the form of informal contacts between individual managers. The apparent aversion to learning through participation in formalised groups manifested itself not only in a perception from both academic and professional support managers that there was an absence of an appropriate structure to enable them to effectively network, but also an evident lack of belief from some in the need for such groups to exist.

7.5.2 From individuals to teams

Whilst academics purportedly have “little desire for collective action and little interest in the larger University” (Dearlove, 2002, p.267) it was from both academic and professional support managers that this view was evident. Anomalously, despite the recognition from managers in both these groups about the loneliness surrounding management positions and their tendency to perpetuate a ‘silo’ way of working, there was an evident reluctance to engage in formal groups or networks with other managers and thereby share information and practice. In particular, this reluctance seemed to focus on not wanting or valuing being part of formalised groups of different managers (rather than role-specific). In addition, a number of academic managers justified their reluctance to formally engage with the others on the grounds of their perceived need to compete rather than collaborate, a practice purportedly encouraged by the current target-driven culture within the University. This appeared to be a major barrier to the formation of networks of managers, inhibiting any learning that might be fostered in such gatherings. There was, amongst these managers, a tendency to protect their own interests and not share with others, choosing instead to stay within their own academic tribes and territories (Becher and Trowler, 2001). In this way, these managers favoured either localised subgroups rather than institution-wide networks, or alternatively, external networks which provided a perceived safe environment in which to learn from colleagues in the wider community, albeit typically from within their own subject specialisms.

Whilst some professional support managers recognised the potential value that being part of a community of practice with other managers could bring, thereby supporting previous research findings external to HE such as Fuller et al. (2005), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (2000), they failed to see how this could work across the University. In line with the views of some of the academic

managers, preference was also shown by a number of professional support managers for sub-communities to exist, (Brown and Duguid, 2001; Fox, 2000, Lindkvist, 2005) rather than institution-wide structures, particularly if the former could directly support in-role responsibilities of different categories of managers. Similar to the perception of some of the academic managers, there was a feeling from a number of the professional support managers that wider and more formalised communities did not and could not exist. Indeed, any informal networking by interviewees in this research largely existed at a local rather than a corporate level, suggesting an allegiance to a community of practice was more likely to occur if the conditions were appropriate. Set within a University context, the evidence from this research programme adds to previous studies which suggest that such groups do not take place in a vacuum but, instead, need an appropriately conducive institutional climate (Roberts, 2006), taking account of the complex interplay of organisational politics (Blackler et al., 2000, Contu and Wilmott, 2003, Huzzard, 2004 and Roberts, 2006).

7.5.3 Joining the University team of managers

Relating to the contextual learning by some of the managers, both academic and professional support, was their awareness of a growing expectation to be part of a wider management team. Views varied, with some of the professional support managers welcoming this, whilst a number of academic managers were more resistant. In particular, this pressure felt by some academic managers to 'belong' to the organisation appeared to be an unwelcome development (Deem et al., 2007), pulling them away from the traditional legacy that universities were essentially a meeting place for a collection of individuals (Barnett, 2000, p.128) or a community of scholars (Henkel, 2002, p.30).

Views differed about the contribution to each manager's learning of the then existing University-wide forum for senior staff. Some believed that it supplied useful institutional or sector-specific information, thereby enabling them to learn in context. However, aligned to the findings of Handley et al. (2006) and Mutch (2003), some other managers did not show a predisposition to conform to the norms of such a forced and formalised community, being either more sceptical about its value or concerned about the effect it had on their identity through being perceived by their non-management colleagues as part of that group. Whereas Wenger (1998) suggested that definitional characteristics needed to exist in communities of practice, this research confirmed that the forum for senior managers was perceived to be too structured to serve this purpose. Indeed the preference of University managers for informal interactions supported the findings of Boud and Middleton (2003) although their study was not focussed on university managers but rather individuals at work. From research within the HE sector, whilst Johnson (2002) supports the notion that, in addition to other factors, the development of university managers requires, "community and participation" (p.47), the

evidence from this research suggested that this institution neither offered the former nor supported the latter. The propensity for the social learning of these University managers was, however, firmly linked to the institutional context in which they worked. Indeed, the perceived competitive, target-driven culture, along with their position within the hierarchy, their in-role specialist requirements and the day-to-day pressures of their jobs, inhibited the development of University-wide communities of managers through which they could share practice with others in similar roles and thereby potentially learn.

7.5.4 Situated learning through observation: a practice to model?

As a corollary to this reluctance or aversion to establishing formalised groups, another key finding was the way in which many managers learned informally from observing the practice of others. The evidence demonstrated that this was a fundamental enabler to their learning but manifested itself differently across individuals. Responses from many of the managers indicated recognition of the situated nature of their learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), which was dependent on the social context of their working practice. However, in an endeavour to discover the means by which this learning from others occurred, a particular line of enquiry centred on whether the managers had a role model from whom they could learn. The theme of role models offers a different dimension to existing studies within the literature, providing another lens through which to focus on the emerging issues relating to the social and situated learning of managers. The responses from both academic and professional support managers were broadly similar, and a key finding was that the managers could not identify a perfect or ideal role model in one person. Instead, they had learned to see aspects of good practice in a range of colleagues and other acquaintances, from both within and external to the University. As a result, role models for some managers tended to be a hypothetical construct assimilated from a selected range of good qualities or practice in others and in this way were aspirational rather than actual. This finding, however, contradicts a recent study about professional career pathways in HE which claimed that “some excellent examples of senior managers as role models and of colleagues who display high level people management skills” (Shine, 2010, p.10).

Despite evidence emerging that academic managers had engaged in a process of watching and learning, this did not align with “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave and Wenger, 1995, p.40) where individuals learn through observing the practice of others as they gradually join a given community. This appeared to be for two reasons. Firstly, as indicated above, some managers were reluctant to accept that there was a University-wide community to which they wanted to belong and from which they could learn. Secondly, unlike Lave and Wenger’s study, the evidence also suggested that the observation in which they engaged was not necessarily an early career activity. Instead, this type of learning was ongoing, ubiquitous and ad hoc, transcending age, experience, role and context.

This supports the notion that “people in managerial work do not suddenly ‘become’ managers” after which their learning ceases to continue (Watson and Harris, 2001, p.221).

7.5.5 Learning through normality rather than exceptionality

Another dimension to the social learning undertaken by some managers was the observation and subsequent emulation of everyday, routine practices of others, rather than focussing solely on exceptional occurrences or achievements. In this way, these managers were following a type of apprenticeship model (Lave and Wenger, 1995), where the learning was informal and unplanned but primarily dependent on observing others. In addition, the evidence indicated that some managers were particularly impressed by witnessing the personal qualities of others, rather than just their management skills. There was, indeed, a desire by these managers to learn from an array of personal qualities in order to develop, thereby viewing “the emergent manager primarily as an emergent person” (Watson 2001, p.226). However, within this research, it became evident that observing others was not just to learn the positive aspects relating to how to manage but instead from the perceived poor practice of others. These opportunities were, in themselves, enablers to the learning of some managers. Indeed, this experiential way in which some of the managers learned was as much through observing ‘how not to’ manage as it was seeking to emulate good practice. For some, therefore, the workplace presented a range of opportunities or ‘*affordances*’ (Billett, 2001, p.209). However, whereas Billett suggested that workplace tasks presented the opportunities to learn, here it was the learning potential of informal social situations which were cited as being particularly valuable to the managers.

7.6 ‘Learning to make sense’ through ongoing, informal, everyday activities

7.6.1 Managers as continual learners

A key finding within this study suggested that, from a wide range of managers, there was a strong acknowledgement of the value of informal learning opportunities which occurred throughout their work within the University. This suggested a perceived value in the relevance of “conceptualising managers as ‘learners’ and their work as learning” (Schwandt, 2005, p.187). Evident from both the initial and the follow-up interviews with managers was the realisation that they frequently used and favoured informal learning to support their in-role development. Furthermore the difficulty surrounding identifying *major* ‘critical incidents’ suggested that their learning was not dependent on sudden, isolated and momentous events but was more of a continuous process whereby they accumulated their experiences gradually over time. The ongoing nature of this type of informal

learning was highlighted by a number of managers, both academic and professional support. These managers had used a process of 'trial and error', coupled with a belief in the value of ongoing learning through workplace tasks and experiences. This supports findings from HE-based research on the development of academic managers, emphasising the importance of practice and context (Johnson, 2002,), the value of conversing with experienced colleagues (Deem, 2006) and the tendency to seek alternative support mechanisms in the absence of training appropriate to their specific roles (Henkel, 2002 and Deem and Brehony, 2005, Deem et al., 2007). In addition, however, within this research programme there was also evidence of some academic managers preferring to engage in their own process of reading around the subject of management. By doing so, they were not only utilising their residual academic skills but also learning in their preferred way, supporting the notion of the "self-educating academic" (Deem et al., 2007). Indeed, whilst Blackmore (2009) suggests the need for a broader framework of development to include the "preferred ways of working of the academic and support staff communities", (p. 674), this research programme also strongly illuminates the importance of informal learning.

7.6.2 Multi-faceted workplace opportunities to learn

Drawing on a number of key facets of the University managers' informal and ongoing workplace learning, this research adds to studies external to HE by providing a different contextual dimension to previous findings. Doyle (2000) and Storey and Tate (2000), for example advocate the importance of exposure to a wide range of activities in order for managers to learn effectively, this research adds further evidence to this from a university setting. The opportunity to undertake challenging workplace tasks (Paauwe and Williams, 2001, p. 97) was certainly cited by University managers as an effective way for them to learn to manage, although it could be argued that their lack of formal reflection may have limited the potential to maximise this learning. The workplace appeared to present the managers with an array of opportunities. Although this reinforced the findings of McNally et al. (2009) and Van Eekelen (2005) as it involved experiential learning and observing the good practice of others either experientially, the absence of learning through reflection marked a difference. Whilst Antonacopoulou (2002) emphasises that the vast majority of a manager's learning is not through a formal process but instead as a result of everyday tasks and activities, this research further extends previous findings by demonstrating the multiplicity of contextual factors which either enable or inhibit this learning within a university. Furthermore, although the researcher also suggests that recognition should be given to the unplanned and unintentional learning opportunities to which individuals may be exposed (Berg and Chyung, 2008, Cross, 2007, Livingstone, 2001 and Marsick, 2009), this research has highlighted the differential extent to which this disguised form of learning is

acknowledged and then adopted by academic and professional support managers. In relation to the criteria necessary for workplace learning to be effective (Skule, 2004, p.14), it could be argued that University managers benefitted most from a high degree of exposure to change and to demands within their expanding managerial responsibilities but there was little evidence of feedback, support for their learning or reward.

It was evident, therefore, that the learning of University managers was predominantly an ad hoc, unplanned and ongoing process and, furthermore, was often embedded within their daily tasks. In contrast to the formalised learning through taught programmes, this learning, from both academic and professional support managers, was not structured, it did not have specific aims and it was, moreover, multi-faceted in nature. Primarily it depended on tacit understanding of situations (Eraut, 2000), and frequently involved carrying out routine daily tasks (Hodgkinson et al., 2003). As a consequence, it was often disguised within normal working practices which sometimes necessitated learning from mistakes. Extending the findings of earlier studies such as Marsick and Watkins (2001) and Tikkanen (2002), this research also highlighted the hidden opportunities for learning from other people's mistakes as opposed to solely their own.

7.6.3 A growing confidence to manage

A finding from the follow-up study was the perception that over a period of time, managers had gradually grown in confidence, a confidence about themselves as individuals which had enabled them to face the challenges of their respective roles. Whilst this is linked to the discussion above on identities, it not only echoes the continuous emergence of managers through "the process of first becoming and then continuing to become a manager" (Watson, 1999, p.86), but also extends previous findings by highlighting the impact of the organisational complexity. Indeed, as the evidence from the University strategic plans coupled with the views of EX1 demonstrated, the researcher argues that this process of emergence was in the context of these University managers becoming more confident over time. This increased confidence enabled them to make sense of what they needed to do within the context of evolving institutional expectations, values and norms.

