Managing in the middle, the practice of managing change in English universities

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutions are worth £45 billion to the UK economy, according to a report published in 2006 by Universities UK (UUK), the representative organization of the United Kingdom’s universities. The higher education sector has undergone considerable change with the introduction of the marketplace, tuition fees and business management structures and methods. Managing change as a middle manager is acknowledged to be important activity (see for example, Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990) and yet there is a limited amount of empirically research that has been conducted to discover how change is managed in the higher education sector in England by these staff. This study explores the perceptions of higher education managers about their role in managing change in the higher education sector. It is an exploratory study based on thirty-one interviews with managers in nine universities from across the higher education sector in England. The universities were chosen to ensure there was a representative sample from the main groups within the sector and a geographical spread across the country’s regions. The literature review found a wide range of contrasting viewpoints that provided a myriad of support and confusing messages. There was a lack of information about how higher education managers manage and, in particular, how they manage change. Managers, and those who seek to help them, face challenges in seeking and providing guidance and improving practice. The middle manager has to manage change and use a variety of means to achieve it. They are caught in the middle between senior managers and staff and other stakeholders. They have primarily learned from experience but need support and guidance when they come across change projects of which they have no knowledge. This can be provided by access to case based practice and a network of experienced experts. This research recommends the creation of such support using new media available via the internet provided through professional associations such as the Association of University Administrators (AUA).
For my family, Angie, Michael and William, who have supported me throughout my research, and my mother and father, Pam and Bill, who originally inspired me and taught me that education is the most important aspect of life

A special thank you to the staff at the University of Bedfordshire and particularly my Director of Studies, Professor Kate Robinson, for their understanding and perseverance particularly when I was not listening or giving them the attention they deserve.
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# Glossary

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<tr>
<td>AUA</td>
<td>Association of University Administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVC</td>
<td>Deputy Vice Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC</td>
<td>Pro Vice Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAE</td>
<td>Research Assessment Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMS</td>
<td>Southern Universities Management Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUK</td>
<td>Universities United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Vice Chancellor</td>
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Chapter One

Background and aims and objectives

1.1 Introduction

Three reports illustrate the importance of the higher education sector to the economy of the country and the scale of change it has undergone in the past twenty years. The first report, produced by the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities (also known as the Jarratt report), identified universities as,

“…..assets of immense national importance. They establish high cultural and intellectual standards throughout society and in the institutions through which society pursues its goals. The quality of life and the international status which the country enjoys today are in a large measure a reflection of the excellence of its universities in the past.”
(Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities, 1985, P31)

In terms of contribution to the United Kingdom economy, the second report, commissioned by Universities United Kingdom (UUK), identified the income of the sector to be £16.87 billion (UUK, 2006). It employed 1.2% of the total workforce but, more importantly, the economic impact was identified as being £45 billion. This report noted that the Government White Paper on the ‘Future of Higher Education’ (2003) and the Lambert review of University-Business Collaboration (2003),

“.envisaged the sector as playing a pivotal role in ensuring the country’s economic competitiveness.”
(UUK Report, 2006, P6)
The third report, produced following the 1996 National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, suggested that the sector has,

“….in recent years undergone considerable change.”
(Dearing, Report 2, Callender, para 1.3, 1997)

This report added,

“The total number of higher education students almost doubled between 1979 and 1995/96 to over 1.5 million. Consequently, the proportion of young people entering full-time higher education rose from 12 per cent in 1979 to nearly 30 per cent in 1995/96”
(Dearing, Report 2, Callender, para 1.4, 1997)

These reports suggest that managing change effectively in the higher education sector is an important task as universities are an important asset, play an important role, generate wealth and have undergone considerable change in recent years.

The literature on the management of change has mainly been written with a focus on the leader of an organisation or company and based upon organisation-wide change in the business sector (see, for example, the Learning Organisation, Peter Senge, 1992, or Business Process Reengineering, Hammer and Champy, 1993). Similarly, the literature on managing change in the higher education sector has also mainly focussed on those leading change (see, for example, Bargh, Bocock, Scott and Smith, 2000). The role of the middle manager in managing and managing change in the higher education sector has not been the subject of much empirical research. However, there has been some recognition that the most successful changes were led by general or middle managers in the business sector (Beer, Eisenstat and
Spector, 1990). Consequently, the focus of this thesis is on the practitioner, the manager, in higher education and how they manage change.

1.2 Background

I need to declare a personal and professional interest in the topic of this thesis. I am a manager working in the sector who has been challenged with managing change. I have worked in the public sector in the civil service, local government and a health charity. My roles have included general administration, policy analysis and facilities management. I began my higher education management career in a new University in 1994 and have worked, within that institution, in a number of different support departments at faculty and central department level. During this time the University has gone through a number of major reorganisations and introduced new methods of working. These new methods of working included the introduction of new services, the development of existing services and the acquisition of new software that required new processes to be implemented. Developments in the sector environment also involved change for the University, for example, with the introduction of fees and increased competition for students and funding. The University staff seemed to be in a permanent state of flux and reorganisation at department and institutional level.

During this experience I have reflected on how the various change projects were managed. The request from staff was that the institution should have a few years of stability but this did not seem to be an option in an ever-changing working environment. I wondered if there was some way to ensure that the changes were managed more effectively. How were other managers managing
similar projects in their institutions and what methods were they employing? Were they effective in helping them to manage the required change more efficiently and effectively?

I conducted some action research during one project that I managed in the 1999/2000 academic year with the aim of determining the effectiveness of the management of the change. This project involved the development of administrative managers in a faculty and the transfer of administrative management from academic managers to these new posts. This research included a survey of the stakeholders involved in the change project. One of the outcomes of this project was the recommendation that benchmarking change management projects in the sector would benefit managers as they could learn, prepare and apply good practice. I started some personal research on benchmarking good practice for the administrative areas for which I was responsible and this proved to be of value in the development of the services that were provided by my department and suggested that managers were willing to discuss their experiences in an open and helpful manner.

I also conducted a review of the available literature on managing change and managing change in business and the higher education sector. I discovered a bewildering array of material available on managing change, although much of it appeared to be written from the perspective of a leader of an organisation or from that of a ‘change agent’ (Senior, 1997) and involved major transformational change rather than change projects within a company. My need was for practical assistance for a manager who was required to manage change projects as part of their ongoing work as a head of department. There were some writers on change who suggested guidelines for managing such change projects (for
example Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992, Kotter, 1996 and Kotter and Cohen, 2002) but equally there were some writers (such as Slowey, 1994 and Mullins, 2006) who suggested that change guides were flawed as each change was different and no recipe or one right way could be universally applied.

The guides that I found (such as those provided by, for example, Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992, Kotter, 1996 and Kotter and Cohen, 2002) had been developed in the business sector and there appeared to be little material available written from the perspective of managing change in the higher education sector. This may be surprising considering the importance of the sector to the wealth and well being of the country. Of the available literature on managing in higher education, there were only a limited number of texts available specifically on managing change in higher education in the England. Two books that were relevant (Weil, 1994 and Slowey, 1994) were written from the perspectives of leaders and heads of department. These provided some useful insights into the methods of managing change employed during the careers of practitioners in the early 1990s although it was not clear as to how relevant this was at the beginning of a new century.

The majority of available literature on managing in the higher education sector in England I found to be of little practical value as on the whole the focus was on the evolution of the higher education sector and clarification of its purpose. Much of this literature had an emphasis on the creation of a higher education market in which institutions compete with each other for students and have to operate in this market economy. This has required a new business oriented approach to be adopted (see, for example, Kogan and Hanney, 1999). If this was the case I wondered if some of the
change guides that had been developed in the business sector were being used in the higher education sector.

The resistance of the sector to the adoption of business methods and business organisational culture has been reviewed (examples include Scott, 1995, Deem, 1998, Bargh, Bocock, Scott and Smith, 2000, Hellawell and Hancock, 2001, and Dearlove, 2002) and there is also a focus on assessments of the management requirements and change required to provide higher education in the new business era (see, for example, Warner and Palfreyman, 1996, Ramsden, 1998, Watson, 2000, Deem and Johnson, 2003, MacCafrey, 2004, Middlehurst, 2004, and Hunt, Bromage and Tomkinson, 2006). There is, however, a limited amount of literature that provides information on whether business methods are now being used in the sector by managers.

In November 2004 I was appointed the Process Review co-ordinator for the University in which I worked. This role provided the management and support for the change management methodology that had been adopted by the University in co-operation with the Southern Universities Management Services (SUMS) consultancy service. The aims and objectives of this methodology were to review business critical processes and identify improvements with customer and stakeholder involvement (University of Luton and SUMS, 2004). This was an approach aimed at facilitating change and the post was a ‘change agent’ for the University and offered more opportunity to consider practical aids for managing change. The role was in addition to the requirement to run an operational department and this, I have found, was not untypical for a manager in the sector.
Clearly I was not the only practitioner who identified a need for help in managing change. There was evidence that managers were being provided with support in the form of staff development from individual institutions or associations of universities and from its professional associations (such as the Association of University Administrators, the AUA). I was unclear as to whether this support had been useful for practitioners and my personal experience had indicated that it was unstructured and of limited value in helping those engaged in managing change.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has, in recent years, also provided support for practitioners by sponsoring projects to provide good practice for the sector. The purpose was to identify good practice and accelerate the implementation of management improvements across the sector (HEFCE, 1999). One such example of a good management practice project was that which provided a web-based resource of information on the management of change. This was produced by a research project led by the University of Luton. The outcome of this project was a toolkit for managers to access and this became available for the sector via a website available at http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/change-management (24/1/08) (formerly http://effectingchange.luton (31/1/04).) which was widely advertised in January 2004. The recognition that managers needed support in managing change had provided the motivation for the development of the toolkit although its utility has not been reviewed with managers. The Project Officer employed my assistance in gaining information on how managers manage change from my fieldwork and included it to help illustrate themes for the website.

More recently, the HEFCE and Universities United Kingdom (UUK, the organisation which represents higher education institutions in
the United Kingdom) have collaboratively established initiatives such as the Leadership Foundation and the Change Academy. These organisations aim to provide events and support for management development and change projects and disseminate good practice across the sector (see the websites of the Leadership Foundation: http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/about/ (29/1/08); and the Change Academy: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/changeacademy.htm (29/1/08.). The Change Academy provides opportunities for project teams to conduct change projects and use the support of experts in managed action research projects. Reviews of the first group of these projects have been published recently (Marshall, 2007) with the emphasis on practical guidance. In addition, initiatives have evolved from Learning and Teaching Support networks. Guides such as ‘Change Thinking, Change Practices’ (Trowler, Saunders and Knight, 2003) and papers from the Change Academy such as ‘Setting the scene: A Change Academy Perspective on Change and Changing’ (Jackson, 2004) have been produced to help guide managers in effecting change. These resources are, once again, based on the desire to assist those managing change although as yet it is not clear how useful they are to the practitioner.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The overall aim of this research was to examine how managers manage change in the higher education sector in England. The focus of this research was, therefore, on the practitioner, the manager. It examines the perceptions of higher education managers about their role in managing change in the higher education sector in England. These managers are not directors or senior managers, they are heads of academic and non academic departments. The focus was on the individual who therefore is ‘in
the middle’ and has to effect change, the methods they have employed and the support they use.

The primary objective was to produce an answer to the question: ‘how do middle managers manage change in English universities?’ This is a broad question but justifiably so because so little is currently known about the topic area. The overarching question itself suggested a number of related questions: specifically, what are the primary challenges of managing change in this context, what knowledge and skills are required to address them, and how do managers acquire these? In the light of the discussion in the previous section, there was also a key further question about how far guides and tools produced for the business sector are being utilised.

All of these aims and questions are in the context of the limited amount of research that has been conducted into how middle managers manage change in the English higher education sector. The account of how managers manage change informs two constituencies. Firstly, the practitioner, the manager who may be struggling with the real life issues of managing change and having to deliver complex projects. Secondly, it is intended to be valuable to those who are seeking to support practitioners and provide guidance to make institutions more effective in managing change.

1.4 The research and the structure of the thesis

The fieldwork was conducted over a period of seven months and the method of collecting data was semi structured interviews. In all thirty one middle managers from nine higher education institutions were interviewed during winter and spring months. Institutions were selected that provided a sample of the types of institutions in
the English higher education sector. The available literature is reviewed in chapter two with the objective of gaining an understanding of change management and management issues in higher education that may affect the management of change and considering if it offers practical help to managers in the sector. Chapter three provides a description of the methodology and research methods used in the study, including detail on the sampling decisions, the data analysis and a description of the fieldwork. It considers the advantages and disadvantages of the method adopted and the limitations of the research. Chapters four, five and six present the emerging themes and their relationship to the literature. Chapter seven, the final chapter, reflects on the principal findings. There are some recommendations for practitioners on the means to improve their effectiveness in managing change projects based on the analysis of the data and the evidence obtained from the review of the literature. There are also recommendations for the practitioners’ managers and those seeking to provide support for practitioners, such as professional associations, consultants and staff development managers. The themes that arise from this examination of managing change in the higher education sector are identified from the practitioners. There are also some suggestions for further work for those who seek to provide support for practitioners in managing change. Finally there are some reflections on the research process and recommendations for those embarking on similar research.

The research indicates that middle managers are caught ‘in the middle’ and are effecting change using their common sense and support networks. There are limitations concerning the generalisability of the findings as the sample is quite small, although subsequent dialogues with middle managers on the research findings have been very positive. To improve practice will
take some time and the dissemination of the research findings is a starting point.
2.1 Introduction

The literature review was conducted with three main objectives in relation to the research question: what has been the middle managers’ experience of managing change in English universities? The first objective was to review and evaluate what is known about managing change in English universities and the management of change as a middle manager. Secondly, to use the literature to generate issues that could be explored with middle managers in English higher education institutions. And lastly, to consider how helpful the literature might be to the middle manager who is working in an English higher education institution and whether it could be a potential source of guidance and support in helping them to manage change in their role.

Literature searches in English language were conducted on a number of topics using digital online research databases. EBSCO host was the primary search tool used with searches conducted in the Academic Search Elite, Business Source Premier and EJS E-Journals databases. The University of Bedfordshire’s Learning Resources catalogue was also used. Initially keyword searches were used to identify articles and journals. Keywords included:

- Change;
- Change management;
- Change management methods;
- Managing change;
- Managing change in English higher education;
- Managing in English higher education;
- Higher education in England;
• Practice;
• Professional;
• Practitioner.

These keywords were then searched in combination to identify literature and journals pertinent to the review objectives. Search parameters had to be set as the initial searches proved to be too general. These parameters included limiting searches to the English higher education sector (i.e. not higher education overseas) and to literature produced within ten years. Thereafter searches were further refined to keywords in abstracts and, in some cases, author names particularly when an author was found to be frequently referenced in an article. Literature that was cited in articles was considered against the review objectives and was then reviewed. The literature was also used to determine the search strategy for further literature as it identified other keywords for further searches. Examples of these additional keywords included ‘change management guidelines’, ‘change management recipes’ and ‘total quality management in higher education’.

The literature review found that there is a considerable amount of literature available. Its principal focus is on business and industry. Much is based in the United States of America and concerns transforming companies and organisations to ensure they remain competitive and innovative (see, for example, Senge 1992, and Hammer and Champy, 1993). A key issue is that not all of the literature is based on primary research; it is not a scientific literature. There is literature based upon theoretical positions (see, for example, Taylor, 1911) and empirical research (see, for example, Mayo, 1949) while there is also literature that uses secondary analysis of data (see, for example, Stacey, 2003 and Burnes, 2004). There are practitioner based accounts primarily written from the organisation leaders’ point of view (see, for example, Ventris, 2004)
although there is a limited literature written from the middle managers’ perspective. Much of the literature is polemical as it is written to dispute a proposition. It is evolutionary and is constantly being developed with an ever increasing research based literature being provided.

When the review was started, managing and leading in the higher education sector in England did not figure prominently in the literature, although there is now a growing body of literature. This includes practitioners’ accounts and reviews (see, for example, Tomkinson, 2005 and Hunt, Bromage and Tomkinson, 2006) and the HEFCE and UUK sponsored organisations such as the Leadership Foundation and the Change Academy provide reviews of their work based upon feedback from practitioners (see, for example, Marshall, 2007).

The literature that was not reviewed, as it was considered that it did not satisfy the objectives for the review, included the considerable literature on leading and managing in higher education in the United States of America and Australia. There is also a large number of texts based upon research into leading and managing and managing change in schools in the United Kingdom that was not reviewed. In the context of change and managing change the role of the change agent, the requirement to become a learning organisation and leading change in the business world from the leader and senior management perspective was evaluated but not included this review as they did not comply with the review objectives.
2.2 Management organisational theory

Academics (see, for example, Stacey, 2003 and Burnes, 2004) recommend that an understanding of management and the management of change can be obtained and is important. It needs to be based on an understanding of the development of management organisational theory. Understanding the historical development is important as management organisational theory has evolved and is shaped by the organisational and cultural thinking at the time. The first attempt was made to break down work and form a science of management (known as the classical school, Taylor, 1911). This school considered that there was a ‘best’ way to organise and define work. Critiques of this attempt to create a science led to the development of the human relations school (see, for example, Mayo, 1949). This alternative view essentially proposed that it was important to understand the motivation of the human element in an organisation and the satisfaction of a human’s needs. This school based some of its ideas on the Hawthorne Experiments that were conducted by Elton Mayo’s research team (Mayo, 1949).

The scientific and human relations schools were dominant, if competing, management organisational theories up to the 1950s and 1960s (Burnes, 2004) although neither took account of the environmental influences on work and organisations. In the late 1960s the contingency theory approach was developed which evolved from systems theory thinking that has been attributed to the biologist Bertalanffy (Checkland, 1999 and Williams, 2005). Systems theory has evolved from Bertalanffy’s conceptual view of thinking of ‘wholes’ where businesses and industries are viewed as systems which are very complex. Further developments for management organisational theory now concern complexity (Levy,
1993) and chaos theories (Gleick, 1993). These developments and the application of these theories arose from a desire to model complex and confusing situations and to try and use complex computer programs to provide some reliability in predictions. It is, in a way, a return to the desire to provide scientific reasoning to complex systems and an attempt to provide some stability by enabling some measure of control and predictability.

However, more recent management organisational theory has acknowledged that,

“Important relationships exist between an organisation’s culture, its key strategies and the prevailing style of its managers. Congruence among these factors increases the probability of success. However, there needs to be a continuous process of coaligning them.”
(Kast, and Rosenzweig, 1985, P.688)

According to management organisational theory and the literature (see, for example, Stacey, 2003 and Burnes, 2004) the culture in higher education and of individual institutions and the style of managers is important. This research is focussed on middle managers and the research design provides an opportunity to explore these themes with middle managers. In particular it explores whether there are cultural and organisational issues that are present in the higher education sector that require middle managers to adopt a particular style and strategies to ensure success. It also explores whether managers believe there is a ‘best way’ to manage and whether middle managers are aware of issues concerning management organisational theoretical propositions in terms of complexity and chaos.
2.3 Management practice

There is a considerable literature on management practice itself (see, for example, Ackoff, 1981 and Schon, 1983) that is to say how management really works. In terms of reviewing the ways in which managers manage, Ackoff considered that the experience comprises,

“….large and complex sets of interacting problems, dynamic systems of problems…..we refer to these as messes. Our focus is on the management of messes rather than the solution of problems.”
(Ackoff, 1981, P22)

Ackoff’s (1981) identification that management is more about messes than solutions is related to the systems, complexity and chaos management organisational theories. It has been further explored and conceptual frameworks have been produced to help guide practice (for example, Flood and Jackson, 1991). Examples include organisational development business systems management, problem solving and creativity and innovation. Flood and Jackson (1991) concentrated on the development of methods to identify ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ messes and tools to solve the associated problems. ‘Hard’ messes they defined as those which tend to be simple and small, have clear priorities, involve few people, and solutions and time scales are known and within a boundary. ‘Soft’ messes are large and complex, with no clear isolations, are serious, involve many people, have no time scales and are unbounded. The ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ continuum was further explored and a test developed to provide an indication of where a mess can be placed on this continuum. Ultimately managers could be guided to best practice to improve performance. Ackoff (1981) identifies tools and
instruments as useful aids in helping a manager to overcome the planning needs for managing these messes and identifies the need for training and awareness. He concludes that the manager must be a humanist as well as a generalist and that practice involves elements of both art and science.

Similarly Schon (1983) considered that professional knowledge required an epistemology of knowledge that was based on practice. Unlike Ackoff, his work considered professional practice generally rather than theories of management and organisational theory. He observed that the development of knowledge has been marked by a concentration on science and technology. He argued that there had not been enough attention paid to the development of knowledge based upon practical competence and professional activity. He recognised that there were difficulties in understanding professional practitioners as their activities have elements of science and art, with the latter including elements of what he termed tacit knowledge. He illustrated this using sports and musical metaphors. A baseball player may feel ‘in the groove’ and a jazz player may have ‘a feel’ for their music. In both cases they may not be able to define and describe what they mean but they know when they are at the top of their game. The use of ‘gut feeling’ rather than a particular method is also referred to and this makes practice difficult to determine in a scientific manner.

This presents challenges for those seeking to provide training for professionals because it is difficult to advise on how to improve practice for them particularly if it is based upon the ‘art’ or ‘feel’ of management. Tangible and definable improvements may be difficult to identify and consequently train. However, the description is powerful as it provides a very meaningful illustration that is readily understandable and yet difficult to define and describe in a scientific
manner. The proposition is that practice helps improve performance and there will be occasions that practitioners will be ‘on top of their game’. Powerful illustrations are present throughout Schon’s work and the data and are useful aids to describing themes and making practical and memorable observations.

Schon also argued that the art of management is further defined by managers’ reflection-in-action rather than reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action he defines as practitioners using unstructured means of reviewing their actions while working and he suggested that, in some cases, this may not be written down. Decisions made may be based on the repertoires of cumulatively developed knowledge that they use and adapt during their working days and careers. Reflection-on-action he defines as being more structured and considered. Schon outlined a problem solving process for managers as being one where they identify a problem and then referred to their experience and knowledge and used this to determine a possible solution. This may include the use of tacit knowledge and may be based on their experiential learning. Schon contrasted two ways of perceiving management. In one, professional practice has ‘hard’ ground where practitioners make use of theory and technique and in the other managers work in ‘swampy lowland’ situations where there are messes that cannot be solved and managers refer to ‘trial and error’ and ‘muddling through’.

Criticism of Schon’s work comes from those who suggested that it is based on limited professional contexts (see, for example, Eraut, 1994). They note that the opportunity to reflect may be restricted due to pressures of time and the decrease in autonomy provided by the modern working environment (Harrison, 2006). There is, however, a lack of literature on professional practice and, in
particular, professional practice of managing in English higher education institutions. Schon’s work on reflective practice has been used in nursing in the National Health Service although it is not clear whether English higher education middle managers have considered it useful or whether they believe there is a ‘best’ way to manage or if they use tools and techniques to help them manage. Powerful illustrations are provided in the literature and yet they are open to criticism and their applicability to the higher education sector is not clear. An example of a powerful illustration of the art of management is that provided by Bridges (2006) on the experience of a leader or manager in which he states that it can,

“….be compared to that of someone conducting an orchestra: you have to keep track of the many different instruments, each playing different sequences of notes and each starting or stopping on its own terms. While you keep a sense of the whole piece you have to hold in your mind the overall design of the melody and harmonies, for unless you do that, every little change will sound like a new and unrelated melody that just happened to come along, without relation to the rest of the music."

(Bridges, 2006, P101).

Such advice to describe the art of managing indicates that it is difficult to identify and teach in a scientific manner.

2.4 Change and management

The literature identified two types: planned change and emergent change. There is a proposal, in much of the literature reviewed, that change can be managed and planned (for example, Lewin, 1952). There is, in contrast, a view that suggests that change is emergent (for example, Meyerson, 2001) or that it is more about
transition (Bridges, 2006). The literature predominantly focuses on the management of change in the business sector. In terms of the methodological approaches of the literature there is considerable variation. Some accounts are based on empirically based work into managing change which depended on interviewing or providing questionnaires to heads of companies or business managers (see, for example, Kanter, 1992, Kotter and Cohen, 2002). In contrast, others use analysis of secondary sources and make assertions about change and its management based on these (see, for example, Senior, 1997, Burnes, 2004 and Mullins, 2005).

The literature that suggests that change can be planned and managed has been based on the initial work of Lewin in the 1940s and 1950s. His research into social theory also has relevance to the organisation of work. A tool to aid in the management of change was developed by Lewin (1952), which he called ‘force field analysis’ and was designed to aid managers to effect change. It enables managers to understand the conditions under which social systems are likely to change. Lewin believed that a social system is one in which there are driving and restraining forces in equilibrium. Change, he proposed, can be affected by strengthening the driving forces or weakening the restraining forces, or both, and these forces form the ‘force field’. Many of the tools provided in change management writing are produced as aids that have been developed from the research into the business sector and, as yet, have not been tested in the sector. It is also not clear if they are accessible to the sector and what their utility might be. Lewin also identified three stages in the management of change and suggested that these stages formed a process that could be managed. The stages are referred to by many subsequent writers on change (see, for example, Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992 and Bridges, 2006) and are included in their analysis of change as a process. The three
stage process commences with the unfreezing stage, a move to the new stage or level follows, and finally the refreezing stage which is identified as the most important stage. Lewin was breaking new ground in the proposition that there could be a planned approach to the management of change. He proposed the use of a collective organised response to the solution of problems posed by change.

However, the concept of planned change has been criticised since it was first proposed. Kanter, in the ‘Change Masters’ (1992), proposed that change is something that is hard to measure as it involves many activities that are present in every organisation. Kanter’s research team developed their ideas from consultancy and interviews with practitioners. They argue that change is close to the idea of innovation and involves the design and development of new structures and ways of working and there is a choice of implementation methods. The requirement is to provide pressure for change and this may be achieved by using any one of the following styles: participative; authoritarian; or political. Kanter concluded that effective change masters and change management processes are essentially the result of the right people being in the right place at the right time.

It has also been argued that change is paradoxical (see, for example, Dauphinais et al, 1996). The need is for practitioners and leaders to be aware of the paradoxes associated within the nature of change in order for change to be achieved. An important example is the paradox that stability is required in order for change to be achieved. There is also the proposition that the concept of planned change is flawed (see, for example, Quinn, 1980 and Wilson, 1992). Quinn (1980) asserted that research has indicated that most strategic decisions are made in spite of formal planning processes rather than because of them. His approach suggests
that change is not the distinct managed three phase project, as initially proposed by Lewin, but operates on a continuum and as a result is open ended. Wilson (1992) similarly proposed that it was an important requirement to understand the context for the change and the cultural and political elements. A formal planned approach is not possible as these elements will never be sufficiently understood or significantly predicted. Strebel (1994) supported this view, based on empirical work, and added that successful change is only possible if a path that is specific to the given change is taken,

“What is needed is the choice of a change path based on diagnosis of both the forces of change and resistance”.
(Strebel, 1994, P29)

Stacey (2003) usefully added to Quinn’s work (1980) by indicating that effective managers manage in a deliberate stage-by-stage process without a long term plan, as the ultimate goal is not known at the start. The environment is uncertain and ambiguous and there is a need to be flexible. Such a strategy comes from the interaction between the people involved and is dynamic due to the pressure groups involved. There is a need for continual reassessment and review and change of strategy, and, as a result, the strategy progresses in small steps. In essence, the organisation feels its way to a goal, learning as it goes. It could be argued that this contradicts the argument that change can be managed and that one management method would be to have a plan to react to and learn from developments in the environment rather than plan a particular course of action.
2.5 Organisational development and organisation wide change methods

The question of whether change can be planned and managed or is emergent has influenced the development of proposals to aid organisations in effecting change. Some change management writers (see, for example, Hammer and Champy, 1993) promote the concept that organisation wide change is necessary to ensure companies survive and prosper in an ever changing work environment that is increasing in its complexity with very demanding customers. These methods have been designed for the business sector to provide for improvements in effectiveness and provide change. An awareness of these organisation wide methods of effecting change may be useful for middle managers in higher education particularly as some have been adopted by a number of institutions in England to help them manage change. In addition, many of these methods identify issues that need to be addressed and provide, therefore, advice for the middle manager on how they might manage change. Some of the organisation wide methods or systems that have been identified that have been used in English higher education institution include: Business Process Review; and Total Quality Management.

One area of a systems approach that has been used in higher education is that of Business Process Review (a search on the internet of higher education institution websites provided references to projects that have been conducted in universities in the United Kingdom.). This change methodology was developed with the publication of Re-engineering the Corporation (Hammer and Champy, 1993). The approach arose from a review of American companies and their lack of competitiveness. It concerned a fundamental rethink and radical redesign of business
processes to improve performance on cost, quality, service and speed. This approach involved a review of structures and a flexible attitude with each manager ensuring that they have developed appropriate skills in order for them to manage. The work is refocused and conducted where it is needed. Everything about the company changes and people, jobs, managers and values are linked together. The process itself uses tools to review processes, including benchmarking, observation, brainstorming, etc.

There are, however, criticisms of the approach (see, for example, Harrison and D’Vaz, 1995). They suggest that it is simply a repackaging of previous techniques, although they also noted that the consultancy firm, Coopers and Lybrand partners, had identified sixteen best practices associated with Business Process Review programmes, including the need to identify the rationale for change and gaining senior support for the change plan. Hammer (1996) later refined the approach and suggested it is a radical path (while total quality management is a winding path) and proposed that, for process review engineering to be successful, all staff have to focus on processes with the customer needs at the core of the review. A number of universities (see, for example, University of Bristol) have used the method to review processes for their management information and record systems and to help them manage relationships with their students. Although the method employed has not used the idea of a total re-engineering of all the processes for the institution at one time (as identified by the approach originally defined by Hammer and Champy, 1993) the preliminary results that that have been achieved are encouraging and improvements have been made to services. Another example is the Process Review approach adopted by the University of Luton (now the University of Bedfordshire). This is currently being evaluated by
the University although there is recognition that effective change has been achieved.

Another change method that has been used in higher education is Total Quality Management. It was developed as a management approach in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s and was introduced to the western business sector by Deming (1982). Companies in the United States started to implement quality management programmes in the 1980s and focussed on customer needs and work processes to improve company performance and effect change. Groups of staff were formed across companies to review systems and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these systems and thereby improve quality of product for the customer. The success of such initiatives in commerce persuaded higher education institutions to adopt total quality management (Kanji and Malek, 1999). The take up in higher education in the United Kingdom was slow up until 1993 when the introduction of teaching quality audits and institutional quality audits provided the basis for an expansion of interest. However, a review of total quality management programmes in higher education (Kanji and Malek, 1999) discovered that there were still only four institutions that had implemented a Total Quality Management Programme. It was noted that only 31 per cent of institutions use measures such as benchmarking and that the post 1992 universities were the ones which use management tools such as quality management practices.

