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**Doctorate of Professional Studies by Public Works**

**Developing Professional HR Practice and Teaching in the  
University Sector**

**Adam Palmer BA MSc PGCE FCIPD**

**Submission for the award of Doctor of Professional  
Studies by Public Works**

**National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships**

**Middlesex University**

**March 2007**

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to record by gratitude to Alison for always believing in my ability to succeed in my life and my work. I thank all those collaborative colleagues who have been an inspiration to me and whose contribution is also represented and acknowledged in many of the public works accompanying this submission. I record here also my appreciation of the advice, encouragement and attention I have received from Dr. Carol Costley and Dr. Peter Critten of the Work Based Learning Centre, Middlesex University.

Finally I dedicate this to my late father, Tony Palmer (1922-2006), who introduced me to the pleasures of reading and learning.

**Doctorate of Professional Studies by Public Works**

**Submission for the award of Doctor of Professional Studies**

**Developing Professional HR Practice and Teaching in the University Sector**

**By Adam Palmer**

**Principal Lecturer Human Resource Management**

**Southampton Business School**

**Abstract**

This submission for the award of Doctor of Professional Studies comprises a collection of the candidate's published work and selected strategy papers with an accompanying context statement.

The key methodology used for constructing this submission is reflective practice and represents further developments in the writer's thinking through the process of compiling this context statement. The author has been introduced to recent work by Whitehead and McNiff(2006) that gives him confidence that he can make this claim for a doctoral level award based on his learning journey thus far. In this sense it marks a new beginning in the way in which he will develop his approach to research. Significantly being able to put the "I" into this work, as demonstrated from page 5 onwards, has

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had a liberating effect on his writing. The publications presented however demonstrate the employment of a range of methodologies including action research, postal surveys with quantitative analysis, qualitative approaches using structured interviews and focus groups.

This statement and the accompanying examples of public works is a narrative that traces the career path of a human resource professional, academic and practitioner as he moves from being a practitioner, to being an academic leader and teacher, to being a senior policy maker and then returning to his current role as an academic and teacher. He shares an emerging body of theory supported by a range of selected publications.

The central theme of this account is how an HR practitioner tries to live out his values and beliefs as he seeks to influence the practice and development of both his colleagues and students within a rapidly changing world. Some of these changes come from the external environment, for example, the reducing resources threatening the viability of universities coping with large numbers of students. Other changes are within the writer himself as he moves from being an academic to being a policy maker and demonstrates what McNiff and Whitehead (2006) would term his “living contradictions”. The story tells how he has attempted to address this contradiction through maintaining the integrity of his values by working through a range of issues that are the subject of supporting publications:

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- How to cope with increasing number of students without compromising quality
- How can academics best prepare and support students independent study
- How to ensure learning resources are allocated in a fair and equitable way
- How to support staff and colleagues in encouraging them to disseminate good practice
- How to use case studies as a method for both inquiry and development of practice in the context of supporting the human resource function in small business
- How to create HR strategy in a collaborative and inclusive way
- How to encourage employment diversity in the small business sector
- How to develop rewards for teachers that also have benefits for student learning.

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### Appendix 1 Selected Published work and Public Works

Paper 1 “Cosyfeet” with Ashok Ranchhod, *Small Business Enterprise and Development Journal*. Vol2.2, p77-92, 1995.

Paper 2 “Doing more with less: Improving the quality of the first year experience on business undergraduate courses within the context of a diminishing resource base”, with Neil Harris, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Vol 19.3 Autumn, p63-74, 1995.

Paper 3 “Best foot forward- a strategy review”, with Ashok Ranchhod *Management Case Quarterly*. Vol 1.3 p14-23, 1995.

Paper 4 “Human Resource Management in Small firms: keeping it strictly informal”, with Graham Benmore, *Small business and Enterprise Development Journal*. Vol3.3, November, p109 -118, 1996.

Paper 5 “Preparing students for the Honours Challenge” with Neil Harris, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Vol20.3, Autumn p31-44, 1996.

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Paper 6 “Critical Thinking in UK and USA undergraduate business courses: implications for course design” with Neil Harris and Diana Lawson in: *Improving student learning through course design*. Oxford : OCSLD. pp277-290, 1997.

Paper 7 “A Review of Strategies for Professional Development in Higher Education” with Neil Harris, *Perspectives The Teaching and Learning Journal of Southampton Institute* vol 10 p40-45, 1998.

Paper 8 “Mitarbeiterführung und personalmanagement in kienunternehmen” with Graham Benmore *Zetschrift fur Kleinund Mittelunternehmen*. Vol1.46, Jahrgang, p1-15, 1998.

Paper 9 “A collaborative approach to improving students' critical thinking in the UK and the USA” with Neil Harris and Diana Lawson, in: *Innovation in Business Education: theory and practice*. Dordrecht, London, Boston : Kluwer. p229-245, 1998.

Paper 10 “Promoting the Human Element in Resource Based Learning for Undergraduate Business Education Programmes” with Neil Harris and Roger Ottewill, in: *Educational Innovation in Economics and Business V*. Dordrecht, London, Boston : Kluwer. p291-306, 2000.

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Paper 11 “Human Resource Strategy” Southampton Institute 2000

Paper 12 “Personnel Service Annual Report” *HR subcommittee paper 01/HR/30*, Southampton Institute, 2001

Paper 13 “Policy and Guidelines on Consultancy and Other External Professional Activities P-42” <http://staff.solent.ac.uk/default.asp> Accessed 14<sup>th</sup> June 2006

Paper 14 “ 360 degree appraisal scheme for SMT” *HR subcommittee paper 03/HR/14*, Southampton Institute, 2003

Paper 15 “ Linking Student Learning to Information” with Van Gore, *Policy and Resources Committee paper 02/PRC/56* Southampton Institute, 2002.

Paper 16 “Analysis of responses to Linking Student Learning to Information proposal” *Policy and Resources Committee paper 02/PRC/71* Southampton Institute, 2002.

Paper 17 “*Perceptions of rewarding excellence in teaching: carrots or sticks*”, with Roz Collins, available at: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources)

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**Paper18 “Identifying ways forward in diversity within SMEs” with Patricia Park, Jackie Wright and Nigel Bradley, *A report written for Southampton City Council of research carried out by Southampton Business School and Diversity Dynamics under the European Social Fund Article 6 project to develop an Integrated Employment Strategy for Southampton 2005.***

**Available at [http://www.invest-in-southampton.co.uk/images/FinalReportart6\\_tcm29-137205.pdf](http://www.invest-in-southampton.co.uk/images/FinalReportart6_tcm29-137205.pdf)**

**Paper 19“Developing Diversity in SMEs in the Health and Social Care sector and Business Support Industries: collaboration between a city, a business school and employers” with Nigel Bradley *Social Responsibility Journal* Vol.2 No.2 2006.**

**Paper 20 “Rewarding Teaching Excellence: Motivation and the Scholarship of Teaching”, with Roz Collins, *Journal of Further and Higher Education* vol.30, No.2 pp193-205, 2006.**

**Appendix 2 Co-Authors’ permission statements**

**Appendix 3 email correspondence from staff**

**Appendix 4 email correspondence from students**

## 1. Introduction and candidate profile

I currently hold the post of Principal Lecturer in Human Resource Management at Southampton Solent University Business School. I took up this appointment after spending nearly 8 years as Human Resources Director at the university. Since returning to an academic role in 2004 I have been the lead researcher and author in a funded project culminating in the report Prof Patricia Park, Adam Palmer, Nigel Bradley and Jackie Wright (2004) *Southampton City Council: Identifying ways forward in developing diversity within SMEs*. Southampton Business School. In the same year I had a joint authored paper published on the Higher Education website Roz Collins and Adam Palmer (2004) *Perceptions of rewarding excellence in teaching: carrots or sticks*. Available at: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources). This year I have a paper published in the *Journal of Social Responsibility*, "Developing Diversity in SMEs in the Health and Social Care sector and Business Support Industries: collaboration between a city, a business school and employers" , Adam Palmer and Nigel Bradley(2006). Finally I have an article in the May issue of the *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Adam Palmer and Roz Collins (2006) *Perceptions of Rewarding excellence in teaching: motivation and the scholarship of teaching*.