7.6.4 Formal versus informal learning

Another finding was the perceived limited value seen by some of the managers in formal, theoretically-based management development programmes, despite some having previously gained a management qualification, albeit generic rather than education or HE specific. In contrast to Schön's assertion that learning within professions need "specialised, firmly bounded, scientific and standardised 'body of knowledge'" (Schön 1987 p.23), the preference of many managers within this

study was to learn how to manage in a less prescribed or theoretical way. Whilst there was some evidence of “codified”, ‘public’ or ‘propositional’ knowledge” (Eraut, 2000, p.113) learned by a minority of managers, the evidence suggested that this tended to be influenced by their previous practice, especially those originally from non-HE backgrounds. Instead, the learning by many of the managers was haphazard, and often opportunistic. Rather than learning a formalised set of professional management principles, there was a strong tendency for them to draw on “uncodified cultural knowledge [that] is acquired informally through participation in social activities” (Eraut, 2007, p.405). However what the evidence in this research programme strongly showed was that formally engineered social activities were neither trusted nor welcomed by the managers to pass on this type of knowledge.

Indeed, juxtaposed with the preference for informal learning and development within this study, there was an emerging tendency from some managers to negate the value of formal training as a means to support them in their respective roles. This was not a distrust of formal training per se but, instead, a view that management development programmes were not sufficiently tailored to their in-role needs. Indeed, the evidence from these managers suggested a lack of confidence in the extent to which formalised training effectively supported their in-role development. As a consequence, whilst Deem and Brehony (2006, p.227) suggest a paucity of “significant training” specific to academic managers in their roles, this research found that there was, moreover, a lack of desire for this training. Whilst this concurs with the finding of Johnson (2002, p.209) in highlighting the reluctance of academic managers to build up “cultural capital” to provide leadership within universities, the combined evidence from EX1 and the strategic plans indicate an Executive-led ambition for this to occur. There was, however, more evidence from professional support managers of a belief in the value of formal training, particularly by managers from outside the sector, thereby exhibiting more alignment with the intended corporate direction espoused by EX1 and the strategic plans.

Only a small number of University managers had followed accredited programmes of development and from these there were evident traces of dissatisfaction about such training. Comments from these managers echoed the views of Quelch (2005), Reynolds and Vince (2004) and Brotheridge and Long (2007), questioning the value of accredited management courses to adequately prepare managers for the complexities of the daily issues they faced. The researcher suggests that the findings from this research support a call for the integration rather than separation of management education and management experience (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2006, Larsen 2004, and Thompson et al. 2001), recognising that theory-based, formalised learning plays only a small part in the development of managers. There was, however, a difference of opinion between the managers’ perceived need to understand their own working environment situated within the context of the evolving University,

and the insistence of EX1 to import practices from outside the HE sector into formalised development programmes.

Whilst supporting the call for a “more subtle view of professional learning” (Knight and Trowler, 2001, p.174) and signalling a need to invest more in informal learning (Cross, 2007), this research gives further insights into the divergent forms that this might take. As a consequence, this research strongly suggests that this should be through more than knowledge and skills-based courses alone and should, instead, move towards being a “multilayered enterprise” (Middlehurst, 2010, p.223). Indeed, the evidence from the follow-up interviews and the reflective journals indicated that it was not necessarily the content of formal development programmes which were necessarily the most useful aspects but instead the other associated activities such as 360 feedback and coaching. In essence, this calls for a more informed view of the learning of university managers, embracing a meta-conceptualisation which includes a process of sensemaking from their day-to-day informal activities.

7.6.5 Time to reflect?

Another finding was the unrealised potential of planned and structured reflection in much of the managers’ learning. In contrast to findings from previous studies (Bolton, 2010, Fook and Gardner, 2007, Jasper, 2006 and Moon, 2004) the interview evidence indicated that the type of reflection engaged in by the managers did not appear to constitute the formalised ‘reflective practice’ as a way of helping professionals cope through becoming an integrated part of their own development. Although positive about the *potential* value of reflection, there was a disjuncture between their beliefs and their practice, with a number of the managers identifying that a noticeable barrier to a more thorough commitment to reflection was lack of time. Where reflection did occur, it tended to be more integrated with other daily activities rather than as a dedicated activity. Lack of time as an inhibiting factor was also reiterated from some within the follow-up study, and concurred with other research findings such as those of Raelin (2002), that excessive workload prevented a more consolidated engagement in the process of reflection.

Whilst the unplanned and unstructured reflective endeavours undertaken by many of these managers may have potentially been missed opportunities or “non-learning” through everyday experiences (Gray 2007, p.496), the managers in this research programme did not recognise this, but, instead felt that their informal approaches were purposeful. Aligned to the assertion that the ongoing nature of sense-making could be difficult to reconcile with the need to also consider issues retrospectively (Pye 2005), there was evidence from this research that managers felt too absorbed in daily tasks to find time to reflect. Indeed, contrary to Weick’s assertion that reflection is “the most distinguishing conceptualisation of sensemaking” (1995, p.24), many of the managers within this study suggested that, at best, it only occurred in a snatched, transient and frequently opportunistic way. In essence, it

'contributed to', rather than being an identifiable or pivotal part of the way in which these managers made sense of what they had to do. Thus, the evidence from a wide range of managers, both academic and professional support, demonstrated that reflection was largely unplanned, unstructured and casual in nature.

Moreover, a related finding in this area was that some managers tended to identify more with 'being reflective' or 'thinking about' rather than engaging in a formalised and deliberate process of reflection. Thus, they were not "reflective practitioners" (Schön, 1983, 1987, and Moon, 2004) but 'reflective thinkers', engaged in an informal and ad hoc process, often integrated with other activities in order to better understand events or actions, either their own or others', particularly when dealing with uncertainty. This tended to involve a lot of self-questioning, particularly at times of self doubt and was integrated within other daily activities instead of being a separate process they went through at a specific time and place. In addition, the resultant reflection tended to be a lone rather than a social activity and did not involve a mutual quest for understanding in the company of other managers. As a consequence, it did not meet the requirements of "reflective dialogical practice" (Cunliffe, 2002, p.36) which calls for reflection to be integrated within everyday social experiences, thereby helping to find shared meaning in the messiness of complexity and confusion.

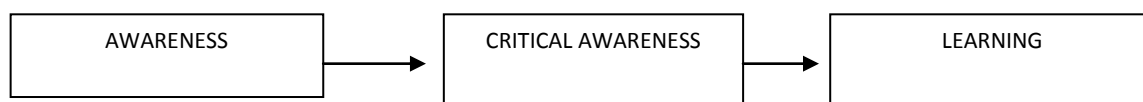
Analysis of the reflective journals indicated that, in most cases, the process of writing seemed to result in post-event deliberative "reflection-on-action" instead of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983, p104). However, for some there was also evidence of a close alignment with to the notion of "reflection for action" (Cowan, 1998, p.36) which promotes an intention to change future practice. Although Cowan uses this concept to describe learning within the context of teaching within universities, the researcher contends that this conceptualisation has valid application to the ongoing learning of university managers. Indeed, the resultant intention by the managers to change their practice (albeit through impromptu and informal reflection) extends the non-HE findings of Brookfield (2000), Kegan (2000) and Mezirow (2000) about the transformative qualities of reflection by providing a university-contextualised example.

Also evident in the journals was the way in which reflection involved managers understanding emotional as well as rational responses to situations. Whilst Moon (2006) acknowledges a tri-partite relationship between emotion, reflection and learning, and recognises the significance of having "emotional insight" (p.29), she does claim that this is not a conscious process. From the evidence within the reflective journals, the researcher challenges this assertion, observing that the process of reflection through journal completion appeared to provide the managers with 'thinking space' in which to gain this insight into their emotional responses, even if at the time of the event it was not a

conscious act. This also mirrors Eraut's (2000) differentiation between reactive and deliberative learning. However, although Eraut used this differentiation to analyse the types of tacit knowledge used in professional learning, here it can be further applied to accentuate not just the impact of reflection over time but also taking account of emotions within the process of learning. Similarly, whilst Kerka (2002) contends that journal keeping encourages an awareness of tacit knowledge, this research showed that it also promotes an exploration of the self, including how one reacts emotionally. However, whilst the completion of the reflective journals facilitated a "conversation with oneself" (Cooper and Stevens, 2006, p.363), the researcher acknowledges that this was within the artificial construct of a research programme rather than a self-initiated development intervention, and therefore suggests that it cannot be assumed that this would necessarily be transferred into everyday practice.

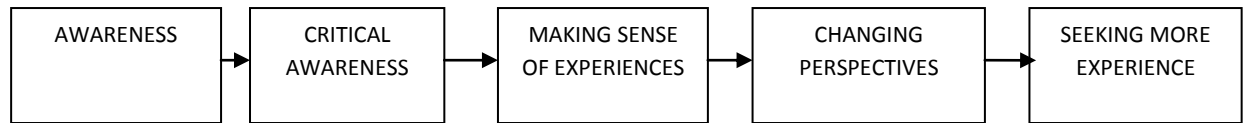
In seeking to analyse the process by which the managers reflected through completing the journals, the researcher adopted the three stage model of reflection (Scanlon and Chernomas, 1997). Although this model was developed for aspiring nurse practitioners, it enabled a systematic deconstruction of the managers' reflective process, using three sequential stages:

Figure 7.2 Scanlon and Chernomas' three stage model of reflection



It could be argued that the University managers' awareness of specific incidents was artificially induced through the process of completing reflective journals. Indeed, through the Reflective Journal Guide (appendix 5), the managers were encouraged to become aware of 'incidents' from their day-to-day practice. These tended to be routine in nature rather than momentous. Moving from awareness to critical awareness took a variety of forms, but characteristically involved a self-examination of actions, thoughts or feelings, and described through a range of styles, from succinct and action oriented to elaborate and sometimes emotive. However, the researcher argues that the direct step from critical awareness to learning using Scanlon and Chernomas' (1997) model was less obvious. In practice, this process was not about the acquisition of new skills or knowledge but about how experiences were being clarified and consolidated. Furthermore, prompts in the journal to question future learning needs resulted in a consistent call for more experience rather than formal skills and knowledge. As an extension to Scanlon and Chernomas' model, the researcher therefore offers the following 5 stage process of reflection evidenced through the managers' completed journals:

Figure 7.3 A five stage model of reflection (adapted from Scanlon and Chernomas)



This extended model of reflection proffered by the researcher suggests that the link between awareness, critical awareness and learning is neither simplistic nor sequential. Instead, a process of trying to find meaning from the ‘incidents’ then resulted in a change of perspective for learning to occur, with a subsequent thirst for more experience. Whilst represented here in a linear format, the researcher also contends that through further research (particularly by the completion of reflective journals over a longer period), the possibility of a cyclical model could be investigated, with the final stage of ‘seeking more experience’ then leading to more awareness.

Conclusions

Having reviewed the relevant literature in chapter 2, figure 2.3 was developed as a conceptual framework to explore in details how university managers learn. This framework offered the four broad headings of 1) Context 2) Formalised Learning 3) Informal learning and 4) Manager characteristics and these have now been used to critically examine the data, leading to the following outline conclusions:

Context The learning of university managers appears to be highly context-specific, with particular emphasis on the influence of the institutional context, albeit acknowledging that this is situated in and driven by a changing HE sector. As a consequence, managers have had to learn to understand the complex and shifting culture which has brought about new expectations, norms and practices, a drive towards individuals becoming more corporate and work within teams, and also an imperative to learn a new (managerial) language.

Formalised Learning The evidence strongly suggests that traditional formal programmes are not perceived as adequate for equipping University managers to learn within their roles due to their predominant focus on theoretical or procedural ways of management. In addition, some formal programmes are perceived as either not fully acknowledging the rich experience of many participants who are practising managers or, alternatively, not requiring participants to base their learning on experience of managing. It appears, therefore, that neither formal accredited programmes nor HR policy workshops are sufficient to prepare contemporary university manager to understand the ‘messiness’, complexity and unpredictability of their daily roles.