An example of the type of quality management work conducted in the English higher education sector since 1999 is provided by the Consortium for Excellence in Higher Education. This has been led by Sheffield Hallam University and funded, in part, by the Good Management Practice Project (as previously noted, these are
projects that have proposed and been awarded funding to promote good practice in the sector by the HEFCE.). Essentially the project aimed to test the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model in higher education. The outcome of the project was the acknowledgement that the Excellence Model is,

“….a catalyst for change - providing a framework through which improvement and changes in current practice can be analysed, prioritised and understood.”
(Sheffield Hallam University, 2003, P1)

The project has provided a website for disseminating good practice (available at: http://excellence.shu.ac.uk/Default.asp (24/05/04). It has also produced a number of reports to provide information on the project and disseminate good practice. However, there is literature that critiques the application of quality assurance to the higher education sector (see, for example, Houston and Studman, 2001). Some of the difficulties identified of the quality management approach in higher education lie,

“...in the definition of academic quality, the nature of improvement in higher education and the applicability and transferability of key quality concepts into educational organisations”.
(Houston and Studman, 2001, P475)

Another issue associated with these methods are that they are mainly written for an organisation or company wide transformation. They require, if they are to be successful, to have the support of the senior managers of an organisation and, ideally, be led by the chief executive. They have been developed for the business community and have been adapted for use in the higher education sector. Their success to date is either limited or, as yet,
unsubstantiated (in the case of Total Quality Management and systems approaches). In the higher education sector in England, a search of University websites identified universities that are currently using organisation wide methods to progress change. Full evaluations of these approaches, used primarily in process-oriented departments such as the registry function, are awaited. The preliminary results, from the statements made on the relevant websites, are encouraging. Some participating universities have published a wide variety of material on their websites about the changes that have been made (examples include Bristol University and University of Essex: see university websites at: http://www.bris.ac.uk/ips-projects/procrev/(23/1/07); and http://www.essex.ac.uk/adminreview/(23/1/07). A review of the effectiveness of these initiatives from the perspective of a middle manager was not found.

2.6 Change management guidelines

Change management guidelines have been proposed by a number of change management writers. The most prominent and frequently cited of these are Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector (1990), Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992), Kotter (1996) and, more recently Kotter and Cohen (2002) and Ventris (2004). Many of these guides have been produced after extensive research with practitioners or by reflections on actions provided by practitioners themselves. Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector (1990), for example, conducted a four-year study into change programmes in six large United States of America corporations and identified six steps to effective change. They concluded that the most successful changes were lead by general managers, or managers focussing on the work itself. In particular these approaches focussed on work alignment and they suggested that the fallacy of programmatic change was the fact
that organisation wide change would be a revitalisation for the company and was lead by human resource staff or departments. They found that formal organisation structures and systems cannot lead to a company wide renewal process. They also add that the best way to manage successful change is to put people in a new structure that imposes new responsibilities and roles.

Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector (1990) devised six steps to successful change. The first two steps concern addressing the human relations school issues. First, there is a need to mobilise commitment to change through joint diagnosis of problems and this needs to be shared with the people the change affects. Second, is the development of a shared vision for the organisation of how to organise and manage for competitiveness. The third step is the fostering of a consensus for the new vision, with the need for competence to enact it and cohesion to move to it along. Step four is to spread revitalisation to all departments without pushing it from the top. Five, is the need to institutionalise revitalisation through formal policies, systems and structures. Finally step six is to monitor and adjust strategies in response to problems in the revitalisation process. Top management needs to set demanding targets which lead this process and they also need to be set such targets as well.

Kotter and Cohen (2002) provide analysis of a project that involved over 400 interviews with people in over 130 organisations in the United States and was commenced seven years before the publication of the results, however they have revisited issues in further interviews. They found that managing change is problematic and many change projects fail. They have provided a change management guide, supported by their empirically based research, to help avoid the pitfalls that can lead to failure. The major
challenge they identify is the need to change people’s behaviour with pitfalls including a lack of the right team, under communication and a lack of a well managed process. They have also provided a website (http://www.theheartofchange.com, 31/7/04) which includes a customised interactive tool that provides insight into any change effort, along with book excerpts, case studies and further reading suggestions. This guide comprises of eight steps which are:

- create urgency – provide rationale for change;
- guide the team – manage and lead it - with credibility and skills;
- guide team with strategies - including budgets, plans, strategies and vision;
- communication of visions and strategies;
- empowerment – remove obstacles;
- short term wins;
- consolidation of change - early change builds momentum;
- nurture new culture and make change stick.

They add many useful tips to ensure that potential pitfalls that can befall a change project do not stall change, although there is daunting advice on the high failure rates for change projects.

There is also guidance available from the United Kingdom and England (see, for example, Ventris, 2004). Ventris provides advice gained from the practitioners’ point of view reflecting on her experience of leading and managing change in the business sector in the United Kingdom. She has identified very similar guidelines with a stepped approach to manage change to those produced by Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (1990) and Kotter and Cohen (2002). She considers how to develop a vision for change
and maintain it, the need to plan for change, to launch a programme, to lead it, to overcome resistance and to build in milestones to ensure success which can be measured. Her advice is aimed at developing successful companies and her view was this can be achieved if a culture of change is created in the organisation. Much of this advice is aimed at the leader or senior manager in an organisation rather than a middle manager. The most useful advice that Ventris provides for the middle manager is for them to adopt a very positive attitude, appreciate the context and culture of the organisation in which they work, and ensure they gain the support of their senior management to increase the likelihood of successfully managing change.

Many of these guidelines are based on an approach that involved stakeholders and were led by a manager in a planned step by step managed approach. They use elements of organisation wide change methods and are project based and offer practical help for a manager. The writers who have devised them have also suggested that there will be environmental or contextual issues to understand and address if change is to be successfully achieved. This reflects contingency and complexity approaches of management organisational theory (see, for example, Kast, and Rosenzweig, 1985). It has been suggested that organisational history matters too (Cameron and Green, 2004), with different communities having differing needs that all need to be addressed and therefore effective communication is absolutely essential. The emphasis on communication has been noted in the evolving literature on higher education too,

“Communication, along with car parking, must be one issue that everyone in every HE institution agrees is a major problem”
(Marshall, 2007, P14)
The guidelines are informative and generally offer similar steps to achieve change and are potentially of practical assistance for a manager. However, there are issues associated with them as they are primarily aimed at producing organisation wide change from a senior managers’ perspective. They are also primarily based upon research that has been conducted in the business sector and mainly based on research in the United States (see, for example, Kotter and Cohen, 2002) although there is now a growing body of work being provided from business practitioners reviewing their experience in the United Kingdom (see, for example, Ventris, 2004). This poses a number of questions about their transference to the higher education sector and whether they can also be used effectively by middle managers for change projects in English higher education institutions. It also is not clear whether middle managers are aware of them and whether they have been used and evaluated as to their utility at this level in an organisation.

2.7 Higher education environment and management issues

The literature on higher education has only recently been written from the perspective of leading and managing in the sector in England, as it was previously mainly focussed on its historical development and purpose. Two useful edited collections of accounts on leading and managing in the higher education sector in the United Kingdom (Weil, 1994, and Slowey, 1994) stand out as some of the earliest writing on the experience of managing change from a leader or manager’s perspective in higher education in England. These accounts are provided by leaders and managers who have provided commentaries on their experiences and reflected on their careers and their success or failure when implementing change. Many of these reflections conclude that change has become a continuous process and part
of everyday management and the learning organisation is the only one to adopt to enable the organisation to survive (Slowey, 1994). The observation that was made by Slowey is, if opportunities are to be identified and grasped, a style of management that uses a consultative approach enables change to be managed more effectively.

More recently Tomkinson (2005) and Hunt, Bromage and Tomkinson (2006) focus on the management of change from the manager’s perspective in the higher education sector. Tomkinson (2005) considers the nature of change, its complexity and the paradoxes associated with change (see also Dauphinais et al, 1996) with a review of the human resource developer. Hunt, Bromage and Tomkinson (2006) suggest that there are higher education contextual issues that need to be addressed. Their focus is on the learning from case studies in the sector and abroad. They reflect on the limitations of change models that define planned change as unforeseen and indicated that unplanned developments occur that prevent a planned approach from being achievable. The use of change models in the sector is questioned, although they recommend the use of approaches that address contextual issues. This is supported by the reviews of action research projects that were guided by the joint Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and the Higher Education Academy Change Academy’ Programme (Marshall, 2007). On reflection, the editor, Marshall, argued that the lessons indicated that the sector, was not that different to the private sector contrary to the practitioners recommendations (see, for example, Hunt, Bromage and Tomkinson, 2006). Contextual issues, however, were identified in the contingency management organisational theory as important. It is clearly seen as an important issue in terms of the development of management organisation theory and
early reviews of and the development of professional practice in the higher education sector.

In more recent years there has been increasing interest in managing in the sector and analysing the requirements to be an effective manager. Some of this work reflects on the experiences and issues affecting the sector (e.g. Warner and Palfreyman, 1996, Ramsden, 1998, Prichard, 2000, Watson, 2000, Shattock, 2003, Chambers, 2004, Whitchurch, 2004 and 2006, and Fullan 2007), while others reflect on the requirement of leading or managing from their experience or analysis of secondary materials (for example Bargh, Bocock, Scott and Smith, 2000, Warner and Palfreyman, 2001, McCaffery, 2004 and Bryman, 2007). This literature provides a useful guide to management and leadership in the sector, although generally there is the recognition that more research needs to be conducted. Bryman identifies a paucity of material based upon empirical research, although in recent years more has been conducted (see, for example, Deem and Johnson, 2003 and Deem, 2006). Throughout the literature, whether it is from an historical perspective or a practitioner perspective, there are a number of concepts that are common, including the indication that the sector is unique and may be averse to using business methods. However, others suggest it is not unique (see, for example, Marshall, 2007).

A summary of the organisational and cultural issues that are identified in the literature and may influence a higher education managers’ style include:

- Managerialism and business methods;

- academic loyalty, academic freedom and the invisible college;
• collegiality;
• complexity of the sector;
• the role of the manager in higher education;
• staff development.

Managerialism has been defined as the development of administration based on business organisation and methods with a new focus on greater efficiency and increased accountability (Deem, 1998). Deem notes that it has been a recognised feature of the sector since the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities report of 1985. The conclusion is that this form of management has been imposed as it is contrary to the traditional organisation culture of the sector and now threatens the very nature of the sector as managerialism does not permit it to operate as it should, in a free and unconstrained manner. There is also a concern that this pressure to adopt business management methods has been increased with the creation of new consumerism. New consumerism Deem defines as the introduction of market forces into the sector. The prevalent culture of higher education, it has also been proposed, will prevent managerialism from being imposed (see, for example, Deem 1998 and Dearlove 2002) and this suggests that business methods and tools may be resisted by the sector.

Much of the literature on leading and managing in higher education that has been based upon research has focused on a senior level. As with the literature on managing in the business sector, many relevant organisational theories have been identified (see, for example, Bush, 2006 and Bush and Bell 2007). The conclusion here is that there has been a change in the management and culture (see, for example, Deem, 1998) although the
recommendation is that an effective way or working is one that is based upon collegiality with autonomous departments. This way of working has to address enterprise issues and as this is most effective in the modern environment (see, for example, Schuller, 1995, Warner and Palfreyman, 1996 and McNay 2006). There is also the identification that the development of a bureaucracy to monitor quality and produce information for league tables inhibits an institution’s, or a manager’s, freedom to manage (see, for example, McNay, 2006). The need for more research across the sector has been identified as the practice of working in these structures has not been widely investigated (Trowler, 1998). More practice based research is required (Bargh, Bocock, Scott and Smith, 2000) with the use of case studies (Clark, 2004). Despite the identification of a change in culture, there is the acknowledgement that there is resistance to change. The academic has divided loyalties and defends their freedom and is loyal to their subject over that of their institution, and this will ensure that any institutional change may be resisted. Academic freedom has been identified as a concept that is jealously defended as a primary requirement for an independent sector (see, for example, Koch, 2003). A useful definition of the concept is provided by James Koch when he writes of the frustration of applying Total Quality Management,

“Faculty members traditionally have had the right to profess their disciplines as they see fit and to seek truth, wherever that search leads them. The content of their courses, the nature of their research, and their professional values over the years have been subsumed under the umbrella of academic freedom”
(Koch, 2003, P329)

Kogan and Hanney (1999) refer to this academic culture as one of dual accountability to their academic colleagues or subject
professionals as well as to their institution. The accountability to their professional subject colleagues can be more binding than that to their institution and causes potential friction during change and the management of change. Kogan and Hanney (1999) call this accountability the ‘invisible colleges’. The ‘invisible college’ is not a recognised organisation but is formalised in the quality assurance processes that exist in the United Kingdom higher education sector, such as the external examiner system and peer review of research. These processes may serve to formally reinforce the subject academic community of the ‘invisible college’. Kogan and Hanney (1999) interviewed Jarrett, the Chair of the Steering Committee that reviewed efficiency in universities in 1985, when researching change and were informed that it was necessary to pay attention to the ‘invisible college’ because if it was ignored then success would not be achieved. Kogan and Hanney conclude that the sector believes itself to be ‘unique’ and, because of the need for academic freedom and the existence of the ‘invisible college’, business methods will be resisted because they are viewed as inappropriate.

Another higher education contextual factor identified in the literature is that of collegiality. This collegiality (see Bennett, Crawford and Riches, 1992, Middlehurst, 1993, Warner and Palfreyman, 1996, Trowler, 1998, Bargh, Bocock, Scott and Smith, 2000, Warner and Palfreyman, 2001 and McNay, 2006) concerns the expectation that staff will be involved in the decision making process. It is based on the premise that the body of staff then owns the decision and consequently supports the practical implementation. Universities have developed complex consultative decision making structures and processes to facilitate this method of collegiate decision-making. Successful managers therefore need to ensure that consultation is conducted on any proposed change and be aware of
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the structure of the consultation process in their institution. In practice, this collegiality may be the means to ensure that decisions are implemented and it can be manipulated by a skilled and experienced higher education manager. The dilemma facing managers is the need to consider how they may tackle the complexity of this social method of decision-making and ensure they research their goals in a consensual manner. They need to persuade and listen and be firm but flexible.

Since 1992 the number of universities has increased and the variation between institutions has been encouraged as the Government has actively supported the development of differentiated missions (Rammell, 2005). The variations in history, tradition, size and location is considerable. Institutions have quite different traditions and organisational forms, although some cultures are maintained across the sector. Coalitions of types of universities have been formed and these make up the institutions that form Universities United Kingdom (UUK). Examples of such coalitions include the Russell Group of research universities and Million+. The diversity within the sector of the various types of universities is, according to Rammell (then the higher education minister in the Government), something to be maintained and encouraged. The complexity of the sector has also been noted in the literature as universities are ‘hybrid institutions’ that contain very diverse communities (Thackwray, 2007).

From the limited literature available from the managers’ perspective (see, for example, Slowey, 1994) the indication is that the manager may have had little formal training to prepare them for the role. This may be a problem for middle managers, although the professional practice literature (see, for example, Schon, 1983) suggests that this training needs to be in the form of coaching rather than any
other form of training. There is, as a result, a limited understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the post of head of an academic department. Bryman (2007) adds that there are differences in roles and motivation between the academic and non academic managers in the sector although the research available to support this appears to be limited. Whitchurch (2006) has identified the changing character of the sector with the emergence of a university as a professional community with professional managers who are very highly qualified and more professional and as qualified in their fields as their academic colleagues. This may be a development identified in recent years although other literature (e.g. Slowey, 1994) suggests that most staff have to learn whilst in the role and there is often little in the way of meaningful induction into the role. The need for development of particular skills for the middle manager has been identified by practitioners (see, for example, Tomkinson, 2005) and these include team building, facilitation, problem solving, analysis and interpersonal skills. It is not clear how these skills are acquired by a middle manager in an English higher education institution and if the training that is provided is deemed practically useful by the middle manager. Staff development (see, for example, Slowey, 1994) is viewed as a very important part of the process and there has been a change in the way in which this has been delivered in recent years. Support and guidance external to universities has shifted from the provision of funding by the HEFCE Good Management Programme for specific projects based on methodologies such as the European Foundation for Quality Management to reflection-on-action techniques such as the Change Academy’s action learning. This provides the opportunity for teams of staff to work on change projects with the aid of specialist facilitators who can help provide reflective learning support for the staff in the teams. This development in support has not been fully evaluated as yet but is based on the concept of coaching rather
than teaching skills and this has been identified as important in practice as well (see, for example, Schon, 1987).

2.8 Key issues arising from the review of literature

The management organisational theory literature identifies the need to focus on an organisation’s culture, key strategies and management style as important. The recommendation from this literature is to ensure that there is some ‘congruence’ between these key features and this provides some assurance of success for the organisation and the manager. This literature is evolutionary and over time there has been a desire to define management as a science with an objective to identify the best way in which work can be organised. The aim is to create an effective and efficient organisation. These ideas have evolved over time with the view that organisations are very complex systems that are affected by environmental and cultural or contingent factors.

The literature on management practice identifies management as a ‘mess’ that requires the manager to try and manage. This has generated a literature focussed on the realities of practice. A key message that is common to the literature on management and professional practice is that they both have elements of art in them and success is difficult to define. This makes it difficult to learn and teach. However, professionals and managers have a choice and that is whether they want to try the scientific or artistic way. The scientific way is based upon more assured ground while the artistic way is less solid. To improve practice middle managers need to be consulted as to how they manage change, the way they manage and how they gather support to improve their practice.
The nature of change itself and whether it can be managed is also an issue in the literature and yet the middle manager is confronted with the need to manage. Much of the literature is based primarily on research and reflections conducted in the business sector and aimed at leaders or senior management rather than middle managers. Most applies to transforming companies to ensure that they are competitive and are able to survive in an ever demanding and changing world. Much is outside the scope of a middle manager working in an English higher education institution. However, there are organisation wide change methods that have been developed and they are being used in English universities to manage change. This work is ongoing and evaluations of their effectiveness are being produced.

The most potentially useful literature for middle managers in English higher education institutions is the guideline literature that advises on a step by step approach to manage change and uses tools to help aid the process. However, it is not clear if this guidance is being used. The evolving literature on leading and managing in English higher education is also potentially useful as it identifies the issues that a middle manager may need to address in developing a style of management that might be effective. The complexity of the sector is an issue here as universities are ‘hybrid institutions’ that contain very diverse communities (Thackwray, 2007). This is important as it may be that managing in one English higher education institution may be different from another. The literature on English higher education also identifies unique organisational and cultural features of the sector that provide a resistance to business methods. As much of the literature is really about business methods and tools and,
“….the general challenge facing HEIs (higher education institutions) at the end of the twentieth century is to accept that ‘management’ is not a dirty word and that the effective management of people is the key to unlocking the creativity of all who work in HE (higher education) ”

(Warner and Palfreyman, 1996. P101)

However, it remains unclear how a middle manager manages change in English higher education institutions and how they develop the skills they may need to achieve change effectively.
3.1 Introduction

The choice of the research design was directed by the research question: ‘how do middle managers manage change in English universities?’, which itself gave rise to a number of further questions, notably about what are the primary challenges and what skills are particularly useful in successfully meeting them. A number of criteria were identified to help with the choice of methodology and the data collection and data analysis methods. Firstly, the focus of the research was the experience of the middle manager and therefore the research design had to ensure that it was their experience which was captured and analysed. This required that data was collected directly from the middle managers. However, in order to obtain a full understanding of their experience, the method also needed to allow them to explore and clarify their explanations and descriptions. This suggested that a face to face interview rather than a questionnaire would be most suitable. Focusing on the accounts of the middle managers and enabling them to consider and expand their accounts would enhance the validity of the data. That is to say, it would increase the likelihood that the data more closely reflected the beliefs and opinions of the middle managers.

However, while enhancing validity is clearly extremely important, the reliability and generalisability of the data are also important, and compromises are often necessary when attempting to optimise the strengths of the data collection method. The second criteria was therefore to optimise the reliability and generalisability while maintaining the focus on the validity of the account. The issue of generalisability was largely addressed through the
methods of generating the research sample. The issue of reliability was largely addressed through the structuring of the data collection and the data analysis.

A further important consideration was that the research method needed to be achievable given the available resources. The research was conducted by a single researcher with limited time and financial resources. Practicality was therefore a key consideration which helped to define, for example, the size of the sample.

In the light of the issues outlined above, the chosen research design was qualitative, and consisted of interviewing a sample of middle managers currently working in English higher education institutions. The interviews were semi structured and the discussion was audio recorded. The fieldwork was conducted in English higher education institutions over a period of seven months. As well as the primary research data – the recordings of the interviews – a research diary was kept and used for recording key decisions and impressions. It also provided a vehicle for reflective analysis and a historical record of the research.

3.2 Research methodology

Qualitative research,

“..has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular contexts.”
(Mason,2002, P 1; original author’s emphasis)

It seemed appropriate to place this research within the qualitative paradigm because it was focused specifically on finding out how
middle managers managed change in English higher education institutions. It would have the capacity to generate data that would enable a description to be produced that fully conveys their experience.

Although there are strengths and weaknesses associated with any methodology there are particular issues associated with qualitative methodologies that can be mitigated with the appropriate strategy. A description of the thinking concerning these strategies is important to help guide the reader enabling them to be able to evaluate the research. A key strength is the opportunity it provides for understanding and providing a rich description.

Key issues guiding the choice of method within the overall paradigm included validity, reliability and generalisability. Reliability has been defined as the stability of the findings, validity as the truthfulness of the findings, and generalisability as the transferability of findings to other settings (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001). Reliability concerns the quality of measurement and whether the same data would have been collected if the collection method was repeated. Validity concerns the research methods and whether they are appropriate for the concepts that they are trying to measure.

Reliability and validity have been refined with the development of other concepts such as dependability, credibility and trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Dependability and credibility concern the assurance that the findings are true reflections of the themes in the data. Trustworthiness has enhanced the concept of rigour and the concern is to assure that there is confidence in the accuracy of interpretations with any
findings being a true reflection of the themes in the data and the real life depiction of those individuals being researched. Methods to assure trustworthiness include the use and further investigation of negative cases, peer debriefing and verification strategies. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the process can only be assured if the criteria used to demonstrate the process are explained and issues that arose are clearly described and decisions rationalised. It is a measure of the trustworthiness of the process and the findings if the thesis enables the reader to consider the development and application of the research process. This enables the reader to make their own judgement about the relative merits of the research.

In this research resonance was also a key concept. It is within the context of generating practical findings that improve practice for the practitioner and those seeking to support them that resonance was considered as important. In essence it was hoped that the description and findings would resonate with other middle managers working in English universities. That is, the description produced would reflect the everyday work environment and the issues they face when managing change in the sector. If this can be achieved the recommendations for improving practice will have more practical value for the practitioner.

The opportunity for the reader to understand the viewpoint of the researcher was also considered to be important as it provides the orientation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2006) for the research and enables the reader to make their own judgements about the research, the findings and their trustworthiness. The viewpoint of the researcher is described in detail in Chapter One (see section 1.2 pages 3 to 8). This addresses, in part, the reliability trade off as it provides information on the viewpoint of the researcher for
the reader and indicates potential bias. This is also addressed by providing the reader with information on the development of the research design and the method of analysis.

3.3 Research methods

3.3.1 Data collection methods

A sample of middle managers was used to collect the data and there were a number of issues associated with the development of the research data collection methods that had to be addressed. On the one hand, it was important to gather data from a range of English higher education institutions. On the other hand, the information gained from them needed to offer a valid picture of their experience and views. Therefore, the method identified was individual interviews with a variety of middle managers from academic and non-academic roles. A diverse range of institutions were chosen from across the country and the interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

The choice of semi-structured interviews as the primary source of collecting data for the fieldwork was made as it enables the focus on the individual manager and provides an opportunity for them to tell their story and impart their views with their interpretations. Its main strength was the opportunity it provides for the clarification of meanings and interpretations during the interview. The emphasis was on ensuring that managers were able provide their views on issues that they were confronted with when managing change. The desire to capture social meanings (Brewer, 2005) and describe them accurately was an important objective when considering the research design. Ethnographic style interviews require either semi-structured or unstructured schedules to ensure
that the people interviewed are able to provide data with their own interpretations and reflect in an informal manner (Brewer, 2005). However, including some structure for the interview addresses some of the issues concerning reliability as there was some standardisation of questioning.

Other methods of data collection were considered prior to the selection of semi structured interviews, and these included: case studies; action research; survey; document analysis; participant observation; group interviews and focus groups; and a combination of these to form a multiple method based research. The strengths and weaknesses of these methods were assessed against the research objectives. The focus on the middle manager could have been provided by any of these methods. However, they all had particular weaknesses either in terms of the size of the group studied, the quality of the data generated, and the practicalities of carrying it out. A case study and action research were considered as they both provide opportunities to explore themes in an in depth and detailed manner although it was felt that they did not offer the opportunity for generalisability that semi structured interviews would. They may be regarded as too specific to the cases or institutions in which they are based and this may limit the resonance the findings may have with middle managers who may not associate their situations or institutions to that of the case or the action research.

A survey would have also provided data for analysis and this may have provided an opportunity for more quantitative data, thereby enabling some statistical observations to be made. Potentially this would provide an opportunity for a larger sample of middle managers to be included. This option would not, however, have
enabled meanings and interpretations to be explored and this was considered to be the prime weakness of a survey.

Document analysis was also considered, although it was felt that this would need to be conducted with another method of collection of data such as interviews. This was considered necessary as the interpretations and meanings of the language used may be unclear and this may pose problems for analysis. Another potential issue with document analysis was whether access to sensitive documents would be permitted by universities and what documents could provide data for study.

The main weakness of participant observation was its practicality. It was not practical as the resource available for the research was limited to one researcher. It is also potentially obtrusive and did not necessarily offer an opportunity to explore themes. A combination of these methods was felt to be too demanding and also not practical in terms of the resources available. Essentially, the key criteria was the need to create the opportunity to ensure interpretations were clarified and this has influenced the final research design and this suggested that semi structured interviews offered the best method to obtain data.

The use of group interviews and focus groups was considered and not pursued, as although the method would have provided data for analysis and potentially provide an insight into interpersonal communication, humour and dissent, it has some weaknesses. The method is difficult to administer for one researcher and it was considered that the method may also inhibit managers in their honesty and restrict the opportunity for them to be frank. It was felt that there could be issues of peer pressure
here and the dominant middle managers may talk over more reserved colleagues.

A completely structured approach for the interviews would have been too restrictive as it would have inhibited the opportunity to ask open questions and restrict the exploration of areas of interest raised during the interviews. A semi-structured approach ensured that each interview had a structure and a format that aided in the reliability of the method of collecting data (Kvale, 1996). The method is not merely a mechanical means to collect data as,

“Interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view”
(Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2003, P267)

The conducting of semi structured interviews that had a similar style and format addressed issues of validity and reliability as each interviewee was asked the same type of questions in a similar structure (Kvale, 1996 and Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2003). A text for the interview was drafted to aid in establishing consistency (see Appendix A). A variety of question types were included to enable rich data to be obtained, including closed questions, rating questions and open questions as they may help provide some depth and aid the analysis process. There were open questions particularly offering the managers an opportunity to identify issues with the aim of providing guidance on the utility of the support provided.

The content and structure of the interview was informed both by the literature review and the research aims and questions. In terms
of structure, the interview was divided into seven sections (See Appendix A) with each having a particular purpose. For example, particular issues for exploration concerned: the biographical background of each manager and their qualifications, training and experience; management style and method of working; awareness of methods and tools and an evaluation of their utility; preferred learning style; utility of internet tools; review of change managed by manager; their experiential learning and factors that managers need to be aware of in managing change in the English higher education sector.

The first section (section A) included questions to determine the biographical background of the middle manager. It was designed to provide some comparison information. This data was included in order to generate data to enable analysis to consider if there are any differences between managers in the sector (i.e. between academic and non academic managers) or similarities or differences in practice in different institutions. Questions were included to collect data as to the personal development of managers with an opportunity for them to reflect on its effectiveness. These questions were included to provide data that may enable recommendations to be made on the most beneficial means of improving potential performance. Associated with this aim questions were included that were designed to establish the support provided for the manager in staff development terms and whether this support had been useful in providing managers with the necessary skills to help them become more effective managers.

The second section, section B, concerned the middle managers’ reflections on their change management style and method of working. The exploration of the support available for practicing
managers was included as they were asked where they would go for help or assistance with managerial problems. This question had examples included, if required, such as line manager, work colleagues, team, etc. The literature indicated that there were a number of networks present in the sector and this included the ‘invisible college’ (Kogan and Hanney, 1999), the network associated with an academic subject, and this question was included to determine if networks were useful, active and a useful source of support. This was considered to be important together with the awareness of methods and tools. The literature indicated that there is a variety of guidance available to assist with the management of change and methods and tools for managing change such as Business Process Engineering (see, for example, Hammer and Champy, 1993) primarily aimed at the business sector.

Section C sought to ascertain the awareness of any of these methods and guides for practice, and views as to how effective these tools were in a practical situation in the higher education sector. This particular question presented middle managers with an opportunity to evaluate the tools based upon their experience and referring to them being used in a practical situation, preferably within the higher education sector.

The fourth section, section D, sought to consider the learning style favoured by the managers to enable the identification of potential recommendations for the development and improvement of support for the managers in the sector. The purpose was to consider from the middle managers’ perspective the best form of support that could be offered in terms of the future development of staff development materials and whether the internet was a potential medium for providing this support. The fifth section,
section E, provides an opportunity for a review of an internet tool to help middle managers manage change in the higher education sector.

Finally the last two sections, sections F and G, provided opportunities for the middle managers to review the experience of managing change in higher education, its effectiveness and the learning they had acquired from the experience. This part of the interview sought to explore specific changes managed by the individual, or as part of a team, with an assessment of how effectively these changes had been implemented. The focus here was not an objective review of the effectiveness of the individual as it was felt that this was not possible for the researcher to form any view on that, but on a reflective analysis by the individual on how effective they had been. A further reflective question on the factors that may be peculiar or particular to the sector was included. This was especially important for the study as the literature review indicated that there was a need to adapt any tools to the environment in which they are being applied (Hamblin, Keep and Ash, 2001). And finally an open question was included which provided an opportunity for the manager to add any other things that they would like to say that had not been covered and which they felt should have been included when considering change management and the effective management of change in the higher education sector. All the questions were designed to enable the manager to reflect on their work experience with the focus on the management of change in the sector and the methods that they had employed.

An important ethical issue which was considered prior to the start of the piloting of the interview was the development of trust to ensure a rapport was possible between the interviewer and the
interviewee (Kvale, 1996). This would ensure that both the data provided was useful and that the managers were not exploited. At a number of stages during the process it was emphasised that the content of the interview would be anonymised and a statement to this effect was sent to each manager together with a draft of the interview schedule. This promise was re-emphasised prior to the start of an interview to reassure the manager that there would be strict adherence to this policy of anonymity.

3.3.2 Development of the unit of analysis and sampling issues

The unit of analysis, defined as that being studied (Trowler, Saunders and Knight, 2003), was the manager in a university. A manager was defined as an employee of the institution that was not a member of the senior management team but had a designated role managing staff and resources as a head of department. There were a number of other possible units of analysis that could have been chosen for investigation. Senior managers could have been the focus as they would have provided some rich data. However it was decided that it would not help the primary objective of gaining an understanding of managing change from the perspective of the middle manager. The majority of available research had been directed at the owner of a company or the leader of an organisation and at senior managers rather than middle managers and it was important to reach a different constituency.

The recipients of change could have been used for the research and these may have included either the staff and/or students who had experienced a recent change. Alternatively, other important stakeholders such as the business community, local councils or the funding councils could have been used as the unit of analysis
for the research. These would also have provided useful data and may indeed be a fruitful subject of further research. The overall problem identified with the use of these units of study was that the real objective of studying the management of change from the perspective of the middle manager in English higher education would not be addressed if the focus was not on them.

A review of institutions’ websites indicated that each could have between forty and one hundred such managers depending on its size. The research resource available, one researcher, required a sample of these managers to be identified for practical purposes. In determining the sampling method there were, once again, strengths and weaknesses associated with the chosen methods. Purposive sampling was used in the choice of the institutions in which the managers’ worked. In addition to the challenge presented by the number of managers there are other issues to consider. The middle management tier of higher education institutions are made up of a mix of academic staff and support services staff. Each of these subsets comprise a mix of academic subject specialists and professional support services staff. It was determined that a ‘purposively chosen sample’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2003) of a mix of academic subject managers and support service managers was made. This would enable the research process to determine, during the analysis, if there were any differences in the manner in which these categories of staff approached change. The sample would include middle managers from different institutions from across the country. This, it was felt, would help to ensure the process could provide findings that could be potentially generalisable as a whole to the sector.