I have recently been working on a new project concerning the links between advanced scholarship and teaching; this has led to further publications. I

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**teach the Managing Change unit on the MBA and MA International Business, Managing Diversity on the MA Human Resource Management, Contemporary HR Issues to BA Human Resource Management students and Human Resource Management to 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate business students. I supervise MBA and Human Resource Management dissertations. I am external examiner at Anglia Ruskin University for the Human Resource modules on their postgraduate management programmes.**

**In my role as Director of Human Resources I was involved in the planning and implementation of major strategic change. I was responsible for developing the university's first HR strategy and its implementation. I was a full member of the senior management team and the strategic planning team. I oversaw two major reorganisations one of the faculties in 2000 and another of the central services in 2002. This involved some very difficult issues of redundancy and redeployment of staff at all levels. At the same time I led my department of some 20 staff in a complete revision and updating of the majority of personnel policies. Externally I was an active member of the SCOP Personnel Directors' steering group and contributed to national working groups on employer and union issues. In addition I was invited to undertake a number of external consultancy projects for other institutions.**

**Previously I held a number of academic posts at all levels from lecturer to deputy head and acting head of the business and management divisions with my current employer. In these I was responsible for major curriculum and**

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**new course development in addition to management of staff. In that period I started to engage in some scholarly activity within my discipline and in the area of subject-based pedagogy, which as can be seen culminated in a number of publications. Much of the work could be described as action research and reflective practice. At that time I was also invited to contribute to validations at other universities in the UK and abroad. I was an external examiner for the University of Surrey and Suffolk College.**

## **2. THE MAKING OF A PROFESSIONAL**

My very early experiences of learning were very positive. My father read widely and I followed suit, so much so that I was reprimanded in primary school for reading when I should have been doing other work! I did well though generally at this stage and won a prize for progress when I left. Secondary education was at a boarding school and was probably one of the most unhappy periods of my life. I worked hard initially but experienced a difficult adolescence in that environment only just achieving enough O levels to go on to further education. I had already decided before taking my exams that I did not want to stay at school and thought that I would obtain a vocational qualification in business studies at college and find a job. Many of my fellow pupils thought I was mad, mainly because they were destined for “top” university places by staying on and thought this was the natural order of things. I had already concluded that I was not “university” material.

Another strand of my earlier development that had a far more positive effect was that I was obsessed with rock music and had developed reasonable skill as a guitarist, having taught myself since the age of 12. As soon as I left school I was invited to play lead guitar in a band by my older brother. This was the start of something very important to me that has stayed with me for the rest of my life. Performing in public, contributing ideas and writing songs that other people were interested in was a boost to my confidence. Through music I met many other musicians, some who have become lifelong friends,



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who were also interested in pursuing other more conventional careers or going to university. We were all developing our own ideas on what was going on in the world and becoming politically aware. I became interested in issues and the different perspectives people had which were far more extensive than I had ever experienced in secondary education. I became good friends with an economics lecturer from the local university who engaged me in some highly analytical discussions which I enjoyed learning from. These experiences made me completely rethink my rejection of higher education and further learning.

Reflecting back on this early experience using aspects of living theory I can see how my ontological position was influenced. I was more comfortable being involved in an activity rather than an observer and was learning from being part of other people's lives and they were part of mine. Below I begin to talk about how I was involved in what Whitehead and McNiff(2006)(p.23) call "mutual relationships of influence".

My relatively weak performance in my O levels meant that university entrance was more difficult. I was also completely ignorant about which one might be sympathetic to an application; I had very poor research skills in those days. By a process of rejection from universities with very high entry standards I decided to apply to Polytechnics and found a lot more interest. Eventually I chose Oxford because my bass guitarist was at the university!

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I performed reasonably well in my college courses and went to Oxford Polytechnic to undertake a degree in Social Studies. Again I struggled with parts of the course I found less inspiring but enjoyed the discussions, essay writing and the social life. A significant learning point for me was the realisation that if I taught myself through reading and practice I could overcome problems. For example, like many social science students who have to take quantitative methods, I found this particularly irksome. I remember it was taught in a particularly obscure manner by a mathematician who had no time for social scientists. In the end, working on my own over the summer holidays, I achieved my best mark in this subject with limited support. I repeated this process a few years later with the same sort of course when doing my professional exams and obtained a distinction! As can be seen from my later career in teaching this has always given me a healthy scepticism about what we can actually achieve as teachers if we do not engage students in responsibility and a relevant context for their own learning.

After graduating in 1975 I decided with my friends in the band that we all pursue a dual career track of a “sensible” job in the same location and attempt to build a musical reputation. I pursued this for 3 years, which were some of the most enjoyable I have ever had. Between us we learned a lot about using our strengths as a team, some were stronger on the technical side, one was excellent at marketing and two of us carried on writing the music. This was an experience of starting with very little and building

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something significant enough to be reported in the national and local music press.

Whilst pursuing my musical aspirations my sensible job was a post in the Portsmouth office of the Department of Health and Social Security as an Executive Officer. I gained a lot of experience in report writing and interviewing as a visiting officer that later proved to be useful in my academic and personnel career. Later I had experience as a supervisor of 5 administrative staff and as the Appeals Officer. The appeals work was an opportunity to critically evaluate decisions of the department before allowing and preparing a defence of the appeal to go forward to tribunal. I learned how to deal diplomatically with decisions that would not stand scrutiny at a tribunal and how to prepare careful arguments based on evidence when cases did go forward.

All these experiences I see as contributing eventually to my preferred epistemological position in my later work. I enjoyed creativity and improving what I was doing but appreciated how this was only possible through the interaction I had with, for example my musical colleagues for the former and the audience or critical reviews for the latter. My work is only as worthy as others judge it be and it is brought about by the stimulus of others as collaborators and critical friends. This generic way of working is expressed in my interactive methodological approach to developing new ideas, openness to new ways of doing things and different experiences.

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After three years of modest success chasing the musical dream I decided that it was time to move on. I applied for and was offered a job as an Industrial Relations Officer with Ford Motor Company in Southampton but turned it down. It was a good boost to have the offer but going into that environment even just for the selection process made me realise that I did not want to work in a regulatory role governed by procedure. I wanted to do something that had some of the appeal of music: creativity, independence, public performance and add something to people's lives. To my surprise, I started thinking about a career I would never have contemplated earlier in life, teaching in further education.

From 1978-9 I undertook a postgraduate teaching certificate in London, using the money I had earned with the band to subsidise a year of study. I was fortunate to be offered a range of jobs and chose to join Abingdon College of Further Education as a Lecturer in Business Studies. I was given a wide range of teaching from post-graduate professional work to O level retake students. The more advanced work was allocated on the basis of my recent (limited) people management experience and Social Science background (helped with the theory). The first two years were tough on the preparation side but even by the end of the first year I was looking to enhance my own learning and teaching by undertaking the then Institute of Personnel Management membership qualification part-time at Oxford Polytechnic. In those days it took three years but the advantage for me was that it was a chance to write

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papers for assessment that in turn widened my reading, this was more useful for my development in the long term than passing the exams.