Informal learning Acknowledging that this covers a wide range of professional, workplace and sensemaking issues, the evidence suggests that all these different perspectives offer a plausible explanation for the divergent ways that university managers approach their in-role learning. Recognising the array of interconnecting factors, informal learning highlights the normality of ad hoc, unplanned, and unstructured learning that is characteristically embedded in everyday tasks and social interactions within the complexity (and sometimes confusion) of daily work.

Manager characteristics Appreciating the diversity of the contemporary workforce, the scrutiny of individual characteristics has allowed for a rich portrayal of a myriad of different factors which impact on manager learning. These variables have given an added dimension to the divergent realities of the managers within this study. In so doing, they have not only highlighted the complexities of management (and each individual manager's approach to it), but have also reinforced why the learning which underpins it cannot rely on the sanitised application of models to explain an often individualist and non-theoretical process. Furthermore, the wide range of different manager characteristics impacting on their process of learning raises questions about the homogeneity of groups such as academic and professional support managers. Indeed, whilst managers might be broadly categorised by the roles they undertake, they respond to the situations they face as individuals. Thus, although a commonality exists in some of the findings, these still need to be viewed in the context of other variables.

Applying this conceptual framework to the data has, therefore, provided an extremely effective deconstruction tool, allowing for the interrogation of connections, the consideration of variables and the interpretation of meaning (or multiple meanings) into how University managers learn. Moreover, this approach to the analysis has revealed the importance of context, informal learning and manager characteristics, juxtaposed with an apparent disconnect of previous and current formal learning programmes with the in-role development of University managers. Going forwards, if the learning of University managers is to be supported, a much broader conceptualisation of this process needs to be acknowledged.

Essentially, through the application of this conceptual framework, the resultant findings not only highlight the importance of informal, contextualised and situated learning but also challenge assumptions about how managers learn. Whilst supporting the call for a "more subtle view of professional learning" (Knight and Trowler, 2001, p.174) and signalling a need to invest more in informal learning (Cross, 2007), this research gives further insights into the divergent forms that this might take. As a consequence, it strongly suggests that this should not just be through knowledge and skills-based courses alone and should, instead, move towards being a "multilayered enterprise"

(Middlehurst, 2010, p.223). This calls for a more informed view of the learning of university managers, embracing a meta-conceptualisation which includes a process of making sense of their day-to-day informal activities.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overall conclusion to the research programme. Section 8.2 seeks to answer the original key research questions about how university managers learn, the factors which either enable or inhibit this process and the extent to which sensemaking is used. Section 8.3 then provides a summary of the contribution to knowledge made by this research programme, with section 8.4 outlining the implications for practice, followed by an overview of the limitations of the research undertaken in section 8.5. Responding to the specific limitations of the approach taken, some recommendations for further research are then made in section 8.6, prior to a conclusion offered in section 8.7

8.2 Answers to the key research questions

In essence, this research has endeavoured to answer the question 'How do university managers learn to manage?' The primary focus has been to investigate how this occurred, to examine any enablers and inhibitors, and to explore the extent to which sensemaking contributed to this process.

Analysis of the data generated within this research indicated the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of the process of learning as the university managers were striving to 'make sense' of their roles, their responsibilities and their everyday experiences. This process varied between managers and was interwoven with a range of different variables relating to the managers' own and others' perceptions of their roles, their particular characteristics and backgrounds, opportunities to learn from others and a mixture of institutionally- determined expectations and sector-led requirements.

Learning for the University managers within this study was much more than a process of knowledge or skill acquisition. Instead it involved the managers deciphering culturally expected norms and behaviours from contextual and socially constructed settings. Importantly, the evidence from the managers suggested that informal learning through everyday tasks, social interactions and institutional cues was central to their development. In this way, their learning was not a predominantly atomistic process of 'acquiring' a prescribed body of knowledge (Schön, 1983), gained largely through attending formal programmes, but, instead, a gradual assimilation of a number of factors and influences which helped them create meaning. Moreover, this study places a focus on how university managers, in particular, rather than individuals in general, learn at work, and these findings are consistent with those from Billet, (2004 and 2006), Kyndt et al. (2009), Marsick, (2009) and Sambrook, (2005) emphasising the importance of workplace learning and the task-embedded opportunities which are presented on a daily basis. Drawing further on this wider field of literature, it became evident that this workplace learning is steeped in experience and adopting the good practice of others (McNally et al., 2009 and Van Eekelen, 2005), even though the University managers'

preference for informal rather than formal reflection may have limited the impact of this learning. Similarly, this study of university managers emphasised the importance of interpretation and making sense, thereby supporting insights from Brookfield (2000), Kegan (2000) and Mezirow (2000) which highlighted the necessity of adopting a different perspective for change and improvement to occur. Indeed, this construction of meaning by managers (but within the context of the University) was a major finding, illuminating the non-theoretical and often non-linear way that their learning occurs.

Whilst potentially transferable to different situations, it was evident that the learning of the university managers was context-specific and, moreover, was heavily influenced by an evolving institutional environment. Importantly, they perceived that learning to work within the context of the University was a critical factor, and analysis of the strategic plans and the comments from a member of the Executive team triangulated these views by emphasising the strong business and performance orientation needed by managers as their roles became more aligned to institutional requirements. This combined evidence strongly suggested that these managers were, indeed, working within a changing institutional environment which was moving from a collegial community to a more hierarchical market-led business. In addition, it was evident that there was a heightened emphasis on managerialist practice and language, with an Executive-led aspiration to reposition the institution from one which encouraged the personal growth of staff as individuals to a one which focussed on a collective alignment of all staff towards corporate goals. As a consequence, the managers were learning to respond to evolving values, with a re-orientation to a more clearly defined, strategic purpose and direction, and to understand (and speak) a business-oriented language of performance, capability and enhancement.

Furthermore, responding to the complex nature of the working environment and the different factors which either enhance or inhibit how university managers understand what they need to do, the researcher contends that the boundaries between learning and sensemaking are intertwined, with the former incorporating aspects of the latter in an integrated and sometimes symbiotic way. The evidence indicated that sensemaking was, indeed, an integral part of the learning process for the managers although there was not necessarily a strict or equal alignment to all aspects of Weick's (1995) seven characteristics. The findings suggested that the boundaries of learning and sensemaking were blurred amidst the complexity of different contextual situations. As a consequence, learning for these managers was not predominantly a cognitive receiving of information nor an acquisition of new skills, but moreover involved them 'making sense' of their emerging realities (Watson, 1999). These realities were constructed within the context of the University, dependent on a complex interplay of factors which collectively enabled the managers to find meaning from their day-to-day realities. The evidence also suggested that such meaning did not constitute an objective frame of reference but,

instead, resulted in a subjective reality in which the managers interpreted their evolving experiences. For many university managers in this study, learning within their roles was a gradual process of realisation, as opposed to the occurrence of sudden or isolated incidents or events. Whilst this mirrored the findings of Schwandt (2005) and Mackerarcher (2004) on the importance of learning through continuous interpretation and finding meaning from experience within the context of the workplace environment, it then further extended it by applying it to the learning of university managers.

The learning of the managers within this study was, therefore, a complex and often unpredictable process, impacted upon by a wide range of factors. Whilst table 8.1 below provides details of these factors, a summary overview of the triangulated evidence suggests that:

- From a wide range of managers in the initial and follow-up interviews, it was evident that there was a continual search for meaning in their unfolding identities. This presented itself differently between academic and professional support managers, with the former exhibiting a greater thirst for clarity, whereas the latter, in the main, tended to view this lack of direction as an opportunity for them to shape their roles. Whilst there was less evidence in the journals of reflection on their identities, there was indication that some academic managers were finding it challenging to move from their past roles and identities into more senior positions.
- Both phases of the interviews indicated that managers tended to reflect in an unplanned, informal and pressurised way which was often integrated into other daily tasks, rather than devoting scheduled time to engage in this activity. Whilst engagement of the managers in the exercise of completing journals did provide evidence of more reflection, the style, length and level of detail in the accounts varied considerably despite the use of a standardised template.
- In the initial interviews, the follow-up interviews and the reflective journal, there was a wide range of evidence which indicated that both academic and professional support managers were aware of the extent to which the organisational environment impacted upon them in their daily roles, thereby influencing the expectations placed upon their working practices. There was a growing recognition of the 'culture' of the University, and, in particular, perceived impositions from the Executive layer of managers. Despite all being senior managers themselves, this led to a lack of engagement with the process of enactment, with them perceiving that they were followers rather than leaders of decisions.
- Learning from others was apparent within all three sources of data. The initial and follow-up interviews revealed that both academic and professional support managers favoured learning

through informal rather than formal groups, through observation (of perceived both good and bad practice), and through seeing exemplary qualities in others, even though these did not always exist in one 'role model'. Using others as a source of their learning also emerged in the reflective journals but here it was evident that the managers typically learned *about* themselves through social engagement rather than picking up good practice *from* others, thereby questioning what they gleaned about themselves as managers.

- The continual nature of learning also emerged as a strong theme throughout the data, and despite little evidence of importing practice from previous roles, many used experiences from outside of work to influence their behaviour as managers. The value of informal learning was repeatedly acknowledged by many managers, with the concomitant perception that formal training courses were less relevant to their on-going development, apart from some value-added programme components such as networking, coaching and diagnostic 360 degree assessments.
- Within the interviews, the extent to which the managers were becoming increasingly aware of an expectation to use managerial language was evident. Whilst there was more resistance to this from some academic managers, it was widely acknowledged that the language in use within the University was becoming more management-focussed, with the need for restricted use with certain audiences in some cases. These perceptions were indeed, triangulated through analysis of the strategic plans which over a sixteen year period showed increased use of business-oriented language, and the comments of EX1 who encouraged and welcomed the importing of perceived good practice from outside the HE sector into development programmes for managers.
- The need for managers to be credible with their staff was evident in the interviews and the reflective journals, although this was often more implied than explicit, and was therefore less discernible than the other characteristics of sensemaking. Acknowledging the need to either manage expectations or exhibit certain skills, attributes and knowledge were all cited as important to how plausible managers felt.

So, in order to ascertain what was distinctive about the way in which the University managers went about their learning and the extent to which it could be applied to other professionals, it is necessary to revisit the conceptual framework (figure 2.3) and the paradigm shift (figure 2.1). Essentially the learning of these University managers was highly context-specific. Unlike some working environments which may present a fairly stable and static backcloth, the University context resulted in being a moving picture which needed to be continually interpreted to find meaning and appropriate

application to each manager's role. Whereas some institutions may be self-contained and self-determining in terms of direction and speed of travel towards intended corporate goals, it was clear from the University's strategic plans and the interview with EX1 that a response was being made to the vicissitudes of the economic and political climate affecting the whole of the HE sector, albeit the response made was of their choice (as discussed previously in section 4.4, pp.112-113). A combination of the dynamic sector-wide and institutional contexts therefore caused a continual sea of change in which University managers were both managing and learning. This latter process was, therefore, not about skills and knowledge but about interpreting the new expectations, values and language of a more managed university (and sector). So, perhaps what was distinctive was the way in which the University managers had to respond to this particular institutional context. Superimposed on this was an evident tension which although did not signal that these senior managers were pulling in the opposite direction to the Executive team, there was a tolerance from some and a loyal acceptance from others, the combination of which did always not portray a consistent engagement with the strategic intent. Whilst learning to respond to these types of institutional demands (which may conflict with individual needs) could occur in other environments, the complex mix of different factors along with the assorted variables below made this a particularly distinctive and dynamic process for the University managers.

Set within this sector and institutional context of continual change, the learning of University managers became less about theory and predictability and, as a consequence, more about embracing uncertainty, unpredictability and sometimes confusion. Traditional formal learning which may have been appropriate for more stable working environments appeared to be less applicable to the University. Even policy training which was specific to the University fell short of supporting managers who were continually dealing with the changing demands from others (both those they managed and those who managed them).

In the absence of *appropriate* formal training, the learning of University managers therefore became much more embedded in their workplace roles where it often started from confusion and chaos before interpretation and sensemaking resulted in greater clarity (albeit temporarily until the next change was introduced). From here they learned through understanding their own evolving identities, observing others, picking up cues from the University and interpreting which was expected. This learning was characterised by being non-linear, multi-dimensional and ongoing. It involved reflection, but not necessarily in a formal, planned or documented format. Potentially, this type of management learning has transferability to other working environments, but the context of use would be different, along with the cultural expectations which underpin how managers carry out their roles.