The next sampling decision taken was on the boundary of the sample. The literature review provided information on the
development of higher education in the United Kingdom (Shattock, 1996, Kogan and Hanney, 1999, Warner and Palfreyman, 1996, Watson, 2000) and offered some potential boundaries. It was determined that the focus would be on English universities. The funding regimes in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were different and it was considered that that might be a determining factor in the way change was managed. It was also thought that including them would create too large a project for one researcher. It was therefore a decision taken largely on practical grounds as the scope would then be very large and the cost of travel quite prohibitive. In terms of geography, the geographical classifications used by the HEFCE were employed and student numbers was the basis on which the size of institution was measured (using the student numbers reported by the HEFCE annual monitoring data).

The complexity of the English sector remained an issue as the sector is made up of so many different types of university and college. During the research design process it was decided to focus on universities (as identified by the HEFCE, 2006) and not include any colleges from Oxford or Cambridge. There are also considerable differences between institutions and their mission and purpose as well as their size and organisational structure. The Open University, for example, operates across the United Kingdom and has a central campus that is not used by the majority of its students. Other universities have many campuses with some being built abroad (e.g. Nottingham). There are inner city based institutions (e.g. Bristol) and purpose built self contained campuses (e.g. Essex) and institutions that have very different histories and strategies.
The categorisation of universities was also complex and the one used was that based on those used in the literature. Some writers refer to the great variety of institutions and suggest there are those that have been formed prior to the 1988 Education Reform Act and the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 as “Chartered” and those which were created by these “statutes” as “statutory” (Warner and Palfreyman, 1996) and others who suggest there are different groupings of universities, for example the sector has a number of voluntary groupings: the Russell Group; Million+; those with medical schools, the “94 Group of post Robbins universities; the south coast channel islands consortium; etc (Watson, 2000). After some careful considerations it was decided to use the HEFCE classifications (HEFCE, 2005/10) of ‘Civic’, ‘Old’ and ‘Modern’ where:

- ‘Civic’ is a city based university founded by Royal Charter in the 19th and early 20th century;
- ‘Old’ is a university created mainly in the 1950s and 1960s and prior to 1992;
- and a ‘Modern’ is a university created post 1992 but before 2000.

The categorisation is, however, complicated by the variety of groupings that have been used and their development. The categories are evolving and ever changing. The term ‘Civic’ may include different institutions for different readers as the term was originally applied to five universities and has since been used as a more general category to include more institutions. This is also true of the other two categories used as a ‘Modern’ university may be part of the self selected Million+ and some of these universities have formed a new category, on the 3 May 2006, the ‘Alliance of non-aligned universities’. Although this poses a problem for categorisation, the lack of clarity concerning categories and institutions that are included in each category does provide some
additional anonymity for the institutions involved in the research. The categories used in this research, together with this description, provides information to help the readers to be able to identify the types of institutions involved without necessarily identifying the actual institutions.

Accessing middle managers to request participation proved not to be a problem as the researcher was a member of the Association of University Administrators and of the Academic Registrars Council Administrative Systems and Processes Group and had colleagues who were willing to help. The researcher’s institution was also a member of the Southern Universities Management Services consortium and it was felt that these contacts would help provide useful contacts within universities from which to select middle managers for interview. The use of these contacts may lead to suggestions that some form of bias could influence the data and the resulting analysis. To address this possibility an additional methods of access - ‘cold calling’ was conducted. This provided some institutions and middle managers for inclusion in the sample. Generally the sector is refreshingly a very open and honest one and this was confirmed when contacts were made as middle managers proved to be very willing to discuss their experiences and their services. The experience of this research is that individuals shared experiences openly.

3.4 Fieldwork

In total, thirty one interviews in nine universities were conducted. There was a mix of academic managers and non academic managers in all but one university. Participants came from four modern, three old and two civic universities, and the geographical location and size of the universities is recorded in Table 1.
Institutions were selected based upon their classification and their location, and individual managers were chosen to provide a balance of staff by gender and by their roles and responsibilities. Managers were identified to represent academic and non-academic staff, and within the academic staff a range of subject areas were included to provide some breadth. The subject disciplines of the academic staff and the departmental responsibility of the non academic staff has been noted and is

Table 1 University type, location and size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Location (Defined By HEFCE)</th>
<th>Size (Student Nos)</th>
<th>Acade Staff</th>
<th>Non academic staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>South East</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>South West</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>South East</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>Yorkshire and Humberside</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>Yorkshire and Humberside</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
Areas that remain to have a representative institution include: North east, North west and West midlands
Student Numbers: A 0 to 12000; B 12000 to 25000; C 25000 +.

given in Tables 2 and 3 for information. It should be noted that some of the academic subject disciplines have been aggregated to ensure that the anonymity of the institution and individual is maintained.
Table 2 Academic staff subject disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Staff Nos</th>
<th>Disciplines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Marketing, Art and Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Psychology/Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Humanities and languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nursing (x2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Business (x2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Non academic staff designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Staff Nos</th>
<th>Dept Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Modern</td>
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</table>

The best means of recording the interviews was to audio tape record them. The best venue for an interview was the managers’ office. The aim was to ensure that the manager was in their managerial setting which provided them with a relaxed but formal setting. It would also offer the opportunity for their referencing any
material they may need. The minimum time required for each interview was estimated as thirty minutes. This gave an opportunity for the manager to reflect and answer the questions from a personal perspective without a need to hurry. Clearly it was important to give consideration to the needs of the managers as they are very busy people and prior notice was given of the areas to be covered and the desire to record the interview. Assurance was given that anonymity would be maintained in the notification of the request to interview (see Appendix B). Pilot interviews were conducted to ensure that the questions provided a rich description and interpretations were explored and were included as part of the database.

The aim was to transcribe the full text of the recording of an interview into a Word document within a week of the interview and make research diary notes on the day of the interview. Notes were also made during the interview, as back up just in case the recording equipment failed, and enabled non verbal communications to be included in a report of an interview. This was an important addition to add to the data obtained during the interview as it enabled non verbal signs to be captured and permitted observations to add to the interpretation of the discourse (Kvale, 1996 and Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2003). These notes have been referred to throughout each chapter of the thesis to generate more depth and accuracy.

Subsequent to the fieldwork the opportunity arose to conduct dialogues with practising managers in which the research based description of practice and the key concepts and their
Table 4 Summary of sample demographic by gender, university type, location, manager type and interview date schedule

<table>
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<th>University type</th>
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<td></td>
<td>11</td>
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</table>
relationships were reviewed. The aim was to explore whether the accounts from the fieldwork were credible to a broader group of managers and resonated with their experience. This was considered important if the recommendations were to carry credibility. These meetings were not recorded, although field notes were taken and subsequently written up into the research diary. As well as one to one, the findings were presented to groups of practicing managers. This included those given within my own institution to groups of managers, such as heads of department meetings and to a meeting of the Association of Heads of University Administration. Attendance at conferences and networking provided opportunities for further one to one meetings. This included attendance of the Association of University Administrators annual conferences in Belfast (2006), Nottingham (2007) York (2008) and Exeter (2009) and attendance at the Southern Universities Management Services Process Review Forum (2006). Further dialogues were conducted with staff and students involved in change projects that the researcher was managing within own institution. Examples include conducting review meetings of administrative activities such as registration, assessments and graduation. The stakeholders (i.e. those affected by the change) would primarily be composed of administrative and academic staff but would also include meetings with other groups such as students. These dialogues provided an opportunity to explore whether the findings had resonance and to consider the generalisability of the findings to other institutions that were not included in research sample.

3.5 Data analysis method

The task of analysis for qualitative data has been identified as seeking,
“….some concepts that help us to make sense of what is going on in the scenes documented by the data.”
(Hammersley and Atkinson, 2006, P209)

The analysis was conducted using the coding procedures developed within grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Glaser, 1978, Strauss and Corbin, 1990 and Goulding, 2002). The full text transcription of the interviews was made after the interview and each transcription was reviewed with themes in the text being assigned a code name or title. These names and titles were initially provided in a list to aid the coding procedure and this list was used when coding subsequent transcripts. The codes were then grouped which eventually lead to them being assigned into families of codes and core categories (Goulding, 2002). A core category links themes that arise from the data together and have explanatory power. Each core category is the subject of one of the analysis chapters and examples of the coding families, and their family trees are provided throughout these chapters (chapters 4 to 6) in diagrammatic form as it was found that this assisted in the interpretation process. Throughout this process constant comparisons (Goulding, 2002) were made to check for interpretations and gain further understanding of the families and themes. This meant that each theme was analysed to consider,

“….similarities with and differences to other data that have been similarly categorised. This may lead to vaguely understood categories being differentiated into several more clearly defined ones, as well as to the specification of sub-categories.”
(Hammersley and Atkinson, 2006, P209)

This potential problem was partly addressed with the use of reference to the research diary notes and notes taken during the
interviews. This provided an opportunity to provide some assurance that the themes and families were appropriately interpreted and had some validity. The emphasis was on ensuring the interpretations were correct and this was the rationale behind the choice of semi-structured interviews as it enabled clarification of themes with the manager to ensure that it was,

“….‘telling it like it is’ in members’ own terms. In this way, ‘reality’ is captured more objectively by means of greater attention to the subjective meanings of people.”
(Brewer, 2005, P107)

A key tool used during the research was the research diary and it proved particularly valuable during the data analysis and writing up stages of the research. An extract is provided to show how it was used and the method of identifying and clarifying themes (See Figure 1).

Figure 1
Research diary entry 18 December 2003

Met and interviewed…………..at……..

Issues arising from interviews,

1 Need to be flexible during interview process as managers are very busy and may be interrupted with urgent work requests – this breaks flow – requirement to reschedule and provide guidance on where they are in process and answering questions.
2 Examples of tools were requested by one interviewee – this suggests that they do not use them or have any readily available in the practice.
3 Request for definitions of terms and examples of types of change projects that research is concerned with – change projects can be anything from moving an office
or service to complete review of services or moving to new means of working.

4 In terms of ‘unique’ features of the sector, one or two interviewees highlighted how they have informed their staff or peers of the ‘peculiarities of the sector, or their institution (or both) if they were their mentor – good example of viewing advice.

5 In terms of – how do you advise or what have you learnt – question is very open ended and open to interpretation – middle managers sometimes consider staff rather than peers and pressing the point on peers is required if the findings are to be aimed at practitioners.

Overall very successful day – need to transcribe these before next set of interviews.

The coding process involved the making of notes or memos in order to aid the writing up process and provide an understanding of the emerging issues. These were then used to develop the understanding of the way in which the managers manage and their interpretation of the influences on their decision making processes. The emphasis was on the accurate description of issues and notes were made to help identify key issues, an example of a note made in the Research Diary is provided in Figure 2. The real life experiences and illustrations that were provided helped to make issues memorable and to establish understanding.

Figure 2 Research diary entry 30 January 2004

Interview ………, after interview discussed concepts of learning on the job/experience and he suggested that this was more important to him than any training he had received and, indeed, there appeared to be some frustration that courses that he had attended were not as useful as he thought they would be….they had not met his expectations……

Initially an alphabetical indexing system was used for the analysis of the data. The amount of data collected proved to be very large and the task so complex that there was little progress was made.
The process was ‘less than awe inspiring’ (Research diary notes, 14/02/04). In total the data included over 160,000 words with an average of 5100 words per interview. It was at this time that the researcher felt a particular empathy with the assertion that analysis was ‘messy’ and very ‘time consuming’ (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). There was a need to bring some order to the process as well as to the data. Qualitative analysis software was used to aid the process and initially the package formally known as NUD*IST N6 was used. This was attractive as it is a qualitative analysis tool that permitted data to be easily loaded and enabled coding structures to be developed. To aid with the writing up process and the presentation of findings another qualitative analysis package known as Atlas ti was also employed. It also offered facilities to make notes and add many forms of data and offered the opportunity of exporting diagrams of coding structures that could be used to describe the development of the study and its findings. These diagrams are provided throughout the following chapters and a sample is provided in Figure 3.

There were some risks concerning the use of assistance in the analysis of the material. For example, the use of software may assist the task but also could come to dominate the analysis. However, the data was well known by the researcher because he had transcribed it and had coded it line by line and these factors, together with the frequent navigation of the transcribed documents, gave a good understanding of the data. The software also provided a referencing system and this is used throughout the data analysis to aid the comparison of data themes and provide a guide to themes during navigation. This system uses reference numbers: for example (4) is interview 4 and this also identifies a manager who illustrates this them; (4, 76) equates to interview 4 line 76 of the transcript. The use of the software
packages enabled the navigation from codes in the transcript texts to lists of codes and themes with greater speed. Whilst coding, the ‘memo’ device was used to aid

![Coding Tree Structure]

Figure 3 Example of coding tree structure

in keeping notes and these provided, with the interview script notes and research diary notes, a rich source of data. The ‘Creative enterprise’, according to Brewer, may be enhanced with the use of software as greater data manipulation enables theory to emerge from,

“….the interweaving of ideas, categories and concepts into yet further abstractions, computer-assisted code and retrieve procedures facilitate the handling of codes and the exploration of links which later creativity on the part of the researcher can construct into theories.”

(Brewer, 2005, P118)
The process provided an opportunity to check the meaning of issues and this, in turn, enabled the coding families to be refined. The focus was to provide a better understanding of the coding structure and a framework that could be used to describe the prominent concepts. An example of the note and memo facility are provided in Figure 4.

EMO: Management is about trying....ME - 26/07/05 (0 Quotations) (Super, 26/07/05 05:55:45)
No codes
No memos
Type: Memo

If at first you do not succeed then try some other weasley way to make it happen. - will try anything..............Management is about trying.....managers use their experience and become experienced by trying to manage....but also use everything in their armoury...or at least good managers do....eg friends, partners as well as their network, qualifications etc.....

Figure 4 Example of memo facility used to aid the analysis process

Examples of the coding facility are provided in Figures 5 and 6. The codes can be searched and retrieved using the software and navigation between reference points proved to be very easy. This meant that references could be quickly reviewed and the context analysed when checking data and the meaning. This proved to be a very useful facility of the software.
3.6 Key issues concerning research methodology and methods

The process of research from considering the design and plan to writing the thesis has been evolutionary and dynamic. Throughout the research the key questions and whether methods offered an...
opportunity to answer them was used as the guiding principle for
decision-making. The focus on the manager determined the
evaluation of methods and tools. There are strengths and
weakness with any method and the research design was under
constant review to mitigate any weaknesses and take
opportunities as they arose. The overall aim was to examine how
managers manage change in the higher education sector in
England in order to produce an answer to the question: ‘how do
middle managers manage change in English universities? This
required middle managers to provide their stories and their
interpretation of themes and core categories. The opportunity has
arisen to consider the findings with other middle managers in
subsequent dialogues in presentations and meetings and this has
provided some assurance that the description of practice and the
key recommendations have resonance.

The use of semi-structured interviews has provided rich data
which has then been analysed using coding methods that have
been developed in social science research. This process was
assisted with the use of qualitative analysis software. The
transcribing of the interviews by the researcher, together with the
use of the software, provided the researcher with a good
understanding of the data, the themes within it and the core
categories. The fieldwork has been assisted by the use of a
research diary which has proved to be an important tool that has
aided the process and the analysis. The choice of research
design and the careful management of the analysis has generated
a rich account of middle managers’ practice which is the subject
of the next three chapters.
Chapter Four

Managing and ‘communication, communication, communication....’

4.1 Introduction

The next three chapters explore each of the core categories (Goulding, 2002) that have been identified in the data (see figure 7). These categories are, of course interrelated. While all the managers considered communication to be important, the way in which they communicated might vary according to their management style. Equally, the degree to which they believed the culture to be unique might determine the recipients of this communication as well as the way they communicate. However all the managers identified communication as the solution to managing change in English universities and a particular challenge as it is complex, takes time and it is difficult to get right.

Figure 7 Core Categories tree
4.2 ‘Communication, communication, communication….’

All the Managers identify communication as being of major importance in managing change in English higher education institutions. It was the most frequently occurring concept in the data as it was either directly or indirectly referred to throughout the interviews and the majority of the managers referred to it as being the most important part of any change project. This is illustrated in the prominence table provided in Table 6. This table identifies the most prominent codes (of the 38 codes identified in the data). Communication also links together a number of prominent codes and these are:

- collegiality;
- committee;
- communications strategy;
- network;
- resistance;
- treatment of people;
- understand people.

The managers recognise its importance in all these areas as it is used to gain advice and support as well as addressing issues when managing change.

A majority of the managers observe that they use communication as an important part of preparing for a change. It is important for obtaining support both prior to the start of a change project and for gaining advice on issues that might arise during implementation. It involves both formal and informal communication as managers communicate with a wide variety of individuals to help them form ideas and become more knowledgeable about the change they wish to conduct. The opportunity to seek and gain advice and support across the sector is highlighted by many managers as an
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Table 5 Prominence Table of Codes from semi structured interviews
important difference from the business sector and one that is generally celebrated and cherished.

The Majority of managers refer to stages in managing change. The development of an effective strategy for managing communications with stakeholders is viewed as important during the implementation stage. Stakeholders are defined as those people affected by the change. The management of stakeholders is referred to as being the most complex and difficult. It creates the most challenges for the managers and is very demanding in terms of time. Communication's importance and prominence in managing change effectively is evident as,

“……..the one that comes out is really…..communication and how to communicate to people and how to solicit views from people and stakeholders and communicate outcomes to those stakeholders…..”
(31, 95-97)

Indeed, effective change could only be achieved if there is,

“All around clear communication.”
(10, 340)

This last comment was made at the conclusion of one of the interviews when the managers were asked if there were any issues that they felt were important which had not been discussed. This particular manager took the opportunity to refer to the concept of communication even though she had already referred to it in great detail during the interview. She wanted to stress the importance of communication and was very passionate in her emphasis of this (Research diary notes, 18/12/03).
alone in this observation as communication is considered by all the managers to be crucial in the management of change.

4.3 Communication during planning and preparation

All the middle managers said they use communication to plan and prepare for their change projects, communicating with a variety of people to help guide them. Figure 8 has been provided to aid the understanding of the relational links between the themes associated with this process.

![Figure 8 Theme Tree for planning or preparing for change](image)

4.3.1 Personal research and assessment of needs

All the managers indicate that prior to the start of any change project they assess the support they require in order for them to be able to deliver the project. They make an assessment of their needs as they consider the change and their experience of managing similar projects. This reflective period is not a formal process and the way in which they describe their decision-making indicates that the manner in which it is conducted is influenced by
their management and preferred learning styles. For some it is important as they need to prepare for the change to ensure they are aware of issues that may arise during the change project. For others they identified the need to be knowledgeable prior to communicating with people in order to show they know what they are communicating about.

Most of the managers indicate that more support is required and sought when they have a limited knowledge of the subject of the change or they feel they may learn from additional experience or advice,

“…it will vary tremendously depending on the nature of the issue “ (13,79)

Many access information because they are trained in research methods. Unsurprisingly, a large number of the managers were academically trained managers as this reflects the make up of the staff working in the sector. Some were academics who were now working in non academic roles. However, many of the non-academically trained managers also refer to this requirement as important as they recognise there is a need to be well informed about the issues involved in any change before embarking on implementation.

For all the managers, communication forms an important part of this preliminary stage. They say they will discuss issues with colleagues, their line manager, friends and spouses. Some conduct some personal research via the internet or resort to books or other sources of information, while many will access professional networks for assistance. For many, much of this personal research also involves communication. A few of the
managers use the internet or web for general searches for information. They conduct specific searches of other institutions’ websites when searching for good practice advice. This also provides contact details of individuals or companies for advice. An example would be where a manager accesses another institutions’ curricula information when they are reviewing the academic portfolio offered by their department. However, a minority of the managers said that the use of the internet was not one they had considered using and some of these said that they may use the medium now the idea had been given to them. In a later dialogue with middle managers (conducted at the AUA Annual Conference in April 2007 and recorded in the Research diary notes, 4/4/07) more managers said they were using the internet than was indicated in the semi structured interviews and this may illustrate the evolving nature of the working environment and of practice.

Many of the managers refer to accessing useful literature by conducting database searches using their university learning resources facilities. This was noted as time consuming and not used by all of the managers. One manager’s imaginative use of his time includes reviewing literature during his own time and he refers to it as valuable toilet reading matter! This private and personal form of accessing information provides, as with the use of other media such as the internet, an opportunity for managers to gain information without displaying their lack of knowledge and this is, for some, very important. Others, however, indicate that they have not the time to conduct such an activity. One manager in particular is illustrative of this problem. He went so far as to suggest he would love to have the time to be able to work more effectively with the opportunity to prepare more and read management books that may help him. This was not possible, he
said, due to the pressures and demands of work. He seemed both frustrated at this and yet remained highly motivated and clearly focused. This was not presenting problems for him as he was enjoying his work and primarily used his common sense to guide him. Indeed he said he was so busy that he may never have the time to read any management books (Research diary notes, 5/5/04).

At the same time as conducting personal research, managers consider the assistance they may need from people and this involves communication. This assistance can be accessed using formal and informal means and consists of communicating with a range of people including:

- stakeholders;
- colleagues within the department;
- colleagues within the university;
- their line manager;
- colleagues in other universities;
- people outside the university sector.

In the literature, Ventris (2004), a business practitioner reflecting on her experience, considers managing change as a journey with the manager of change as a ‘pilot’. She continues with this analogy with the recommendation that the ‘pilot’ requires a crew and a destination that may be described in a colour brochure. A key task for the ‘pilot’ is to assess what will motivate the passengers. The managers interviewed know this is important and this forms the rationale for their preparation and their communicate strategy. However, the variety of people they communicate with is not highlighted in the literature as it primarily focuses on the people affected by the change rather than those that may assist guide those managing the change.
4.3.2 Stakeholders

The majority of the managers identified staff and students as the primary stakeholders in the most of the change projects they conduct. There are other stakeholders, however, and these include the Government and contractors. Many of the managers identify the challenges presented by the complexity of the stakeholders that have interests in the higher education sector and this is explored in more detail in the next chapter. An example of managing the exercise is provided in chapter six by a manager who reviewed the curriculum change that he was managing. The involvement and engagement with these individuals, groups or entities, is considered to be very important by all of the managers. Some managers communicate with stakeholders during the planning and preparation stage of a change project as well as the implementation stage. They say generally that they discuss the associated issues in an unstructured manner and do not have a process they follow. However, there are dominant and consistent messages. Communication with stakeholders has to be carefully thought through prior to embarking on the exercise. It is an important part of the planning and implementation stages of a change project and the method employed is dependent on the style and experience of the individual manager.

4.3.3 Communication with colleagues in the department

The majority of the managers discuss changes with their own staff, or their peers, within a department. They recognise existing expertise within the department, which they generally respected. Associated with the issue of communication with colleagues within the department is the level of formality in which it is conducted. There are managers who refer to such communication as being
very formal in nature with the use of regular team meetings as one form of accessing such support. These regular team meetings take place where managing the service is concerned and a few of the managers believe that general management is all about change and its management. They identify this aspect of their responsibilities as being part of the everyday management style for the sector. It is made a regular feature of the agenda of meetings. The use of formal meetings gives a structured approach to planning, and implementation, and proves to be very supportive and successful for the managers’ who speak very favourably of them.

An example of a very formal, and structured, approach to communicating with colleagues was provided by one manager. This individual had developed a questionnaire, with a colleague, at an early stage in a change project. The idea, he said, was to gain the views of staff and then use them during the consultation process later in the project. He added that a subsequent change project, within the same department to update the original change, had not used the same methodology. This project, he said, was more top down and less consultative which lead to initial resentment. His reflections on the manner of managing was,

“I think that in these cases everybody has to resort to what their natural style is….and my natural style is getting things done through relationships….being friends and friendly to people….knowing which friends might become useful allies in the future and just being amiable and not too dictatorial”
(31, 155-159)
There is a link here with management style as different managers will employ different styles and this is explored in more detail in chapter six.

The use of less formal means of communicating with colleagues is also evident. Some of the managers said that they communicate in a style that involves unplanned conversations and unstructured discussions. Meetings are considered to be too formal and structured by these managers as they feel they may inhibit communication. These managers use informal occasions where they will involve people in an unstructured and casual manner to gain information and support for their projects. These take place during social occasions and settings such as over drinks in a public house at lunchtime or after work. This is, for some, described as the preliminary or planning stage and would invariably take place prior to any formal method of communicating. As well as being an important part of the preliminary process, it is also useful during the implementation stage as it becomes part of the problem solving process which may have to deal with unforeseen problems.

All the managers clearly use the resources that are available to them in communicating and many will use innovative methods to aid in developing ideas and supporting their communication strategies. An example provided was where a manager regularly used illustrations as he resorted to drawing pictures and providing diagrams. This was viewed as an aid to improve understanding and the identification of issues for the manager and had proved valuable when he dealt with the stakeholders involved in the change. Some of the pictures he then used during the implementation phase to aid in communicating to stakeholders. Many of the managers therefore are very creative and use all the
resources that they have available. Not all, however, will have opportunity to use such skills and it may not suit their style to use them.

The majority of the managers suggest that they have formed relationships which have been established within their departments that have proved to be beneficial. These have developed over time as they have found the information and support that has been provided to be of some use on particular projects. The relationships can be formal and informal in nature. A good example of a formal arrangement is where the manager works in a department or school where,

“……we have this structure in this school with the general manager and the dean which I think works quite well…..so I can go to the Dean if it is an academic matter and the general manager if it is about who gets paid what….and I think that division is quite useful actually…..”

(29, 87-91)

An example of an informal arrangement was provided by one manager where he said a work colleague provides the support and information in an unstructured manner. The support is sought whenever required. The managers that said they use structured and unstructured relationships and these may be in formal and informal settings for communication. This appears to depend on the style of the manager and the institution.

4.3.4 Communication with colleagues within the institution

Many of the managers also sound out ideas with colleagues or peers within their own institution but outside their department. This
involves them in contacting individuals they trust to obtain views and inputs and these can be in any direction and at any level. Some of these managers are very specific about this and use a wide variety of working colleagues including library assistants or security guards as well as peer group colleagues. They communicate by just picking up the phone and asking for information even, they say, on a silly problem in an informal manner. Using this form of support is simple and undemanding as,

“… it is relatively easy for me to ring up the personnel director for example and say what is the issue about this or that or I could go and see the registrar for example…..”
(2, 94-96)

The approach to a colleague who is perceived to be an expert within the university is also identified by many managers. This expert may be identified by the manager from their experience of working in that university or the expert’s reputation within that institution.

Once again, there were some of the managers who identified their institutions as having very formal means to enable consultation to take place. An example provided was in the form of regular meetings with managers across their university. Some of the managers referred to regular heads of department group meetings and these cited examples of having raised issues and obtaining support and advice in a very positive manner. There were those who said that they regularly met with groups of staff within their institutions. One manager indicated that he considered that this form of support had proved very useful initially but it had proved, over time, to be a fairly static group and got a little bit ‘comfy’. Although supportive, it was not sufficiently task focused enough
for him. This was one of the few comments made that indicates there is a potential problem with such formal support networks. It illustrates the individuality of needs and methods of managers. Each manager may require advice and support, although they would access it according to their style and preferred learning methods. They would then evaluate it in what appeared to be an individual and subjective manner. Formal methods of providing support and advice may be made available to managers by an institution or the sector, although the usefulness for the individual can, however, be affected by the style and preferred methods of that individual.

Another more formal method of gaining support described by some of the managers is where their institutions have a mentoring system. This appears to be most useful for the manager when they had just started working in an institution or commenced a new role. When available, managers find this service particularly helpful in obtaining advice and support about the culture and style of the new institution and in discovering the location of other sources of help and assistance within the university. A manager jokingly refers to the lack of a formal office for support as,

“There is not a specific place to go to here at this university.....there is not a change management office......(laughs)......so I guess....the way I tend to do is to talk to a few trusted colleagues both within the department and outside the department.....the university is quite small so you get to know lots of people very quickly and I have been here fourteen years now so I know everybody that there is to know pretty much....”

(27, 87-92)
The research indicates, however, that if such an office existed some managers would not use it as most of the managers access the support they have found to be useful.

### 4.3.5 Communication with the line manager

Many of the managers sat they discuss issues at an early stage with their line manager and make use of this assistance both formally and informally. Formal processes mentioned included regular meetings, either individually or collectively with colleagues. The agenda for these meetings is usually flexible enough for them to raise issues they wish to be discussed. Some refer to accessing this support early in their career and the seeking of help in gaining an understanding of the system or how to get things resolved and assessing what a manager could do and may not do. This institutional ‘street wise’ advice and the gaining of an understanding of the principles behind issues and projects was common and aids the development of their ideas and the projects. This advice also provides a better understanding of the culture of the institution and the sector. It also provides the managers that access it with guidance on the institution’s decision making processes.

The majority of the managers agree that their line manager has the experience and the trust to enable this communication to take place. Some refer to their line manager as being in their role before them and so their knowledge and experience in the post proves to be useful. Many of the managers have had a positive experience of accessing their line manager for support and once this has occurred they say that they continue communicating in this way. In addition, many of the managers access their line manager because they know he or she have worked in another
institution and may have had experience of an issue or project in that institution. This provides a fresh approach to any problem in their institution.

The positive experience of using the line manager is not, however, common to all the managers. There are those who say that they will not communicate with their line manager in this way, and just start any project without accessing this support mechanism. Some of the reasons identified for this included: those who say that they have more experience than their line manager; and those who say their line managers want them to get on with the task. They have developed a management style and method of working that excludes accessing support from their line manager and this appears to be based on their experience and interactions with their line manager.

4.3.6 Communication with colleagues in other universities

Nearly all of the managers identify a feature of the higher education sector that is not evident in the business sector. This is the opportunity to contact and consult in an open manner with peers and colleagues who work for their competitors. They note that this is a refreshing and surprising feature of the sector. Some of them indicate that they regularly seek support from their spouses who work in industry and say that they are amazed about the naivety of this openness as it does not exist in the business or commercial sectors. The lack of commercial confidence may be because of the nature of academia as,

“.........we are colleagues and we are very willing to say that this is an issue that I have dealt with and this is perhaps because we are
academics and we are keen to share our results.”

(15, 296-298)

Although the sector is becoming more business like and professionalized one manager said she has,

“…. a very good network and relationship with colleagues in similar roles in other universities and for many things I would consider their experience to be relevant as well….so I would talk to people really.”

(26,139-142)

She said that she has many opportunities to access colleagues across institutions within the sector. As well as a network of like minded link officers in each institution she referred to a well organised network of education liaison officers which was over 400 strong. She said that there was a wealth of experience among its members. Although many had limited managerial experience, it had some very long serving members from a range of institutions who provided a valuable sounding board and source of ideas. She said that this network also provided access to a national mail base and administration that scheduled formal regional and national meetings with a national committee. This gave her many opportunities to talk to people and pursue ideas. She refers to ‘talking down the ladder’ to staff within her department as this enabled contact with other networks of staff. This gave her access to more ideas and expert opinion. This was not unique among those interviewed, as many refer to accessing colleagues via formal networks or on an individual basis for information. Other managers refer to access being sought in a very informal open question method where a general enquiry may have been made via email to a network. Many examples of formal networks are
referred to and these include:

- Academic Registrars Council;
- Association of University Administrators;
- Association of Heads of University Administration;
- learning support professionals;
- finance directors;
- librarians;
- information technology support groups;
- University and Colleges Information Systems Association;
- student record officers;
- academic subject groups;
- academic heads and professors of subject groups;
- Association of Business Schools.

Such networks are used as a rich source of professional information where it has proved very supportive due to the,

‘…broad range of capabilities and experiences among the group.’