When I started lecturing I was rather daunted and felt that if I could become effective in that role that was enough for me. However my confidence grew and I was starting to take on course leadership roles in the college and was even union branch secretary for one year. I started applying for more challenging roles in other colleges having worked out that I would be a long time waiting for opportunities by staying where I was. In 1984 I obtained a post at Farnborough College of Technology, which as it happened did a substantial percentage of higher education work. Much of my work was allocated in the higher education courses and I specialised more in Human Resource Management. I found myself with a lively group who shared resources and worked as a team. We worked so efficiently by doing this that we were able to set up our own consultancy group to do reasonable amounts of external work for industry clients privately and for the college. Some of the work was writing learning materials for Distance Learning whilst other parts was delivering management development. My confidence increased because I was working with managers from companies like Marconi, Feranti , Sabre Health and Safety co., Philips, a firm of solicitors, local authorities and airlines on HR development issues.

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**The positive experience of collaborative work at Farnborough working with higher education students and professional clients led me to thinking about going in to consultancy or moving outside education into business. I secured some interviews with Zurich and Black Horse Agencies to be considered for regional management development roles but was not successful. I thought about being an independent consultant but it was the wrong time to take financial risks because we were about to start a family. In the light of this I thought about staying in education and making a contribution at a more managerial level. I had arrived at the stage where I could stand back from my role and look at the bigger picture. I was interviewed for a couple of Department Head posts in Chester and Chesterfield. A pattern that was emerging was that every 4 or 5 years I had a desire to do something new. I decided if for the moment I was to carry on where I was I would undertake a part-time Masters in Educational Studies at the University of Surrey, which would be an opportunity to study sector issues and within the context of my own work and discipline background.**

**The MSc programme positively encouraged reflection on theory and practice to address issues in our own context. I found writing the papers enjoyable and helpful in developing deeper thinking on problems that I wanted to address. Interestingly I did not enjoy the dissertation as much and to this day it is one reason why I thought I would not wish to undertake a PhD. Later I realised that one of the reasons why I did not enjoy the dissertation as much for my MSc was that I based the primary research on a quantitative survey.**

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Although I have done some of this since (see paper 4 Benmore and Palmer 1996) my values and approach are far more in the qualitative interpretivist area.

During the first year of my MSc I saw a post advertised at the then Southampton Institute of Higher Education as a Senior Lecturer, a very similar post on the same grade as at Farnborough. Although this was ostensibly a sideways move I was attracted to the college because it had ambitions and this post was for someone to contribute to the development of new degree courses. I was offered the job to start from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1990 and within a year found myself leading the new degree in business studies. In the mean time I successfully completed the MSc.

The work and environment were new at Southampton, which would normally be enough to maintain my interest. However, I could not have predicted how this ambitious college could develop so rapidly to be at one stage the largest higher education college in the UK. This meant a massive increase in student numbers (see paper 2 Harris and Palmer 1995) and additional and different staff to provide teaching and support services required. For me personally I was being asked to lead teams to develop further degree courses as part of a suite of six within a unitised programme. This programme grew to have some 800 students on it. As an expanding organisation it had more opportunities for promotion and by 1992 my endeavours were rewarded by being promoted to Principal Lecturer.

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**As a new higher education college it was recognised that staff external links were crucial to developing an appropriate experience for our students. For my part I participated as an external panel member at validation events at other universities in the UK and abroad. Although we were a new player in the field I could see my contribution was appreciated and as well as benchmarking what we were doing, I could see that most of us were facing the same issues of having to “do more with less”. Through these networks I was invited to apply for external examiner appointments at other institutions. Carrying out the role of external further developed my confidence that although I was learning a lot from others I also had something to contribute.**

**Whilst I was a supporter of widening participation in Higher Education meeting the needs of more students with a range of abilities concerned me. How could the quality of their higher education experience be maintained and their success be assured in an environment of diminishing resources?**



### **3. Starting to write for publication**

It was around this time (1994) that a colleague at Southampton, who was at that time Head of Academic Development, encouraged me to write about my experiences of teaching and leading courses for large numbers of students and present paper at a conference in Dublin. The conference was international and run in collaboration with the University of South Carolina, which meant that there were likely to be American perspectives on how they had been dealing with the challenges of mass higher education. In my teaching I tended to draw on my consultancy experience to develop learning and assessment materials and thought a natural route for me to academic publishing was writing case studies. I had not therefore contemplated being a contributor in the educational development field, although I had some good grounding in education theory and research methods from my MSc.

I thought it would be more comfortable to collaborate with another colleague to write the paper. A close colleague who shared the challenges of the expansion of student numbers was an economist Neil Harris. He had considerably more experience in higher education and had seen the changes over a long period. Neil was very interested in educational development, was developing his knowledge of the literature and was a good writer, having authored a core 2<sup>nd</sup> year text on European Business. We were therefore a good partnership and went on to write 14 papers together. Many years later Neil pursued his interests in student learning and achieved a Doctorate of

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Education; his knowledge of education development is now probably far superior to mine!

*“I worked with Adam Palmer in conducting educational research in the mid to late 1990s for several reasons. We were both interested in the same areas, relating to the student experience in Southampton Institute, as it then was, so collaboration was a good way to obtain synergies in terms of effort inputted. We were also both people who delivered when we said we would do something, were both rigorous and thorough in our research, and were able to write well and produce what I believe were interesting, thoughtful and well received papers. Initially we looked at the Level 3 honours challenge but subsequently considered the first year experience. This enabled us to present papers at the First Year Experience conferences organised by the University of South Carolina. Subsequently, our focus became more related to business education and this led to papers presented at Edineb conferences.*

*Subsequently, Adam became Director of Personnel at Southampton Institute while I became an Associate Dean in the Business School, as well as continuing to write textbooks and then start a doctorate. Consequently, our collaboration slowly stopped, mainly due to a lack of time”. ( Neil Harris 10<sup>th</sup> May 2006)*

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The issue we had in common with most other post 92 universities was larger numbers of students who were not well prepared for more independent learning with less staff to support them. At the same time highly dedicated teaching staff wanted to offer a similar service as they offered to smaller groups of students in the past but were finding it difficult to adapt. The process of writing the paper was more important for organisational and personal development than the eventual publication. It represented Kolb's(1974) classic model. We had a concrete experience which we found challenging, developing the paper gave us thinking space to reflect on what we were doing. We used theories of transition to adulthood (Knowles 1978), learning(Kolb 1974,Honey and Mumford 1989) ,student centred learning (Gibbs 1992) and lifelong learning (Handy 1989) to conceptualise how we might address real world issues. The conclusions presented an agenda for future action, including more research that sought to demonstrate how interventions to meet new challenges were evaluated and modified to improve their effectiveness. These were also grounded in theory and reflective practice.

The research method employed for this work was a combination of a case study approach and action research. The case was our own organisation and its particular context. Within that context we sought to investigate a particular issue and find ways in which we might suggest future actions. It was not necessarily our aim to generalize our conclusions to other situations but as the work evolved we found others were interested in our analysis.

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Although this and a lot of my subsequent work is based in a university it represents mode 2 research as identified by Gibbons et al (2004) in that potentially it was trans- disciplinary involving concerns of practitioners, policy makers and students.

This and most of my subsequent work is based within the broad realm of interpretivism, I am endeavouring to see the world through other people's eyes, although at the same time I am often also a participant in their world. In this early work we were looking to secondary sources to help us to understand our situation as a precursor to primary research that considered the views of other practitioner colleagues. It is also the case that our ontological position was constructivist, being quite open to the influence of our actions and those of others on what we see as "reality".