Superimposed on this patchwork of contextual requirements and the intricate threads of management learning processes were the characteristics of managers themselves. Whilst these may have similarities to managers elsewhere, what became clear through the evidence was the lack of homogeneity, even within identified and known groups such as academic managers and professional support managers. Different family and professional backgrounds, varying levels of confidence and divergent career aspirations all combined to make a complex mix of factors affecting the management learning process.

Whether the learning of the managers within this particular University was different and therefore not applicable to other working contexts will only be known through further studies involving other institutions. Whilst the context-specific dimensions will inevitably cause a degree of uniqueness in the learning of individuals within an organisation, what may be transferable is the suggestion of a reconceptualisation based on a paradigm shift which accepts that it is an informal, complex, and multi-faced process, taking on an amorphous shape instead of being highly structured and contained. Furthermore, this type of management learning is a continual process which accepts the diversity of previous and current experiences as an aid to interpret meaning and ultimately make sense of what needs to occur.

Thus, it can be seen that the learning of these University managers was not about the 'what' but about the 'how' of this process. In essence, they were learning how to:

- decipher culturally determined but evolving norms and expectations
- cope with the complexity and amorphous nature of their roles
- recognise and use the richness of task-based informal learning opportunities
- interpret information in order to find meaning
- understand their evolving identities
- capture the richness of social interactions presented through their roles

In table 8.1 below, a summary is given of the common findings and emergent differences between the views of academic managers, professional support managers and 'the University'. These are presented under the conceptual framework key headings (outlined in table figure 2.3). What is apparent from this table is the lack of commonality between the managers' perceptions and the corporate view. Whilst this might be explained, in part, by the interpretation of the evidence drawn for the different sources, it could be argued that it also highlights the sense of dissonance evident between the twenty-four managers interviewed and the corporate view.

Table 8.1. Summary of the common findings and emergent differences between academic managers, professional support managers and the corporate view

Conceptual framework key headings	Common findings	Emergent differences
Context	Academic and professional support managers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextual nature of learning Dependence on picking up cues Myriad of different influences- assisting or inhibiting Endemic awareness of the culture affecting ways of working and expectations Awareness of changing working environment Awareness of centralised decision-making Not being enactive of their own environment but could use their own style Awareness of a change of language within the University 	Academic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Tolerance' rather than acceptance of the imposed managerial culture 'Tolerance' of language Moderation of language i.e. translating it for colleagues Not wanting to be part of management teams Professional support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater level of acceptance of a managerial way of working More acceptance of the expectation to use management language Corporate view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong desire for outward-facing orientation Firm intent to impose standardisation and conformity Strong accountability and control culture
Formalised learning	Academic and professional support managers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tendency to rely on management qualifications gained many years previously All management qualifications had a business orientation No management qualifications were HE specific Previous formalised learning had not led to a habit of reflection Formal policy-based management-based workshops often perceived as inadequate to equip managers for the complexities of their roles Expectation from managers that programmes should teach them how to manage 	Academics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived lack of value in formal programmes Professional support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some showed support for accredited management development programmes Corporate view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs to be an increasing focus on leadership rather than management Vehicle for transmission of key corporate messages Desire to have a predominant input from externals (to the HE sector) Needs to be focussed on the needs of the University rather than individual managers Strong steer to be improvement-oriented

Informal learning	Academic and professional support managers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to manage strongly involved trying to interpret, find meaning and 'make sense' of their roles, their interaction with others and the University context • Absence of major critical incidents. Instead, preference for ongoing rather than sudden learning through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trial and error -Everyday activities -Growth in confidence over time • Learning informally rather than through organised groups/forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -did not value structured groups -lack of appropriate structure • Preference for localised sub-groups, especially role specific ones • Learning through observing others (good or bad) i.e. sometimes observing how not to manage • Situated learning-dependent on social context • Role models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -no perfect 'ideal' -not in one person -different attributes in different people -University and external -hypothetical construct • Unrealised potential of formal reflection, often through lack of time. Instead, reflection tended to be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -integrated within other activities -unplanned and unstructured -snatched and transient -opportunistic -casual in nature -lone rather than a social activity • Continual search for meaning • Amorphous nature of role • Lack of clarity about role boundaries • Evolving identities • Need to understand new role and new ways of working 	Academics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading round the subject (self-educating academics) • Reluctance to build up cultural capital of management through accredited management development • Little desire to be part of an institution-wide group • Perceived need to compete rather than collaborate with others • More localised sub-groups • Examples of preferred allegiance to external rather than internal networks Professional support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More evidence of seeing the potential value in learning through others in appropriate groups Corporate view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Executive desire for staff to work in teams rather than as individuals • Push towards all staff being 'corporate' rather than belonging to localised communities • Partnership and collaboration encouraged • Preference for centrally controlled development in line with targets for staff to 'perform' • Personnel/Human Resource dominance of development priorities
Manager characteristics	Academic and professional support managers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importing learning from other parts of their lives (i.e. non-work) • Little evidence of work-based transfer from previous posts, leading to the compartmentalisation of learning within specific roles • Gradual increase in confidence • Heavy reliance on years of experience at the University to inform roles • Tendency towards 'localism' in 	Academic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reluctant managers • Uncomfortable with role ambiguity • Uneasy about lack of role definition • Uneasy about unclear boundaries Professional support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally more positive • More evidence of prior intentions to become a manager

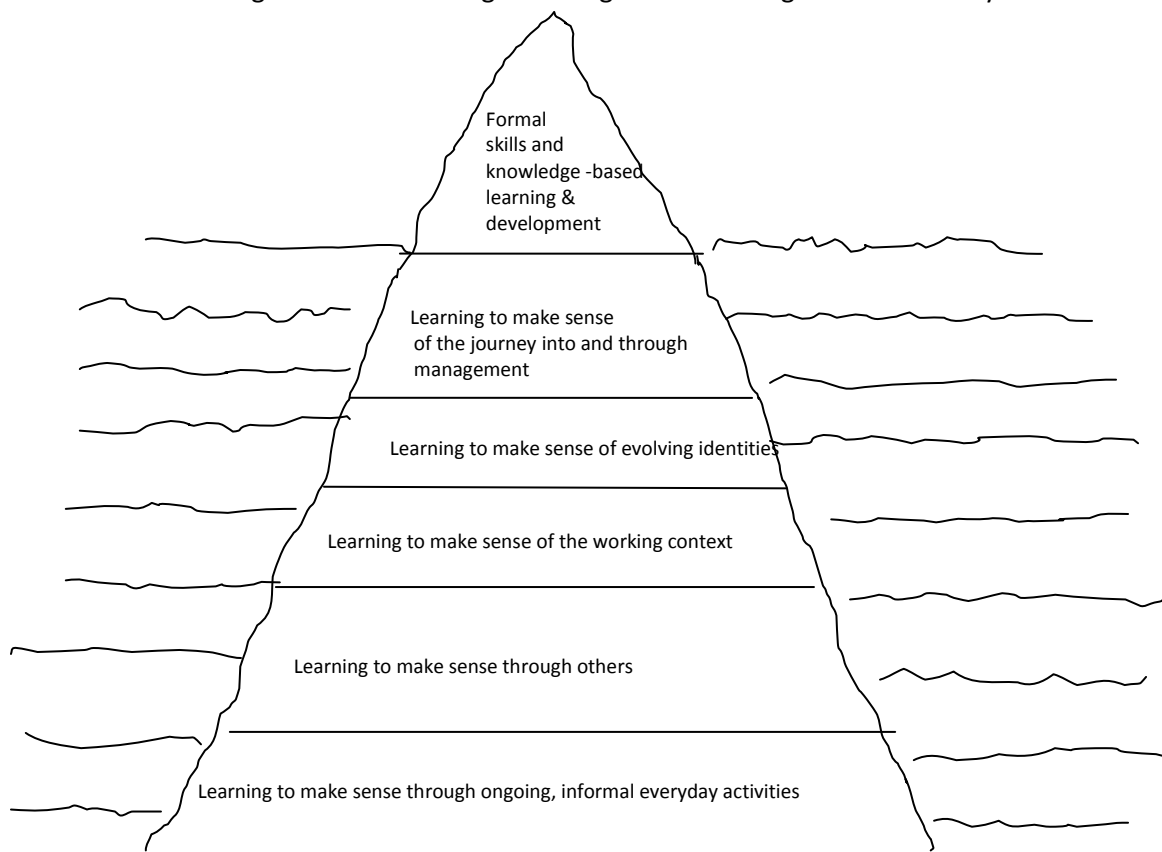
	<p>practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to exert own 'style, even when carrying out institutionally designated tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More positive about being in a state of permanent transition • More willingness to interpret their roles • Positive about opportunity for shaping of roles • Definite sense of optimism for the role <p>Corporate view</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspiration towards managers being more outward facing and 'cosmopolitan' • Executive endorsement of managers learning about themselves through interventions such as 360 degree feedback • Roles increasingly defined by clear Executive-led demarcations of duties rather than individuals being free to interpret them • Little belief in the value of years of experience being beneficial to staff (or the University)
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Taking all the emerging themes into consideration, analysis of the data provided evidence of the complexity within managers' in-role learning. Extending this further, the researcher suggests a re-conceptualisation, suggesting that there was a 'learning to make sense of' process which occurred as these managers strove to understand their in-role responsibilities. This incorporated a blend of learning, development and sensemaking amidst the complexity of role evolution and ongoing response to institutional requirements.

The analysis of the evidence from the different sources suggested that being a manager within the University involved 'learning to make sense of' a multitude of interrelated factors which impacted, to different degrees, on the way in which each of the interviewees approached their respective roles. Furthermore, the in-role learning of these managers aligned with a constructivist-developmental approach (Drago-Severson, 2004) which necessitated actively deconstructing and then reconstructing their experiences in order to find meaning. As a consequence the managers were gradually (and sometimes imperceptibly) learning to understand their roles by making sense of their unfolding workplace challenges through "a qualitative change in the way in which adults make sense or construct their experience, rather than a quantitative change in knowledge and skills" (Cooper and Stevens, 2006, p.350).

This dominance of ‘learning to make sense of’ is a key finding within this thesis, suggesting that the way in which these managers were learning within the context of their environment warrants a new conceptualisation. It is argued that the learning of managers went beyond the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes characteristic of formalised management education or development. In addition, it was also dependent on making sense of a complex interplay of factors which would require a range of different learning and development activities to be provided through a “multilayered enterprise” (Middlehurst, 2010, p.223) in order to meet the managers’ needs. Indeed, building on the assertion that “formal education and development activities are merely the tip of a learning iceberg” (Fox, 1997, p.25), the researcher contends that the findings from this initial exploratory study suggest that the bulk of the managers’ in-role development involved ‘learning to make sense’ through informal, task-based, everyday activities. This was often a disguised form of learning which lay hidden beneath the surface of their roles, as illustrated by Figure 8.1.