(17, 131)

A network that was less in evidence in the managers’ interviews was a professional academic managers’ network with supporting administration. This would provide a practice based association for them with the opportunity for meetings and an email mail base. If this was to be established, the academic managers said they could use it to gain advice and share good practice as those that were available for the Association of University Administrators or the Academic Registrars Council. This type of network may aid the development of the profession and help provide guidance on practice.
Once again the access to, and the utility of, networks appears to depend on the individual’s management or preferred learning style. Some are active members while others are more passive members. Access to a mail base enables both of these styles to be used. Some of the managers refer to their use of a mail base in a very passive sense as they tend to read rather than contribute but still find it useful to discover what is going on in the sector. The use of the managers’ staffs’ access to networks is also dependent on their style of management. Many of the managers consider that wisdom does not solely reside with them and they or their staff should consult with others for ideas and support.

A note of caution was mentioned by one manager when assessing the usefulness of advice and support that was available across the sector. He suggested that although it may be communicated that a particular university had changed a service or introduced change in a particularly effective way it may prove to be different when people visit the institution. The revelation was that,

“….. it is not quite how it is presented and no one has got to the holy grail on these things….”

(22, 111-114)

Many of the managers were also aware that advice would be sought from them by their counterparts and they said that they were open to providing it.

The majority of managers refer to the opportunities that networks provided. They provide access to a wide variety of experiences
from a broad spectrum of types of institutions. As well as the formal networks, managers may have a more personal network outside the institution from which they gain support. This network is used as part of their process of managing on a regular basis rather than one off informal irregular contacts with individuals or experts. The start and development of a network may be similar to that of contacting an individual. A call may be made to a colleague in a similar position in a neighbouring institution asking for assistance. A manager referred to an example of where he had met the individual previously and he had proved open and willing to share experiences in this preliminary discussion. This person was then added to the individual’s network. Another manager accessed colleagues from institutions he had previously worked in to gain information and support. Some managers have joined professional networks as their role had provided them with an opportunity to be part of such a source of assistance and help and, having found them to be useful, used them actively. Once again, the use and effectiveness of such networks and assistance, appears to be dependent on the experience, management style and preferred learning style of the individual, although in general it appears the use and accessibility of networks is an important part of a managers’ support in the higher education sector. This was acknowledged during the dialogue meetings held with managers (Research diary notes, 23/2/06 and 10/11/06).

The use of networks as a source of support was not widely referred to in the business literature, although it is referred to in the literature on higher education but only in the context of academic loyalty and the invisible college (see for example, and Kogan and Hanney, 1999). From the perspective of academic loyalty it is identified as a potential problem in managing change.
An individual may not see the institution as their primary home or motivator, this may be their subject. Some commentators have, however, written favourably of this peculiarity of higher education management culture. When writing on the administrative manager, and of a fellow researcher, Duke (2002), it was suggested that this concept of a knowledge community beyond the borders of their own institution (Whitchurch, 2004) provided higher education staff with access to succour and support. The managers who use and reflected upon the experience suggested that these networks were indeed very useful. They were very positive about the benefits they receive from them and the opportunities they offer to help with their development in terms of their management and the projects they were working on.

4.3.7 Communication with colleagues outside the higher education sector

As well as communicating with colleagues within the university sector, some of the managers contact people outside the sector in, for example, the business community. These colleagues included a variety of sources, once again depending on the manager and their style, including:

- suppliers, commercial providers and professionals;
- friends and spouses;
- and perceived experts.

The accessing of support from suppliers and commercial providers may also depend upon opportunity and resourcefulness. One manager gave a good example here as he had developed this method of working because, he said, it formed part of the method of working for his profession. He had found it to be a rewarding method of working. He worked in information
technology and management information systems. The accessing of software suppliers and commercial organisations was part of his working style and he used such a support service to establish solutions to problems; general advice and support. However this was a not an isolated reflection, nor was it unique to information technology staff, as managers who work in other areas referred to accessing professionals outside of the higher education sector. Another manager, who worked in university admissions, suggested she would contact employers to seek advice and support.

A group of the managers that were engaged in providing professional education for the National Health Service said they would contact professionals within the health trusts to develop the curriculum and ensure that the provision of learning and teaching was that which was required from the service. Those associated with the provision of nursing and midwifery training referred to contact with colleagues in the health profession. This may include, for example, mental health experts, as well as colleagues within the contracting authorities (that is those who have commissioned the training in the form of educational contracts.). Another of the managers, who was not associated with the Health Service, had developed, through the provision of training contracts in management, a number of corporate sector contacts with whom he consulted depending on the issue. He said that he may use these contacts to assess the validity of an issue during the development of a training programme. These contacts were made in both a formal and informal manner.

One manager referred to his role as trustee of two charities and he used contacts and experience from these organisations to help inform his management style and decision making. This innovative
method of accessing support and providing advice illustrates the
diverse and creative methods used by many managers to provide
themselves with access to information and advice. Several of the
managers refer to accessing friends or spouses for support. In
terms of spouses some refer to the fact they had professionally
qualified spouses and that they talk to them about issues and
projects, thereby obtaining free expert opinion. Examples provided
by some of the managers were where their spouses were
professionally qualified such as chartered accountants and those
that have professional degrees. These managers added that they
had developed interests in these subject areas over time as well.
One manager said his spouse was an organisational
anthropologist who had given lots of free consultancy over the
years, although the manager jokingly suggested that he may have
to start paying for this service soon. Many of the managers also
refer to friends offering help and assistance and taking advantage
of this in very informal settings such as fishing trips. They talk over
issues with friends who worked in industry and this may then offer
a non higher education perspective on issues and projects.

A minority of the managers also refer to action learning groups in
which they had become active participants during their own staff
development. These groups, they said, provide a useful source of
advice and support that is not necessarily the perspective of the
university sector. A good example was where a manager identified
this group as being very useful early on in their management
career and described it as becoming less active as a source of
assistance as time passed. Another example was a group,
referred to by another manager, that was open to women only and
this had proved particularly useful as the members could discuss
gender and management issues and support each other actively
through discussion of associated issues.
Some of the managers identified experts to contact prior to the start of any change project. The distinction between a person who is contacted on a regular basis and an expert is blurred. Many of the managers use the term ‘expert’ for colleagues within their department, and some for their spouses or their line manager. The majority identify an expert as a person or group that they would contact for a particular project as the information demands are unique to it. Many identify a particular individual or group of people within their university or externally as this expert and then actively seek their advice prior to embarking on a project. The identification of the ‘expert’ is made on the basis of a known expertise such as a database expert or the basis of their position within an organisation such as that person being a business development staff member. The decision to communicate, it is said by many who use this method, appears to depend on the issue and the knowledge base of the individual manager. If they were not sure about an issue then they seek advice from such an ‘expert’. The accessing of advice from an ‘expert’ appears, in some cases, to be speculative as the manager may not have experience of interacting with the individual but has had a positive experience of obtaining useful information from such sources in the past. Internal ‘experts’, those within the university in which the manager works, are contacted informally or formally as many use casual conversations to assess the value of the communication prior to any formal process.

Managers who said they use this form of support infer that they regularly engage with their contacts for advice and support. A number refer to the staff development unit in their institution for advice, or an individual within such a unit who is clearly identified as an expert in supporting change or is aware of potential experts
within or outside of the institution who may be able to help. The individual may also be a person whom the manager can bounce some ideas off, as well as someone able to put them in touch with someone who can help. This repository of knowledge of where to obtain further expert advice is referred to very positively. The opportunity to discuss the potential impact of changes to employee contracts is also an important precursor to embarking on change projects, as identified by a number of managers. This may be conducted in a preliminary discussion or at the same time as the discussion on the identification of possible experts for more advice.

An example of the resourcefulness and individuality of managers’ working style is where a manager said that he always accessed a professional support mechanism which worked effectively for him and that came from his therapeutic profession. He used,

“.. a consultant arrangement with a therapist ..... who has institutional dynamics as part of their brief. So probably the institute of recruitment analysis”.
(7, 82-85)

He used his professional experience to establish a support system for himself and for his project and referred to the use of his line manager as complementing the support he receives from his therapist. The line manager provides the ‘streetwise how you do it bit’ (7, 87). The use of the therapist and the expertise the manager had in therapy gave him an opportunity to gain an understanding of what might be going on for the people affected by the change. He said that the advantageous use of such insights to provide support and direction for the change was important for him. He
believed that this helped him identify the support required for the change and provided a greater opportunity for the successful fulfilment of the change project. This was not a unique case among the sample as other managers, who have particular skills or work expertise, use these to direct change projects or access support. Another manager, who was a research oriented academic, said that he used his research skills and research network to facilitate his awareness of issues and to help him in the management of change.

Although those managers who said they use advice and support from outside the sector were enthusiastic about it as an additional source of help, there was one manager who added there were drawbacks. He referred to a particular experience in emotive language, as he suggested that the expert was entirely useless but added that he had introduced him and his staff to a very helpful tool, Business Process Reengineering. This, he said, had the benefit of ‘decomposing processes into little boxes’ (6, 98). Although he described the terms used as unhelpful, the tool had proved very useful and there was a general acceptance by his staff that this new way of looking at things was particularly interesting and refreshing. The outcome from this experience, however, was not particularly successful in a practical sense. He said that this tool was inappropriately used for an organisational issue and there was a delay before that could be changed and progress made. He observed that the expert, a consultant, was brought in prior to the change on the initiative of his line manager and this intervention from above appeared to have a negative effect on the attitude of the manager and his staff. The use of the term consultant was also a potentially limiting factor as he inferred, in his tone and manner, that he did not respect the expertise or status of such an individual (Research diary notes,
15/12/03.). This may have affected the decision not to use the expert’s advice. The people seeking to support managers could usefully use some of this manager’s experiences to help develop support that may address some of the issues here. This could involve more sensitive use of experts and their tools.

The challenge facing those wishing to support managers is evident. Managers are very independent having their own perspective on issues and this should be addressed when trying to support them. This is illustrated by those managers who offer a very positive view of the usefulness of accessing external experts from other sectors. An example was provided by one manager where the use of a guest speaker from a leading bank whose experience was required because he was an expert in mergers. He was invited as part of the planning for a merger of departments in the University. The learning achieved from this experience indicated the need for greater honesty at every level of communication. The manager spoke very positively of the use of the expert’s experience although he added that this honesty was not always possible as there may be politics involved.

4.4 Communication during the implementation of change

Most of the managers refer to the decision to use particular communication methods, or strategies, to support the development and implementation of a change project. They identify the need to use a consultative and inclusive strategy as important as it is an integral part of the organisational culture of the higher education sector and that of their individual institutions. Many say that they involve key stakeholders in the development of the change. The methods of engaging with the key stakeholders are both formal and informal as they use the structures that are
available in their institutions and some managers continue to operate outside these structures by resolving issues that arise informally.

It appears, once again, that it depends on the subject of the change and the style of management that the individual is most comfortable with as to the methods they employ and the scale of engagement. There are issues evident in the reflections that make general guidance problematic. This is illustrated by the determination of the strategy to be adopted being influenced by a number of variables. One such variable is the style and culture of the institution in which the individuals work. To add to the challenge of determining a management style that is the most effective for guidance there are managers who indicate that a particular style may not suit them and an effective style may not work in every case. Another potential variable that is in evidence in the sector concerns the training and learning a manager has received during their development. The managers use their training and experiential learning on change management when considering strategy. The learning that has indicated the need to communicate to stakeholders throughout a change project is particularly relevant. Experienced managers view such engagement as critical and this may determine the strategy rather than the style and culture of the institution in which they work.

There are issues in using a consultative and inclusive strategy. It is very demanding of time. The managers that have experience of using such a process are concerned that consultation implies that they would respond to each issue that is raised and this poses problems. The consultation also may raise too many issues and these may conflict with each other. This can increase the complexity of the project. Occasionally these factors dissuade
some of the managers from embarking on such a demanding all-inclusive consultative exercise. Once again the experience and style of the manager appears to influence them. They may opt for a more manageable smaller scale strategy. This is an approach adopted by many, although the type and scope of project also affects the scale of strategy that is employed. The consultative approach is adopted where there is an opportunity and requirement to consult. The types of projects that this involves included reviews of curriculum and academic structures. The managers also refer to the use of this method in small change projects such as accommodation moves, although when it has been employed it may be that they were only consulting about room layout and not about more fundamental choices.

Some of the managers also refer to change projects where they have managed the change by informing the stakeholders about the change without really using their input to develop the project. They refer to a strategy of keeping the stakeholders informed throughout the life of the project and this is acknowledged as an important factor in the success of the project. One rationale for using this type of approach is the lack of opportunity to affect the change that is being adopted. It still enables the manager to address resistance to the project by discussing the change and the need for the change. The writers on change who suggest guidelines for managing change (see, for example Kotter and Cohen, 2002) and the change management methodologists (see, for example, Hammer and Champy, 1993, and Hammer 1996) would not advise that this non consultative method be adopted as it would not address the resistance associated with change and creates problems for the general acceptance of the change. The managers acknowledge this issue but suggest that this is not
possible to fully consult in every change project. The idea that all stakeholders can be convinced of the value of a change is not viewed as practical or achievable. Some stakeholders will always resist change and this is an issue that needs to be accepted by the organisation and the manager. The managers believe that these stakeholders will be faced, ultimately, with the stark reality that the change is necessary, that they either will accept it or not and may then either need to leave or be given a role which is non essential. A less consultative and inclusive strategy is still time consuming but not as time consuming as a completely inclusive consultative communication one. It ensures that the change is effected and issues are addressed. The types of projects that were provided as examples here were mainly around restructuring of departments and accommodation moves.

However, there were two managers who offered a contrasting perspective and rejected an inclusive strategy. One manager referred to a project that took place some years ago and suggested that such a methodology could not be employed in the current working environment. The other suggested that he was inclined towards adopting this methodology and strategy as the current vogue of including stakeholders in the change he considered was not necessary, took up too much time and raised expectations unnecessarily. After further discussion it became apparent that the views expressed were based on a certain amount of exasperation on the part of the manager. The work and time taken by him to ensure that consultation had been conducted and for people to feel empowered had not in his view warranted the effort as the change had occurred. This could have been achieved with a more direct style of management, in his view. He was referring to a project that was delivered in his department alone and he believed that a strategy of a more directive style may
not be the most appropriate for a change project which is broader in scale and operates across the institution, affecting staff outside of his immediate department. This manager, still firmly believed that management was a lifelong learning experience reflecting on his experience, he believed that his role was to understand the people he managed. He also had to understand the people who managed him. This, he suggested, would enable him to understand motivational factors and then interpret the rationale for change. He could then provide some structured approach for the project to ensure that some order was maintained. The language used by this manager indicates that his management style is based on the experience he has gained. His reflections indicate that he really is trying to prevent some form of anarchy from destroying the equilibrium of the unit. He also is striving to provide some guidance for the staff to ensure that there is no breakdown or major upheaval. This is typical of some of the emotive language used when describing change as many managers consider their role to be one who interprets the change and supports the staff through transitions.

The managers are involved in lifelong learning from their experiences. They conclude that there is not a right way of managing communication and that the only real method is to provide strong leadership and continue to work at it. This is supported by my subsequent dialogues with managers, as,

“No matter how much you think you’ve communicated, its’ never enough!”
(Research diary, 4/4/07)

A manager needs to concentrate on,
“Communication, communication, communication.....is the key!
Involve everyone as much as possible”
(Research diary, 4/4/07)

The literature that provides guidelines for managing change based upon research in the business sector in the United States (see, for example, Kotter and Cohen, 2002) and from United Kingdom practitioner’s reflections in the business sector (see, for example, Ventris, 2004) indicate that communication is important. The managers generally support this, although there is some frustration at the time and energy commitment required.

The decision to adopt an inclusive communication strategy is not straightforward. The nature of organisation and management in the higher education sector has a bearing on this decision making process as managers refer to the collegiate organisational culture which requires a fully consultative approach to be adopted. They also refer to the lack of a clear line management structure for academic departments as a key determinant in choosing a consultative communication strategy. The lack of managerial control of academic staff demanded that such staff have to be widely and actively consulted about any proposed change. Many managers add that the need for ‘buy in’ is important in this area as, without it, staff can become disruptive. However, some managers adopt a managed approach within this style. The majority of the managers are aware that staff do things because they have decided to do it and not because it is imposed upon them. This style and way of working may be more evident in some institutions than in others and most of the managers consider that it depends on the style of management currently in vogue in the institution.
4.5 The evaluation of communication strategies

All the managers believe the evaluation of the success of any project and the associated communication strategy is problematic. Many say that it cannot be measured in an objective manner and stakeholders in a change project will have a variety of personal opinions as to the merits of a project and the associated communications. The most prevalent view, in terms of success criteria for change projects, was that if the project achieved the majority of its stated aims it was deemed a successful project. However, some managers said this may not be the accepted view of all the stakeholders involved in the project. Some of the stakeholders may even claim that the project has not been successfully implemented at all. This judgement, a failure of the project, would be made as the stakeholders may consider that the project did not achieve all its stated aims and, in particular, meet their expectations and the communications concerning the project were not managed very well.

Nevertheless the majority of the managers identified a number of concepts that were associated with an effective communications strategy and these are listed in Figure 9.
4.5.1 Requirement for communication strategy

The need to manage resistance to change is widely understood by the managers. It is the main reason why they adopt a communication strategy that is inclusive. One manager provided a useful example of how he had managed resistance to change by using his experience of managing and, in particular, managing communication strategies around change. He talked about a change project that involved the creation of a one stop shop advice and service counter. He had already used communication prior to the implementation phase of the project to gain information and advice to inform his strategy development and this had included conducting personal research. During the implementation stage of the change project’s aim was misinterpreted by some senior staff to mean that they would be transferring to operate counters. This misinterpretation posed a potential threat to the successful implementation of the project. The manager had not anticipated this lack of understanding and he had had to inform the staff that this was not the case. The requirement to allay fears through one to one or group meetings was identified and
commenced. The learning this provided to the manager was that communication with stakeholders was required from an early stage and this had to be two way throughout the project. He has learnt from this experience and he has adjusted his style accordingly.

Another example of such learning from experience include some of the managers who used communication to identify the herd leader, ‘awkward squad’ or most vocal opponent to proposed change during a project (see also Learning to manage in the English higher education sector, chapter six). Once this is complete the strategy used is then for the manager, and this may include some of the staff, to convince that person, or persons, of the need to change. Managers said that following this it was often the case that this person, or people, would lead the other staff along to help accept the change. It helps to ensure that the right people are on board with the recognition that some people will not come on board. Managers are aware that managing those people can be difficult. Paradoxically, some managers had found that the vocal anti change staff actually had proved to help implement change as they invariably had been spoken to by the other staff, they were rounded upon by them in the end. However, there are instances where staff cannot be convinced of the need to change. One manager said that if that person was senior, then the best method of dealing with them was to identify an escape route, particularly if they were close to retirement. It was better for those people to leave rather than having them sit there resentful.

There is a great deal of literature that has focused on resistance to change and its management. There are tools that have been developed to assess the resistance to change (see, for example, Force Field Analysis, Lewin, 1952 and the TROPICS test,
McCalman and Paton, 1992). There are methods that have been developed to ensure that resistance to change is addressed by the stakeholders being involved in the development of change (see, for example, Business Process Re-engineering, Hammer and Champy, 1993). Change management guidelines also include steps to overcome resistance (see, for example, Kotter and Cohen, 2002). A minority of the managers refer to the literature although there were only a few managers who had had experience of using a tool or method to help with a change project. They said that they had not used the tools as anything other than an aid. That is they were not used as the method to effect the change and many said that if they were used they had been adapted for purpose. They had not then conducted a meaningful evaluation of the tools for managing change and not then provided guidance for other managers concerning their experience. They had kept this to themselves and it was very individualistic in approach.

4.5.2 Management of constituencies

Most of the managers see that the requirement to consult with a number of constituencies may mean that all the real benefits of a particular change may never be realised. There may have to be compromises made to ensure that some of the constituencies are signed up for the project. An observation made by one of the managers indicates this is particular problem for the higher education sector,

“What I would say, and this applies equally to myself and other university change programmes, is first of all we are a bit reticent about what we want the outcomes and possible benefits to become. We sell an idea to different constitutions and some of the
benefits of what we want to sell may not be palatable to some of the constituencies. And the open nature of the university makes it difficult to be very specific in the way you might be in another organisation. “

(8, 328-334)

This manager reflected that the university put a lot of effort into the process of consultation and added that this may mean that a change may not have been as effective as it could have been. The main effort was on the process rather than effecting and supporting the fulfilment of a change. Experience had proved, to this manager, that there was a need to ensure some resource was available at the end of the implementation of the change in order to ‘mop up’ undesirable outcomes. He added,

“At the end of the day we get the change that we want and it probably has been more painful and a lot more costly than it could have been and maybe we only get only 80% of what we really wanted and those are kind of some of the compromises that happen in the institution in the management.”

(8, 340-343)

The importance and the difficulties associated with an all inclusive communication strategy is also evident in the literature on managing in higher education,

“Overall, the importance of communication in its widest sense must be stressed.”

(Middlehurst, 2004, P85)

Middlehurst adds that one of the difficulties was the requirement to include all groups and address their culture and language and
respond accordingly. This was to ensure that the communication was effective and not consultation just because that is what you have to do. However, the provision of advice on how to manage this process was not evident in the literature for a manager.

4.5.3 Need for honesty

Most of the managers identify the requirement for honesty in communications with the people affected by the change. This is also highlighted as potentially problematic when there are competing constituencies. These managers note the difficulty in managing this part of the process as the managers are aware that change can be frightening and scary for people. The use of emotive language here is common and some of them are uneasy when they reflect on these particular aspects of managing change. Their unease principally concerns the difficulties associated with managing people and their feelings. They say that they cannot always be truly honest to all the constituencies throughout the life of a project. This dilemma was referred to by one manager and presented particular problems when considering communications and managing,

“….. the thing that frightens people most is not knowing…..even if they do not like what is going to happen….they can cope with it better if they know what they have to cope with….so I always try to be as honest as I can and as up front as possible…..and then to get people to work with it and to influence the change….in a positive way.”
(14, 248-253)

This is a concept that was developed further by another manager who added that communication involves,
“….keeping people informed what the changes are and why they are being introduced…..and I think if people can see a reason why it is being introduced even if it is an external one they are likely to make it work….professionalism will come through….”

(16, 255-259)

He concluded that,

“….I think your average academic will respond to that…..it is just letting people know what the change is and why it is being introduced.”

(16, 259-263)

Associated with honesty is the need for rumour management and this is seen as being an issue that effective communication helps to address. Change is disconcerting and unsettling for people and managers identify staff as people who may gossip and ‘get the wrong end of the stick’ if communication is not carefully managed and monitored. This is a key issue for some of the managers as they develop a communication strategy that specifically addressed potential rumours and their associated issues. A good and well managed strategy was one that provides an opportunity for the manager to put the case for the change and confront the rumours in an open manner. This, ideally, is an aim that is outlined early and continued throughout the life of a project. The need to establish a measure of control and management is important. This enables stakeholders’ needs to be met or, at the very least, their views are seen to be addressed.

The literature refers to issues concerning honesty and openness (see, for example, Kotter and Cohen, 2002) although there is little
to advise a manager in practical terms. In higher education there are examples provided where institutions have not addressed issues. McCaffery (2004), for example, comments on the main issues confronting Thames Valley University, when it had been through a major change process. The Quality Assurance Agency review of the institution concluded that the commencing of consultation on the proposals for change was a ‘hollow exercise’, McCaffery added,

“….consultation, and the participation and commitment that goes with it, is essential prerequisite for any change process that seeks to be an effective one…”
(McCaffery, 2004, P234)

The challenge for the manager is that every change project has its own issues that need to be addressed. In practice they use their experience to assess issues that may arise during the planning and implementation phases predominantly without reference to models or particular support or training.

4.5.4 Achieving ‘buy in’

Some of the managers highlight the problem of achieving ‘buy in’ from stakeholders involved in a change even when they say they have used a classical change management process. An example is when it was found,

“…..we thought we got stake holder buy in….in a university there is a willingness to say yes and mean not likely mate…. (laughs)…..I think the selling has to be more than just words……there needs to be more effort put into making sure people really do understand and work through all the issues about
change and that includes when they turn up for work on Monday morning.”
(8, 354-357)

All the managers are very particular about the importance of communication and the requirement to get it right. They often reflect that some of the recent large scale organisational changes that had been managed by their departments had not been communicated as well as they could have been. There is recognition that this is a key area for managing change effectively. Many also recognise that they needed assistance in improving the communication strategy for the change projects they have been managing. One manager had solicited the advice of the head of the institution’s staff development unit to help improve the communication strategy on a large project. Many other managers referred to their staff development office as being a useful source of advice. Other sources of advice identified by the managers were their own staff and experts. This advice helped the managers to produce a communication strategy that included talking directly to the staff, a regular newsletter and the use of the line management structure. The manager still concluded,

“I think you can’t get it right........ At one point I decided to stop castigating myself that we were not communicating enough or appropriately and just got on with it...”
(6, 422-426)

This manager also provided a particularly powerful illustration for the issues around communication for the management of change as he reflected that planning and implementing change was similar to planning and prosecuting a major military campaign. He likened it to the planning for D-day, the invasion of Europe, and
suggested that the original planners were fixated with the notion of getting across the beaches and had forgotten that behind the beaches there were cliffs and miles of hedgerows where people shoot at you a lot. He continued,

“So I kept saying that the point of this process is not to get us into the new building but to get us to Berlin which is some way away…but they all said that they wanted to go to Paris anyway.” (6, 325-334)

An inclusive consultative communication strategy that enables key stakeholders to communicate with the manager throughout the life of the project does not guarantee all people will be satisfied by the outcome of the change or the process used. From these reflections it appears that in order for stakeholders and change managers to work together effectively during the life of a change project, there is a requirement for a robust communications strategy which provides the change manager with opportunities for two way communication and re-clarification, if necessary. Without this strategy the participants will reach an objective which will leave them dissatisfied with the process and the project.

This observation of the managers, which is based upon experience is also supported in the literature on the management of change where it is emphasised that communication involves the constant involvement of the key stakeholders throughout the life of the change project. If this is not done carefully as part of the process of change, with the opportunity to test the acceptance of the objective and redefine if necessary, the manager of the project may find that the stakeholders have a different view of the objective to that of the manager. This part of the process of communication is particularly evident in the change process
guidance provided by such authors and consultants as (see, for example, Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979 and Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992).

4.5.5 Skills

Many of the managers are concerned that they had not communicated enough or did not have the skills to communicate effectively. They, whilst reviewing the training they had attended, suggest that they are disappointed that particular programmes have not addressed this need. Or, if they have received such training, it has not then addressed the real need adequately enough. One manager, when referring to training events she had attended, observed that the topics were badly run and that the events had,

“….included communication in terms of personal and remote forms of communication ………nothing about dealing with people.”
(4, 44-45)

Communicating she argued is not just about providing information on effective change management methods and using skills such as communication, it is also about effectively communicating with people and ensuring that they understand the communication. This is supported by the literature,

“Interpersonal communications is perhaps one of the most important and least understood competencies that a manager can have…."
(Quinn, Faerman, Thompson and McGrath, 2003, P38)
Quinn, Faerman, Thompson and McGrath (referring to Zey, 1990), identified the importance of the mentor role in assisting with communication. They emphasised the difficulty of knowing when and how to share information. This is complicated by the requirement to understand people and situations. They conclude that being an effective communicator is not easy. They also indicate that there are problems in recognising or being informed about problems with communication and the skills required to be an effective communicator,

“The road to mastery of an activity is essentially a lifelong learning process that takes place over time. Although this learning can take place at times when you are not consciously aware that you are learning, it generally requires a focussed effort at understanding new concepts and practicing new skills.”
(Quinn, Faerman, Thompson and McGrath, 2003 P340)

Many of the managers refer to communication as requiring some soft skills such as dealing with people skills and they refer to this aspect of managing change as problematic as change is scary. This skill is one that has been highlighted as a requirement for a good manager by some of the managers. They add that the development of skills requires a considerable investment of time as well and this resource is in short supply and the provided training has not provided for this.

**4.5.6 Strategy and methods**

Many of the managers refer to the strategy and methods they have used to communicate. They explain the downside of a poor communication strategy based upon inadequate information or
poorly thought through and, inadequately supported methods. It leads, they suggest, to a situation where the organisation’s management is faced with fundamental problems as the management will,

“….. have poor communication and poor information…we can be making all sorts of changes…there is no rumour management and there is not that clarity and transparency so that we know that when we say, okay, there are spare resources in the faculty and we could say yes and know where they are…we do not have any of that information…as long as you got that then you can always fudge the issue and fudging is the big thing….and this University seems to run on expediency and fudging and neither of those are good when you want to manage change.”

(4, 374-382)

There is, therefore, a need to ensure that the communication strategy and ways of communicating are supported with effective information and management. If this is not provided then compromises and fudging may result. The managers used various ways of communicating although the primary one involves meetings with key stakeholders with one to one meetings being clearly identified as the most important. Besides meetings there were also questionnaires, reports, newsletters, emails and telephone communication methods employed. The use of ‘brought in’ ‘experts’ to address and present on their experience and present new means of assessing needs was also identified.

4.5.7 Management

The majority of the managers recognise that strong and focused management and leadership are identified as necessary to
improve communication strategies. Some of them indicate that this may require an alternative style to that employed by their own institutions. This would, they feel, improve the management and, in particular the management of change. They conclude that dissatisfied staff would, at the extreme, decide to leave the organisation if such leadership was not provided. One manager also reflected that too much communication had had a downside too, in that people actually want the change to happen and that communication, or the need to communicate, should not delay the change project unnecessarily. There is a balance, it was suggested, to be struck here and this manager reflected that the project must commence at some stage and that,

“… I am not sure that at the end of the day that people just do not want that to happen….and you just get churn because you are changing things. I think it will take a lot longer to settle down than we think yet….I think we are doing all right….we could do more….and there is always more.”

(6, 426-430)

Many managers also indicate that they believe they could have done more to reflect after a change project and they have learnt from their experiences and this helped to develop their style for future change projects. Some managers indicate that they will have always this feeling and that a 100 per cent solution is not possible and mistakes will be made whatever level of planning and experience is employed.

A few of the managers expressed some concern that the advent of email has stifled communication. What appears to be an improvement in communication has a downside. Too much communication is now performed using email and this has cut the
personal contact and benefits of interpersonal communication. The use of such a medium as email should be an aid for the management of change and part of the communications strategy. It should not, however, be the only method of communication as people value the opportunity to have personal contact where they can interact with leaders of change and their managers. One particular manager concluded that the advent of email,

“...means that we do not communicate as effectively any more.....”
(23, 310-311)

She supports the suggestion that communication is more than just providing information as it is also about being effective at dealing with people as well.

The managers know that the opportunity for personal dialogue with a manager is valued by staff. They realise that staff may have personal questions which they would want to ask. This may occur throughout the life of a change project’s implementation. The emphasis here is again on providing a communications strategy that provides the opportunity for staff to meet, individually if necessary, with managers. Although this is a time consuming part of change it is widely thought of as very important as staff are identified as the key stakeholders in a change project as,

“It can be managed but it does take time.....as a busy manager...it is all about making time....people want access to you and they want to talk to you.....they have personal questions about their future role...they want to talk one to one...they do not want to be on the end of an email.....it is time consuming.”
(10, 276-277)
One strong concept which is referred to throughout all the managers’ reflections is the requirement to ensure the project is managed with a strong sense of purpose. There was one manager who suggested that too much consultation and not enough directed management could be a potential problem for the effective management of change. He suggested,

“….it is really easy to kill change by talking about it a lot in a formal way…”
(2, 223-224)

This problem was also referred to by another manager who suggested that there was too much of an emphasis on communication and the need to consult. The emphasis really ought to be on managers, and particularly senior managers, having a clear view of where you are going and sticking with it. He suggests,

“For that clear sense of direction is more important than widespread consultation and giving people feelings of ownership…. and in practice I have not seen that kind of philosophy as particularly helpful. And if you do that then the core will follow and people will adapt, and people are adaptable, and they will adjust and you may lose a few people on the way…..”
(5, 236-246)

He, however, was the only manager who appeared to be frustrated by the need to consult and communicate. Others suggested that the real requirement was for a manager to manage the process and direct the communication methodology accordingly. This is supported in the literature,
“Significant change depends on dialogue and commitment as much as imagination and perseverance”
(McCaffery, 2004, P243)

Many of the managers said that they are aware of this need to be strong and manage and they clearly demonstrated a desire and a motivation to succeed.