It was decided that I would present the paper in Dublin. The paper created quite a lot of interest and the room was full. A few people approached me afterwards to exchange addresses and a publisher approached me to be put on their list of reviewers. Later I reviewed the drafts of the manuscripts for John Chaffee's (1998) **THE THINKER'S GUIDE TO COLLEGE SUCCESS** prior to its publication. Having obtained this positive feedback we decided to submit the paper for publication and continue the work we had started to improve the experience of students on our courses.

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The paper was published in the Journal of Further and Higher Education in 1995 . It was cited as recently as 2003 in Houston and Cook (2003)

**(see Paper2“Doing more with less: Improving the quality of the first year experience on business undergraduate courses within the context of a diminishing resource base”, with Neil Harris, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Vol 19.3 Autumn, p63-74, 1995).**

Neil and I were encouraged by the experiences, networks and development in our thinking created by the process of dissemination. We decided to continue our work on the student experience by carrying out an action research project that built on the issues raised previously. The project was concerned with diagnosing what does or should represent the honours challenge in Southampton Business School undergraduate programmes. The staff of the Business School were involved in collaboration with us in sharing their interpretation of and approach to developing the honours challenge in their courses. Our aim was to seek out good practice and concerns with a view to improving students preparedness for the challenges of honours degree level study. The extent to which the honours challenge was represented in the Business School Undergraduate Programme (BSUP) became the main focus. However later interventions reflected on in later work would be concerned with effecting improvements by disseminating and embedding "good practice" more widely, and evaluating the effects of such changes e.g. through surveying student and staff reactions.

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I had become attracted to action research during my studies for my MSc and it seemed to be the most appropriate vehicle for finding out how we might improve student and staff experiences in the then new mass higher education context. Whereas paper 1 was essentially a position paper that showed the influences of on our thinking of Knowles, Handy and Gibbs (ibid) on the context of higher education, this was more concerned with practicalities. In the long-term this led to further research on the student perspective and the introduction of a new first year unit called “student success” designed to prepare students better for advanced study. It is also interesting to reflect that in our conclusion we talked about the possibility of using learning outcomes to replace objectives in unit descriptors. These were eventually adopted at my own institution in 2003; universities are slow to change sometimes!

This paper had another indirect consequence when I presented a first draft of the paper at a conference at the University of York. There I met and exchanged business cards with a lecturer from Champlain College Vermont USA. This eventually led to a student/ staff exchange relationship that continues to this day.

**( paper 5 Preparing students for the Honours Challenge with Neil Harris  
*Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Vol20.3, Autumn p31-44,1996)**

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For a number of years Neil and I sought to find answers to the question of how we might better support students in adapting to more independent learning. In doing this we looked to the work of educational theorists, management theory, our own colleagues and practice in other countries. We also shared our own efforts and practices nationally and internationally. I took these experiences and issues with me into my human resources role because I felt it was important to identify the connectedness of the core business to the direction and values to be developed in policy and strategy. I return to this in section 6. In the next section I reflect on work I was doing with other colleagues during the same period. This focused on how case studies might be developed for the benefit of student learning and as tool for stimulating reflective practice for entrepreneurs. This led to work that sought to establish the extent to which HR practices were recognised or utilised in small businesses.

#### **4. Case Studies and Small Businesses**

Whilst I was leading the Business Undergraduate Programmes (1991-3) I undertook an industrial placement visit to a student working for a company called Cosyfeet in Somerset. I had lunch with the owner David Price who was a very interesting entrepreneur who had once worked for Clarks shoes. His ideas were very advanced at the time and he was contemplating the impact that the internet could have on his mail order business. He was also quite “New Age” in his approach and had used Feng Shui techniques in organising the physical work environment of his company. I said that I had enjoyed our discussions as Cosyfeet made a great case study and he reciprocated by saying that he enjoyed exchanging ideas with someone from outside the business. We decided that we would meet again so that I could develop the case study and he could benefit from reflecting on his ideas for business development.

In this work we were not overly concerned to generalise our findings, the method employed was to engage in intensive analysis with David Price and where possible interpret our findings using established models or theories. What was more interesting was the uniqueness of parts of David’s approach. There was a longitudinal element as we planned to revisit the case a year on from our first study.

I had a friend and colleague in the business school, Ashok Ranchhod, who was a marketing specialist with a particular interest in the potential of e



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business. He used case studies a lot in his teaching on the MBA course he was running. I asked if he would be interested in a collaboration to develop a strategy case on Cosyfeet combining our expertise in Human Resource Management and Marketing. He was very excited by the idea as it was potentially live material for our students and it represented another passion of his for small business and innovation. We spent a day with David Price and wrote the case from our conversations interspersed with underpinning references to models of business strategy and human resource management. The case was presented at the Enterprise in Action conference at Nottingham University and won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the best case competition. The case was subsequently used for assessments and student seminar activities. It was later published in *Small Business Enterprise and Development Journal* in 1995.

**( see Paper 1 Cosyfeet, with Ashok Ranchhod, *Small Business Enterprise and Development Journal*. Vol 2.2 July p77-92.1995)**

We did a further examination of the Cosyfeet business one year later to explore what actually happened following the speculation on possible future scenarios in the previous case. This “part 2” we called Best Foot Forward and it was based on conversations over the course of an evening in May 1995. This was again designed for use by lecturers and students and illustrated the unpredictability of business.

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*“Collaborative working has a lot of appeal for me as it allows me to see how research can be approached from different angles. Working with Adam was very useful as he provided a strong input from the human resources angle, whereas I brought in aspects of marketing into the equation. He was also very meticulous in helping to refine the ideas that we had and this strengthened the final output immeasurably”. ( Ashok Ranchhod 5<sup>th</sup> May 2006)*

**(see paper3 “ Best foot forward- a strategy review”, with Ashok Ranchhod. *Management Case Quarterly*. Vol 1.3 p14-23, 1995).**

Whilst making the contributions above the business school was expanding ever faster and it was reorganised into 4 separate divisions. I became deputy head of the business division in 1993. As well as continuing to lead course development, the head asked me take more responsibility for staffing matters. I organised the annual staff appraisal cycle and involved myself as much as possible in developing others to take forward new course proposals, partnerships with universities abroad and their scholarly activities. We wanted to start an international business degree and needed to secure partnerships with other universities abroad. We appointed a colleague to lead this area but the job was too large for one person and I found myself working with him to sign up partnerships for student and staff exchanges with American and Canadian universities. At the University of Maine I found a

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future partner for collaborative work in Diana Lawson. I wanted to encourage staff to gain more external experience either by teaching in other universities on exchange, become external assessors or publish their work.

Paper 4 was the culmination of the desire to encourage a talented colleague and his enthusiasm to develop an idea he had for a project. At the time the literature on HRM in small business was relatively small. Graham was interested in how much small business actually considered HRM issues in reviewing their strategic position. Graham was and still is an excellent writer in his own right but was keen to collaborate on this project. Established HRM strategic models were used to design a questionnaire to be sent out to small businesses in the Southampton area.

*"I chose to collaborate with Adam Palmer as we both shared an interest in people management within small firms and were able to refine ideas very effectively when working together. I knew that his input would be extremely valuable in framing our research questions and analysing the responses. I have no doubt that Adam's ideas enabled us to make some very interesting points in our article. We were pleased to receive plenty of complementary feedback about our original paper, delivered to a conference at Nottingham Trent University, and then subsequently when a refined article was published. We were delighted when we were approached by a Swiss publisher requesting that a further version of our work be*

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*incorporated into a small business journal there. Rather fortuitously we also write in a very similar style, to the extent that I believe it would be very difficult, even for a close colleague, to identify which of us wrote particular sections of the article". ( Graham Benmore 8<sup>th</sup> May 2006)*

At the time very little research had addressed the issue, for example all the main texts applied models of strategic HRM to large-scale business or organisation. We thought a good starting point was to carry out an extensive quantitative survey to establish a snapshot of small business owner attitudes with a view to identifying areas for further research. The resulting paper was accepted for presentation at the Strategic Direction of Human Resource Management conference at Nottingham Trent University UK in 1995. It was in a later version published in the *Small business and Enterprise Development Journal*. The paper created sufficient interest to be later translated into German and published in a Swiss journal: *Zetschrift fur Kleinund Mittelunternehmen*). Recent citations include Spence et al (2001) and Spence(1999) and Koch and Kok (1999).