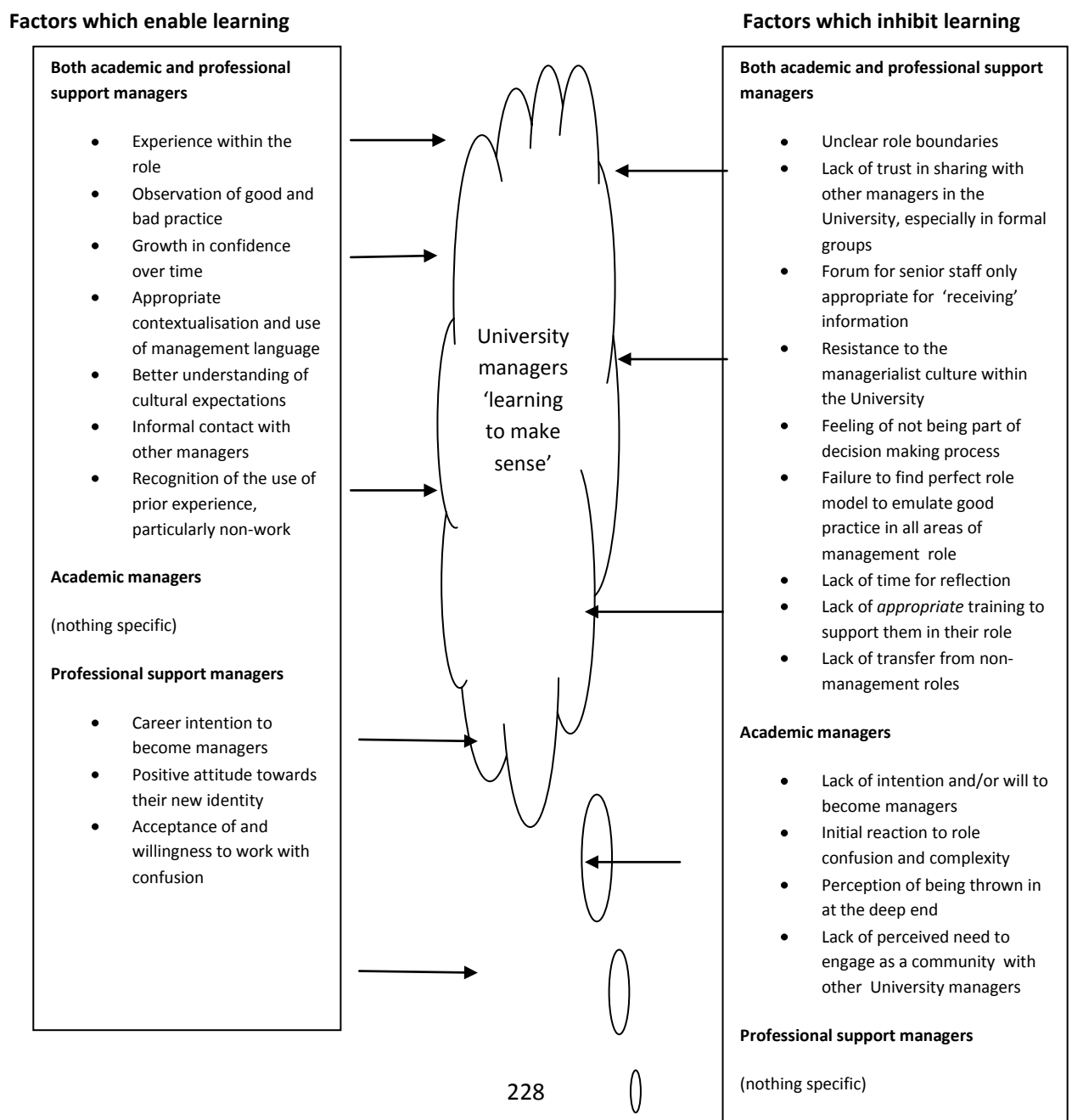
Figure 8.1 The iceberg of management learning in the University



Throughout this research, it became evident that there was a range of factors which either enabled or inhibited this process of ‘learning to make sense’ by the University managers. Figure 8.2 provides a summary typology of these, drawing on key points raised in the analysis of data discussed in previous chapters. Although the factors highlighted in this typology cannot be attributed to all academic and

professional support managers in this study, the figure identifies the range of issues identified by each of the groups. On analysis of these, the factors enabling learning are those which were largely within the managers' control such as their own understanding, their intrinsic motivation to positively use their own experience and their willingness to learn from observing others. All of these were within their 'gift' to use to inform their ongoing learning, and all could be changed by them, had they chosen to do so. In contrast, the factors which were perceived by the managers as inhibiting their learning were extrinsic and not within their control, such as the managerialist culture, the lack of clarity surrounding their role boundaries, the inadequacy of existing forums, and the lack of appropriate training provided for them.

Figure 8.2 Summary typology of the factors identified by University managers as enablers and inhibitors of their learning



8.3 Implications for theory

This research provides a number of theoretical constructs in order to explain the learning process undertaken by managers. For example:

- There was originality of approach by applying a sensemaking framework to deconstruct how the managers were learning, thereby using a range of sensemaking characteristics to analyse and find meaning in the data. This led to the introduction of a 'learning to make sense of' construct to suggest a blend of learning and sensemaking.

Figure 2.1 (p. 66) Offers a paradigm shift as a way of understanding how University managers learn, highlights the increasingly diverse nature of this process. It suggests that recognition needs to be given to the possibility of a paradigm shift from learning being largely programme-based, concept or policy driven and mono-stranded to acceptance that it may involve informality, ever-changing scenarios and the interpretation of complex factors.

- The introduction of the iceberg construct (figure 8.1, p.198) also presents a new attempt to theorise about management learning within a university context, illustrating the predominantly latent nature of much of this process within managers' daily activities.

- The application of McKenna's (2004) complexity map concept (figure 7.1, p.181) to a university setting also adds a new dimension, providing an opportunity to theorise from the practice of the managers within this study as they tried to decipher environmental cues.

- Through analysis of the University managers' approach to reflection, especially those who completed reflective journals, the researcher suggests an extension to Scanlon and Chernomas' (1997) three-stage model of reflection. This adds an extra two stages (figure 7.3, p.190) to not only incorporate sensemaking but also to acknowledge the iterative nature of the process to meet the managers' continuing need for further experience.

The findings summarised above suggest a process of 'learning to make sense of' which embraces aspects of some previous research findings from the HE sector, professional learning and sensemaking. As a consequence, the researcher advocates the benefits of using research findings both from within and external to HE to understand the process by which university managers learn, drawing on studies from a variety of fields in order to extrapolate possible meaning.

This research also raises the question of why much of the literature on management in the HE sector focuses on either academic or professional support managers. Indeed, the researcher advocates the value of research which seeks to find out any possible similarities *as well as* the previously emphasised differences between academic and professional support managers. Table 8.1 and figure 8.2 above highlight factors common to both groups as well as key differences.

Essentially the research provides a suggestion for a theoretical underpinning to the *process* of management learning within a university context, thereby enabling the provision to support managers' development to be research-informed, as further explored in section 8.4 below.

8.4 Implications for practice

8.4.1 Recommendations

In the light of the findings in section 7.2 the researcher advocates the piloting of certain changes in the development of managers within the University. Whilst Knight and Trowler's call for a "more subtle view of professional learning" (2001, p.174) was specifically aimed at academic leaders, the researcher contends that this plea for a more diverse approach should be further extended to the development of all university managers. In essence, this should include an array of different development activities, thereby accommodating a range of learning opportunities (Blackmore, 2009, p.674). Instead of formal programmes based on skills and knowledge, the researcher recommends the development of new management development curricula within the University. Moving away from an entrenched policy-based focus on skills and knowledge as in previous management development programmes (outlined in appendix 12), future provision should primarily be designed to recognise, complement and support all the informal, work-based learning opportunities to which the managers are exposed on a daily basis, and be a vehicle to discuss these in the reality of their changing roles and in the face of evolving institutional expectations and requirements.

In addition to the change of curriculum content in formal programmes emphasised above, other 'value-added' aspects should also be emphasised. For example, based on the views of the University managers in the data set undertaking a recent institutional development initiative where the additional activities of 360 degree feedback and coaching were perceived as the most useful aspects, these types of activity should be more widely available, either through other programmes or as standalone interventions. This should help managers to better understand their ongoing development, enabling them to recognise the workplace as rich in opportunities for learning, thereby reconceptualising them as "'learners' and their work as learning" (Schwandt, 2005, p.187). The researcher recommends that future plans should therefore outline the need for continual rather than

time-limited development of managers, reinforcing the evolving nature of their roles, situated within a complex and always changing working environment.

Acknowledging the reluctance, to date, of managers to formally share their ideas in a University-wide network identified in section 7.2.4, more role-specific sub-communities of practice for academic and professional support managers should also be encouraged. Through this intervention, managers would have a mechanism to compare their experiences with others in similar roles in order to develop shared meanings and possible solutions.

Another way to encourage managers to learn from observing others identified as an issue in section 7.2.4, would be the introduction of a manager shadowing scheme. During this process, the reality of managers not exhibiting all the characteristics of a 'perfect' role model (also highlighted in section 7.2.4) could be discussed, along with encouragement for them to reflect upon their own style and approach.

In order to address the unrealised potential of reflection by managers identified in section 7.2.5, ways to facilitate protected time for this type of activity should be considered. This could possibly be achieved by the integration of learning through reflection within management programmes, and then encouraging this approach as a habitual and integral part of their regularised learning and development thereafter.

As outlined in section 8.3, there is a need to recognise the inter-disciplinary and multi-source nature of the research underpinning this thesis. Future management development should therefore be informed by a wide range of research findings and practice from different sources. As a consequence, there should be opportunities for good practice from outside the sector to be synthesised with that from within, acknowledging the views of EX1 but also recognising the diverse background experience of University managers as outlined in table 5.1.

Acknowledging the multi-dimensional nature of management development advocated to support the in-role learning of both academic and professional support managers, examples of possible learning pathways are offered in appendix 11 as illustrative examples. These include a blend of programme-based and informal interventions which support the day-to-day learning of University managers.

8.4.2 Pilot initiatives introduced

The recommendation to introduce separate development programmes for academic and professional support managers may seem contradictory to other findings from this research which showed the similarities, in parts, of their learning processes. However, the introduction of separate programmes is *in addition to* a plethora of existing institutional generic management development provision. Furthermore, the justification for separate programmes was based on evidence, from both academic and professional support managers, that they would welcome social interaction through role-specific sub-communities. Through these separate programmes, staff doing similar jobs have been able to come together and explore their changing identities, discuss the impact of the evolving institutional context on their roles and gain an insight into their own in-role effectiveness. In addition, such programmes have facilitated practice-informed discussions about how they learn within their roles, and how they access specific workplace opportunities to grow and develop. Following the completion of the programmes, the participants have also been able to engage in networking with each other, and thereby establish an informal role-specific sub-group, addressing another need which emerged from the research.

Based on a comprehensive review of the recommendations above, the implementation of a range of associated pilot initiatives has already started within the University. For example, in order to aid managers' clarification of their roles and to help them to work effectively within the performance-oriented culture of the University, a new programme for academic managers has been introduced (appendix 9), thereby enabling managers in similar roles to discuss key issues. This programme is purposely not knowledge or skills-based but, instead, contextualises the learning of managers with both the demands of their daily roles and their exposure to informal task-based learning opportunities within an institutional environment. Day one of this programme is devoted to academic leaders understanding themselves, including a specific session on 'What it means to be an academic leader'. To heighten the HE and management context, day three of this programme is then specifically devoted to enabling academic managers to understand their institutional environment.

A parallel curriculum for professional support managers has also commenced as part of an institutionally-developed 'Higher Education Leadership and Practice' programme. Supporting the ongoing and informal learning of the University managers on both of these programmes, 360 degree feedback and one-to-one coaching has also been introduced as an integral part of the provision. Both these aspects encourage the managers to analyse and discuss feedback about their routine ways of working, promoting a self-critical deconstruction of their own dominant practices. In addition, separate networking forums specifically for these managers have now been established to encourage the sharing of practice and the co-construction of meaning from their daily roles. These networking forums are organised outside of the programme hours, and allow managers in similar roles to

continue meeting after it has finished. In addition, to encourage more formalised reflection, reflective journals following the template used in this research programme (appendix 6) have already been included. However, responding to the challenges faced by some of the managers in this study completing reflective journals, not only is the value of formalised reflection emphasised but advice and guidance is also given on how to do this for maximum benefit to self-learning. As a means to help managers understand and address their own approach to learning, specific sessions on how management learning occurs have also been included within these programmes, along with the introduction of action learning sets to encourage the sharing of experiences between the programme dates.

In addition to the above initiatives linked to formal programmes, a manager shadowing scheme has recently been introduced (appendix 10). As part of this initiative, managers provide reciprocal feedback for one another, discussing how their respective approaches are either the same or differ, and identifying any subsequent actions which might be taken as a result of the observation. This is in response to the evidence from this research programme which not only indicated the value of managers learning from observing others, but also the need to find dedicated time and reflective opportunities in which this can be formalised.