4.6 Key issues concerning communication

The middle managers consider each change they have managed or have to manage as a project with stages. The first stage is considered as prior to the start of the project. This is when the middle managers say they will assess their needs and conduct personal research. This involves communication and ensures they are well informed. For some this was in order for them to show that they know what they are talking about when they start the change project. They know they will be questioned about the change and they will need to demonstrate they have answers. They also know that change is scary for people and they need to be managed sensitively but firmly. They have learnt this from training and reading but mainly from experience. More support is required when they have no experience of managing the change required. The support requested is in the form the middle manager is most comfortable with and the majority request access to experienced colleagues who have managed similar projects in a higher education institution. The creation of such evidence based practice that was readily accessible to practitioners is an important recommendation arising from the research.

The managers seek this evidence based practice in a variety of ways depending on their preferred way of working and the time
they have available. For many managers time is a very limited and valuable resource. One manager says he has no time available and certainly no time in which to read and relies on his common sense and the skills he has developed. He may represent a group of middle managers who it may be difficult to support. This is illustrative of the challenge in providing general guidance and support for those managing change. Middle managers have little time available for their development and will access support according to their needs and preferred style, if they have the time. Consequently the provision of evidence based practice should not involve more work for the practitioner and has to represent value for the time invested.

Communication is recognised by the middle managers as the most important part of managing change in English higher education institutions. It is time consuming as they recognise the best way of communicating is by one to one meetings with the primary stakeholders affected by the change. These are identified as the staff in most of the change projects managed by the middle managers. These one to one meetings have to be part of a strategy that is dedicated to two way communication. This helps to ensure that misunderstandings are clarified and rumours are dealt with. The investment in time required is considerable. Paradoxically the late twentieth century media developments that have ostensibly improved the way we communicate have been identified as stifling effective communication. What should be an aid has become a potential problem. Email is being used as it is so easy to provide with messages being delivered in a speedy, timely and inclusive manner. Sadly it is being used instead of other forms of communication. This means that there may be a reduction in two way communication and this has affected the depth of understanding of the middle manager and the
stakeholders concerning the change. The middle managers have learned this from experience and advise that new methods of communicating are best used to support a communications strategy that includes the opportunity for one to one meetings. Advice on an effective communication strategy as part of evidence based practice is required and advice on soft skills and understanding people forms part of this requirement.

It is noticeable that non academic middle managers will use research skills as well as academic managers and there were no obvious differences in the manner in which the various middle managers conduct themselves. The majority use communication as part of this personal research stage as they seek advice from colleagues within their department and institution. Many use their line manager while some will not. Many also use colleagues across and outside the sector. This ‘free consultancy’ aspect of managing change is not reflected in the literature. Some managers will be very active and proactive spending some time seeking out resources and contacts to help them manage change. They will communicate with a variety of people about change and this also forms part of the implementation phase. This may be formal or informal utilising the wide array of support networks that exist in the higher education sector. It may include the unique opportunity to talk openly with competitors that only really exists in the higher education sector. Other managers may be more passive in their accessing of support and spend more time reading the communications of others. A minority may not be access networks at all. The provision of a network of practitioners is the key recommendation here. The real life experiences of middle managers and their learning has not been written about by them and the opportunity to share this learning is normally lost. This gap is in part being addressed by the provision of the Leadership
Foundation, the Change Academy and professional associations such as the AUA. The training and networking they provide for leaders, managers and their members does contribute to the development of practice. This is, however, in its infancy. This gap was also identified by recent research in the higher education sector (see, for example, Whitchurch, 2006 and Hammersley, 2007). The development of professional practice could be enhanced by practising managers using new technologies that would permit access when the managers wish to access it. The request from the managers is for access to support that provides practical examples of how to manage in the sector and this includes reviews of management failures as well.
Chapter Five

Managing the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the English Higher Education Sector

5.1 Introduction

All the managers refer to the need for an awareness of the ‘unique’ culture and organisational characteristics of the sector and particularly those of the institution in which they work. However a few managers acknowledge that working in the sector is not that different from other sectors and some say that their institution has changed its management style as business terminology is becoming more acceptable. However, the majority of managers believe that business methods have to be adapted for the sector and there is recognition that managers coming into the sector from business may find it a challenging as the decision making process can be unclear and lengthy.

Figure 10 Managing the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the English higher education sector family tree
The complexity and the organisational characteristics and culture of the English higher education sector pose practical problems for the managers. Issues concerning the duality of structures, confusion on whether particular structures should be used or not, as well as a lack of a ‘command and control’ structure indicate the mess of managing can only be clarified with experience. A particular style of managing is required if the manager is to be successful.

5.2 Organisational characteristics and the culture of the English Higher Education Sector

All of the managers refer to organisational characteristics and a culture that makes the higher education sector ‘unique’. Some of the managers identify staff that celebrate this and use it to refuse to be managed. Many of these characteristics are identified in the literature (see, for example, Bennett, Crawford and Riches, 1992, Middlehurst, 1993, Warner and Palfreyman, 1996, Trowler, 1998, Kogan and Hanney, 1999, Bargh, Bocock, Scott and Smith, 2000, Warner and Palfreyman, 2001, Koch, 2003 and McNay, 2006). Some of the managers conclude that they provide the basis for fundamental differences with managing in the business sector. They present obstacles and challenges to change and the development of effective leadership and management. The ‘unique’ characteristics identified by the managers included:

- organisational structures;
- collegiality;
- academic contracts;
- academic loyalty;
- ‘them and us’;
- stakeholder complexity;
• sector complexity;
• philosophies are different.

This list is similar to that identified in the literature although managerialism and staff development were not identified as prominent characteristics by the managers and they identify academic contracts, loyalty and ‘them and us’ as issues that are important. Two particular issues that these characteristics raise are the time required to effect change and a lack of clarity over the decision-making process. Managers consider these are used by those seeking to obstruct or prevent change and this presents them with a considerable challenge.

5.2.1 Organisational Structures

The majority of the managers consider that there are differences in structure and management between the business sector and the higher education sector. They consider organisational structures in the higher education sector as being very flat with management that has a lack of an ability to ‘command and control’. They do not refer to specific organisational theories such as Contingency theory directly (see, for example, Checkland, 1999), although from their comments it can be concluded they believe that the business sector operates along Classical School lines (see, for example, Taylor, 1911). Some of the managers refer to the lack of line management authority in the higher education sector. They speak of this with some degree of jealousy as they say an authoritarian approach is just not possible (Research diary notes, 5/05/04). Many of the managers refer to the duality of structures being in place in their institutions. Definitions are not clear when managers refer to this duality as there are the academic and the administrative structures within
institutions as well as the committee and executive structures. Decision making within these structures can be confused and unclear.

In the English higher education sector there exists collegial committee based and executive line management based decision making structures. Some managers consider this duality provides for uncertainty to how they are managed and operate together. The presence of a committee structure itself is a source of the perceived lack of clarity about the decision making process. This is in evidence when issues of governance and deliberative mechanisms are considered. The majority of the managers believe that their institutions have complex decision making structures that need to be understood and engaged with in an appropriate manner in order for some decisions to be made as part of a change process. This requirement for understanding is situated in a complex and changing world where executive power and authority is ever evolving.

Many of the managers also add that a manager from the business sector would need time to adjust to it. Although they acknowledge that the effective management of change may require a consultative style to be adopted, they are aware that the higher education sector’s collegiate management culture frustrates a manager coming into the sector from the business environment. The requirement to consult and persuade is more important in the higher education sector than in the business sector. Many managers are aware of colleagues who have come into the sector from business and consequently struggle. A manager that was interviewed who had had a considerable amount of business sector experience and was relatively new to the sector had experienced some problems herself. She was astounded that
even the decision to consult may need to be consulted about and agreed.

The academic and administrative structure is also viewed as a major difference compared with the structures that exist in the business sector. Within the academic structure there was a reference to the lack of line management,

“…..there is a line management structure in the administration and other services and there is no line management effectively down to the academic on the shop floor……and this makes it pretty difficult to issue a diktat and make sure that it happens…….”

(19, 447-451)

This form of duality of structures, together with a perceived lack of control in the academic structure is identified as one of the causes of the lack of clarity over the decision making process as,

“The management structure is all over the place because you have an administrative management structure and an academic management structure running in parallel and a huge amount of tension and a lack of clarity between the two and as to who is actually calling the shots.”

(5, 282-285)

Many of the managers agree that an understanding of the operational working of these two systems is only gained by experience. Managers who have worked in an institution and the sector will pass this knowledge onto other managers. It poses challenges for managers new to the sector, or new to an institution as,
“One of the issues is knowing how and where the decisions are being made….I think if you look in a commercial set up it is usually pretty clear who has the responsibility. Whereas in a university it can be a very diffuse organisation pulling in all directions.”

(9.235-239)

This source of tension and confusion, paradoxically, provides a lot of freedom and is identified as one of joys of working in sector by many of the managers. Although it is also a source of some frustration, it offers the freedom to work the way you wish. This is a theme that was present throughout the data. Many value and defend this freedom and yet it is the culture and structures that make the command and control structure difficult to implement. This also relates to the academic freedom that is evident in the literature and which staff jealousy defend (see, for example, Koch, 2003) and obstructs the use of business organisation and its methods (see, for example, Deem 1998 and Dearlove 2002). Some of the managers identify the freedom of academic staff, which the culture and dual structures permits, as a reason why some staff have entered the profession and their contractual arrangements are defended to ensure this freedom continues. This is an area that was not specifically evident in the literature but was implied, to some extent, in the requirement to address the cultural aspects of organisation during a change project.

5.2.2 Collegiality and organisational issues

The majority of the managers refer to the sector as being collegiate. They define collegiality as the committee decision making process which requires a consultative and consensual style of management. They consider that this is a feature of its uniqueness. The impact this has on managers is,
“…you cannot do things autocratically everything has to be done through discussion and persuasion....”
(31, 466-467)

Managers consider the implications of collegiality for managing in the higher education sector in England are that the decision making process:

- is time consuming;
- is ‘unique’;
- can be confused and unclear;
- can be used by those opposed to change as a means to resist, obstruct or ignore it;
- lacks line management control;
- lacks academic managers;
- senior staff lead and manage institutions.

The requirement for consultation and the need for winning hearts and minds, together with the time it takes to get ‘buy in’ are part of this organisational characteristic. There is a link here with the concept of communication, in that it is acknowledged that this is an important component of any change management process. There is, however, some frustration and irritation that this collegiality causes more delays and requires more time and therefore has an impact on the speed of managing change. This management culture and style was contrasted with that of the business sector as,

“..... very often the delay is all about having internal discussions in the school rather than how fast can we make a decision to approve this new programme....”
(30, 524-526)
Many of the managers recognise there is a requirement for additional resources to facilitate the collegiate form of decision-making. This is in the form of an allowance for the time taken to reach decisions and the preparation and process required for persuasion. They also believe a manager needs an understanding of the time it takes to ensure the consultative demands are addressed as,

“…it is a much much longer process of talking and explaining and whatever. For me collegiate is about consultative, equality and a sense of us all being in this together, a flat structure.”

(10, 321-324)

However many of the managers are aware that there are differences between institutions. Some of them refer with envy to institutions that work at a faster rate or appear to be clearer about when they need to use collegial or line management for decision making. Line management was identified as a process that would speed up the process. This envy is tinged with caution however as some managers considered the collegiate way of working to be a better approach to that of a ruthless authoritarian approach. Despite this note of caution, the requirement for sufficient time is seen as a major problem. Many of the managers add that staff working in the sector have a variety of roles and responsibilities and are not given change projects to manage with any reduction in their workload. This adds to the problem. They lack the resource which they need the most in order to consult, namely time. Many of the managers believe that there may be more time available for managers in the business sector and more resources in terms of staff allocated to change projects.
The slow speed of decision making in many universities because of the need for consultation and committee based decision-making is commented on by Dearlove,

“Collegial governance seeks consensus through committees and so involves sluggish decision making….”
(Dearlove, 2002, P265)

Dearlove proposes that change brought about by committee was conservative as decisions become less radical as they go through committees. However, the managers did not readily identify this potential drawback as important as they concentrated on issues around resistance where people are able to refuse to change altogether.

Many managers identify collegiality as being a ‘unique’ form of decision making. One manager provides a useful summary of the implications of this ‘uniqueness’ for managers,

“……universities do think of themselves as unique and academics do expect that they will be consulted far more as professionals in a collegiate way, and so the process of change may take longer than outside education..”
(15, 289-295)

The issue of legitimacy is very important for managers as a decision that is not seen as legitimate, that is, one that has not been endorsed at a committee, can be challenged within an institution by stakeholders. If the appropriate process has not been followed, some stakeholders feel able to challenge the decision and legitimately resist it any of the associated issues. This poses a potential dilemma for a manager as to the issues
that need to be put through the committee process in order for them to be made legitimate and enforceable. A manager summarises this well,

“There are all sorts of questions of legitimacy as you have a committee system and you have to work out what role the committee system plays in management as opposed to policy, making it is very difficult. There are all sorts of constitutional issues that can arise and they are difficult to navigate your way through. And so the whole political environment internally is therefore quite complex.”

(5, 286-292)

There is literature that comments on this in terms of reviews of governance and management (Dearlove, 2002) but there was little of prominence in the literature on managing change or managing departments. Many of the managers believe there is a need for experience within the institution to be able to manage this aspect effectively. This experience was identified as important as it was observed that new managers need to be made aware of the structure to be able to manage effectively.

However, engagement in the process of committee decision making may mean that these mechanisms may confuse the responsibility for decision making and offer an opportunity for staff to avoid decision making,

“I think it links to what I was saying about our deliberative mechanisms….we are much more inclined, I think, in the academic world to deliberate in committees about things rather than somebody making a decision and requiring it to be done.”

(17, 391-394)
Some managers identified that some institutions have attempted to clarify and remove the complexity of this duality of system, and there were the managers who suggested that their institution had a very supportive executive culture and structure to help them effect change.

Another potential issue of this collegiate culture and structure is that there is a democracy in decision-making and some of the individuals engaged in this democracy feel that they can organise and vote against decisions and stop things happening. This may be an important difference with the business sector as, although a manager in a business may still have to sell the change to staff and other stakeholders following much of the guidance on change (see, for example, Kotter and Cohen, 2002), many of the managers felt business managers could use their authority to enforce decisions if need be. Some of the managers indicate that the higher education sector provides many opportunities for resistance that may not be overcome by this command and control method. There are people in universities who will resist change both openly, using the committee structure, and also covertly, by refusing to change. Managers know that these staff may ‘get away’ with not accepting decisions and, as a result, do not change. Their actions are justified as,

“... history says that people do get away with not doing it. That is a peculiarity and you have to work out how you deal with that in an age when institutions are becoming more corporate.”
(8, 403-405)

Researchers on governance in higher education support these findings and note the frustrations that arise for managers when
they come across those resisting change. For example, one case study, conducted by Hellawell and N Hancock (2001) found,

“Even when consensus had been achieved on a particular plan of action, it was noted that some members of staff did not always feel personally obliged to go along with it at the implementation stage”
(Hellawell and N Hancock, 2001 P188)

This was identified in a university which was noted for a history of innovation. It was perceived as being, according to its managers, at the forefront of change in the sector for some time and this was not just tinkering, it was wholesale restructuring. The managers from this institution agreed it had very supportive structures and believed in consultation and yet one manager still referred to areas of the university that resisted change or did not engage and accept change.

Another theme is the tension between the old and the new and that are references to the ‘old form’ of collegiality which is a democracy in structure and style and the new which is an executive driven agenda. Although this is not a direct reference to managerialism it could be considered, at first glance, to suggest it was a change in leadership and management style. There is, however, still,

“……something in universities where you have that, but you also have something that is more participative and consultative which anyone coming in from outside might find quite bizarre……”
(22, 473-475)
The existence of the collegiate consultative culture is still very much alive, although some universities and some departments are deemed to be more resistant to change with a less consultative style of decision-making. Some managers indicated that resistance to change is more prevalent in some subject areas and their home departments. An effective manager must be able to communicate effectively in a collegiate culture with all staff. They need to be aware of differences between groups and potential resistance and non-compliance. This requires good skills and includes an awareness of the subject areas and the culture of an institution. This is, according to many of the managers, acquired by experience or by the advice of staff or line managers.

The majority of managers identify the need to rely on the support of departments or staff not under their control in order to manage. This issue is not that prominent in the literature. The managers believe a particular issue associated with this lack of control is that some staff in these departments do not understand their business,

“….the reorganisation was contingent on moving space, there was a complete lack of interest on matching space to function which I found appalling and an insistence that they know best and they bloody don’t.”
(6, 380-383)

In addition,

“……most of the people that they will rely on to do things or to provide input or whatever are in academic departments over which they have no management control whatever……”
(26, 478-480)
This lack of common awareness and control creates problems and presents challenges. Managers need to ensure that they are skilled and persuasive, and consultative approaches to change management are required. The trepidation expressed in their responses on the potential effectiveness of achieving change and the manner in which managers describe the uncertainty of managing institution wide change was very evident. They are more assured, and speak with less nervousness, when they reflect on change within their own departments when they are more in control.

5.2.3 Academic contracts

Some of the academic managers consider that the whole nature of the academic contract is a problem, as the requirement to manage using good will without direct control poses difficulties for them. These managers say that some staff have exploited this freedom from control. An example of the problem was provided as one academic manager said she cannot readily observe her staff in the classroom as this was not the culture and the accepted teaching monitoring practice. This presents difficulties as the manager has to rely on the good will of staff to perform some of their basic duties.

The academic managers add that the nature of the management of performance is different in the English higher education sector from other sectors as,

“…in a university setting you cannot order anyone to do anything….you cannot threaten them with the sack….if somebody is underperforming you just have to manage it.….”

(31, 467-470)
Job descriptions are not clear for academics and,

“.....we have this “wishy washy” peer support and the trouble is every thing that we bring in like that ends up as a rod to beat the good member of staff and not having any teeth to deal with the poor management...you know with management issues with poor staff.”
(4, 431-435)

This culture and structural issue was primarily identified as a performance management problem but it is also a problem for anyone wanting to manage change as,

“....if somebody is being an obstacle you just have to go round them....you cannot remove them....there is no way to coerce people to do anything.....that just does not happen in the private sector....”
(31, 470-473)

The academic managers acknowledge that this is more evident in chartered universities rather than the post 1992 universities. Although there has been some improvements to the process requirements for some institutions to address these issues in recent years,

“.....you cannot simply get rid of a member of academic staff for anything without going through a very convoluted and very expensive tribunal followed by appeal procedure.....”
(19, 456-458)

The academic managers are frustrated by this problem and envy what they perceive to be a different culture in other sectors. Any
review of the contract should aim to address some of the
associated conceptual issues. This was not as prominent in the
literature review as it was in the data. Many managers would like
to be able move back to a command and control culture or a
classical school model of organisation where the work is carefully
broken into its component parts and managed. The literature on
organisational theory has, however, evolved into more complex
models such as human relations, excellence and contingency
models and schools suggest that inclusive, learning and collegiate
methods of managing are now prevalent in the work environment
and are required for the modern organisation to be successful.
The concept of a learning organisation was not one acknowledged
by managers and many believed it would be easier to manage if
you could simply tell staff what to do and they would then carry out
instructions.

5.2.4 Academic loyalty

Academic managers also identify the difficulty, in motivating and
managing academic staff. They say that they are not loyal to their
employer or department and can be quite selfish. The system may
encourage them to do this as promotion and workload models
may be based on research outputs and this is not always seen as
being in the interests of the students, the community or the
department. Once again this affects ‘buy in’ and,

“…we cannot afford to get this much worse than it is
now….laughs…..”
(30, 566-567)

These managers believe that a decision-making and management
style has to developed to manage effectively in this environment
without a command and control structure and this is further explored in the next chapter. Once again the ‘stars’ issue was raised when academic loyalty is discussed as,

“We did go to a lot of trouble to stay friends with our key chairs and PVCs (pro vice chancellors) as well and actually they are very useful when we are saying how do you feel about x, y and z.”
(6, 387-389)

Although the loyalty of academic staff may be in question, the management style adopted to counter this potential problem is to seek the counsel of ‘stars’ prior to embarking on a change. This is conducted to seek their support and gain an understanding of the issues that might arise. Managers believe that issues concerning loyalty and, in particular, resistance to change, are being addressed by changes in staffing as new senior managers are felt to be more amenable to change. There is some indication that this is a requirement for achieving more wide reaching change.

Managers consider that an appreciation of the issues that motivates academic staff is important,

“…if you look at the academic staff, their allegiance to their school and their discipline is a factor that does not have any parallels in any other institution. The notion of collegiality and academic freedom are peculiar to universities and people do have a considerable amount of freedom, particularly in the academic areas as to how they organise their time…”
(9, 239-243)

An associated issue is the individuality of the sector as managers believe that academic staff have opted out of the commercial
world. They have joined an institution to have the freedom to work on their research and may not work well with colleagues. For the academic department a key unit of resource is the academic. Some managers refer to more flexible contracts being introduced that would enable the manager to manage with more control. This change has affected their morale and motivation as perceived changes to the contract are seen as threats to the nature of academic freedom. There have been reviews of workloads and changes in regulatory frameworks that have demanded greater monitoring and transparency. The perception is that staff have increased workloads and are under more pressure and stress as although,

“…motivation can be quite poor in higher education and that has to be managed....”
(31, 473-475)

The loyalty of the academic community as being different to that of the staff in a business organisation is particularly evident in the views of the majority of managers. This is also identified in the literature review (see, for example, Kogan and Hanney, 1999). Academics’ believe passionately in their profession and their subject and they take a priority over that of their loyalty to their institution. An interesting explanation of this difference is provided when reflecting on the complexity of the constituencies of higher education and the academic community as there is,

“….. a large constituency which does not think in a corporate way.....it has no corporate identity.....it does not aspire to having a corporate identity.....not entirely but in general....”
(13, 406-409)
This manager added that a supplier may suggest a new method of working with a particular software solution and they will be surprised to be informed that it may well work but there may be constituencies within the institution who will not accept the change. He added that,

“The academic staff have the mindset that they work for themselves…”

(13, 416)

There are differences in managing within universities and within subject areas. This does not feature prominently in the literature. A manager illustrates the differences by suggesting those subjects that could be considered as older, such as philosophy, and may have difficulties recruiting students, are more defensive in comparison with those that have more buoyant recruitment. The newer subjects tend to have more bargaining power within the institution and are able to push things through university systems. The indication is that some subjects are more able to accept change than others. This all means that anyone wishing to manage change faces multi dimensional pressures and has to be aware of these to manage successfully. The old order still holds that,

“…… higher education institutions you are not supposed to be loyal to…you are not supposed to be loyal to the institution…the academic, administrative and people who actually work in these institutions…none of the people who actually work for the institutions…none of them feel that this is their company…”

(3, 301-305)
This particular manager added that this is a shame. He was the only manager to suggest that support staff also have a lack of loyalty to their institution.

5.2.5 Managing and being managed by professionals

Managing in the higher education sector and addressing issues of loyalty to organisations was likened to other sectors such as the health service or research establishments by some of the managers who had had experience of working in other sectors. An awareness of the staff as being special and the requirement for the respectful treatment of them is identified as an important factor in managing successfully in these sectors. Managers agreed that managing professionals is challenging as they are creative and have a tendency to be very intelligent and artistic. There is an acknowledgement that staff are very aware of theory and of the disciplines associated with acquiring and developing knowledge although,

“In education you have a huge base of people who think too much…rather than do it…you ask an academic to do something and three months later you get a paper about it….sometimes it gets in the way.”

(7, 426-429)

This culture can come into conflict with support service departments that may have people who are very practical and are viewed as, according to one manager, ‘doers’. The issue that institutions are full of individuals who know the theory although they are not good at applying it practically forms part of this concept. The solution proposed by this manager was for there to be some recognition that the relationship between these two types
of staff (the ‘thinkers’ and the ‘doers’) is crucial, and that they have to work together with mutual respect and understanding of their respective motivation. This understanding is achieved in many institutions by the appointment of academic staff in senior management positions who will manage the ‘thinkers’ and ‘doers’. This was to some extent identified in the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities report (1985) although the recognition that management was key was also clearly stated. The literature does not identify the differences between academic staff cultures between academic subjects or recognise that this adds to the challenge and complexity of managing effectively in the sector.

The managers know they need to use a variety of management styles to manage as some may be more effective than others, particularly when managing different types of staff. This may be particularly relevant when ‘stars’ are being managed. ‘Stars’ were identified as very important academic staff. They have prestige and high profile reputations. They are very powerful and need to be carefully managed as their opposition to a change could mean its failure. Individuals may be offered inducements but these will vary between staff groups and individuals in these groups as different staff are motivated by a variety of incentives. An example was provided by one manager where a general policy of relieving academic staff from administrative work was used as an incentive as part of a change project. This, however, was not uniformly seen as a benefit for some of the staff as the manager said it was discovered that they did not want to relinquish these duties. This is contrary to one practical recommendation provided in the literature (Archer, 2005). This was that academic staff be provided with administrative assistance to free them from that role.
Some of the managers identified an associated issue and that was a perceived decrease in the availability, in recent years, of experienced academic staff who can and will perform administrative roles. These academic staff are willing to manage and develop academic programmes and adopt a responsible role for managing an area of academia were acknowledged as becoming increasingly scarce. Such staff are viewed by these managers as very important in the management of change in the sector. They have gained the respect of academic staff and have the knowledge and style necessary to manage change. Academic staff who wish to follow an administrative role and do not wish to research or work as teaching fellows are sorely missed when they retire as,

“….they take this huge amount of folklore and memory with them and knowledge and influence we find it very difficult to replace them as there is not enough people in the system who want to follow that as a career path….”

(30, 503-505)

There is an acknowledgement that many senior research staff refuse to work with these required responsibilities, and the staff who are willing, do so to develop their experience so they can then gain promotion and move on relatively quickly. An organisation that demands consultation requires staff who have appropriate skills to be readily available. Institutions are viewed as being structurally dependent on the availability of such staff and their shortage was identified as a weakness in the structure of many universities. Some managers identified a need to advertise and bring in people to have a semi-administrative career path. They believe that there are some roles in academic administration
that the university and its staff cannot accept a non academic doing.

The managers acknowledge that the majority of senior staff in institutions were academic staff. Whilst this is not viewed as being necessarily a problem, it is suggested that an administrative manager at this level might offer a different model to work to. Some managers believe such a manager will have a more focussed ability to run the institution. It will bring different skills to the table and a different approach. Some managers add that this may be problematic in many institutions as a non academic member of staff may not be able to command the respect of the academic staff or have the necessary knowledge, and therefore, be unable to manage effectively. One manager reviewed the experience and background of each of the senior staff in his institution and clearly identified them as academic staff,

“….and it is the fact that they are very well respected academics in their own right that when they are trying to put through change……. they talk academic to academic”
(25, 354-356)

Managers agree that this works well and very effectively because an academic can interact so well with fellow academics and there are a good set of relationships.

This particular manager added that this is a different structure from that of the newer universities and,

“… it is something that is fairly common in the pre 92…..although some pre 92 are moving towards the new ‘managerialism’ of the
This was one of the very few references to managerialism that was made by the managers. The manager here uses the term to describe an authoritative and business like management structure with executive decision making. Some of the managers observe that different structures and cultures exist within the sector. They identify an ‘old school’ and ‘new school’ although they add that some older universities have adopted ‘new school’ approaches. The dominant theme that is evident is that historically evolved academic structures and culture dominate the decision making process and there is resistance to a command and control style of leadership or management. This culture views leadership and management with a measure of distrust as they are associated with business and are not collegiate.

A manager described how the head of his school, in his institution, was in the process of being replaced and a recruitment process was underway. He was concerned that the process had indicated that his institution still had a problem with the recognition that leadership and management skills were as important, or more important, than academic recognition or potential academic leadership. The process of selection included the fact that,

“…..no where in the job description of this new head does it say anything about the requirement to know anything about the management of change or having had successfully managed change……it is all about world class research and five star in the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise)…”

(24, 674-679)
The Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities report (1985) stressed that the requirement for a head of department was principally in management. Academic leadership was felt to be equally important although the recommendation was that if these two could not be combined then the academic leadership should be delegated and the individual should possess the requisite management capabilities. This particular manager said that this was not the case during this appointment process and said that the lack of preference for managerial skills was,

“......... bloody absurd.....now this school has a budget of £14 million and I can think of a number of extremely eminent .......(reference deleted to protect anonymity) researchers who I would not put in charge of 50 p.......and again I do not mean that in any derogatory way....what I mean is that they are being asked to do the job without having had any of the tools.....it is no wonder that if you go round the whole of the sector the place is in a bloody shambles because the most senior managers no matter where you go have had no bloody senior management experience...”
(24, 683-690)

Some of the managers refer to the lack of senior managers that have been appointed from outside the sector to lead institutions. Their appointment was identified as one way that the sector can be professionalized. There were some exceptions to this observation where it was identified that professional managers have been appointed from outside the sector. One example provided was that of Sir Richard Sykes, at Imperial College. The bringing in of professional managers at a senior level, as well as at a middle manager level, from business and industry was considered by many to be a good thing. It was identified that,
“….running a modern university is not about you know......well the problem is that conflict isn’t it.....it is about five in the RAE (Research assessment Exercise) because you have to be top of the league tables or else you are nobody but actually it.....well running this college at £x million a year or something .......(reference deleted to protect anonymity) .....that does not require a Nobel prize winner it requires a blooming manager......”

(24, 696-671)

There is a concern that due recognition was not given for the need for professional managers and the skills they possess. What is prevalent in the sector is that these skills are not valued above academic skills. Academic qualifications, experience and standing were more important than their managerial equivalents. Senior managers in the sector may be eminent academics but they may not be experienced leaders or managers as they may not have had the skills development.

5.2.6 ‘Them and us’

Many of the managers recognise that in the sector and institutions there is also a ‘them and us’ culture. This is associated with the duality of academic and administrative structures. Depending on which group the manager is part of there are professional or support staff and there are academic staff. Managers believe that the staff in both groups help perpetuate the culture of the groups and the differences between them. Increasingly the distinction between academic and professional staff is becoming blurred as there are more professional support staff groups that are becoming an important part of the sector and more professional staff performing academic roles. This is also recognised in recent literature (see, for example, Whitchurch, 2006). Despite this development managers acknowledge that the support staff may
be viewed as providing serious constraints for academic staff. They may be viewed as over bureaucratic and work to infringe basic academic principles such as academic freedom. This is highlighted as a problem as it inhibits attempts to manage and creates a rivalry between these two groups that can, on occasion, cause some problems,

“….that there is a bit of a them and us……that people that are in administration are really quite different and strange……and generally they are not quite as good as academics….and even if they are good at their job it is a dull old job….and I notice this quite sharply because I used to be one of them…”

(26, 507-512)

Yet again there is the observation that this may be an ‘old school’ and ‘new school’ issue,

“I think there is, there can be a tendency, not always, for some academic staff not to respect the professionalism of non-academic staff. There are huge temptations to remind some staff that you are more qualified than they are….”