The methodology was a slight departure from my usual approach. That is not to say that it represented any change to my overall epistemological position of wanting to be a participant in the world of my research and creating new knowledge in partnership with others (Whitehead and Mcniff *ibid*). At this stage in the development of the subject matter we wanted to derive a

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structure for analysis of a large number of respondents. If we had continued this work we would have used the data to help us design structures for interviews or focus group work with interested respondents. Reviewing the paper now I think we can still be pleased with it as a piece of writing, it follows the usual template with its review of literature explanation of choice of research method, question design linked to key concepts and statistical analysis. In this sense it ticked the boxes for publication but it is an example of how many of us have learned a prescribed social science approach that presents the impression of the objective “truth”. By grounding the work in already established theory the results were bound to be restricted and using statistical analysis gives the veneer of “scientific” study. To me this search for generalized propositions is profound in how it restricts the development of new perspectives. Case studies are criticised by advocates of surveys for their lack of potential for theory generation but I think for students they provide interesting insights.

Later when I was offered the job of heading up the HR function (1996) at the university and I was unable to continue to develop the work myself. Graham used the work in his teaching on a new unit he developed HRM in Small Business and involved his students in evaluating the use quantitative research methods in HRM. Graham still teaches at the university, has gained his doctorate and continues to carry out individual and collaborative research with other colleagues.

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( see paper 3 Human Resource Management in Small firms: keeping it strictly informal, with Graham Benmore *Small business and Enterprise Development Journal*. Vol 3.3 November p109 -118, 1996 and paper 8 “ Mitarbeiterführung und personalmanagement in klieununternehmen” with Graham Benmore *Zetschrift fur Kleinund Mittelunternehmen*. Vol 46 Jahrgang.46, p1-15, 1998).

## **5. Becoming a Senior Manager**

At the same time as I began to write for external publication I was offered an unexpected temporary opportunity. One morning my Head asked me to his office and informed me that he had been seconded to work with the directorate for the academic year 1994-95. It had been suggested that I should be offered the post of Acting Head in his absence (so much for equal opportunities!). I was a bit shocked at this sudden change but accepted the opportunity. The Institute's rapid expansion meant that these sorts of changes were increasingly common as resources were reallocated to respond to the demands of the Higher Education environment.

Hence I had a short spell in this role as a member of the senior management team. I was struck by the large number of senior managers and the political manoeuvrings as colleagues went in and out of favour. Inevitably there was another reorganisation during this period where the Divisions became Faculties, Heads became Deans and various mergers took place. My Head returned from Directorate as the Dean and I returned to my old job but was now called Head of Academic Operations! I worked out that I had had six different job titles in a period of 3 years.

This was also the beginning of a difficult year for the Institute (1995-96). Observations were made internally and externally that the Institute had moved too quickly into overseas markets without the experience or the

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quality assurance mechanisms in place. Much of this was unfounded but these concerns coincided with what should have been a confident bid for degree awarding powers. The concerns of the then HEQC about a very small aspect of provision was enough to fire up the media about the activities of the sector in general and the Institute in particular. This served to fuel disunity amongst the senior managers and an unpleasant period ensued culminating in the eventual departure of the Institute's Director. One event I recall vividly was returning on a flight with my then line director chatting normally, only to hear the next day that he had been suspended and would probably not come back.

This was not a period I enjoy recalling and for obvious reasons it is not appropriate to say much more about it here. However, looking back it was an extraordinary time to even consider undertaking the leadership of the human resource function. At the end of 1995 the new post of Head of Human Resources (later to be restyled as Director) was advertised in the national press. One of my colleagues who was leading the human resource academic grouping said to me "you ought to go for that job". I rejected the idea without much thought, I was enjoying the academic work I was doing and the people I worked with. Besides, from my previous experience, the senior management team seemed rather an unhappy place to be. The Institute did not manage to find a suitable candidate from those interviewed and in the end they appointed an Acting Head. About six months later the post was re-advertised with an interesting difference, the post was to include



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responsibility for the Educational Development. Human Resources and Educational Development was not a unique combination in the sector but was fairly unusual as I was later to find (Palmer and Harris 1998).

A larger number of colleagues encouraged me to apply for the post and this time I was interested because of the expanded portfolio. In my application I emphasised the match between my background and the slightly unusual portfolio that was on offer. I had academic and practical experience of Human Resource Management, experience of faculty management and a developing interest in educational development. I argued strongly that an appointment from the academic community would add a new perspective and would be particularly important in our quest for degree awarding powers; quality audits often manage to pick up fragile human resource practices within faculties and expose the mismatch between central policy and reality.

I also argued that with the new grouping there was potential for a more integrated and inclusive human resource strategy for all staff. I argued that this could start with new approaches to staff development that had previously been quite separate for academic and support staff. The learning organisation movement led by people like Peter Senge (1990) was gaining popularity and this was certainly an influence on how I couched my application. In retrospect, quite naively, I saw the job as being about human resource and organisation development in an organisation that was expanding, this is what really interested me and I did not foresee how much I

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would later become drawn into leading a downsizing operation. As the Institute was still a relatively new player in the higher education market, I put forward a case that it needed someone in the role that understood from the inside where it had come from as well as where it wanted to go. I emphasised that at the same time I was well connected externally through my international collaborations and the work I had done for publication.

After the selection process, which consisted of 3 presentations to different groups, psychometric tests and a final formal interview I was offered the job. I was pleased I had succeeded against external candidates, one who was quite a “name” in the sector, partly because deep down I lacked confidence despite my clearly persuasive and enthusiastic application.

I still had a lot of commitment to colleagues in the business school, with whom I had already started various projects and I wanted to continue with them. I now recall my new line manager shrugging his shoulders when we agreed my first set of objectives, saying, “if you think you can cope with it all....but you don’t have to”. I persuaded him that on the contrary continuing to do some collaborative enquiry into practice should be part of my objectives. It was not just that I did not want to let people down, I actually believed that it was important to remain connected to discourse on matters that were very relevant to the role in any case. Not surprisingly, unless I was at a human resources gathering, I was often the odd one out now at conferences because of my role. I was struck recently by the dissonance of

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this with the often accepted but “divisive logic .....which has led to the separation of policy makers, researchers and practitioners” (Whitehead et al 2006 p.18)

Perhaps I could argue that I was ahead of the game in the sector when you consider the way in which the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) set the parameters for claiming the “Rewarding and Developing Staff” funds for universities in 2001. Round two in 2004 especially emphasised the requirement for links between Human Resource strategies and teaching (see paper 21 Palmer and Collins 2006). Finally, with regard to this issue, I think in the back of my mind I always thought I might one day want to return to teaching or an associated academic role.

In this section I have begun to demonstrate vestiges of the struggle I would have later with coming to terms with the challenges to my values and beliefs inherent in taking on a senior role. At the same time I clearly believed at the time I would be able to be a positive influence for change in that role with my direct knowledge of the core business.