In conclusion, therefore, such initiatives have enabled findings from the research endeavour within this research to begin to influence practice, thereby enhancing the design of management learning to incorporate a blend of different initiatives which support managers' everyday and context-specific practices.

8.5 Limitations of the research

It is acknowledged that undertaking research within a single institution limits the way in which the findings can be generalised beyond the host institution. The researcher recognises that the extent to which research is generalisable is an important issue, but suggests that it is useful to note Denscombe's (2002) distinction between generalisability and transferability, arguing that the former is more associated with measurable and testable results in quantitative research whilst the latter has greater applicability to small-scale and/or qualitative studies. Furthermore, transferability calls for creative and imaginative inferences to be made, based on the evidence and the extent to which it can be sensibly applied to other similar situations. Given that the research in this particular study highlighted the importance of the context-specific nature of the University's managers' learning as a key finding, it could be argued that the 'transfer' to other settings might be problematic. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.316) argue that judgement on the possibility of this 'transfer' is not the

researcher's task but instead the reader's, based on their evaluation of the evidence presented within a given study as to its typicality. Indeed, whilst the researcher concedes that the number of participants is low, this is frequently characteristic of other qualitative studies which focus on generating in-depth rich data. As a consequence, the data can be used to contribute to the overall body of evidence supporting a particular finding. Indeed, Mason (1996) and Denscombe (2002) differentiate between empirical and theoretical generalisation, advocating that the latter can be more productive in qualitative research. On balance therefore, and as advocated from the outset in section 1.1, the researcher suggests that this study needs to be regarded as an initial exploratory investigation to inform future, more expansive research.

Within the context of this study, the researcher was also aware of institutional issues which may have had an effect on each manager's views of their learning. For example, the evolving introduction of a new leadership initiative or assorted organisational change programmes, as outlined in section 4.2. As a consequence, the researcher acknowledged that the findings primarily relate to the managers' perceptions at a specific period in time, whilst the University (and the HE sector) continues to change (as evidenced through the University strategic plans), and is therefore not a static construct. Findings from this research might therefore only relate to a previous or current regime or culture rather than the University as an evolving organisation.

Connected to the researcher's awareness of these organisational issues, the limitations caused by being an "insider" (Robson, 2002, p.382) within the process of research are also recognised. For example, the potential bias caused by interviewing colleagues who may have distorted their views in order to be perceived differently from their practice has to be acknowledged. In addition, the challenge for the researcher to not only remain objective but also for confidentiality to be maintained post-interview has to be acknowledged as a potential limiting factor. As discussed in section 3.6, these issues may have distorted the data and the subsequent interpretation, hence impacting on the findings.

In addition, whilst the use of purposive rather than random sampling of managers may have led to the eventual analysis of a restricted range of viewpoints and added a consequent distortion to the findings, the decision to adopt this approach was based on the need to select participants from different parts of the University and covering a range of management job-roles and hierarchical positions (albeit all senior managers).

Whilst the researcher recognises the value of including reflective journals as a way of triangulating the evidence, especially in the pursuit of any 'critical incidents' affecting the managers' learning, she also advocates a degree of caution. The reflective journals were, for most respondents, artificial in both construct and process, and therefore could not be assumed to be "a direct mirror of what happens in the head, but is a representation of the process within a chosen medium- in this case writing" (Moon, 2004, p.80). In addition, Moon (1999, p.65) argues that "there is no one behaviour or set of behaviours" that constitutes reflection, and indeed, despite the standardised template and guidance notes issued to the managers, the journals showed that the degree of reflection and how it was recorded varied between managers. In particular, two potentially limiting factors are worthy of note. Firstly, it was evident that the managers approached this exercise in different ways and, even after issuing a standardised template and guidance notes, the style in which they completed the journals varied. The researcher would therefore argue that it cannot be assumed that all the managers within the data set were equally competent, confident or indeed comfortable with the process of documenting their reflection through formalised means. Secondly, in returning to the primary reason why this aspect of the research was introduced, the journals did not show evidence of *major* 'critical incidents'. Whilst the managers gave insightful information on a range of 'incidents', these were not momentous events (Patton, 2002) or groundbreaking critical decision-making points (Birley and Moreland, 1998), but instead an ongoing number of smaller occurrences. The researcher argues the importance of recognising that this non-emergence of *major* 'critical incidents' may have been for a number of different reasons. For example, these managers may have had a reluctance to reveal them, a failure to recognise them as opportunities for reflection and learning, or alternatively, there may have been a general absence of such events.

In conclusion, the researcher acknowledges these limitations but believes that even taken together they do not raise significant doubts about the validity of the findings summarised above.

8.6 Recommendations for further research

As this research was an initial exploratory study, various options exist to further investigate how university managers learn. For example, still within one institution, the research could be extended by surveying a wider group of managers. Whilst all the senior managers interviewed were drawn from the University's Senior Staff Forum, future research could either further stratify this data set, or alternatively, differentiate between supervisory, middle and senior managers. This would allow for the data to be analysed in a "logical, structured and boundaried way" (Henn et al., 2006, p.191) and thereby enable comparison between different layers of management.

A natural progression from this initial exploratory investigation might be the replication of the study within other institutions by a different research team external to the University. This would test the external validity of the data and possibly extend the range of findings about management learning. Conducting a multi-institutional study would, in particular, ensure that institutional factors did not distort the findings, recognising that within institutionally-based studies, context is a “powerful determinant of both causes and effects...set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.253). By going beyond the initial study in this way, it is anticipated that findings from a larger data set would be more generalisable, thereby potentially having implications for practice on a wider scale. Alternatively, a comparative analysis could be conducted between two different types of university (for example, pre and post-92) to ascertain whether the cultural background led to any differences in experiences, attitudes and approaches to learning which could enhance the original findings.

However, as the research has already led to the launch of pilot initiatives to support the development of managers, the researcher would strongly advocate the evaluation of these through a further study. This type of study could enable an evaluation of targeted activities such as the recently launched differentiated programmes for academic and professional support managers or the introduction of the shadowing, 360 feedback or coaching interventions, and thereby tracking “some intervention or other event and examin[ing] its effects over time” (Robson, 2002, p.160). Such evaluative research would aim to determine the impact of any of the interventions selected, seeking to ascertain whether they had been successful in achieving anticipated goals (Bryman, p.40) and testing identified solutions (Patton, 2002, p. 218).

This thesis has therefore provided an exploratory platform from which further studies could be launched, dependent on the meeting of identified gaps within the current literature on management learning, the needs and priorities of different organisations, and the commensurate resource commitments to support this endeavour.

8.7 Conclusions

In answer to the key problem upon which this study is based, the researcher concludes that the way in which university managers learn how to manage involves a multifaceted process in order to take account of a myriad of different influences. This is suggestive of an ontological and epistemological shift away from the learning of managers having an acquisition of skills or knowledge orientation, and, furthermore, involves drawing on research from both within and outside the Higher Education

sector. Essentially it necessitates a subjective interpretation of many factors, transcending the boundaries of education, development, learning and sensemaking, with a more blended process of 'learning to make sense of' to explain how university managers approach their in-role learning. The vast majority of this learning occurs informally through ongoing workplace activities, forged through selective interaction with others, and informed through environmental cues which either enable or inhibit learning. From the evidence analysed in this study, there is a growing need to adopt and then evaluate a multi-layered approach to support university managers as they 'learn to make sense of' the complexity of their roles, recognise their changing identities and interpret their evolving worlds.

As evidenced through the pilot interventions already introduced, this research has profound implications for practice, seeking to encourage those providing development opportunities to re-examine the range of activities they offer. It suggests that informal, workplace and ongoing learning need to be recognised as essential parts of all development interventions for university managers, and, paradoxically, even formalised programmes should include a curriculum which explores and promotes the importance of informal learning as a central tenet to management learning. To enable university managers to learn to manage, they must, indeed, manage to learn about how this process is grounded in the reality of their daily roles, impacted upon by others and set within an evolving institutional context.

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Information sheet about the proposed research

Introduction

As part of a doctoral programme, I am carrying out research about the way in which university managers learn and develop within their roles. This research seeks to understand how managers learn, and, furthermore, what strategies they use in order to develop. The title of this research project is “Learning to Manage or Managing to Learn: An exploratory study of the way in which university managers learn within their roles”.

Objectives and research questions

Primarily the objectives of the project are to investigate the way in which university managers learn how to manage, whether this is formal or informal, planned or ad hoc. It focuses on the emerging roles of university managers and investigates the extent to which they recognise and acknowledge their ongoing development. The main research questions of this study are:

- What is the process by which university managers learn to manage?
- What are the factors which assist and inhibit this development?
- Where and how this learning occurs within a university context?

What will be required of you

The main part of the research requires me to interview you, asking questions about how you learn and develop. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be arranged at a date and time convenient to you, and, if possible, within your office.

What the benefits are of you taking part and why your involvement is important

By taking part in the research you will be encouraged to stop and reflect on how your development as a manager is progressing. This in itself is likely to be a very useful exercise for your own personal development. In addition, you will be providing information which will help the University to consider the best ways of developing managers like yourself. This will ensure that in the future, the strategies for management development in the University are evidence based, informed by localised as well as external research.

What will happen to the data collected

Throughout the research process, all the information which is collected will be anonymised and the details of your role and location within the University will not be recorded. To help with note-taking, each interview will be audio-recorded and then transcribed by me. The audio-recordings will be destroyed at the end of the research process.

The data which will be collected will form part of a PhD thesis and will therefore be read and examined by one internal examiner and two external examiners. In order that the research findings are of maximum benefit to the University, in addition to the written thesis, a bullet point list of recommendations for subsequent management development will be made available to staff/organisational developers within the University.

Contact details

If you require further information about any aspect of the research process, please do not hesitate to contact me on extension or via email:

As part of the research process, you are now required to sign the attached consent form.

Many thanks for your involvement.

Consent Form

Dear

Many thanks for expressing an interest in becoming involved in the research I am carrying out about the way in which university managers learn and develop within their roles. As a standard part of the research process, it is necessary for me to ask you to read the statements below and then provide your signature in acknowledgement that you understand all the information and, as a result, confirm that you are willing to be involved:

1. You have read and understood the information sheet attached which details how the research process will operate.
2. Through the information sheet, you have been given my contact details so that if necessary, you can ask any further questions about the research process.
3. You understand that your involvement in the research is voluntary and that you can withdraw at any time, for whatever reason.

If you agree with 1-3 above, please provide your signature in the space below. This form will be collected from you prior to the start of the interview.

Signature

Date.....

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Marj

Marj Spiller, Centre for Professional Development, A11 Cadman Building, Stoke Road

Extension 4403, email: m.spiller@staffs.ac.uk



Interview Guide- EX1

The following key themes were used as a guide to structure the semi-structured interview with EX1:

1. Rationale for the introduction of the previous MDP
2. Extent to which did the MDP served its purpose
3. Extent to which management development at the University has changed over the past 5 years
4. Current rationale for developing University managers? (i.e. what are you trying to achieve through development?)
5. Rationale for the separation of management development from leadership development? – what are the key differences between these two development routes?
6. Clarity re what is an effective manager at the University
7. Key drivers which inform what is included in a management or leadership development programme
8. Extent to which the development of managers at the University programme-based
9. Indicators of success in the current leadership and management development programmes
10. Justification for the predominance of generic leadership and management development at the University (rather than focussed towards academic or professional support managers)
11. Extent to which practice from outside Higher Education inform leadership or management development
12. Views on how the University is changing, and how this is likely to further inform leadership and management development

Reflective Journal Guidance Notes

Many thanks for agreeing to keep a reflective journal as part of the research I am conducting for a PhD on the way in which managers learn within their roles. The focus of this journal is therefore **you within your role as a manager**. Ideally this reflective journal should be kept for approximately one month (although this can be extended if you are about to take annual leave or are currently involved in other major projects for which there are competing deadlines). Whereas a diary tends to record on a daily basis all significant events which have happened, a reflective journal is an opportunity to describe and analyse selected current events with a view to suggesting what might be changed next time. Daily entries to this reflective journal are therefore not essential, although regular reflections would be welcomed.