(17, 395-399)

This ‘them and us’ culture is also identified in the literature on higher education management,

“In almost all HE institutions, there is a ‘them’ and ‘us’ aspect to the manager – academic relationship, which will vary from nothing more sinister than staff club banter – the registry table with its more formally dressed occupants standing out among the tables of ‘jeans and jumpers’ academics (at least in the 1960s institutions) – to real conflict and tension, especially at times of
cuts, when perhaps the one topic that academic departments can agree on is the need to prune ‘management’”
(Warner and Palfreyman, 1996, P5)

Managers comment that the relative importance of this concept and its associated issues may differ from institution to institution as organisational cultures vary.

There is, among a few managers, surprise expressed that the academic departments who have expertise are not used to help institutions. An example would be that the academic staff who have academic expertise in marketing could assist in the development of a marketing strategy for the institution and yet this does not appear to take place,

“….it comes down to respect between the two sides, I hesitate to say sides, because that tends to put people into categories….but there is a divide there…."
(17, 403-405)

Some professional support managers contradict this suggestion though as they support the notion that academic staff may know the theory but do not know how to apply it. These issues point to the variety of viewpoints that exist in the sector and within institutions as individual managers have strong opinions about their colleagues and help perpetuate the ‘them and us’ culture.

An example where the ‘them and us’ issue has a potential to divide the two groups is over the conflict that is evident when academic staff and internal non academic staff are required to enforce sanctions against students who do not pay their fees. There will be some academic staff who will not agree to the issuing of a sanction and some ‘star’ staff, in particular, can pose
problems for the management of this issue as they may not agree with enforcement and may subvert any attempts to manage this issue in a uniform manner for their students. These types of problems, that is those associated with managing staff who are not part of an individual’s line management responsibility and the ‘them and us’ culture, are not mentioned prominently in the literature. These issues are, however, evident in the data although, paradoxically, it was also suggested that this makes working in the sector quite complex, difficult and challenging and yet, more rewarding.

5.2.7 Complexity of higher education environment

The stakeholder complexity of the higher education environment is potentially problematic to those managing change. Many of the managers refer to the number and diversity of the stakeholders as being unlike any other sector of the economy. Some of these stakeholders receive different products from the higher education institutions. This means that there is a difficulty in identifying the core product and the effect on it of any change. Some managers speak about the business sector as not facing this level of complexity. If you are manufacturing widgets this might be easier. This may be a key difference in considering the uniqueness of the sector. This complexity requires careful consideration at every stage of managing and, in particular, when managing change. Research into the potential interests of stakeholder groups is conducted by many managers prior to embarking on change and managing the variety of constituencies presents management challenges for managers during the implementation of change.

Managers suggest that the variety of stakeholders and the need to keep them on board supports the idea that managing in the sector
cannot be compared to the business sector. Some managers believe that this form of organisation may exist in a manufacturing business which is an old fashioned view of an organisation that is ordered along Classical School lines (see, for example, Taylor, 1967). This observation is flawed as was previously observed in the literature review as the working environment is now more complex as many organisations in the business sector are acknowledged to be complex organic systems. Although there is an acknowledgement that the sector is diverse and complex there is a lack of awareness from some managers in the higher education sector that this may now be the case in the business sector. These managers reflect that they wish they had such a structure as they ruefully envy the opportunity to give orders that will be obeyed.

An example of the complexity of the sector is provided by the challenge provided by the complexity of ratios of types of students and their respective needs and the need to balance this requirement with teaching and research. The observation that there is not a tangible product is made and the complexity of the customer base is a challenge. It poses more potential problems for an inexperienced manager and this issue has to be addressed when using business techniques. A number of stakeholder groups were identified by managers and they include:

- faculty;
- administration and support departments
- students;
- government;
- partners:
Managers advised caution when addressing this complexity as a dialogue with one manager after the interviews included the statement that one should not,

“….assume the changes only affects one group of staff. Academics, admin and students may be affected - even in one case security staff. A process may cross several areas in the University - it may also impact on others e.g. placement providers” (Research diary notes, 5/05/04)

The challenge is the need to balance the competing stakeholder requirements and prioritise them and then to make judgements as to the relative importance of these stakeholders when considering options for the change project. This decision-making is informed by experience and the management style of the manager.

A key stakeholder group for universities are the students. Some of the managers consider that treating them as normal customers does not work as they are very important stakeholders who have particular needs and interests that need to be understood and addressed in a particular manner. They are recognised by some of the managers as being the main reason for entering higher education. They provide a challenge that is rewarding and fulfilling. However, they identified a concern that support and service departments within some institutions are not as focused on the development and delivery of their services for students as the academic departments. This was another example of the existence of a ‘them and us’ culture and differences in the understanding of the roles and motivation of staff groups was evident in the data.
The managers indicated that within the sector there are also differences between institutions on how they treat their students. Some of the managers are critical of how some institutions are not as student centred as they should be. Some older institutions do not have the impetus to change themselves and make themselves more student centred and there is some envy of other institutions, particularly the newer universities, as they were putting students first. A manager illustrates this well,

“Yes, it depends on the institution as well….so old one like this which does not have a problem with recruitment or a problem with money related to students does not have an impetus to change and make themselves student centred because people are knocking on the door to come to the place so why should they and that has a huge impact on the psychology of the place.”

(7, 414-419)

In comparison this manager added that a new university has a radically different attitude and is much more student centred and much better in many respects as it is focused on keeping students.

The manager considers how decisions have to be made as to the relative priority of the stakeholders and provides advice on how their needs may be addressed. This poses a potential problem that needs careful management. An associated issue was the difficulty of identifying the product of higher education for these stakeholders. This is a complex task as the diversity of the stakeholders ensures that they have differing needs and definitions. Examples provided included the product being: knowledge development; teaching; research; provision of professionals, for example teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses and
administrators; and the support and stimulation of the local and national business community. This diversity of product, together with the diversity of staff that supports the variants of the product, adds complexity to the leadership and management of change. On occasion the stakeholder groups may have competing needs and the manager may have to make some difficult choices.

Internal stakeholders are also seen as quite important but the support they provide can be problematic. There are references to support departments that are made with some anxiety, and anger, by academic managers as they are not subjected to the same scrutiny, in terms of quality assurance audits, as teaching departments. There is real frustration present in the sector that these departments are not as supportive of the student experience as they should be and this coupled with the lack of loyalty presents problems to managers. They believe that these departments have not yet modernised and are in an old ‘public sector’ mindset in which the customer was not seen as important. Some of the managers identify the structural issues as the problem. The support staff are, more often than not, not directly managed by the academic manager. A lot of time may be needed in order for them to be convinced of the need to change and this requires an investment in time, and this is a resource that was identified as being in limited supply.

The government is also identified as a key stakeholder and an instrument of change within the sector. Far reaching changes to the funding for the sector has been implemented by the introduction of tuition fees by the government. The nature of the academic contract and the motivation of staff had also been changed, although this was not as far reaching as was required.
There is still complacency among staff and difficulties in removing non performing staff. Managers find this difficult to deal with,

“… its people who become stale and do not improve….the system changes continuously in terms of education comes down from the government or from individual institutions there’s lots of changes in systems and ways in working for the sake of change and not for the sake of improvement….it looks like they are trying to imitate business failingly…these are all negative things…”

(3, 287-297)

Paradoxically the Government is viewed as being necessary for changing the old public sector way of managing and is also seen as interfering and recent changes in higher education policy and funding causing unnecessary work. Emotive language was used when referring to this key stakeholder (Research diary notes, 27/04/04). Institutions are clearly affected by the government changing its policies. This then affects the financial strategies and financial standing of institutions, which require changes to funding models, policies and procedures. This change of funding can affect everything and appears to be based on the whim of others. It is outside the control of managers and there was frustration and anger evident among them.

Besides the main stakeholders of faculty, students and government there are also partners identified. A manager’s review of his consultation practice, provided in chapter six, refers to the need to engage with partners. In this example it was with a number of partners and these included professional staff as well as the contracting authorities. The learning the manager had had from a previous experience of changing the curriculum had influenced the way in which he was now engaging with those
partners. Experience ensured that things have improved and there was now more of a feeling of working together.

Other stakeholders, such as business contractors, who have engaged university departments to offer other forms of support such as training, consultancy or research, are also identified. These stakeholders have very distinct requirements and increase the complexity of the marketplace in which the sector operates. Suppliers were also identified as important stakeholders who provided support and placed demands on key staff in particular departments in a university. These additional stakeholders provide a considerable challenge for managers of change as,

“.... it is trying to bring in all those different inputs and try to make sense of that and that is quite a challenge as well....and in that sense the higher education sector is more complex sector than many companies operate in…”

(31, 489-492)

There is more pressure in the sector on managers to change more rapidly. A problem here is that the time required to consult and manage stakeholders in a collegiate manner ensures that managing is a lengthy process. Managers believe they have less time available and this decreases the opportunity for consultation. If a small number of stakeholders are consulted it may mean that those that are not engaged become disengaged and may resist or refuse the change. Speeding up the process may mean that managers are not given enough time to enable them to convince stakeholders of the need for change and the stakeholders views are not given the prominence that they may require. The result is that stakeholders believe that the exercise is hollow and meaningless as their issues are not being addressed. This may
mean there is an increased lack of commitment and apathy from stakeholders about the process and this presents difficulties for the manager and adds to the challenge of working in the sector. Paradoxically, the complexity of the sector and the ever changing environment still appear to motivate many of the staff and offer them a real challenge. They refer to this challenge with a real relish and obvious enjoyment and add amusing anecdotes to illustrate their predicament (Research diary notes 15/12/03).

5.3 Business methods and the changing culture of the English Higher Education Sector

Some of the managers identify that business change management methods, such as Quality Management or Business Process Re-engineering, are being used in the sector. They are aware of the methods and have either been involved in their use as participants or are aware of them being used in their institution to effect change. Quality management is normally associated with teaching quality assurance processes and teaching quality audits and academic managers are familiar with using the methodology. The use of the methodology has made departments efficient and effective and one manager was particularly pleased that her department had received praise and renown from senior managers to that effect. However, managers are sure that methodologies do require resources and this can prove a stumbling block to their effectiveness and adoption.

Quality management has not been so prevalent in support services, although managers report that academic colleagues and some senior managers are suggesting that this should now happen. Questions are being asked as to the systems available to validate the efficiency and quality of the support services in the
university. One outcome has been the review of the European Foundation for Quality Management assessment tool by a consortium of universities led by Sheffield Hallam University (see, for example, Sheffield Hallam University, 2003). The use of evidence based practice, such as piloting new methods, is acknowledged as a useful way of developing practical and effective methods. There was, however, scepticism from the managers about the methods employed, the evaluations and whether such methods can be used in other institutions.

Business Process Re-engineering methodology is also now being used at an institutional wide level in a number of institutions (see, for example, University of Bedfordshire) that were included in the research sample. This is particularly associated with the introduction of student record systems or, in one case, when a reorganisation was being considered. This methodology is proving to be very useful from the perspective of the number of non-academic managers that referred to the methodology in use in their institutions. Although, there is also some scepticism about the utility if there is a strict adherence to the methodology throughout the life of a change project. Scepticism and cynicism forms part of the working environment of the sector, it is a valued academic trait. Academic staff are seen as being resistant to a ‘one method fits all’ and this requires some sensitivity. Managers say that they and their staff criticise the application of such a policy and resist its implementation in overt and covert means.

The majority of the managers are not using business methods for their change projects as they tend to manage smaller scale projects and consider such methods to be of more use for larger scale projects such as the introduction of a new student record system. They are considered to be useful for institution wide initiatives and, therefore, are considered to be the domain of
senior management. The methods they use tend to be ones they have developed which are based on common sense (many of the managers refer to the use of common sense in management), their experience and evidence from their training or networking. One such method for effecting change, which a number of them use, is a review of a particular project after it has been conducted. This review is conducted with members of staff involved in delivering a service and the identification of issues arising from the delivery of that service which can be improved upon. Change in delivery of that service is then identified and the manager ensures that the change is implemented in time for the next delivery of that service. It is experiential learning and reflection on action and a managed activity. Managers who use this method consider that it is a necessary part of their management style and has been developed as it has proved a useful tool for improving practice.

Some managers suggest that the higher education and business sectors have major differences and attempts, therefore, to use business methods in the higher education sector are flawed. Although, as previously indicated, the issue of managerialism is not directly referred to by managers, the differences between the sectors is an issue as,

“…it would be trying to square very different philosophies….”

(14, 292-293)

Many of the managers believe that managers from the business sector would not be able to understand that there is an unwillingness to change underperforming areas of some institutions as changes, for example, to subject offerings may not be made on ethical and moral grounds. Managers consider that this sort of issue may not be tolerated in the business world. The
culture is different in higher education as different styles of management are required with varying tactics for a particular change depending on the issues involved. These managers say that managers who do not have the experience of working in the sector and come into higher education from the business environment have to be carefully mentored to ensure that they learn about the differences in culture and the ways to manage effectively. The lack of clarity and agreement over the primary function of higher education creates a real tension,

“…. is it making money or providing education…..”
(7, 436)

Managers believe that this is changing, as although around ten to fifteen years ago, the priority was education but this, it was suggested, has now changed, for the worse (Research diary notes, 15/12/03). In some institutions the cultural differences have changed as the philosophical differences have been eroded and the creation of the market and market oriented performance has changed the working environment and influenced practice. There is some evidence provided by managers that the higher education sector has become more business minded now,

“I would have said that three or four years ago I would have felt like a voice in the wilderness where as now it is the zeitgeist, part of the mainstream, so there has been a change particularly at this institution with basically a total change of people and attitudes at the top and…but it is probably only in line with the general trend across the sector…”
(13, 141-146)
However, many managers continue to highlight the differences between the higher education sector and business and suggested that they are still apparent,

“…..many parts of the sector are not embracing management concepts…..they are only just taking them seriously..”

(10, 316-318)

This manager added that the speed of change was still very slow in her institution despite reflecting that it had a very dynamic and supportive structure. Interestingly other managers from the same institution identified it as an innovative and creative institution that was always leading on change in the sector. This indicates that some universities, or departments, are becoming more businesslike than some others. This adds to the complexity, or the ‘mess’ of managing (see, for example, Ackoff, 1981) as it will not always be clear where or whether they are able to use business methods. Many of the managers indicated that the acceptance of business methods is not confined to modern universities. There is also the suggestion that institutions that may, at first glance, be perceived as being innovative and dynamic may still be quite slow, for some, when compared with the business sector.

An issue that makes an assessment of the effectiveness of the use of business methods problematic was identified,

“….change has been managed well because it has been shadowed by a proper risk management process throughout and a staff development process throughout so the staff development centre has been there for us during that process.”

(11, 243-246)
This manager added that there is a problem with his analysis, however, as he suggested,

“A lot of my colleagues may completely disagree with me having experienced the course portfolio review, but I would say that the change has been managed very effectively.”

(11, 246-249)

There is a lack of agreement on whether a change has been managed successfully or a method has been useful. This lack of objectivity of analysis provides a problem in assessing change and the methods employed. This lack of agreement extends to the styles and general cultures that exist in the sector and in individual institutions. Another example of this dilemma was provided over the issue of how the sector believes it is peculiar, although some managers suggest this may not be as peculiar as it believes it is as,

“…. two colleagues who have come in from outside the sector who says that maybe there are not the same issues but conversely in my attempted writing up for the leading edge programme I found plenty of quotes of the difficulty of managing universities or the oddity of the universities as institutions.”

(15, 283-288)

Alternatively,

“…..it is different…and that should be celebrated and not used as an anchor to chain us down……it is just totally different ….”

(18, 369-372)
Despite the identification of a wish to celebrate the differences, this manager typifies the problem of making generalizations from the data but although he appears to indicate that he is against the adoption of business methods, he added,

“….. there are advantages from a business perspective….and one of the things I am very keen to do with my colleagues is to have much more links with business and we are doing various things about that. So I am very keen to have links with business so long as those links do not become chains…..we have a lot to learn from business in so many ways…so I m very open to that and trying to manage that.”

(18, 405-411)

He provided a useful illustration of the problems associated with analysing the sector as, without these further reflections, it could be suggested that he was against business methods being adopted in his institution or the sector as a whole.

5.4 **Key issues concerning the ‘uniqueness’ of the sector**

The majority of the managers believe that the higher education sector is ‘unique’ and, more importantly, many of its staff believe it is. This requires careful consideration prior to the application of business methods to help manage change. There is some evidence that business terminology and methods are becoming more accepted and their use is increasingly evident in the sector although they appear to be being used and more accepted in some institutions rather than them all. The managers were using their experience and the assistance of advisors from the business world to help them manage change although they were not openly using business methods to effect change. What is noticeable is
that the middle managers and the literature (see, for example, Quinn, 1980 and Wilson, 1992) consider that there is not one right way to manage and, indeed, business methods have been criticised in the way that they have been developed in the business community (see, for example, Harrison and D’Vaz, 1995). They have also not been proven to be effective in managing change more effectively in the business community and have yet to be proven to be effective in the higher education sector. There is, again, a lack of evidence based practice and a need for more empirical based research on the utility of business methods in the English higher education sector with a real need for some success stories.

English higher education organisational characteristics and cultural issues were identified by middle managers as being important in managing change. They paradoxically are a source of frustration and motivation for many middle managers. They have learnt from their experience and advice from colleagues about how they should be addressed to ensure they are able to manage change. The organisational characteristics that impact on their management include the duality presented by the need to engage with a collegial form of decision making that requires a greater degree of consultation and persuasion than that required, according to them, in the business sector. They speak with envy that the business sector’s ‘command and control’ method of managing is not available to them.

The duality exists because there is also an executive structure although the line management command and control method of managing is not available to them. There is a lack of clarity about which decision making method they should use: the collegial committee based one; or the executive line management one. To
add this problem there are issues concerning the existence of a duality of academic staff and administrative staff structures as there are differences in the way the staff are managed and the managers advise that a middle manager needs to be aware of this if they are to be effective.

The problems associated with the culture and organisational issues include the lack of the possibility of managing academic staff, the academic contract and their divided loyalty. In addition there is a problem with managing professionals and ‘stars’, the ‘them and us’ culture and the complexity of the sector. This presents serious challenges for middle managers and they believe that managers from the business sector take some time to adjust to the requirements to manage effectively in the English higher education sector.

The managers acknowledge that management in the sector is becoming more professional and open to business methods, although there are some institutions that are slow in adopting this way of working. By professional they mean more competence in management and yet, what is striking here is that the profession of manager in the English higher education sector is not given the prominence it demands. Managers are responsible for large budgets and resources and yet the focus is still on the managers’ academic achievement and development. This is still a serious oversight by the sector and a serious risk and it is one that has been recognised in the literature (see, for example, Jarrett, 1985) and yet it has not been seriously addressed. The sector needs a more structured approach to developing the profession of management and raising its status.
The training needs that were identified were primarily in soft skills such as communication and in providing access to managers who had experienced the management of change of a variety of types of projects. The need is for the provision of case study, or evidence based practice. This would then enable support to be offered to other managers. A network or professionals or community of practice could be further developed. This network concept is one which the sector provides to some extent although managers believe that it should be enhanced structurally with more access to evidence based practice.
Chapter Six
Learning to manage in the English Higher Education Sector

6.1 Introduction

All the managers have developed a management style to manage effectively in the English Higher Education Sector. This style addresses the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the sector that they have identified as well as that of their institution. It also addresses the requirements for a communication strategy which they believe is the most important part of managing change in the sector. Each manager has developed this style according to their preferred learning style and learnt to manage in the English Higher Education Sector. Primarily this has been through experiential learning and not through professional qualifications or training.

One of the managers provided a very useful review of how he was managing a very complex change project. This review has been informed by his previous experience and addresses the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the English Higher Education sector and his institution’s organisation and culture. His whole focus is on communication, the challenges it presents, the decisions he has had to make and the reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action he has made. Unfortunately as with all the managers, none of this
Valuable evidence based practice has been written up and provided as advice for other practitioners. This review provides the evidence based practice that the managers say they need.

6.2 The development of a management style

The managers were asked questions about their biographical background, their training and their preferred learning style. They were also asked evaluative questions that were aimed at obtaining their own assessment of the value of their learning experience. The managers have used a wide variety of different developmental and support methods from which they learned how to lead and manage. These methods include:

- qualifications and formal academic training;
- training;
- experiential learning;
• and personal inquiry.

The managers say that they learn more effectively if the developmental and support methods available suit their preferred learning style. All managers refer to the utility of methods with more enthusiasm when this has been provided.

6.2.1 Qualifications and formal academic training

Unsurprisingly, managers in the sector are well qualified with first degrees, postgraduate degrees and professional qualifications. The academic managers indicate that they require qualifications for their academic roles and they say that they have the opportunity to study and obtain further qualifications as they work. For many this leads to research and qualifications with skill development in research methods as well as research degrees. These qualifications form part of the formal academic training referred to by the academic managers although this training is also received experientially as many of the managers refer to the academic skills that has traditionally been learnt while in the classroom or to their development of research methods through their practice of research.

The majority of the academic support managers are equally highly qualified. They have degrees and professional qualifications linked to their profession as well as possessing undergraduate degrees in a variety of subject disciplines. Many of these managers are as well qualified as the academic managers and many have well developed research skills and use these when they are considering issues that may arise prior to start of a change project.
However despite the evidence of a well qualified staff base across all the managers, they all refer to two distinctive groups of managers in the English Higher Education Sector and these are academic and non academic although other terms are occasionally used there is not the ‘quasi-academic territories’ (Whitchurch, 2006) that has been identified in the literature. That is the managers do not refer to a middle ground of managers that are neither academic or non academic with less of a distinction between the roles. The abundance of qualifications between academic and non academic staff does indicate, however, that there is a ‘community of professionals’ (Whitchurch, 2006) although the managers still consider there to be really two communities in each university. This forms part of the ‘them and us’ culture.

Many of the non academic managers have managerial qualifications as well as professional qualifications. Those with management qualifications also indicated that their experience of change management effectiveness had been positive. What is surprising is that these managers did not refer to their qualifications as being an important factor in their positive evaluations of managing change or in the development of their learning. They were, however, more aware of change theory and change methods and tools due to these programmes. One manager, who had been awarded a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degree, had studied modules which were management oriented and he said included the subject of leadership. Surprisingly he did not refer to this qualification when evaluating the support he had in effecting change and on his learning and preparation for managing change.
A general theme that was evident was that much of the learning received from the managers’ qualifications was considered by them to be ‘embedded’. This was a term used by many of the managers when asked if they could recall any particularly useful learning they had received from their qualifications. When they were specifically asked about change management training a few referred to some change management theory and, in particular, Lewin. None of these elaborated about the relative utility of this knowledge adding that it was ‘embedded’ rather than of any particular practical use.

6.2.2 Training

Surprisingly, for the educational sector, many of the managers have adopted a less structured approach to their management development and have not reviewed their qualifications portfolio with management, or, more specifically, the management of change as the focus. Many suggest that they believe they would be assisted in their management roles by a more focussed management training programme for higher education managers. In particular the development of soft skills is identified as important, although the issue of time and opportunity was recorded as being a reason why this need had not been addressed by them.

The majority of the managers said that they have not received any management training and of those that had, most referred to short course programmes provided by their institutions, professional associations or from their former employers outside the higher education sector. One manager, in a modern university, noted the irony in the fact that many business schools provide training and
consultancy for industry and yet do not provide it for their own staff,

“What I am saying is industry does this...the business schools are trying to teach this to industry ......the expertise is in the university ....and if this stuff is important then why are we not being taught it.”
(4, 251-253)

She added that,

“...what I am cynical about is that it seems to me that most universities are really very badly managed because they are managed by people who, like me, haven't done much management training. And we go off and tell all these companies that they ought to train managers, and they do, and they spend lots of money training managers and, presumably, it is all beneficial stuff. Whereas we get no management training whatsoever and yet we are supposed to do it and, alright I am seen as a successful manager and it sort of works, but maybe I could be a better manager with a bit more management training.”
(4, 202-210)

However, one manager really stood out from the others. She had made a conscious effort to develop her skills and keep them under review. She had completed a two-year programme for senior managers and yet had not received a qualification for this programme. She had embarked on such a course of action after reflecting on her skills development. She said,

“I did it because I felt very strongly that I did not know what I was doing and felt quite strongly that I went outside because there was
completely nothing in higher education that I could find anyway....and I knew that I needed quite a lot....”

(21, 70-73)

The emphasis was on people management and soft skills and this, she added, had been useful in helping her to develop an effective management style.

A typical response to the evaluation of management training programmes when asked to recall topics that were covered was,

“None whatsoever......but that is a factor of my recall not necessarily of its content. I can recall quite a bit of change management stuff in the senior management course and some random components of the course I can recall but better to say they were embedded.”

(6, 60 – 64)

As with the evaluation of qualifications the term ‘embedded’ was used by the majority of managers when they attempted to recall training themes. This indicates that such training has not provided methods and tools that they have subsequently used to any great extent. They have said that the main benefit that was provided by such training was the opportunity to have time to reflect and obtain an insight into some ‘case study’ experience and be able to network with other managers either within their institution or with managers from other institutions. The majority of managers suggested that the training they had received had not been memorable.
McCaffery (2004) suggests that the low esteem associated with management in the higher education sector is partly responsible for this lack of,

“…continuous professional development…“
(McCaffery, 2004, P294)

He writes that this is now changing but this commitment to personal development had been present in other professional groups and now was becoming more prevalent in the higher education sector. In his view it should not be an option but a lifetime obligation and responsibility and leadership should come from the manager as,

“.you cannot expect staff to do it if you do not do it yourself.”
(McCaffery, 2004, P294)

It was clear that most of the managers were not considering there lifelong professional development to include professional management training.

Nearly half of those managers that said that they had received management training and had a relevant management qualification were from a National Health Service background. This appears to indicate that other sectors may have a greater emphasis on professional management development and qualifications. It was also clear from some of the managers that some institutions place more emphasis on such development and qualifications than others.
6.2.3 Experiential learning and trying

All the managers identify work experience, particularly their management experience of managing change gained in the English Higher Education Sector, as being very important in their development. They have used this to help them manage change and develop what they consider an effective management style. Many refer to their management style being based on their experience and some even suggest that this is probably ‘everything’. This perception comes from their reflecting that management and managing involves using experience to be effective. This experience has been enhanced by the opportunity to manage projects and experience or try to implement change. One manager suggested that he would experiment, when it had all gone quiet, as he would,

“…poke a stick into a wasps’ nest to see what happens…..”
(6, 431)

This would enable change to occur and he added that he was continually trying out new ideas and methods of delivering services and reviewing his changes. He spoke about inviting business consultants into his department and reviewing business methods to review services and processes. This was not an unusual means of managing as many managers referred to accessing networks and experts to help with change.

Change projects such as curriculum design or moving offices were seen as valuable learning experiences as some of the managers had been able to develop a style of management that suits the sector as they experiment and try methods when managing such projects. They say that the sector has attributes that they have to
be aware of in order to manage effectively and this awareness comes, in part, from experience. This supports the literature where it is suggested that professional practitioners use experiential learning and reflective practice as a key part of their learning (see, for example, Schon, 1983 and 1987).

A summary of the work and management experience of the managers interviewed is provided in Table 6. Many managers are experienced managers who have worked in management and the higher education sector for a number of years. Many have some experience and in a few cases considerable experience, of other sectors and business environments. Some had only minimal experience in the higher education sector and more experience of other sectors. The managers who gave an unqualified positive evaluation of the way change projects had been managed in their current institutions were predominantly those who had over eleven years higher education experience. This is also the case with those who had had previous work experience in a sector other than education.

There appears to be less of a link between management experience and a positive evaluation of change projects. There were fewer managers who had over eleven years management experience saying that projects had been successful and there were managers with less than five years management experience who were saying that change projects had been successfully effected. The indication is that experience is more effective than other forms of learning in providing an effective change manager. This concept is supported by a leading higher education management commentator, when he states,
“No book can be a substitute for making mistakes and learning from them….since the process of reflection is the engine that drives performance improvement among professionals…..”
(Ramsden, 1998 P6)

Table 6 Fieldwork, Experience

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Some of the managers are very innovative and creative in accessing more experience, they will access colleagues in other
universities or outside the sector and use these contacts as consultants to advise on best practice. The use of experience is more important than other forms of learning as the managers consider that qualifications and training are not as useful. This may be a reason for the lack of personal development plans that was found in the review of the managers’ personal biographies. Another factor may be the issue of time as this was clearly identified as being an important resource that was in limited supply. The identification of preferred learning styles having an influence on the engagement of the manager with learning may also be important in influencing the use of particular learning methods and their perceived usefulness.

Many of the managers identify a requirement to understand and comprehend the history of an institution if change management is to be successful. This, together with experience and the self-reflection, help the individual to develop an effective management style for managing in the sector and in their institution. Self-reflection provides an opportunity, for example, to consider the development of a style when working with people and the learning gained from that experience is important,

“I am learning all the time…what specifically…..I am learning more and more …that in order to manage change .....you have to understand the people who would want to implement the change and the people who need the change...you almost need to mediate the change and my job as a middle manager...most of my jobs are to ensure that when the change is happening it does not look like upheaval....it feels and seems to be by both sides very positive...”

(3, 258 - 264)
This need to be able to understand the people affected by the change was important for the majority of the managers. They said that it can only really be effectively gained from the experience of working with people. Some change management writers have also identified this requirement as being important (see, for example, Quinn, Faerman, Thompson and McGrath, 2003, and McCaffery, 2004) as well as the need for effective managers to understand themselves as being crucial. The dimensions of self that are important include,

“…strengths, values, emotional intelligence….if you do not understand yourself and what motivates you it is really impossible to understand others.”

(Quinn, Faerman, Thompson and McGrath, 2003, P31)

McCaffery adds that there is also a need to understand the context in which the manager operates. He suggests that the trait of reflecting on leadership and, more specifically,

“…of how one should embrace a new role or tackle on existing role…”

(McCaffery, 2004, P92)

is not one found in higher education. However McCaffery’s research was based on the evidence gained from vice chancellors and chief executives, rather than middle managers.

The majority of the managers say that they do reflect on their roles and themselves as they do not have the opportunity for structured self-reflection. Thinking time or structured constructive reflective learning is rarely available due to the pressures of work and the time available for managers in the sector. However, many of the
managers say that they do reflect on their experiences though this may not be in a structured manner. McCaffery considers that reflection is more structured in the business sector. He adds that, where a new role may be created, the individual may have appointed mentors to help with their personal development. This was a structured approach to help with reflection. There were a few references to the use of mentors by the managers and these included formal and informal systems, while others used a wide a variety of other support methods for assistance. Those managers that said that they had experienced being mentored said that they had had a positive experience of this form of support but that it had mainly been provided when they were new to an institution. This was one of the only structured forms of reflection that was used by the managers. The only other method that was mentioned by a minority of managers was what they called ‘review meetings.’ These ‘review meetings’ were held after particular events such as a registration period and provided stakeholders with an opportunity to reflect on the services provided and recommend changes to services. They were considered to be very useful.

Some of the managers said that the experience of implementing change methods based on theory is also important. They referred to the benefits achieved from this exposure and to the practicalities of their application on particular projects. Experience in itself is not the only success factor for management and the management of change. Reflection on that experience and learning from this experience is important. There is evidence that change methods, such as Business Process Re-engineering (see, for example, Hammer and Champy, 1993), have been used and this has included the use of consultants to advise on the process. Although some managers are sceptical about business methods and their application in the sector, or in their institution, it is
important to note that some of them have reflected on the experience of using such tools and methods. They have found them to have a use if adapted for the sector and institution. McCaffery (2004) supports this concept of an awareness of management theory and the experience of its application as important. This he says can counter the common sense approaches. This awareness can be achieved by studying and gaining qualifications and training, although this was not recalled as being particularly useful by the managers. Self study or using other support methods such as their support networks or mentors is the main method the managers’ use.