## **6. Keeping an eye on the core business: student success**

Maintaining the links with the issues staff were facing in teaching more and different students was important to me in looking at where we should be targeting support for educational development. In the early years (1996-98) in Human Resources I worked very closely with colleagues in the Academic Development unit. We redesigned and revalidated the post-graduate teaching certificate that amazingly was under threat of closure because of lack of support from the faculties. We supported a wide range of educational development projects in the faculties and offered partial secondments to teaching staff to work with the unit on the course, lead initiatives in the faculties and organise institutional level workshops. I led a couple of the sessions on the post graduate certificate with my co- author Neil Harris as we continued to investigate ways to improve the student and staff experience of mass undergraduate higher education.

Neil and I extended our work to consider if there was anything we could learn from the American experience, they had after all been dealing with the challenges of mass higher education for a long time. I met Diana Lawson of the University of Maine through initiating some of our exchange links when I was in the business school. Some of our students and Maine's students were experiencing the courses at both universities. I had talked about some of the issues we had been considering in our previous work and asked Diana if she might be interested in running our study in Maine. We thought we might open

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up some different ideas for course design in both institutions. This was the fairly early days of the inter-net but of course already it was making working together internationally a far easier proposition.

As it turned out the American perspective did not get us a lot further with solving our problem. The issues were similar but the additional year available for developing students' critical thinking and the reliance on liberal arts subjects as vehicles for this was incompatible with the predominant UK model of business undergraduate courses. However it did open up a discussion of ideas for consideration by both sides of the partnership, the "five competing models" (see paper 6 Harris and Palmer 1997). Also through the process of research better understanding of the partners' approaches was built. Our subsequent approach to designing a unit called "undergraduate success" was informed not least by the pitfalls of each model, including the one we adopted. The unit was designed carefully to address the weaknesses identified in the literature and the issues raised by our previous work. We were also measured in adapting our model to one major programme as a pilot with the intention of evaluating students' experiences of the unit and subsequent challenges in their later studies.

This work was probably not significant in the general field of educational development but during that period there was limited contribution from subject-based practitioners in the field. We were taking the opportunity to develop our practice informed by researchers in educational development

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and seminal theoretical models. Our issues led us back to standard taxonomies of learning e.g. Biggs and Collis (1982) and Bloom (1956), considering their contribution to understanding out student needs and then looking for work that was more specifically focused on critical thinking Gubbins (1985).

On reflection I would now challenge our approach to starting out on a project that sought to find resolution to our issues by generalising propositions from other theories and observations of practice elsewhere. We may have found more telling evidence for how we might improve the situation by examining our own personal practice and interventions at an earlier stage.

Although continuing on this theme disrupts the chronological flow, it seems to make more sense to me to deal with it here before returning to the parallel activities in human resources. As well as changing the approach adopted to supporting academic skills development we continued to share our issues with others and hear what they were saying. A paper “Transferable Intellectual Skills in Vocational Degree programmes” with Neil Harris at the *15<sup>th</sup> conference of Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia* Melbourne was compiled for this purpose and many of the key players in the field were then in Australia. My impression was that there was a gap between those who researched how we should deal with more students less well prepared for higher education and those at the “chalk face” (not that we were using much chalk). This impression was repeated locally in

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evaluations of the post graduate teaching certificate where some felt that those who taught on it had very little experience what it was like to teach in mass higher education. Hence some of the changes to delivery and approaches to supporting educational development mentioned above.

Although I think this issue has begun to be addressed nationally and locally, I still think that the key authors who are pointing the way have not travelled down our particular road recently, I return to this theme in later papers ( see paper 20 Palmer and Collins 2006).

We felt it was important to continue to study the outcomes of the actions we had taken. Looking back at the way this work developed seems very logical but in reality it represents the non-linear cycles of new areas of investigation emerging demonstrated by McNiff (2002). As she argues, in action research the problem is never solved. Our next step was to study the students' thoughts on the undergraduate success unit through structured interviews of successive cohorts as they progressed through the levels. The results of these were written up and presented in conference papers: "Thinking their way to success: first year students talk back" with Neil Harris, *10<sup>th</sup> International conference on the first year experience*, University of Warwick UK, 1997 and "Critical Analysis, what does that mean? Providing the tools to be a successful student" with Neil Harris, *11th International Conference on the First Year Experience* University College Dublin Ireland, 1998.

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The two published papers that deal with the earlier part of this work are:  
paper 6 “Critical Thinking in UK and USA undergraduate business courses: implications for course design” with Neil Harris and Diana Lawson in: *Improving student learning through course design*. Oxford : OCSLD. pp277-290, 1997 and paper 9 “A collaborative approach to improving students’ critical thinking in the UK and the USA” with Neil Harris and Diana Lawson, in: *Innovation in Business Education: theory and practice*. Dordrecht, London, Boston : Kluwer. p229-245, 1998.

The time lag between submitting work and publication was and still is quite lengthy. Unfortunately neither Neil nor I were able to continue publication of all our enquiries in this area because of our increasing responsibilities and pressure of work. However, for a while I found I could do useful research to underpin the human resources role by continuing to collaborate on professional development approaches to support for academics. Ultimately this developed to include how teaching resources might be utilised in a way that was fair to staff and students to support independent learning. I will return to this after some reflections on the early years in Human Resources.



## **7. Leading Human Resources before the Change**

Although as I have indicated earlier there were issues of leadership for the Institute when I first took on the human resources role, the early years focused quite positively on development. A staff development committee had been designated and I was the business manager. I was also able to exercise influence over senior management development, as I was responsible for organising the annual series of management conferences. We were still in our expansion phase and we were always looking to improve what we were doing.

Internal papers that would chart some of the progress that was made are no longer available. I have scoured the committees' intranet site but going back this far only the agendas appear, not the papers. However I did find in my files a job application I made in 1998 for a senior post at another university that recorded some of the successful initiatives during the period. I include a summary of these here because they show, when compared with later work, how varied the role of human resource professional can be and the different inner resources you have to draw on.

There was limited formal human resource planning at the faculty and service level and justification for appointments was centrally controlled. The system was perceived as quite arbitrary and not meeting the future needs of the Institute as well as it might. I had recruited a good personnel operations manager from the retail sector who was able to translate my ideas for a template for staff planning into a working document. Faculties and services

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have since that time submitted their 5 year plans annually for approval and could then deal directly with my service. The system has been modified over the years and sometimes in times of financial constraint the approval of posts is temporarily reverted to the centre, but at the time this was welcomed by the users of the service not least because of the greater transparency and speed of response in filling vacancies.

The staff appraisal system was revised to open up the continuous professional development sections so that objectives could be shared within groups of staff. Previously the appraisal was completely closed so that very little information could be used for organisational development. The background to appraisal in higher education had not been positive and was the subject of long negotiation in 1991 when it was put into academic staff contracts. I attempted to change the perceived negativity surrounding appraisal by revising the policy to couch it in terms of having one as a right to support and development. My staff development manager at the time used to organise an annual staff survey and we were able to monitor improvements in this area as part of it. As with all issues this needs to be continuously revisited and refreshed. I am told that participation in appraisal has declined but surveys are no longer carried out.

Moving away from a faculty role into a central service I became very aware of the perceived inequity of development opportunities for administrative staff. Working with the staff developers we managed to validate one of the first

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accredited administrative staff development programmes leading to a qualification through the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). My staff development colleagues did the groundwork on this but it seemed to work well that I was able to bring ideas from my research and networking that they could run with. These initiatives are now more widespread as the sector wide mechanisms have been developed through the Association of University Administrators (AUA) and the Higher Education Academy.