As a manager, your reflections might come from any number of different daily 'events'. These do not have to be momentous occasions, and may well be part of normal, routine activities such as:

- What happened in a meeting
- Your response to an email received or sent
- Your thoughts on how a chat with a member of staff went
- Any conflict or tension within your role
- Your reflections on something which went well e.g. a meeting, an appraisal or a successful completion of a task
- Your reflections on something which went badly
- Your observations of others
- Your reflections on your own performance as a manager in a particular situation
- Your attempts to make sense of things which have happened, either to you as a manager, or to other others, but impacting on your views as a manager
- Your regrets at having said something or, alternatively, not having said something
- Any expectations placed upon you by others
- Any frustrations which arise within your role

(This list is not exhaustive, but merely serves to illustrate the types of events which might trigger some reflective thoughts in you as a manager.)

Throughout the research process, all the information which is collected will be anonymised and the details of your role and location within the University will not be recorded. As some of the entries into your journal might involve your reflections about other members of staff, it is advisable that you do not name them but, instead, merely refer to them in a more anonymised way e.g. as 'X', 'Y' or 'Z'. However, an indication of this person's type of role and/or link to you (e.g. 'administrator within the team' or 'own line manager' would be helpful to the analysis.

Reflective journals can take a number of formats but basically they are an opportunity for individuals to write down their experiences and thoughts, comment on why things happen, express emotions, make conclusions and suggest what the lessons learned might be. For the purpose of this research, the attached appendix has been designed to guide you in the process of data recording.

Reflective Journal Template

Date.....

What happened, why do you think it happened and how did it make you feel?

What skills, knowledge or experiences did you draw on to deal with this (and, if possible, how did you acquire them)?

What have you learnt from it? What might you do differently next time? Has it flagged up any skills, knowledge or experience gaps you now need to address?

Leading for Success Programme

Context

The Leading for Success programme aims to invest in and develop aspiring senior leaders for today and tomorrow. The programme is being driven by both internal and external influences that include reflections from the people management self-assessment, development needs arising from the employee engagement survey, feedback from Investors in People and learning from organisational change programmes.

Target Audience

The programme is being designed to develop leaders who are recognised as talent the organisation needs to support and nurture. Nominations will come directly from Faculties, School and Services. The final decision on the shortlisted participants will be determined by Executive working with Deans and Directors.

Principles

The values of the organisation will be integral to the programme and the following principles have been identified to underpin both design and delivery:

- Build upon the existing leadership and management expertise of the participants
- Introduce different learning experiences that challenge thinking and take people out of their comfort zones
- Utilise the skills, learning and experiences of senior leaders, within the organisation, including Honoraries and Governors
- Stimulate thinking by the contributions of speakers from different sectors and environments
- Engage partners from diverse organisations in contributing to the programme
- Draw upon contemporary research and thinking about effective leadership development for senior leaders

Desired outcomes for programme participants:

- Understand how to translate corporate vision and values and align positively with them
- Develop greater self-awareness and enhanced ability to manage self
- Develop greater confidence in leading and working with people and managing productive relationships and networks
- Develop greater confidence and skills to act in a diversity of situations
- Develop enhanced understanding of the context in which they are working
- Develop a network of peers who can support each other

Management Development Programme (MDP)

Aims

Programme aims:

- To improve the quality and effectiveness of staff management practice across the University
- To develop required leadership capabilities
- To nurture a positive engagement with required change

Delivery team

This programme is delivered by [local training company], [local solicitors] and Personnel Services.

Target group and attendance regime

The MDP is aimed at all managers in the Senior Staff Forum. All managers in this group will be contacted to sign up for the workshops. Each of the workshops lasts for a full day and will be available at least twice within each academic year. Managers are required to attend all the workshops.

Curriculum

The following workshops have been identified as the core curriculum to be attended by all managers within the Senior Staff Forum:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Performance Management ➤ Discipline and Grievance ➤ Influencing Skills ➤ Recruitment and Selection ➤ Diversity Awareness ➤ Behaviour at Work ➤ Disability Equality ➤ Race Equality ➤ Discrimination Legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Health and Safety Awareness ➤ Data Protection and Freedom of Information ➤ Managing Stress ➤ Conducting an Investigation ➤ Staff Management Skills ➤ Project Management ➤ Problem Solving ➤ Managing Change ➤ Customer Relationship Management
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Pen-Portraits

AM1

At the time of the initial interview, AM1 had been in her new post as a senior academic leader for six months. She was relatively new to the University with only four years in total within Faculty/School academic and team leader roles. Prior to joining the University, AM1 had over fifteen years' experience within the commercial sector, both as an employee in a national association and as a director within her own business. Building on this eclectic mix of experience drawn from different roles and sectors, AM1 was keen to progress her career, and had willingly applied for a more senior academic post when one became available.

Whilst AM1 did not hold a formal management qualification, over the past four years she had attended many workshops from the Management Development Programme to update herself on the application of University staff policies. In addition to this, between the initial and follow-up interview, AM1 had enrolled on the new cross-institutional leadership programme for senior managers.

AM2

AM2 had been at the University for less than six months, and was relatively new to his senior management role. He was not, however, new to management having held a number of senior roles in other education establishments for the past ten years, including a Higher Education Institution. For a further ten years prior to this, AM2 had his own manufacturing company, and was therefore responsible for both staff and the production of goods. On starting employment within education over ten years ago, AM2 had endeavoured to diversify from his original technically-based degree with both a post-graduate diploma and then an MBA. This was an attempt to enhance his career-development opportunities as he was keen to progress into even more senior management posts. This was supplemented by occasional management skills training, although AM2 did not have the opportunity to take part in the University-based management development programme as it had ceased to run in its previous format by the time of his appointment. Occasional update policy training remained, however, an ongoing requirement of AM2's role, as and when new revisions to policies were introduced.

AM3

AM3 was just fifteen months into his new role as an academic manager within the University, although he had held other team-leadership positions over the past few years. He joined the University six years ago, and prior to that had held academic management and subject leader responsibilities in another University for approximately fifteen years. AM3's new post, however, was defined differently, being centred around academic project-management rather than team-

management responsibilities. As a consequence, he did not have line-management responsibilities for other staff, but was a member of his Faculty/School's senior management team. Although keen to learn the theoretical aspects of management through reading textbooks, AM3 had never formally qualified in management through accredited routes. He also attended occasional in-house management development skills and policy-based workshops in addition to other briefing forums for senior managers.

AM4

At the time of the interview, AM4 had been in his new role as a senior manager for less than six months. He was not new to the University, however, as he had worked there as an academic for sixteen years. Prior to that, AM4 had worked outside the HE sector for ten years in a local council environment, where he had a predominantly non-management role. In total, AM4 had approximately eight years of management experience, gained largely from team leadership roles within an academic environment. AM4 did not have an accredited management qualification. His experience of formalised management development was gained mainly through attending occasional policy and skill-based workshops, supplemented by some bespoke development as part of a senior management team.

AM5

Having worked at the University for twenty years, AM5 had been in his senior management role for two and a half years. Responsible for five staff, AM5's role involved focussing on teaching quality and the management of the academic portfolio within one Faculty/School. His management experience was both extensive and diverse, covering a fifteen year period, although prior to his current role he had focussed primarily on managing projects and research budgets. Whilst his subject specialism was based within a scientific/technical area, AM5 had also taken an accredited post-graduate diploma in management twenty years previously, anticipating that it might, at some stage, be useful to his career. Although having attended a number of management policy and skills updating workshops within the University since in his current post, AM5's preferred way to learn about management was mainly through reading and researching via the internet. This declared preference appeared to be aligned to his previous background in research.

AM6

At the time of the interview, AM6 had been in her role as a senior academic manager for approximately two years, having worked at the University for twenty years in a number of curriculum leadership roles. This University-based management experience was superimposed on over ten years in practitioner-based roles from within a health-care setting. Her disciplinary background encouraged a strong 'reflection-on-practice' approach to all aspects of her role, and this had a clear influence on

her development as a manager. Not favouring a predominantly theoretical focus to management development had dissuaded AM6 from enrolling on accredited programmes. Despite this, AM6 showed a keen commitment to her own development as a manager through attending a range of skill- and policy-based workshops as part of the management development programme. This mirrored the approach taken in her previous vocational background where engaging in professional development was an accepted part of everyone's role.

AM7

AM7 had been in his new senior management role for just over thirteen months when interviewed. He was not new to management, however, having had significant team-leader responsibilities at the University over a ten year period, and also drew on early career posts in junior management positions for ten years external to education. Indeed, whilst in total, AM7 had worked at the University for fourteen years, prior to that he had not only taught within another sector of education but had also held various management roles in the commercial sector. Thus, in terms of his development as a manager, this had been an eclectic mix of experiences and training drawn from very different working environments. In addition, AM7'S development as a manager had also been underpinned by a post-graduate diploma in management gained over fifteen years previously, albeit originally taken more to support his subject discipline rather than his management career. A keen advocate of continuous professional development, now in a senior management role AM7 attended a series of skill and policy based workshops for updates, and this he did in both a reactive and proactive way.

AM8

AM8 had been in academe all her career, and had worked at the University for sixteen years. However despite having had a senior academic role for a number of years, AM8's management role was less well-established, with only five years in total. Although attending all the management development workshops required of her to remain up-to-date with University policies, AM8 used her research skills to supplement this by reading around selected topics. Despite this more theoretical approach to management development, it had not led AM8 to want to enrol on an accredited management course. Her development as a manager was also supplemented by having an outward focus and engaging in networks of other academic managers, and it was with these that she sought to share practice as her management responsibilities increased.

AM9

AM9 had worked at the University for sixteen years, and had been in his current senior academic management role for between five and six years. This built on three previous years of curriculum leadership responsibilities. Prior to joining the University, AM9 had for ten years worked in a skill-based commercial environment, although not in a management capacity. Despite not needing to

teach within his current senior management role, AM9 chose to do so, and in this way retained a strong affinity with his original discipline background. AM9 engaged in all the skill and policy-based workshops required of him in his role. He did not, however, have a management qualification, and, indeed, remained sceptical about the relevance of any management theory for explaining the behaviours of others within organisations.

AM10

AM10 had worked at the University for approximately thirty years, and had been in his current management role for five of these. Prior to joining the University AM10 had worked in manufacturing for approximately three years where he had been fast-tracked into management at an early age. His current role was project-based rather than line-management focussed, straddled between academic and professional support areas. Although he drew from both these domains in terms of networks, social contacts, projects and resources, he remained firmly rooted within academe for his sense of professional identity. AM10 had studied business and management-related subjects at both undergraduate and post-graduate level, giving him a theoretical underpinning in both of these subject areas, although, by his own admission, not necessarily to the practice of management. Over the past four years, AM10 had also attended a range of the University's management development workshops in order to 'keep up with' policy and process changes.

AM11

AM11 was a senior academic manager who had been in his present role for four years at the time of the interview, although in total he had worked at the University for ten years. Prior to joining the University he had held posts with management responsibilities within another university and local government. Whilst taking a number of post-graduate accredited qualifications to support his subject specialism, this had not been replicated for the management aspect of his role, despite the perception that he did not receive adequate management training. AM11 did, however, engage positively in a range of non-accredited skills and policy-based management development workshops. Between the interview and the completion of the reflective journal, AM11 had also enrolled on a senior leadership programme within the University, and as part of this had received one-to-one coaching from an external coach.

AM12

AM12 had worked at the University for twenty years as an academic in a number of roles, having spent five years working in another educational institution. Although not an original career choice, this route into management was deliberately taken on the advice of her own manager who outlined the polarisation of HE management and HE research. She had been in her current role for nearly two years at the time of the interview. Although this role was academic, it had strong elements of

professional support both in structural location and management alignment. AM12's formal development as a manager had been in the form of attendance at workshops rather than accredited learning, although she also valued the support of external networks, especially pertinent to her previous curriculum manager role.