Many managers refer to the fact that they will increasingly use the internet for general searches or self study for information and these media are normally accessed when the individual has limited knowledge of an area in which they have been given a task. These searches may include seeking information on the use of change management methods or project management. McCaffery also suggests that rationality will get a manager so far when managing change and that the real challenge is in supporting people and guiding them through the painful process. He adds that this awareness of theory, together with the experience of management and effective communication skills, form part of the development needs for a manager. It is enhanced by experience and reflection and developing skills and strategies for managing change,

“You need not only empathy, as we’ve said, but also to have sincerity and genuine respect, if you are to succeed.”
(McCaffery, 2004, P249)
This is supported by many of the managers and many use their acquired knowledge and understanding in communicating during change projects. They say that respect may be gained from those engaged in the change for the manager when they use the wealth of knowledge and experience they have acquired and apply it during change projects. Staff and colleagues involved in the change are usually informed by the manager of their relevant experience and knowledge during the communications associated with change. This helps to generate the respect required for the change to be successful.

Many of the managers have learnt from their experience of using change management methods and are aware of some of their practical limitations, especially when applied in the higher education sector. One manager provides a useful illustration where he suggests a classical change management process was followed. Stakeholder ‘buy in’ was sought and yet there were problems encountered as managers believed they had this ‘buy in’ only to discover that there was a willingness to say ‘yes’ and this may mean ‘not likely mate’. This particular manager believed that the selling of the change had to be more than just words; there has to be a concerted effort by managers to ensure that people really understand and work through all the issues about change. These lessons could be applicable to any sector although it was suggested that the higher education sector has staffing issues that are ‘unique’ as the concepts of the academic culture, dual organisational structures and collegiality with the need for consensual decision making are important.
6.2.4 Personal Inquiry

Personal inquiry is an important part of the management style of managers in informing them about issues connected with any change project. This relates to the academic training and skills that the majority of the managers have and their use of research skills is apparent. The need to be knowledgeable is an important part of planning for change and this is explored in more detail as part of communication and preparing for the implementation of change when the manager considered they needed to be better informed. This ensures that they are seen to ‘know what they are talking about’ and reassures stakeholders that are affected by the change.

6.3 Requirements for managing change in the higher education sector in England

The managers identify a number of factors that they feel are required to ensure that change is achieved in the higher education sector in England. These include:

- common sense;
- experience and awareness of the higher education organisational culture;
- preparation and planning;
- communication and consultation;
- leadership;
- flexibility;
- and resources.
6.3.1 Common sense

The majority of the managers believe that management theories, and many associated methods and tools, are really just common sense. Despite this observation there are indications that management and business methods and tools are more in evidence in the sector than ever before. There are managers who refer to initiatives where business and management consultants have been invited into institutions to provide insight into business methods and tools. The use of such methods and their effectiveness is not clear as many managers believe that common sense is still the most important factor in their experience. They believe they need to use this common sense for adaptation of the methods and tools so they can be useful in the sector. There is still some scepticism about the use of management methods and tools and particularly about their perceived acceptance by academic staff in the sector.

This scepticism indicates to the managers that common sense and the needs of the sector should prevail over business management or management in general. It is prevalent among the managers but more importantly it is the considered wisdom of their staff and staff in general, across their institutions. These staff may not be directly managed by the managers but are still crucial stakeholders as they may be responsible for either using or receiving the services developed by the managers themselves. They are also important as managers indicate that their standing with these colleagues is vital if they are to collectively deliver services or achieve targets for the institution. The management style of the manager and their standing becomes an important influence in the achievement and delivery of work. A manager said,
“Trimmed down common sense versions of the methodologies are being more accepted in other areas than just the IT (information technology) area...”

(13, 196 -199)

Some managers are more scathing in their criticism,

“.....I tend to be cynical about this......I think these are tools that people make money out of and sound highly plausible when you come across them but at the end of the day it comes down to common sense.....”

(16, 123 – 126)

This creates problems for those seeking to support managers with tools and methods. They will need to directly address the scepticism with practical examples of how they may or have worked in the sector. The use of case study material or evidence based practice would be a means to counter such scepticism.

Change projects are complex, dynamic and multi dimensional and provide the managers with a major challenge. This is primarily because time is in short supply. Actions that aim at improvements in management style are considered time consuming by the managers and may deter some from engaging in them. Managers have their general management tasks and day to day responsibilities and these inhibit the time available for personal development and the time available to manage change projects. This also inhibits the opportunity for individuals and practice to be developed effectively. Managers do not appear to have the time to reflect-on-action and may, therefore, not have the time to write up their experiences. Managers consequently rely on the common
sense that is developed and supported by their own personal experience and that of others if they choose to access them.

Paradoxically managers also suggest that common sense is in short supply in universities. This concept is supported in the recent literature on management and leadership in higher education (for example, McCaffery, 2004) but these assertions are difficult to judge as many managers are uncertain about the means to quantify and evaluate common sense and what therefore constitutes good management. One manager provided a useful commentary on this concept,

“….I guess we have always managed to use to a certain extent normal sensible skills and common sense generally to get to where we have done and whether we have been more successful or got to it as quickly as we might have done then I do not know.” (12, 86 - 89)

McCaffrey (2004) concluded that management continues to be viewed with suspicion and opposition within institutions and across the sector. He considered that this is due to the resistance, from some staff, to the acceptance that it is not a science but has elements of art and craft that are difficult to quantify. The majority of the managers observe that management skills and their development are still not afforded the priority required. McCaffery has addressed this issue in his Higher Education Management Handbook where he makes a request that this be addressed directly by institutions and individuals. He warns against common sense, saying it is useful but a reliance on this trait alone is potentially dangerous.
The provision of management development and skills training will need to be adapted or customised for the English Higher Education sector and the institution. The majority of the experienced managers understand that this is necessary. However, a few experienced managers said that they did note the complexity of change and its dynamism and the fact that change had to be contextualised and this was based on their learning from experience of working in a particular institution. This contextualisation enables them to use best practice and to adapt it for the project, the department, the institution and the sector. Many have been given the opportunity to manage change projects and have learnt from the experience. They have indicated that this has been useful and effective and provided some new opportunities for developing the services for which they are responsible. They assess and adapt methods based on their experience and their awareness of English Higher Educational organisational culture.

6.3.2 Experience and awareness of the higher education organisational culture

The managers that are self-aware and self-assured with a well-developed management style appeared more confident when they reflected on their experience of managing change (Research Diary notes, 16/9/07). They really believe that they are more effective in managing and achieving change than an inexperienced manager or a manager that is new to the sector. The managers who have not had the time to reflect on their practice say they are using common sense and their experience in a more tacit manner. The profession of manager in higher education is evolving (see, for example, McCaffery, 2004 and Whitchurch, 2006) and the skills that are required to manage successfully in institutions in the sector are being identified by research as there is an increasing
interest in supporting managers in a complex and evolving working environment. The development of the profession and evidence based practice is being addressed, although the managers add that there is no substitute for experiential learning.

All of the managers believe that there is no one simple model for the delivery of change or a prescribed method to ensure success. They use their experience and use a style that is effective from their point of view. They can, therefore, advise on guidelines to ensure a measure of success, but they know that every change and every institution is different and dynamic. This concept is supported by many of the writers on change and management and in particular by recent commentators on management in higher education in the United Kingdom (see, for example, McCaffery, 2004 and Lapworth, 2004) who suggest that,

“There is no exact method or prescribed formula in managing change; no pill which will guarantee success.”
(McCaffery, 2004, P243)

and,

“Institutions do indeed ‘work best when governance is seen as a partnership between the corporate and the collegial approaches, and where a sense of common purpose informs the balance of the relationship’ (Shattock, 2002, P243)”……
(Lapworth, 2004, P 313)

Lapworth added that there is no single best model although a broad model for shared governance between the academic and steering core can be devised that ensures that the best aspects of diversity and ‘heterogeneity’ are exploited for the institution.
Reference is made by McCaffery (2004) to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) review of Thames Valley University where the need for very careful and comprehensive planning is suggested as essential but that there are other needs as well such as,

“… effective leadership, prior infrastructural development, good communication, failsafe contingency plans, fully tested information systems, a realistic timetable and goodwill on the part of all staff. We believe that these were all prerequisites, not merely desirable options, the absence or failure of any one of which would be likely to jeopardise seriously a successful outcome.”
(McCaffery, 2004, P233)

This context, where management theory and methodology is evolving alongside the evolution of the environment, is one in which the managers have to adapt and change their management styles. It appears that the individual has to use support methods to ensure that they keep abreast of the current vogues as appropriate to their institution and the prevailing culture and style of management in which they work (Research Diary, 31/1/07) . The managers are aware that any model, theory or viewpoint of organisation in higher education would need to address the differences in style in different institutions,

“There was not the need when I was there to have lengthy consultation with staff and get ownership on particular issues you just got on and did it. I think that style is something I would never want to get back to...so I think that in terms of learning it is about my own personal style about how to roll out change and also about the need to plan more effectively and do proper risk analysis and viability analysis and that is something that I think
they need support in and I have identified that in my own senior management training programme and I think I want support in it.” (11, 256-266)

This manager identified his support requirements for managing in his institution by reflecting on his management style and the management style, or culture, of the institution in which he was employed. Management structures and styles are different in different institutions. In this example a manager has experienced a previous institution that had a different emphasis on policy and strategy and thereby a different management style and culture. An awareness of these cultural differences and an adaptation to these styles is required if the manager is to be effective in delivering change.

The managers are also aware of the requirement to learn and develop a personal style and McCaffery suggests emotional intelligence as being useful here, which he defined as the ability to define one’s feelings and those of others. The use of empathy together with an appropriate management style for the institution in which the manager works is important. He suggests,

“If you are to make the right impression then attention to your image is as critical as with any other aspect of your role…” (McCaffery, 2004, P97)

He adds that it is important to look the part and feel the part as it is to fit the part. These are issues concerning style and the development and adoption of a suitable style. However, none of the managers referred to the importance of emotional intelligence.
6.3.3 Preparation and planning

The requirement for a management style that addresses preparation and planning is also linked to communication. It also forms part of the organisation and culture of the sector and managers have learned, mainly from experience, to employ consultative management methods to develop and implement change. All of the managers have adopted and adapted their style of management and they use a variety of methods to gain support for a change project whether this be reading or accessing free consultancy. The methods used depend on the preferred learning styles of the individual managers and this presents a challenge to those seeking to help managers. It is recognised that there is a,

“… need to plan more effectively and do proper risk analysis and viability analysis…..”
(11, 263-264)

The emphasis though, is on,

“….assessing the possibilities and the ways they can be improved and coming up with a realistic route in which to change those things and at the same time managing expectations…..”
(13, 373 –376)

The managers recognised the need to be practical and use common sense in planning and in providing them with an overview of the issues that need to be addressed.

Some of the managers are aware that they may also utilise change management methodologies and management tools to facilitate this crucial planning activity. Some methodologies have
planning elements within them and offer the opportunity for the management style of higher education and the individual institutions to be addressed (see, for example, Business Process Re-engineering with its involvement of stakeholders, which addresses the need for a collegial approach). This is supported by researchers on higher education management (see, for example, Lapworth, 2004). There is a perception that there is greater management effectiveness where there is synergy between the corporate approach and the collegial approach in a form of partnership.

6.3.4 Communication and consultation

Many of the managers have learnt from change projects that there has been a lack of clarity on objectives in some institutions and that this had meant that communications with key stakeholders, such as staff, has not been totally honest. The managers were frustrated here. They said that their institution had had a history of trying to be too nice during communications and particularly during the consultation stage. This meant that the management of a project has become too woolly and there is a lack of clarity over objectives. This, they believed, is partly due to the lack of honesty from the University. There is a need for a brave person. This is compounded by the collegiate culture of institutions and committee-based decision-making. The managers identified that a stronger style of management is required as there is some frustration expressed at the institutional style that prevents honesty from the beginning.

Managers are sometimes unhappy with the style of management in the institution in which they work and this presents problems for the individual, and the institution. These frustrations also relate to
the time taken to make a decision or impose change. There were
some managers who suggested that this is a challenge they
relished while there were others who are frustrated and concerned
that this means that the pace of change is slow or, in the worst
cases, change is not possible.

6.3.5 Leadership

Many of the managers identified leadership as important and said
it was required to counter the lack of honesty and the need for
clarity of objectives. This may come from the manager as well as
from their line manager or a more senior manager. It commences
with the preparation of the project and continues throughout the
implementation phase of the project. The manager is not able to
manage and implement change without clear and decisive
leadership. It is leadership that provides the clarity of vision for the
change and consistency of message,

“I think that managers, particularly senior managers, should have
a clear view of where you are going to go and just do it….if people
don’t like it then tough….and stick with it.”

(5, 239-241)

The need for leadership that includes perseverance has been
discovered by the managers as they reflect on their experience of
change. There is frustration when projects have not succeeded
because of a lack of leadership. The need for perseverance and to
‘stick with it’ is also described as a ‘stubborn streak’ or a ‘never
give up’ attitude. The language used by managers is one of
stubborn determination in spite of setbacks and opposition or
unforeseen obstacles. This is supported by a later dialogue with
managers,
“Change needs strong leadership. Willingness to take calculated risk and a resilience robustness and resourcefulness to hold one’s nerve if the politics get messy.”
(Research diary, 6/4/04)

Opposition or resistance to change is recognised by experienced managers as always a possibility. They acknowledge that whatever inclusive style and powers of persuasion a manager may have and use, it may not be enough to convince all of the recipients of change, whether staff or customers, that the change is of some benefit. The language used by the majority of managers becomes very emotive as there is the idea that some changes need to be forced through for the greater good. These managers acknowledge that some individuals may not be persuadable in the context of a consensual management style and attempts to gain ‘buy in’ can be a waste of time and a more directive style of management may be required. This view was perhaps, surprisingly, expressed by managers based in the old university sector where the concept of consensual management might be thought to be more prevalent.

The requirement for leadership also refers to the Vice Chancellor and/or chief executive or line manager of the manager. This leadership ensures that the necessary vision and impetus or motivation is provided for the organisation to change. It is almost as if the manager is not solely in control of their destiny here as they are ‘in the middle’. Leadership is required to manage the change as part of a large organisation although there was also the suggestion from many of the managers that the management of successful change may be in spite of the leadership or the way it was introduced. These managers refer to the leadership that they require from senior managers and also the leadership that they
need to provide in order for change to be effected. Effective leadership (McCaffery, 2004) is based on a style that has to be appropriate to the situation and the institutional style. The need to lead at the manager level includes the recognition that decision making rests with those individuals and,

“In the end the buck stops here and I have to make a decision of what I think will be best for the department.”
(27, 238-239)

Many of the managers recognise the need for effective and appropriate leadership, i.e. appropriate to the environment and the institution. However, leadership is not always given the right priority. Candid and open reflections were made in reference to leadership to the extent that some thought that they were unsure as to the requirements or, indeed, the definition of leadership. These views suggest that there may be a problem in the provision of leadership within the sector. This is also suggested by the literature (see, for example, Ramsden, 1998),

“…seriously underestimated the power of leadership in higher education. It is perhaps the most practical and cost effective strategy known to organisations that are struggling to survive and to make progress through troubled waters.”
(Ramsden, 1998, P3)

Some of the managers indicate this is a particular issue in their institutions as the requirement for experience and leadership does not appear to be a priority in the appointment of senior managers. Ramsden adds,
“…there is still far too much unprofessional academic leadership, of both these kinds – excessively lax and responsive, or dumbly aggressive and assertive – at all levels of universities.”
(Ramsden, 1998, P4)

Where leadership is provided and is structured: the emphasis is on a very formal structured approach to leadership and management with a very supportive style. The identification of the requirement for leadership to effect change is linked to the key concept of communication. Managers are aware of their role here and the need to ensure that the leadership they provide is informed,

“…..there is more stuff like you are given appropriate leadership…..relevant communication both downwards and upwards particularly if you have got sponsorship stakeholders whether that be your line manager or head of school or college registrar or whoever…..you have got to ensure that you have the appropriate background to what you are trying to do….you have got to ensure that there is an awareness with the staff members of what the end aim is….and you are confident that if it is the staff who are involved in the change that you have the staff to carry it out…..”
(28, 292-300)

Leadership is required, although the interpretation of what is good and effective leadership is problematic. This presents challenges for those seeking to provide practical guidance to managers.
6.3.6 Flexibility

Paradoxically, with the requirement for leadership and perseverance, there is also the need for flexibility. Some of the managers feel that this is a necessity if the manager is to be effective in a working environment that is in a constant state of flux. This includes the need to accept an element of compromise on occasion. The search for an ideal solution may be futile or at least not worth the effort. A less experienced manager may not understand this pragmatic approach and still seek the ideal solution and method to effect change although,

“The 100% solution is not on…it just has to be good enough.”

(6, 324)

It was also suggested that in working in a collegiate style (see, for example, Bennett, Crawford and Riches, 1992) the need for compromise was paramount and that the leader’s role was to provide direction within this management culture. The emphasis is on flexibility when working with individuals and this was identified,

“You have got to have quite a high level of flexibility particularly when you are dealing with individuals…and you cannot rely wholeheartedly, 100%, on everyone being on board what you are trying to propose…”

(28, 283-285)

He added that there is a need for persistence to ensure that the resistance is overcome although other managers said that they use flexibility and decide on whether they need to persist and overcome resistance. The manager will need to overcome opposition but will use their common sense or tacit knowledge to
gauge when to be flexible and when to be stubborn. McCaffery supports the concept that,

“Significant change depends on dialogue and commitment as much as imagination and perseverance”
(McCaffery, 2004, P243)

These are elements of style clearly identified by many managers and are associated with what they consider are the prerequisites for effective change. They have learnt this from experience rather than from training or other forms of development.

6.3.7 Resources

Resources are also clearly identified as being important in the evaluation of managing change effectively by the majority of the managers. This requirement may not just be for the life of the project but also after it has ostensibly been completed. The resources identified were not solely financial they included staff and training. The costs, in terms of time, and,

“….the other thing is to try and anticipate practical needs that may help to deal with the change….so if there is going to have to be….I do not know…..some temp staff because there is going to be a load of work…..or there is going to need to be training programme or whatever……because again that helps in a practical way and it also helps in morale way ……people know that they are going to get some help by either the training or getting some people in and it makes people less anxious….about
Some of the managers consider that change has only ever been successful because of the professionalism of the staff and not solely due to the way it has been introduced. In terms of resources the requirement is for a professional and dedicated workforce. With this is still the believe that management is all about resources and that their availability is a critical factor in achieving successful change. Many of the managers believe that without resources they cannot deliver their core services and any cut has a serious affect on quality. They added that the availability of sufficient resources eased the management of change.

The scope of the planned change is also seen as an important determinant of time and resources required,

“The environment has to be right for change. It all depends on the scope of the change.....I found a nice little diagram which sort of suggested that the scope...the smaller the scope of the change the less people affected the easier to implement and the shorter time to implement but obviously the scale of the change gets bigger the more people affected the longer it takes...”

In addition, the availability of resources which are appropriate to effect the change provides staff with an assurance that there is leadership which has planned the change and that they, the staff, are being supported through the implementation of the change. The management style required is one of a managed or facilitative approach that is conducive to the prevailing style in the institution
and to ensure managers need to reassure stakeholders that sufficient resources are available to deliver any change.

6.4 A review of a consultative change methodology and all inclusive communication strategy used in the English Higher Education Sector

One manager provided a useful review of an inclusive consultative strategy he was employing in a change project. This illustrates the issues that a manager needs to address using such a change methodology and the issues and decision making he has considered as part of his communication strategy. It indicates a type of management style which addresses the requirements of managing in the sector. The review forms part of the ‘case study’ or ‘streetwise’ advice that the managers said they need access to. The review concerns a curriculum review and, as the manager advised, it had to address the demands of the external stakeholder: nursing. This included commissioners of the education as well as several other key stakeholders. Prior to commencing the project he had identified the key stakeholders:

- the academic staff within his university;
- the students;
- and NHS commissioners.

The manager’s management style, developed principally he said from his experience, provided a rich source for his professional practice. During the project he uses his own support network that includes a friend and they have also contacted other stakeholders including:
other university nursing departments offering similar programmes;

professionals in the hospital trusts;

and the contracting authorities.

The review provides evidence that the variety of stakeholders with their varying needs complicates the consultative process. The manager knows he requires a considered approach to be adopted. His strategy was determined by his experience, as he had conducted a similar exercise once before and had learned from the experience. The preliminary discussions he had had with his friend within his department prior to the start of the project also helped shape his strategy. Preliminary discussions were also held with other colleagues as well as they were invited in to meetings either in a considered approach or if they happened to be passing. These meetings consisted of at least three to four hour informal discussions. They took place over a number of weeks in various venues, sometimes in a public house. The manager produced draft plans and relationship diagrams. These diagrams formed the basis of the consultative material that was sent out to a small sample of stakeholders for their comments in a preliminary consultation to help prepare for the more inclusive consultation. The manager and his friend then analysed the responses received from this initial consultation and devised material in the form of pictures and boxes for the main consultative exercise. This is evidence of learning-in-action and learning from reflection-on-action that forms part of the tacit knowledge of the professional (Schon, 1983). He was matter of fact about the process but does have a process or method unlike some management professionals Schon identified.
The manager provided an overall structure for the curriculum in his initial consultative material and stressed that he did not provide the basics of what is to be taught in individual lectures. This particular level of detail was managed by the lecturing staff and they are then able to own the programme by having some control. This permitted the academic staff to have their freedom and be part of the consultative process. He defined his role in the process as providing guidance on the development of the ‘gross overall structure’ and not getting into the detail at individual subject levels. He acknowledged the complexity of the process he was following and identified it as a big change project. Part of the complexity comes from the need to manage the three main constituencies (the lecturers; the students; and the NHS commissioners). He knew he had to keep all three happy and has realised, from his experience, he couldn’t succeed in this task all of the time as there were difficult decisions that had to be made. One example of this conflict, he reflected, was on the requirement for attendance by the students. The students only wished to attend a maximum of two days a week, while there were requirements from the professional bodies that required two or even three times as much. The added complication here was that the students saw fellow university students attending less than half of their required time. The professional demands won through on this area, as it had in the past. The problem he noted was that the decision was not made on the basis of keeping all the stakeholders happy. It was based on a hierarchy of stakeholders where some stakeholders had more influence. The power of these stakeholders ensures that the manager is,

“….not entirely in control of the change……and of course from the managerial point of view that is always a bit scary. You would like to be because you would like to have your hands on some of the
levers.....but of course some of the levers are being pulled by other people mainly for reasons of money as much as anything.....so I have got to start with them as a given.....”
(24, 240-245)

Although the manager was not directly concerned with the detail at subject level in the curriculum review he determined his role was still to check that the staff had included all the ‘stuff’ that he wanted,

“..... my role is very much drawing the picture so here is a box......fill that box with information.....”
(24, 146-147)

This, he said, was because he does not have the experience and knowledge to complete these tasks as he does not have the subject knowledge for all areas of the curriculum. This reliance on the expertise of colleagues for their input in change is a common to many of the middle manager’s reflections. It requires some delegation and a reliance on the professionalism of colleagues. It also requires some careful management with the manager providing guidance as to the overall aim of the project and careful monitoring to ensure the project remains on schedule and conforms to planned parameters. The manager conducting the curriculum review said his role is to check elements are included,

“... whether they want it in there or not.....and change management is a really good example.....I will insist, in the nicest possible way of course.....that is in there....”
(24, 156-157)
Chapter Six – Learning to Manage in the English Higher Education Sector

An idea of the size of this consultative exercise is provided by the manager as he explained in the interview that he had produced two consultative documents and sent each of them out to over a thousand stakeholders. In his opinion he thought he would be lucky if he receives more than thirty responses although he recognised that the challenge would come if he received thirty very different responses. This was a potential problem due to the nature of the diversity of the group which he called an extremely ‘heterogeneous group’. All of them have their own vested interests and he believed that this was understandable. Consulting so widely had created an additional difficulty as if he received more than a hundred responses, which could also be widely different, he would then have an analysis challenge. He was toying with whether there was a model that he could use as a way of managing the process and was researching this when he was interviewed.

The difficulty was that the enterprise was so big and,

“….if you are the manager of thirty people who are all doing the same thing….say you are managing an office and you are working in an industry…..presumably you are working in the same direction…..so what you are aiming for is similar…..and that makes change management in that sense so much easier because you are managing people in the same direction….”

(24, 431-436)

He said that he was,

“…..trying to manage where there is no possibility what so ever of everybody going in the same direction….is just not going to happen….so in that sense all of the models….and it is just about
all of them…..that talk about shared aims are kind of redundant because this is just not going to happen…..”
(24, 436-440)

One idea he had to solve this difficulty, or ‘mess’, was to break the consultation into discreet parts and in that way they could be more readily identified as moving in a similar direction. He concludes that,

“…my big challenge in managing change and that is the sheer complexity of it.”
(24, 447)

The need to make sense of the responses from the consultation and then act upon them was an area which has been commented upon by a number of researchers on management in the higher education sector,

“We must listen and consult; but we must have the wisdom to know when the advice we receive is correct.”
(Paul Ramsden, 1998, P9)

This manager also was using some tools to help him with the management of the project. He was using a project plan in diagrammatic form, a Gantt chart. He published this to provide assistance in managing the process that identified timescales and milestone dates for key activities. This included dates by which responses had to be received in order for analysis to be made prior to finalising the curriculum framework in time for it to be provided for approval by the university prior to the start of the academic session. All of this had to be completed with the prospect of holiday periods and the ongoing work of the university.
The use of the Gantt chart as a project management plan was seen as important as it provided a tool that enables all managers to be able to understand their role and involvement at key times and he used the chart to provide updates on progress at key stages in the life of the project. He knew, from his previous experience, that there was always some slippage and he allowed for this in his project plan. This was due to his awareness of the complexities involved in engaging with the different constituencies. Academic staff were given strict deadlines and some had complained about the short timescale in which they were able to respond, the manager replied with a,

“…tough “shit” if you have not done this by the end of April then you are never going to do it…..”

(24, 338-339)

The use of vernacular language and the passionate manner in which he stressed the phrase indicated the strength of feeling that he had on this issue (Research diary notes, 30/03/04.)

He recognised that there was a need to be strong in managing these particular consultations as the responses were part of the initial consultative process and were needed to inform the larger consultation. There is a potential issue with the management of this process and that is the need to ensure that all stakeholders remain convinced that their views are being sought in order to influence the outcome and that it is not consultation because that is what you have to do and that having consulted them you will ignore them anyway. The problem here was that he acknowledged that he will have to ignore some of them anyway. He reflected that he had had one ‘absurd’ response from one lecturer who wanted to teach ‘wall to wall’ sociology. The manager believed that he will ignore this
response as it comes from an extreme viewpoint and the bottom line is that the University has only a certain amount of hours in which to teach the programmes and has plenty of other ‘stuff to pack in’. He said that this was a problem of any consultative exercise as the only responses he may end with may be the ‘extreme minority views’ and this may ‘polarise’ findings in one particular direction. He considered the issues here and paused and said that, to date, this has not happened with his current exercise.

The learning this manager has had from the experience of managing change has enabled him to be more aware this time round. This is evidence of his learning-on-reflection (Schon, 1983). One issue the manager had identified was that the first time he managed a review of the curriculum he found he had been ‘conned’ by some people who had just ‘rebadged the old stuff’ when they claimed they were rewriting it. This time round the manager was adamant that he will not permit this to happen again. This learning has made him more ‘streetwise’. The manager also said that in the first review he had no status as he was a lecturer on the same scale as many of his colleagues and without a ‘track record’. Now he was Head of Pre-Registration Nursing and on a more senior grade to that of his colleagues and had much more authority in running the process. He said he knew a major overhaul was required and he was determined that this will be conducted throughout the whole curriculum.

The manager added that he also had experience of managing change in the Health Service. This was where he had managed a change when in professional practice in charge of staff for the first time. He had initiated a change and then referred to the first lesson he ever learnt about change management. This, he said, was straight from the pages of Lewin. He was one of the few managers
who referred to Lewin and said he had not frozen the change and, as a result, a few days after having introduced a change the nurses had reverted to the way they had always done things prior to the change.

The manager also was, he said, a lecturer on change and the management of change. This meant that he was aware of the process, the issues associated with the theory of change and some of the key requirements for managing change in practice. He had also learnt from his practice and said he now was teaching his students that the key requirement was to freeze the change. He now was sure that his authority and experience will ensure that he will not be ‘conned’ again and the process will be better. He was searching for better processes and better means of working using his common sense along the way.

The manager insisted this curriculum review will be different and more thorough than the previous one he was responsible for and that was due to his having some authority and yet, paradoxically, ‘bugger all power’. He laughed when he reflected on this situation and suggested,

“…..that actually makes the management more difficult…because I have got to depend on the management below to get their staff to implement what we are coming up with….so if I cannot get the line managers to come with me then I am sunk….”

(24, 636-639)

Despite his new grade he lamented one key issue he had learnt from managing in the sector and that was that he could not instruct staff as they might be able to do in the business sector. This was because if you were,
“….. a manager that is in charge of everything…..you know it might make facilitating change a little bit easier……”

(24, 645-647)

His language and disposition here was one of frustration and a longing for more control to ensure that he was the manager with power and authority. He appeared to wish for ‘command and control’ of the Classical School of organisation (see, for example, Taylor, 1911) and yet paradoxically he enjoyed and, even, positively relished the challenge (Research diary notes, 30/03/04).

He also reflected that he had reached his current position within the institution without being trained on the tools for managing change and that this was not an unusual situation for a manager in the sector. This is not ideal as he suggests he had, and is, learning from experience and continues to develop his management style without much supported training. He suggests that this was one reason that he embarked upon staff development, in the form of a professional qualification (type of award not recorded as this may compromise anonymity). He had used a project plan in diagrammatic form, a Gantt chart. He published this to provide assistance in managing the process that identified timescales and milestone dates for key activities. This included dates by which responses had to be received in order for analysis to be made prior to finalising the curriculum framework in time for it to be provided for approval by the university prior to the start of the academic session. All of this had to be completed with the prospect of holiday periods and the ongoing work of the university. The use of the Gantt chart as a project management plan was seen as important as it provided a tool that enables all managers to be able to understand their role and involvement at key times and he used the chart to provide updates
on progress at key stages in the life of the project. He knew, from his previous experience, that there was always some slippage and he allowed for this in his project plan. This was due to his awareness of the complexities involved in engaging with the different constituencies. Academic staff were given strict deadlines and some had complained about the short timescale in which they were able to respond, the manager replied with a,

“…tough “shit” if you have not done this by the end of April then you are never going to do it…..”

(24, 338-339)

The use of vernacular language and the passionate manner in which he stressed the phrase indicated the strength of feeling that he had on this issue (Research diary notes, 30/03/04.)

An additional issue he considered from his experience was,

“One of the things that I have discovered as I have been doing my (type of award not recorded as this may compromise anonymity)….and I have talked to more and more people about this because I think that it is key…..but I think that it is very different depending on where you go…..in order to be a successful manager in this university…..it is really helpful if you know the history…..”

(24, 713-718)

He was amazed that some of this history dates from the nineteenth century and that surprisingly it was still important as there was always a lot of baggage that comes with it and this continued as his current department was made up of a former department from within the university and staff from hospital schools of nursing and,
“……even though we successfully merged ten years ago.....the history is still there......there are still little groupings of people that are historical groupings of people who came from the same place....and there is still animosity because this group does not get on with that group because they never did and there are people who were forced to merge who did not want to merge.....”

(24, 743-748)

The review provides a useful illustration of the importance of the core categories arising from the middle managers interviews. There is a need to ensure that it is managed with key decisions being taken at appropriate times. The manager provides leadership, flexibility and oversees the use of resources but has been given these by the institution and his immediate manager and this will ensure that the project is given an opportunity to succeed. His management style has been developed with the use of reflection-on-action and he appears to be confident and self-assured (Research diary notes, 30/03/04) this time round and more so than he inferred he was the first time he conducted such a review. He had not considered writing up this experience and providing the opportunity for other managers to be informed of his learning.