When I was in the faculty previously I had initiated a more rigorous approach to recruitment and selection of part-time lecturing staff, mainly because I wanted better planning of resources and some oversight of the quality of appointments. The approach to this aspect of human resources was extraordinarily slapdash and when I was able to take a view on the whole organisation I realised the problem was even worse than I had imagined. I understand again that this was a problem across the sector but there were so many issues: quality, equal opportunities, training, criminal records and induction. It was interesting how difficult it was to persuade erstwhile colleagues to accept some regulation on these issues, although I think people were pleased when external agencies visited. Despite the inherent risks with the ad hoc approach our intervention was seen as interference. I spent a long time consulting with the faculties but in the end it was a political approach that persuaded them to take the changes on board. When they argued that a professional approach to human resources for part-time lecturers was

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admirable but impossible I offered to take on the work centrally. The faculties did not want to lose their independence on this and speed of response so they eventually agreed. I am not naïve though, I am sure the effect was not total but practices did change and when we did have issues people were clearer about the implications of non-compliance.

Another problem was the rather old-fashioned job evaluation system; some would say at least we had one! Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA), a tailored approach for the sector, is still not fully functional in all the universities who have opted to use it. It is interesting therefore to look back and see that I had decided to take on training for my staff and arrange a pilot in a major service in 1997/8. It was fortuitous that the Director of the service involved argued that there were major issues with the grading of staff in his area, so I took this opportunity to use this to acquire his cooperation. As we now know there have been interminable problems with HERA and I know the work is still not complete at Southampton Solent. This is where I learned that I am too quick to be an early adopter of new practices. The national employee relations climate became hostile to job evaluation and by the time we were able to make progress again I had to arrange retraining and further pilots because the approach had been modified so much. The changes were no doubt for the better but this is an illustration of the frustrations there are developing modern, or elsewhere standard practices in this environment. A theme I will return to later is the way I interpret the positive applications of these sorts of initiatives in practice, although clearly as an academic I am

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perfectly capable of applying the critiques. I think I found it very difficult because I saw in many ways the objections and suspicions of staff had some credence in that managers often see initiatives as way of exercising more control over small numbers of difficult people or groups. It is amazing the number of times you hear highly competent individuals express belief in what you regulate for will actually happen, “ put it in their contracts and they will do it”.

There are other steps forward that I am pleased that I fronted although it is my staff that really made the difference. I think what I managed to do is to create an environment where people could do what they wanted to do provided it had fit with overall objectives. One of my staff was very interested in the then new disability discrimination legislation and was keen to put the Institute forward as a good practice employer. She had lots of contacts in the community of relevant voluntary organisations and wanted to run a disability awareness week. I was very pleased that she wanted to do this, as it was a very positive initiative for the organisation internally and externally. The week was a great success and soon afterwards we were able to be one of the early employers to be entitled to use the two ticks disability symbol. Another staff member was concerned that we should have some way of celebrating long service at a time when there was a perception that it was only new staff who were of interest in a climate of change and expansion. Again it was not top of my agenda but I thought this was a good idea and I was prepared to develop the necessary arguments and allocate the resources

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to make this gesture. The scheme was not costly but widely appreciated when it was implemented and every year there is an event when awards and short speeches are made to mark 15, 20 and 25 year service. The person who was most associated with this initiative has now moved on and it seems to have less of a profile now. I even have to sadly note that I myself was due an award in January 2005 but I heard nothing until it was drawn to the attention of personnel in June 2006!

During the first 18 months in Human Resources there were other developments: preparations were made for Investors in People assessment through a mock assessment of half the faculties and services; responsibility allowances for academics were introduced; supporting the creation of Southampton Business School through the merging of two faculties; the organisation of four senior management conferences; the introduction of new policies e.g. staff references, flexible working and prevention of harassment. I also continued to chair validation and academic appeals panels and held 2 external examiner appointments.

## **8. Preparing for Change**

By 1998/99 the Institute's rate of growth was declining. A group was set up by the new Principal to develop the corporate strategy for 1999-2004 and I was a member of this group. I found that although I had previously been very active in my own right as the head of the human resources function, I was now being drawn far more into the central business planning for the future. We were about to embark on the biggest change exercise the organisation had ever experienced. This was because put simply we either had to find new sources of income other than more students or reduce our costs to safeguard the future of the institution at somewhere near the level of its activities at the time. I was pleased to be contributing not least because so many of my external colleagues bemoaned their lack of involvement at this level. The variable presence of the Human Resources Director in the boardroom is still to this day a matter of debate within the profession (Kelly 2001).

During and leading up to this period I was still making the time for reflection and collaboration with academic colleagues. I had started to refocus my inquiries to support reflections on staffing issues but still considered the faculty perspective on student learning to be the central driver of these. A starting point for this work was a review of what was happening in the sector as a prerequisite to further development of strategies for the Institute. This work would later partly inform my development of the human resource strategy. Interestingly the now seemingly forgotten Dearing Report (1997)

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was a considerable influence on universities in assessing their strategic position. I recall organising one of the management conferences around a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the Institute in relation to the Dearing view of higher education's future direction.

The paper (paper 7 "A Review of Strategies for Professional Development in Higher Education" with Neil Harris, *Perspectives The Teaching and Learning Journal of Southampton Institute* vol 10 p40-45, 1998) was initially presented in an earlier version at the Educational Innovation in Economics and Business conference in Edinburgh (EDINEB). The paper was included in the Institute's teaching and learning journal, having had positive encouragement from colleagues from other universities at the conference. The article in a sense took up Dearing's (1997) challenging of the professional status of teaching in higher education and sought out case studies of good practice where institutions were addressing the issue. It allowed us to benchmark our own position and gave us confidence that we were moving in the right direction and hopefully reassured staff that we were making appropriate interventions to support development. Finally it made the connections between development, new modes of delivery and assuring reasonable workloads for staff. This is still a fundamental issue of trust for many academic colleagues as I have discovered in the current project I am working on " Linking Advanced Scholarship to Teaching". Some are still



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reluctant to share their innovations in more effective methods because they feel they will be “rewarded” with an even larger student caseload.

Whilst the issue of trust would continue to limit the pace of change this work gave confidence that we should continue to work hard on development to support staff and student learning. At Edinburgh I was encouraged by the supportive comments of Roger Ottewill then of Sheffield Hallam University. He was very interested in resource and problem-based learning and this led to another collaboration that evaluated how the connections need to be made between delivery of resource- based learning, the demands of students and staff support in developing institutional human resource strategies. I am struck now how resonant the approach we were using is with the ideas expressed by McNiff(2002). This was a very supportive form of research into our practice; we were working as equals but from different perspectives trying to find answers to improving what we were doing. The strength of these collaborations is the improvement to the quality of your thinking by having this growing community of critical friends. (**“Promoting the Human Element in Resource Based Learning for Undergraduate Business Education Programmes”** with Neil Harris and Roger Ottewill, in: *Educational Innovation in Economics and Business V*. Dordrecht, London, Boston : Kluwer p291-306, 2000).

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After a yearlong period of consultation the Institute's strategic plan was launched in 1999. It had major staffing implications even though there were moderate plans for income growth built in. The predominant phrase that acted as a fig leaf for these was "rebalancing". If the institution was to maintain its present level of operations it needed to allocate resources to areas of demand and invest in new projects. Like many organisations at the end of a successful period it had grown a considerable amount of management "fat". I used ratio analysis to assess and compare staff and student caseloads across the college. The management cadre could be halved in the reorganisation of faculties and services by making these more equitable. The organisation had become so out of balance that for the more successful areas this meant no change to responsibilities whereas in others it meant there were going to be mergers of activities and less posts. Later there would be further changes in academic staffing and devolution of student related administrative functions. The Human Resource strategy that I was leading the development of at the time had to strike an optimistic note in emphasising a brighter future with the many positive activities that were planned or underway. I was not happy about this state of affairs but knew that we had to embark on this process to eventually move the Institute back into surplus. The consultation, conferences and working groups had been thorough; therefore at the level of detached observation staff that were not negatively affected were at least reluctantly supportive. The selling point was to have more academic and administrative resources available at the point of delivery in the three faculties (formerly 9).