AM13

As a senior academic manager, AM13 had been in her current role for just over a year, and had worked at the University for a further two years prior to that. She was not new to management, however, as she had over twenty years experience in a range of management roles. These were drawn from the further education sector and from a health-care setting, both of which had presented a range of opportunities for her career progression as a manager. Within her current academic manager role, AM13 directly line-managed one member of staff, with indirect responsibility for ten others. From nearly two decades ago, AM13 had an accredited post-graduate management qualification, and since then had relied on a range of skill or policy-based workshops to support her in her role. By the time of the follow-up interview, AM13 had enrolled on a senior leadership programme within the University, although this had not started by then.

PSM1

PSM1 was a professional support manager who worked within a Faculty. At the time of his interview he had been at the University for two and a half years. Prior to that he had worked in industry within the manufacturing sector where he had gained approximately eight years of management experience, doing a variety of team-management and supervisory roles within small teams of staff. PSM1 was therefore at quite an early stage in his career, and was keen to progress. As part of this ambition, PSM1 was pursuing a taught Masters level management qualification funded by the University. In addition to this formal management education programme, PSM1 also attended all required policy-based management development workshops at the University. Within his current role, PSM1 was responsible for over thirty staff, and from those he directly line-managed four team-leaders.

PSM2

PSM2 had worked at the University for twenty-one years in a variety of roles and in different professional support areas. Prior to this, PSM2 had worked in both the commercial and voluntary sectors in posts with administrative responsibilities. Most of PSM2's roles had gradually evolved and she had rarely applied for promotional posts to enhance her career. An exception to this was her relatively recent move into management. This had happened two and a half years prior to the interview, a move which she had done to give herself more challenge, not within the specialist part of the role but in its management content. Thus, although PSM2's career in the Higher Education sector was well-established, her management career was still very new. In anticipation of supporting her

future career development, PSM2 had taken an undergraduate professional administration qualification approximately twenty years ago. However, when interviewed, PSM2 stated that she intended to enrol on an accredited post-graduate management qualification in order to raise her awareness of wider management issues.

PSM3

PSM3 was head of a professional support area within the University and had been in her current role for approximately nine years. In total, PSM3 had worked at the University for just over twenty years. Prior to joining the University, PSM3 had worked in another university and in local government. PSM3 was a specialist within her current role, and in addition to managing her team, was required to advise and guide other colleagues from across the University. Within her career as a whole, PSM3 had approximately fifteen years of management responsibility, and therefore both her career in Higher Education and in management were well established. Although not averse to partaking in non-accredited management development workshops, PSM3 was not formally qualified through an accredited route due to not finding anything particularly relevant to either her role or to HE. She also attended Senior Staff Forum briefing sessions held approximately three times per year. Between the interviews and the completion of the reflective journals, PSM3 had enrolled on an in-house leadership programme for senior managers, in which one-to-one coaching was an integral part.

PSM4

PSM4 had worked as a manager at the University for approximately fifteen years. Prior to that he had been employed in both local authority and manufacturing. With many years of dual technical and management responsibilities, PSM4 eventually opted for the management side because of the perceived better opportunities for longer-term career development. Six months before the initial interview, PSM4 had been promoted to a new senior management post with strategic responsibility for a large service. PSM4 had taken an accredited diploma-level management qualification twenty-five years prior to the initial interview, and since then had actively and regularly engaged in a range of policy and skills-based workshops as part of the management development programme, in addition to being a member of the Senior Staff Forum for strategic updates. Between the initial and the follow-up interview, PSM4 had enrolled on an in-house leadership programme at the University and as part of that was receiving one-to-one coaching.

PSM5

PSM5 had worked at the University for twenty years, holding a number of roles within one particular service, and had 'worked his way up' into management through undertaking a number of roles, each with increasing management responsibilities. At the time of the interview, PSM5 had been in his current role for approximately eight years. His on-going development still heavily involved his subject

specialism. For the management aspects of PSM5's role, he actively engaged in a range of skills and policy based workshops as part of the University management development programme and attended Senior Staff Forum briefings for strategic updates. Prior to this, PSM5's experience of formalised management development was through a level two accredited First-Line Manager course, which although held at the University, was generic in nature rather than HE-specific. In the period between the interview and completing the reflective journal, PSM5 had completed the in-house leadership course for senior managers.

PSM6

At the time of the interview, PSM6 had worked at the University for just over six years, and had been in her current management role for three of these. In her career as a whole, PSM6 had thirty years of management experience, and this was largely drawn from outside HE, with a significant proportion in the retail sector. Although PSM6's role necessitated her operationally managing a professional support team, she also liaised with staff from across the University on a number of specialist projects. PSM6 proactively engaged in the process of development which involved updating on project-specific information as well as supporting the management aspect of her role. The latter took the form of attendance at the in-house management development programme to enhance her skills and learn about the application of University policies, in addition to being a member of the Senior Staff Forum. This supplemented her prior knowledge and understanding of management gained from her achieving a post-graduate management qualification over twenty years ago which focussed specifically on retail management.

PSM7

PSM7 had worked at the University for twenty-four years and had been in her current management role for five of these. The vast majority of her career had been in roles which had management responsibilities. This resulted in her management experience being more generalist rather than specialist. In total PSM7 had twenty-eight years of management experience, twenty-four at the University and four drawn from the commercial sector. All of PSM7's management development was non-accredited, enabled through attending a number of skills and policy-based workshops aligned to the needs identified in her evolving roles. Gaining an accredited management qualification had never been a desire of PSM7, due to her perceptions of the time involved, its effect on work-life balance, and generally a lack of conviction as to how effective it would be in helping her in her role.

PSM8

PSM8 had been in her current post for approximately five years, and prior to that had been in a similar type of role within a Faculty, albeit with more operational than strategic management responsibilities. Before being recruited to the University, PSM8 had worked both in retail and the NHS

for approximately eight years. Although not a declared career intention to be a manager, PSM8 had spent all of her working life in management roles. As a result, in total she had gained approximately twenty years of management experience. Very soon after graduating, PSM8 had taken a post-graduate diploma in management studies, giving her a basic understanding of management theory. Within her current management role, over the past five years PSM8 had been required to attend a number of skills and policy based workshops as part of the management development programme and she was also a member of the Senior Staff Forum which provided strategic updates periodically through the academic year.

PSM9

At the time of the initial interview, PSM9 had worked at the University for less than a year. Prior to joining the University, he had been in the commercial sector for fifteen years in a variety of roles, focussing on his subject specialism rather than management per se, and remained firmly wedded to much of ideology and practices. In total, PSM9 had less than eight years' management experience, and favoured working at a strategic level in organisations rather being involved in operational duties which involved managing staff. In addition to his current team leadership responsibilities, PSM9 worked across the organisation aiming to influence and negotiate with others. In terms of management development, PSM9 considered that as part of his first degree (gained over fifteen years ago) encompassed management, this could be applied to his current role. Having attended other management development workshops prior to arriving at the University, PSM9 was keen to look for linkages to help him in his current practice. PSM9 was very ambitious within his career as a whole, and by the time of his follow-up interview he declared that as part of his intended strategy to progress his career he would enrol, sometime in the future, on an accredited management development programme, possibly an MBA.

PSM10

PSM10 had been at the University for approximately one year. Her role involved leading a new area within the University which necessitated negotiating and persuading senior managers from across the University to accept changes in practice. These changes were strongly influenced by external ways of working, brought in by PSM10 from her previous two decades working in the commercial sector. In total, PSM10 had eighteen years of management experience, drawn largely from profit-orientated companies. A key part in PSM10's own development as a manager had been the gaining of an MBA sixteen years prior to joining the University. This had not only given PSM10 an insight into management theories but also the confidence to lead. In addition, PSM10 had engaged in various in-house management development and coaching programmes during her employment in the

commercial sector, and on joining the University continued to prefer the involvement of external management development consultants.

PSM11

Having worked at the University for twenty-four years, PSM11 had been doing the same management role for approximately fifteen years. In total, PSM11 had just over thirty years of management experience, and had pursued this from early in her career. Most of PSM11's work necessitated reacting to issues and challenges which occurred rather than proactively planning and delivering initiatives. Indeed, PSM11 was in an area of the University where her professional specialism was as important as her management 'know-how', and, as a consequence, her need for updating focussed primarily on the former rather than the latter. PSM11 had attended a range of workshops as part of the management development programme, and was also a member of the Senior Staff Forum where she received updates on strategic issues. Whilst being a great advocate of development in others, PSM11 did not have a formal management qualification herself, but instead preferred to learn through internal social networking and experience.

Leading Academics Programme Outline

(Pre-work: Undertaking a 360 exercise provided by an external organisation)

Day 1	Developing as an effective academic manager
9.30-10.00	Overview and introductions
10.00-11.00	360 degree feed-forward (Reflecting on typically occurring common themes)
11.15-12.30	Becoming more emotionally intelligent as an academic manager: Getting the best out of people
1.30-3.00	What it means to be an academic manager
3.15-4.30	Great expectations- an insight from key senior academics
Day 2	Building a high performing teaching team
9.30-11.00	Building teams
11.15-12.30	Effective communication to secure engagement (1:1 and meetings)
1.30-3.00	Managing difficult situations within teams
3.15-4.30	Managing change and transition in academic areas
ACTION LEARNING SETS (to take place between days 2 and 3)	
Day 3	Leading within a Higher Education context
9.30-11.00	Higher Education today and tomorrow – challenges and opportunities
11.15-12.30	The University in context – vision, values and strategy
1.30-3.00	The future funding of Higher Education: securing a sustainable future
3.15-4.30	Managing to learn within a university context

Manager Shadowing Scheme (extract)**What is the manager shadowing scheme?**

This scheme enables you as a University manager to spend time shadowing another manager within a local or regional organisation of your choice. It is designed to be a purposeful learning experience for you and the other manager taking part, and should compliment your other development activities.

Why take part?

It is hoped that as a manager taking part in this manager shadowing scheme, you would develop a greater insight and awareness into the appropriateness of your approach and style, with a view to either further consolidating your practice or making changes where appropriate. The anticipated benefits would be for both you and your shadowing manager to

- Receive feedback on how you perform in a range of day-to-day management situations
- Provide feedback to your shadowing manager on key issues of management
- Reflect on the effectiveness of your own style of management and approach

In addition, both the University and each shadowing organisation would be able to

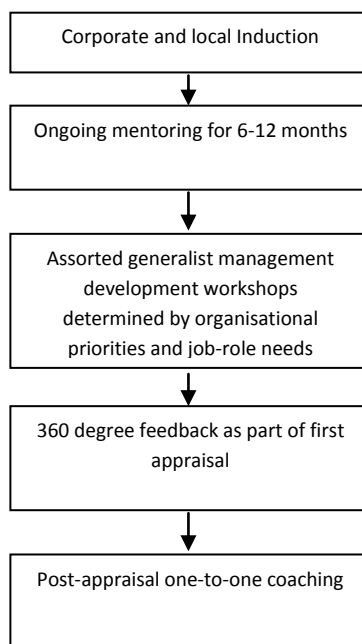
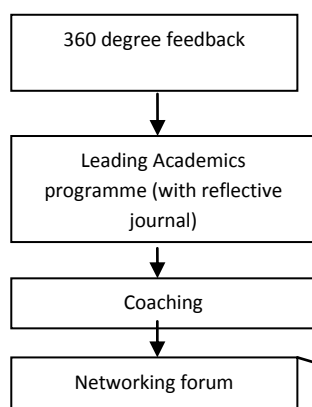
- Develop and grow external networking in order to inform organisational learning on the effectiveness of management approaches
- Encourage the development of a learning and sharing culture with staff from different organisations
- Evaluate the effectiveness and contribution of situated learning in the development of managers
- Reflect on different strategies for management learning within future organisational development frameworks

How will the scheme be evaluated?

Once you and the other managers involved in the manager shadowing scheme have completed the evaluation forms, this information will be used to inform a summative evaluation report. On the basis of this report, decisions will be taken re whether to

a) extend the scheme and b) make any further amendments to operational details.

Possible Learning Pathways for University Managers

New managers (academic and professional support)**Experienced managers****Academic****Professional support**