6.5 Key issues concerning learning to manage in the English Higher Education Sector

The managers, whatever their experience, are still learning and primarily are using their work experience and common sense to inform their management style. The learning they have received from their qualifications and training has, they say, been ‘embedded’. This is their own term and primarily means that their recollection and evaluation indicates that it has not been of practical value. The most practical development they receive from
training and development is the opportunity to network with fellow professionals and a time to think and reflect on practice. They are not using the tools and methods that formed part of this learning in their roles as middle managers. A small minority of the managers are searching for tools and methods to help them and are experimenting with them. The learning from this experience is not written up by them to form part of what they say they would like, evidence based practice with lessons learnt from a practitioner's point of view and an access to the practitioner to provide 'streetwise' advice if they need it.

It was noticeable that the major issue here is, once again, time as the opportunity to experiment is limited as the middle manager does not possess an abundance of this precious resource. This means that the majority of managers use the style that suits them most and that appears to include reflection-in-action rather than reflection-on-action methods. The structured methods of reflecting and supporting managers were not, according to the managers, as evident in the higher education sector as in the business sector. There were examples available such as mentoring and review meetings but they were not used to any great extent and the managers were envious of the more structured approach they believed occurred in the business sector. The opportunity to review actions in a structured manner with colleagues is not available due to the time constraint and this seriously limits the development of the profession of management in the sector. Ultimately, what is noticeable, is the managers are restricted in the opportunity to improve their practice and that of the profession. The pressures on them mean that creative ways of providing support are used, such as free consultancy and those wishing to support them need to consider the best way to provide help without burdening them with too much time out.
Each manager is aware of the requirements for managing change in the English Higher Education Sector. This includes using common sense to manage change and the challenges of addressing the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the sector as well as that of the individual institution. The need to address planning, communication, leadership and resources for any change project to become effective has also been learnt from experience. Many of these requirements are referred to in the literature that provides guidance on managing change in the business sector (see, for example, Kotter and Cohen, 2002). The experience of how they are addressed and applied in a practical situation and to a change project has been gained by the managers by ‘getting on with it’ rather than learning about how to do it. The application of theory and reflection upon it is not evident and the development of the profession of managing in the sector is therefore limited and restricted. This is being addressed by professional associations and organisations such as the Leadership Foundation and the Change Academy. They need, however, to be aware of the time limitation for middle managers and the way they learn and develop.

The review of a curriculum review that was managed by one of the managers provides a very good illustration of how a middle manager has adopted and adapted his style to manage change. He, in his reflections, provides some very good guidance on how he has had to address particular issues that he was confronted with. He also provides an insight into how he has learnt from his past experience. This is just what many of the middle managers said they would like to be able to have to help them in managing change in their roles: evidence based practice from the practitioner’s point of view.
Chapter Seven
Findings and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The research aim was to examine how middle managers manage change in the higher education sector in England. Conducting this research has been demanding, stimulating, rewarding and very enjoyable. All the managers involved were open, honest, hard working and committed. This has generated a very rich picture of the everyday working life of the middle manager, particularly in the context of managing change. Some of this supports the current literature in this area, which is itself still in its infancy. However, it also raises new issues. Much of the evidence suggests that management in the English higher education sector is a very complex and demanding task which is made more challenging because of the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the sector and the individual institution. This idea of a ‘unique’ organisation and culture is found in the current literature, although the middle managers believe that their working environment is now more complex and ever changing. They said that they were struggling to deliver services with limited resources and are asked to manage change as well. They are also responsible for managing and developing services in a very public arena. Excellent customer service is demanded and instant access expected. They said that new ways of working are being introduced and this requires them to be rethinking the way they do things and to be flexible. All of this is time consuming and stressful for them. Therefore, anyone wishing to support them should ensure that they do not increase middle managers’ workload and concentrate on providing what they want in the form they want it. In general they asked for access to experienced practitioners and accounts of evidence based practice.
This chapter provides a summary of the findings and recommendations of the research. The findings and recommendations have implications for practitioners and prospective practitioners, the practitioners’ line managers and the professional associations, consultants and staff development managers who seek to support practitioners.

7.2 Fulfilling the aims and objectives of the research

The research was undertaken because there was a limited amount of empirically based research available on how managers manage and effect change in the higher education sector in England. Exploring how middle managers manage and, in particular, their experience of managing change, might provide important evidence and could inform the development of guidelines and other supportive materials. An important objective was therefore to provide an empirically based analysis that would offer an insight into the working environment in which managers operate. The primary objective was to produce an answer to the question: ‘how do middle managers manage change in English universities?’ The research has been successful in answering this question and a number of related questions: specifically, what are the primary challenges of managing change in this context, what knowledge and skills are required to address them, and how do managers acquire these? The focus was on the middle manager and, in particular, the individual who has to effect change and the methods they have employed.

The qualitative research process worked well and the use of semi structured interviews proved to be an effective method for obtaining useful data, although there were limitations in terms of the size and composition of the sample. Although there are always limitations, or
strengths and weaknesses, associated with sampling, the sample used in this research was quite small in proportion to the total population of middle managers. Within the sample there were also more non academic managers than academic managers and only a relatively small number of institutions were included. Additional issues that may be of concern are that the sample included middle managers who were willing to take part and discuss their reflections in an open and honest manner. There was no opportunity to interview middle managers who did not want to take part and might offer very different views or to consider how the middle managers actually had managed change projects. These issues affect the generalisability and reliability of the findings and, the recommendations. During the analysis it was determined that this could, in part, be addressed by utilising the opportunities that arose for the discussion of the findings in dialogues with more practitioners. This, it was felt, may provide some reassurance that the sample had provided findings that had some resonance with middle managers working in the English higher education sector.

The transcribing of the interviews in terms of the specific method, proved to be very useful as I was able to gain an understanding of the data and make notes about particular issues, such as the way in which things were said. The use of software to improve the collation and analysis process has been particularly useful as it has enabled a vast amount of data to be stored, accessed and reviewed. The process has also been aided with the use of a research diary and it has, in itself, involved the development of key skills such as self reflection and self analysis. The research has produced a very rich account of the everyday world of the middle manager.
The dissemination of findings and recommendations that has to date mainly been conducted by subsequent dialogues with other middle managers in the English higher education sector using the research results and recommendations has been a very fruitful exercise. These dialogues have indicated that middle managers have related to the research findings. The description of the working environment and the challenges middle managers face has resonated with working managers. They have, in particular, welcomed the proposal to improve practice and access to experienced practitioners and, unsurprisingly, reacted very favourably to the recommendation that they be given more time to manage change and reflect on their practice. They welcomed the recommendation for more advice and support in managing communication more effectively.

The major contribution of the research is to answer the research question and to ensure that answers are generated to a range of questions about practice. Middle managers say they work in a very public arena and are under great pressure to provide their services as well as manage change projects. Three overarching themes were identified and they are communication, managing in the ‘unique’ culture and organisation of the higher education sector and learning to manage in the English higher education sector. These themes are inter related as, for example, the middle managers identified communication as an important part of managing change. They said that it is also necessary to address the ‘unique’ culture and organisation of higher education institutions in England and this had primarily been learnt from their experience of managing in the sector. There are practical recommendations for practitioners and those seeking to support them.
7.3 The literature on change and managing in higher education

The literature on higher education management has only recently been generated from the perspective of leading and managing in the sector in England. However, since this research was started there has been an increasing interest in supporting managers and the development of management as a profession in the sector. The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and the Higher Education Academy Change Academy have been created as organisations the aim of which is to provide events and support for management development and change projects and disseminate good practice across the sector (see the websites of the Leadership Foundation: http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/; and the Change Academy: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/changeacademy.htm.).

The Change Academy provides opportunities for project teams to conduct change projects and use the support of experts in managed action research projects. Marshall (2007), the editor of the book that includes reviews of change projects, identified the,

“….pointers for planning and delivering change in higher education (derived from the 25 evaluation reports)…”

(Marshall. 2007, P 5)

and concluded that they were ‘similar’ to those identified ten years earlier by ‘Kanter and Kotter in the private sector’. Consequently, there is an increasing recognition by senior and middle managers in the sector that management is a professional activity that requires development and support. However there is still evidence that management is not accepted by some key stakeholders in the sector, particularly the academic staff (see, for example, ‘The In-betweeners’, Tahir, The Times Higher 10/07/08). The middle managers that were involved in this research believe that
management is still problematic and identify a ‘them and us’ duality when they refer to academic and non-academic staff. The research indicates that those seeking to develop the profession of management in the English higher education sector need to address this and clarify the management role and the means to manage effectively. This can be achieved with the commissioning of more research into practice and in particular the publication of accounts of practice.

7.4 The findings and recommendations

The evidence from the research is that middle managers in the English higher education sector are managing change as part of their middle management role. Change is an important part of their everyday work and much of what they do is about managing change. Managing change is embedded within their practice and their general work. They do not get the opportunity to manage a change project with time allocated for the project. This creates a challenge for them as they have to provide their services as well as deliver change. Many of the managers believe this is ‘unique’ to the sector as other sectors may employ managers to manage the change. This may be due to the lack of resource, the idea that management as a profession has not be thought through or the belief that business methods and tools have to be adapted by practitioners in the sector as part of the normal working practice. Whatever the rationale the middle manager appears to be caught in the middle and yet many managers appear to enjoy their work and embrace the challenge of managing change as part of their roles. They talk openly and honestly about the task with interest and enthusiasm. Many managers are proud of their achievements in managing change and speak of particular examples where they achieved change despite being caught in the ‘middle’ between senior management and the requirement to achieve change quickly.
and the stakeholders who are primarily staff and students who request more time to adjust and accept the change. Many of these managers may not want the challenge taken away from them.

Much of their work, including managing change, concerns face to face interactions with staff and other key stakeholders, such as students, and they rely on their experience to manage this key activity effectively. Middle managers do not currently use standard business methods and tools that have been accepted as being effective for managing change in The English higher education sector. Some are not keen to import them. Some are, however, experimenting with them and adapting them for use in their institutions when they have the time. Many middle managers are more sceptical about the utility and effectiveness of such methods and tools in the sector and, in particular, about their use in their institution and consider the application of ‘common sense’ to be far more important.

Middle managers considered managing change as projects with stages. There is a preliminary stage when they consider what their needs are and this may involve considerable personal research depending on whether they have experience of the type of change project they are to undertake. This research is conducted as they know they need to be knowledgeable about the change and the issues that may arise as the stakeholders in English higher education institutions are themselves very knowledgeable and demand answers to difficult questions. These stakeholders may include staff that report to the middle manager. This could be a model that could be further developed for the sector. The academic and non academic managers, many of whom are highly academically qualified, conduct this research using their skills in similar ways. There are no discernable differences within the
sample in the style of middle managers whether they are from an academic or non academic department and background or, indeed, within the sector between the varied types of higher education institutions. They use their support network, which may include colleagues in their institutions, in other institutions, ‘experts’, friends and spouses. This ‘free consultancy’ provides managers with the opportunity for guidance and advice to help them in their decision making. In some cases it may be a ‘sounding board’ for ideas. However, when such ‘consultancy’ is sought appears to be dependent on the style of the manager and their needs. The middle managers manage projects addressing common challenges in similar ways.

Middle managers considered the challenges they face when they are managing change and identified the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the English higher education sector as a key challenge. It inhibits the development of the profession of management. The sector is ‘unique’ partly because the staff believed it to be and they required a different style of management from that in other sectors. This includes: a duality of organisational structures with committee and executive decision making; collegiality that provides for a consensual and quasi democratic decision making; academic contracts that have terms and conditions that make it difficult to line manage and supervise; academic loyalty that is not to the institution but to the subject; a ‘them and us’ culture between academic and non academic staff; a complex stakeholder base; a complex sector with a wide variety of institutions with differing missions; and a philosophy that is different from any other sector based upon the freedom to be different and critical. The middle managers also say they have to primarily learn from their own experience how to manage effectively in the sector and in their institutions and how to address the ‘unique’ organisation and culture. The qualifications
and training they have received have not provided them with tools that they could use to help them manage change in the sector. They feel the need to be ‘streetwise’ and as they can gain some of this from ‘free consultancy’ and identify this form of support as their primary need.

The middle managers identified changes that have occurred in the sector such as the introduction of business terminology and tools to some institutions but recognise that there is still resistance to change and the use of business methods particularly from ‘old school academics’. This is another key challenge for them. These ‘old school academics’ were defined as academic staff that refused to accept the imposition of management and change and were more prominent in subject areas such as philosophy. The middle managers have primarily learnt how to manage this resistance from experience using a consensual style of management and their common sense to adapt tools and terminology for their use. However, they said they are frustrated at their lack of authority when managing a project and the time it takes. There are important messages here concerning the role of the manager, the status of the profession of management in the English higher education sector and its future development.

The middle managers considered communication as the most important solution or response for the challenges they face when managing change in the English higher education sector. Paradoxically communication is also a challenge as well as a solution and this may form the basis of a sixth paradox to the five identified in the literature (see Dauphinais et al, 1996). The middle managers recognised that it was time consuming and difficult to get right and yet was an essential. Despite recent developments in communication, such as email, the key method of communicating
was still two way meetings with the stakeholders affected by the proposed change. This provides the opportunity for messages to be clarified and rumours to be managed. Communication was clearly identified as being all about dealing with people. Middle managers understood that change was scary for people and many resisted it. Consequently, those seeking to support middle managers should focus on people skills and areas such as the management of difficult conversations. This should include the use of examples of good practice that has proved to be effective in the sector. Similarly, those appointing middle managers may consider the criteria for the role and include people skills as a key requisite.

The need for skill development was identified as important. When considering their training and development the middle managers said that they had primarily learnt how to manage from their experience and mainly used common sense when problem solving and to help them with their decision making. The middle managers confirmed that academic achievements rather than management skills and experience have been the dominant selection criteria for senior managers and this does not appear to have significantly changed since the publication of the report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities (1985). Furthermore, it appears that, once appointed, middle managers do not invest time in their own management development to any great extent and do not have the opportunity for the kind of structured ‘reflection-in-action’ that may assist in the development of management practice. The demands on their time limit the opportunity to improve their practice. Time is very important to them and they identify the development of an evidence base of practice as an area that they would find useful. The middle managers said they used the ‘free consultancy’ provided to them according to their support needs and their own support network. The opportunity to
access experienced colleagues for additional ‘free consultancy’ when they feel they need it would be advantageous and may help develop the profession of manager in the sector. Paradoxically, the majority of middle managers do not have the time to reflect on their actions and provide this formally for their colleagues. This inhibits the development and dissemination of good practice. It would appear that those seeking to provide support for middle managers should focus on providing some relief from their burdensome workload to provide an opportunity for structured reflection. This could include the requirement to provide project end reports that would help in the development of English Higher Education evidence based practice. The emphasis should be on the practical issues and the advice has to be readily accessible.

Despite the growing interest in recent years in the training and development of leadership and management in the English higher education sector (see, for example, the founding of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and the Higher Education Academy Change Academy and the work of professional associations such as the Association of University Administrators) the research indicates that this is still in its infancy. That is because the profession of manager is not, according to the middle managers, recognised by some of the key stakeholders in the sector, the ‘old school academics’. The ‘professionalisation’ of the profession of manager has to be further supported and developed. This ‘professionalisation’ could be reinforced with the development of a professional association for academic managers that supported the development of an evidence base for practice and created and maintained a professional network of practitioners. This association could then support training and development and consider offering an accredited training programme such as that provided by the AUA for administrative managers. In the literature, there is a constant
reference to the management of people and, in particular, managing academics as being like ‘herding cats’ (Bennis, 1997). The analogy suggests that this may not be possible. This is not, however, how Bennis conceived the analogy. He believed, from his experienced of leading and managing academics in the United States of America, that leading and managing people in many sectors now involved ‘respect’ for,

“…individual rights, tastes, opinions, and idiosyncrasies...”
(Bennis, 1997, P7)

He suggested that while managing people was like herding cats and they will not allow themselves to be herded they may,

“...be coaxed, cajoled, persuaded, adored, and gently led. With cats, keep in mind, the dictum is milk before meat. Any leader who dares to think of himself or herself as the ‘cats meow’ will likely be hissed and clawed. The recipe calls for more catnip, less catnap”
(Bennis, 1997, P7)

Bennis considered that the emphasis all over the world now was on the individual. The evidence from this research suggests that the focus should now be on how to develop the profession of ‘cat herder’.

Communication and managing people takes a considerable amount of time and yet forms part of the solution in effecting change in the English higher education sector. Middle managers managing change know that it is all about communication but are aware that they face problems as managing communication is demanding in terms of time and this is the resource that they most lack. It is evident that this lack of time inhibits the opportunity to develop their
practice. They are struggling to manage their services and also manage change. Given this picture of the reality of managing change, what might be the key recommendations for those who are trying to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the sector? The next three sections will look in turn at how first, the practitioners, second their managers, and lastly those agencies working with the sector could help.

7.4.1 The Practitioner

Hopefully, practising managers will recognise this picture of their working lives. It was clear from my subsequent dialogues with middle managers working in the sector that many do so (see, for example, Research diary notes, 4/4/07). It may help them understand some of the stresses and strains they experience, and they may find it encouraging simply to know that others are also struggling with similar issues. Clearly managers have little time for day to day reflection but the provision of an account of their environment may help them identify which parts of managing change are causing them the most problems. There are key messages here from experienced managers, for example about the importance of communication, which may help others with their project planning.

Change that the middle managers have to effect can be viewed as projects with stages and communication is a very important part of each stage. A communication strategy for managing change should therefore be developed that uses every media available to promote the change. Middle managers should advise stakeholders of the consultation process, although the primary focus should be on meetings and, in particular, two way communication. There is a need for,
“All around clear communication.”
(10, 340)

and,

“It can be managed but it does take time…..as a busy manager….it is all about making time….people want access to you and they want to talk to you…..they have personal questions about their future role…they want to talk one to one…they do not want to be on the end of an email…..it is time consuming.”
(10, 276-277)

However, managers are aware that common sense is king as,

“….we have always managed to use to a certain extent normal sensible skills and common sense generally to get to where we have done and whether we have been more successful or got to it as quickly as we might have done then I do not know.”
(12, 86 - 89)

Middle manager practitioners should be aware that it may not be possible to get it right and this may help to relieve some of the burden of management.

There are also some interesting ideas about how managers are seeking to support and develop their practice. Their use of peers, for example, may encourage others to reach out within and beyond their own institution for advice and guidance.
The sector is very open and middle managers are very willing to share their experiences and, although they have limitations on their time, the majority appear to be willing to advise fellow practitioners of their experience. The sector is also very challenging as the staff that work in it believe it to be ‘unique’ and it does have many organisation and cultural features that have to be addressed if a middle manager is going to be successful. This includes issues of the duality of collegial and executive decision making as well as a ‘them and us’ duality of academics and non academic staff. There are staff in the sector that are considered by the managers as ‘stars’ and these are identified as key stakeholders and mainly eminent academic staff. They may resist change if they are not managed in a particular manner and may provide influential resistance to change that may derail the project if not managed sensitively. The managers suggested that these staff can be managed if approached in the right way. Peers can assist middle managers with advice on how this can be done and this may form part of the ‘herding of cats’.

The discussion on the relatively scarce but growing use of business methods in the sector may stimulate managers to take a view on what they might usefully have in their own work and in their institution. There is some evidence, see for example Chapter Five, that to be effective such methods will need to be adapted for the higher education environment. The sector is not, according to the middle managers, averse to business methods, although there are still areas that resist them and, indeed any change, and the methods employed to help effect the change. This resistance is most evident in some institutions, some subject areas and by some academic ‘stars’. However, the managers believed that resistance can be overcome through discussion and the utilisation of tools by experienced middle managers who are able to adapt them.
Those aspiring to be middle managers might like to look at this picture and consider if this role would suit them and how well suited they are to the role. There are real pressures on managers to perform their day jobs and manage change as well. They need to be able to deal with people and manage communications and there are real challenges to overcome, such as the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the sector. Many of the middle managers in the research are motivated, although some of them are also frustrated and realise that some of the styles of leadership and management that may exist in their institution are not suited to their style.

The advice for aspiring managers from this research should be for them to consider how to start building a network of support and to focus on the development of their communication and people skills if they are to be successful. This is an important indicator on how to start their personal development and they should prepare a development plan. The main objective should be to develop the people skills although they also need to learn how to be an effective manager in the English higher education sector by building an awareness of its ‘unique’ organisation and culture. They need to know how to be ‘streetwise’ and knowledgeable about the sector.

7.4.2 The practitioners’ line manager: senior managers

There are many key messages here for those managing middle managers. Perhaps the most important is to recognise that the place of the middle manager in the organisation is one that is squeezed from both the top and bottom and this has the potential to cause considerable strain. This is exacerbated when the middle manager has no dedicated space for managing change projects. They are simply squeezed into an already busy work schedule. If there is an opportunity to provide some relief in order for them to be
able to manage change more effectively then this should be provided.

In so far as senior managers are responsible for the development and training of middle managers there are some very interesting conclusions. Clearly from what the managers said the majority did not have either the time or the inclination to approach this through ‘book learning’. One issue here might be the amount and complexity of management literature. The middle managers said that they did, however, want to learn of practical examples and case studies presented in an accessible way. This included examples of where the change was not a success. Perhaps one of the most important messages here is that many middle managers found networking useful and senior managers might want to ensure that their middle managers have both internal and external networks of support. The senior manager could ensure that contacts in other institutions are provided and encourage visits to other institutions by their staff as well as encouraging them to become members of professional associations.

The opportunity to reflect on practice could also be supported by senior managers with some assistance in a structured manner. This could be with the use of professional facilitators with the objective of providing written evidence of their learning and a focus on development objectives. The middle managers in the research have learnt from their experience but regretted that they did not have the time to reflect and consider how they might improve their practice in a more focussed manner.
7.4.3 Professional associations, consultants and staff development managers

The number of organisations seeking to enhance management practice in the sector has grown over the last few years. These are sector based and the research indicates that this is important as it will help address the ‘unique’ organisation and culture. These include the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and the Higher Education Academy Change Academy, as well as professional organisations such as the Association of University Administrators, the Heads of University Administration Association and the Academic Registrar’s Council.

Hopefully, these research findings will provide some guidance about what managers need in terms of training and development. In terms of content, it is clear it is the soft ‘people’ skills that managers need and want to learn. At the moment these are largely being learned through experience, but there is the possibility that more structured input could speed up this learning process. Coaching on managing difficult conversations and presenting plans for change could help some middle managers. The development of evidence base for practice would be useful. This would require some reflection on action by practitioners facilitated by the line managers and professional associations. This should be in the form of reviews of case studies and the development of an effective communication strategies that have been applied in the sector with an assessment of their effectiveness.

In terms of style, the focus needs to be on ‘professionalising’ higher education management. The development of the profession for managing academic staff, the ‘stars’ and the ‘herding of cats’ is important with and acknowledgement that managing in the sector is
like no other. It is ‘unique’ and requires an awareness of the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the sector. The management of the collegial aspects of decision making and the ‘stars’ in the sector is important if change is to be managed more effectively and efficiently. This could be directed by an organisation such as the Leadership Foundation and the professionalization could include the development of a professional association for academic managers. The Foundation could provide the focus for the development of evidence base for practice and create and maintain a professional network of practitioners. It could then support training and development and consider offering an accredited training programme such as that provided by the AUA. The support provided in terms of accessibility should not be limited to articles and books but made available in other imaginative forms to provide insights into issues. Other forms that may be useful should be explored and this may include the internet and new communication methods such as ‘blogs’ (a web diary), ‘Facebook’ (a social networking website) or ‘wikis’ (a collaborative website). Every opportunity to enhance the support should be used and developed, including the establishment of networks and support groups.

7.5 Further work

It is clear from the research that further work is required to provide an evidence base practice and make this accessible for the practitioner. This research supports the findings of the more recent literature (see, for example, Hunt, Bromage and Tomkinson, 2006) as change in the higher education context can be achieved that addresses the ‘unique’ organisation and culture of the sector. The requirement is to work collegially in,
“…mutual education and learning...whereby the case for change is made with reference to high quality evidence, and the opinions of stakeholding academics are taken into account in the spirit of open debate.”

(Tomkinson, 2006, P10)

The focus for this work should be on the review of practice from the practitioner’s perspective and this should not just include successful change projects but also unsuccessful ones. This is what the middle managers said they would value most as it would enhance the support available for them. The challenge here is to motivate the practitioners and enable them to have the time to provide this evidence base.

It could be that the most useful literature on managing change is that that provides practical advice on the steps required to effect change such as that provided by Kotter and Cohen (2002) or that provided more latterly by practitioners from business (see, for example, Ventris, 2004) or from practitioners from the English higher education sector (see, for example, Tomkinson, 2005). This could be reviewed with practitioners in dialogues to help motivate them to review their own practice and also identify more good practice guidelines. The provision of practical assistance based upon actual cases with the responsible manager’s contact details is requested by managers in the research. Some of this is being provided (see, for example, Hunt, Bromage and Tomkinson, 2006), although the need is for information on a broader range of change projects. The work of the Change Academy, with its emphasis on providing support for teams and publishing reflections on their experiences (Marshall, 2007), together with the work of professional associations such as the Association of University Administrators,
will help provide managers with some of the knowledge they require.

The dissemination of these research findings through the delivery of seminars at the Association of University Administrators (AUA) annual conferences and other good practice events such as the Southern University Management Services (SUMS) Participative Process Review Support Group will help develop support for managers. A Special Interest Group for the AUA has been established based upon this research on managing change in higher education that will create a support network, provide assistance in writing up practice and use new media such as a Wiki to provide practical support for managers managing change in the sector. Preliminary support for the group has been good with ten middle managers from ten institutions wishing to actively participate and contribute and this Group was launched very successfully in July 2008. Three of these managers are presenting a working session on communication at the AUA annual conference in 2009 and plan to promote the work of the Group further with publications using the AUA and other publications. A guide on managing communications is planned.

Work with the Leadership Foundation is being explored to consider if a professional network of academic middle managers might be created and a professional association developed. This work is in its infancy at present as initial contacts have been made with the Foundation’s lead consultant of change and the Programme Director for the Head of Department training programme.
7.6 Concluding comments

On March 3 2008 the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills emphasised the importance of universities as they are worth £50 billion adding,

“Never have universities been more important to Britain. They unlock the talents of students; promote shared values; extend opportunities to an increasingly wide range of people; drive local and national growth; provide a highly skilled workforce; provide innovative world beating products and services; creates jobs; and support communities”.
(Department for Education and Skills, P3, 2008)

The work of a middle manager is clearly crucial in providing services and effecting change. The evidence from this research is that it is a very demanding role with many competing demands and it is important that the profession is developed and appropriate support provided. Access to resources and supportive leadership is important as are perseverance and awareness. The process is complex and the work is challenging. As a leading satirist suggests,

“….being a midlevel manager is like being a fisherman, except instead of having an efficient fishing tool, such as a fishing pole or a net or dynamite, you have to talk fish into surrendering. Sometimes a flying fish will accidentally jump into your boat, at which point you can write a bestselling management book about it. The rest of the time you end up shouting slogans about team work and excellence into the water and hoping for the best.”
(Scott Adams, 2003, P90)
The challenge is to bring order to the complexity of managing and leading change whatever the scope of the proposed change. This is mainly achieved through experiential learning as,

“…probably each of us has to go through this process until we find our own management style, though hopefully with fewer iterations”. (Tomkinson, 2007, P7)

The further development of the profession of management in the sector would aid in unravelling this complexity. The provision of support materials that provide guidance that the individual manager can access according to their identified learning styles would also help. The research indicates that a complete solution may not be possible so an acknowledgement that any initiative may only support 80% of managers is important. Also any support should be provided in as many imaginative ways as possible. This may change over time as new means of communicating are developed however the 100% solution may never be achieved and managers need to strive to improve but realise, like this manager that,

“I think you can’t get it right………. At one point I decided to stop castigating myself that we were not communicating enough or appropriately and just got on with it…”
(6, 422-426)

As Bennis (1997) concluded leaders and managers need to stop trying to ‘herd cats’, they should be ‘humble’ and start,

‘…building trust and mutual respect. Your cats will respond. They will sense your purpose, keep your business purring, and even kill your rats.”
(Bennis, 1997, P8)
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UNIVERSITY OF LUTON - Change Management – Good Management Project funded by HEFCE

Semi Structured Interview
This interview has been established to explore change management and the management of change in the higher education sector. This will include assessing the utility of web based tools developed by the partners in the good management project to aid in the successful management of change and also to consider their utility i.e. whether managers will use the tool and identify factors which may help managers in using such tools.

If you have any queries please contact me by email at: chris.sarchet@luton.ac.uk

Results of the evaluation will be to all interviewees for further comment prior to publication and as a result we would like to know your name and email address

Section A Interviewee biographical information
Interviewee: Name .................................................................
Job Title
E mail address

Interviewer Name .................................................................
Date of Interview
Venue
1. In what capacity are you employed by the University?
   e.g. head of department, non academic etc

2. How long have you been in this post?

3. How long have you worked in the University sector?

4. How long have you worked in a management position?
5 Details of Previous work experience prior to University and higher education?

6 Qualifications (including professional qualifications) ?

7 What management training have you received?

8 What training or experience of change management have you received?
9. And, if you have received training in change management what topics were covered?

Section B Management style and method of working

10. Where do you go for help with work tasks? E.g. web, line manager, colleagues, mentor, friend or other…

11. How did they advise you…how did they approach change?

12. Have you knowledge of and use BPR, TQM, etc (please specify)
Section C Managing Change

13 How useful do you feel management tools are (e.g. TQM etc) in a practical situation?

Please circle the number which matches your view most closely where 1 represents not useful at all and 10 represents very useful

| Not Useful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Very Useful |

Comments

Section D Support methods for management

14 What is your preferred learning style? E.g. reading, interactive, workshops, mentoring or other?
15 Have you or Would you search the internet for help and if so how useful has/is a general search for help?

Section E Evaluation of web site tool

Provide quick sight of web site and review

16 Is this a useful tool which you can find useful and If a web site is useful what sort of detail would you find useful ?
17 Do you now, after seeing such a support tool, consider tools useful to managers and if so what format is best – eg. Academic and theoretical or just recipes?

Section F Review of change managed by interviewee

18 Have you had experience of managing change in higher education and if so give examples?
19 How effective has this change been implemented?

20 What are the key things you have learnt about managing change, based on this experience?

Section G Improvement of tools

21 How can the web site or other tools become more useful to managers in higher education?
22. Are there any factors you feel a manager has to be aware of for managing change effectively in the higher education sector?

23. Are there any other issues you wish to comment on relating to change management or the management of change which have not been covered in this interview?

24. Please note the emphasis in this research is on the development of theory from the research and as such this may mean that a further interview may be required and also a draft report for comment from the interviewees will you be willing to be re-interviewed and receive documentation for comments in the future. Are you willing to be contacted again and participate?
Dear ....

nice to talk to you yesterday and many thanks for the offer of assistance in arranging interviews for my DBA project on change management in February 2004.

Ideally I would like to interview four/five staff on one day at one per hour regarding change management and these staff should be middle managers e.g. academic heads of department and heads of support departments such as yourself (if you include yourself around lunchtime we can grab a bite afterwards).

I have established a semi structured interview which should last thirty to forty minutes maximum. The interviews are strictly confidential and non attributable and all results will be held generally to the level of institution e.g. head of ------ in pre 1992, Russell group University, post 1992 institution etc.

The theme is change management and assessing awareness and training and experience and personal methods. This is to support my research for my DBA (Doctorate in Business Administration).

I shall be taping interviews if agreeable to staff but they will remain an aid to my research and not be used in any other way.

If you need any further information please let me know.