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However much I took the strategic view in public I could not escape from the fact that I would either directly or indirectly be telling some quite close colleagues on the management team that they would be going. I think in order to prepare yourself to do this work you find yourself trying put yourself in their place. Of course you can never feel what they feel but this process of constantly being alert to this in some ways takes you through a form of that loss yourself. You contemplate continuously the consequences of redundancy as if it was happening to you. I was about to experience what Whitehead et al (2006) would call my living contradiction. My values of caring, collaborating and improvement could not be lived through a redundancy programme. On the other hand I tried to rationalise the process by aligning the values with what would eventually be a better position for the organisation, a type of modern day utilitarianism for the greatest good for the greatest number.

This was really just the beginning of a long period of change that I was still to be fully involved in but as I embarked on it I started to notice some physical changes in myself during 1998 and 1999. I now know that what I was beginning to have was panic attacks but I did not realise this at the time. I started to become withdrawn at home and socially. When I was not at work I slept a lot and not much else. I went on a very pleasant holiday but even had some episodes whilst away. When I returned to work everything was fine for

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a few days and then I completely broke down. I kept trying to come back to work but for a while could not even leave the house.

Friends and colleagues at work were very supportive and told me not to hurry back. I turned this round in my depression to thinking “of course they don’t want me back”. Fortunately for me the Principal came to see me at home and said “there’s no hurry but you have got to come back because you are the only one who can get the HR strategy sorted out”. This is what really helped but I still could not surmount the brick wall of the anxiety. I eventually in desperation talked to a doctor friend who assured me that unless I took medication it would take a very long time for me to come back from where I was. This submission may not be the right place to disclose these reflections but I share them on the basis that I did come back after a few months and for another four years played a leading role in managing organisational change. Further, it has given me greater insight into the effects of depression and has enabled me give better support to others.

When I returned to work my colleagues were extremely helpful in making me feel wanted. Even my deputy who had been given an increase in salary to cover for me was happy to be relieved of her additional duties commenting that it was not a job she would want to do permanently. Although I knew that I was in no way indispensable it was a wonderful feeling to be welcomed back as if only I could fill the space that I had left. At the same time it was made clear to me that I was not expected to fulfil the standards I had set for

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myself in insisting that I fulfil the role of policy maker, researcher, practitioner and academic writer.

This episode is therefore significant in that it marked a halt in my writing for publication and external examining. I simply felt I had to limit the time I spent at and on work. The role of Human Resources Director that I had though meant there are many examples of my contribution to major organisational change in papers that are in the public domain. My first major task on my return to work was to develop successive drafts of a human resource strategy to share with a working group drawn from across the Institute. This worked very well and we soon had a document we could consult more widely on. Rather than call special meetings I obtained wider coverage by offering seminars or discussion sessions at other events. For example the educational development conference to obtain academic staff views and the support staff conference for their perspective. I also booked slots on faculty management team meetings. The trade unions were actually one of the last groups to see it but it was even well received by them; partly because I had had a lot of helpful contributions from staff already.

This all probably seems rather an obvious way to go about developing the strategy but my experience is that many of these documents are only discussed in management committees and are therefore the products of a very small number of thoughts. Looking back I am pleased that although I had suspended my research activities I still used an enquiry based approach to

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developing the strategy. Taking this route prior to gaining approval of the senior management team and the Governors, gave me great confidence when arguing for its adoption. (**Human Resource Strategy Southampton Institute, 2000**).

Looking back critically I think it was rather too wordy as a document and contains some management jargon that dates it. What I do know is that it was harder to achieve its objectives than create it as a document, although having said that through successive reviews much of what was set out was achieved. Being ready with this document in 2000 was of benefit to the Institute. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Institutional Review of the Institute took place in that year and it was important that we attained a positive report in order to proceed with a bid for degree awarding powers. The Dean of Quality told me that he thought the HR strategy would be “one the stars” in this process; his optimism made me a little apprehensive of the attention it might receive.

Fortunately it did feature in a helpful way and I was pleased to find these comments in their report:

*“The team would wish to commend the Institute’s Human Resources Strategy and the progress that has been made since the previous audit to address various matters associated with the training and development of its part-time academic staff” para 53*

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*There are several enabling strategies that the Institute has developed which should allow it to address some of the challenges that it presently faces. Many of these are to be found in the imaginative and carefully considered Human Resources Strategy para 67*

*(Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006*

*[http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/institutional/southampton\\_institute/southampton\\_institute.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/institutional/southampton_institute/southampton_institute.asp)*

The now Vice Chancellor of Southampton Solent University recorded his appreciation of my contribution to our quest for degree awarding powers in the note below.

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Southampton

Institute

**MEMORANDUM**

Date: 8 February

Ref:

2001

RJB/BE/dap/disk5

To: Adam Palmer

From: Dr Roger

Brown

#### **DEGREE AWARDING POWERS**

Now that the Institute's application for degree awarding powers has been submitted, I thought it timely to express my thanks to you for the help and support you gave David Parry on the preparation of the critical self analysis.

We are all aware that David managed the project splendidly and that without his dedication to the task we would not have been able to produce such an excellent submission. However, I know David would be the first to agree that he could not have achieved this- without the help and encouragement of many colleagues across the Institute.



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I am, therefore, particularly grateful to you for your contribution to this effort. I know it meant undertaking tasks which were over and above your already busy workload. I greatly appreciate your readiness to do this.

Let us hope that the outcome of the DAP Committee's deliberations later this month will result in our having established a prima facie case for degree awarding powers at which time the next stage in the process begins!

In the meantime, many thanks once again for all your hard work.

**DR ROGER BROWN**

**PRINCIPAL**

**A324 EXT: 3216**

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**I believe one of the strengths of the document is that it followed Lewins' (1951) prescription for change. The early part is reflective and critical of some aspects of the old order to unfreeze previous perspectives. The middle sections propose processes of development to support organisational change, for example the leadership programmes and staff development. Finally, it contains proposals that had potential to refreeze in the values espoused in new policy and career routes.**

**The early preparation of the strategy was also timely because it was in that year the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) announced the availability of funds under the Rewarding and Developing Staff initiative, on the condition that a fully costed HR strategy was submitted for the years 2001/4. The HEFCE feedback for improvement was mostly concerned with fitting in with their template and we found this a rather tedious process but realised compliance was the requirement. This was a real life reminder of the way in which much criticised goal theory still dominates as guarantor of what will happen provided it is measurable. This demonstrates the need to present in different ways for different audiences and I should have anticipated this. The funding was worth over £2.5m and after satisfying the council with several more documents, our strategy was approved for funding. Although it did not seem as much our strategy any longer!**

**At this point it seemed timely to upgrade my membership of the Chartered Institute for Personnel Development (CIPD) to Fellow. There was an**

optimistic and upbeat note to the introduction of my development plan submitted on my application:

*“I would like to continue to lead development of HR strategy and further implementation. I hope that the contribution of HR will have even greater impact on strategic thinking now it is being formally recognised by permanent presence on executive board rather than weekly appearance to address HR issues. Governors have agreed my post is re-designated as Director of Human Resources to reflect this change formally. I would wish to be leading an HR Function that, three years from now, has successfully guided the implementation of the HR strategy and has supported cultural change through a thriving personal and organisational development unit, and is respected for its progress in establishing better opportunities for all who work in the Institute. Personally, I would wish to have developed my skill as a leader in the organisation, contributed to improving HRM in the HE sector and be networking more externally”*  
(CIPD application to upgrade to fellow August 2000)

I became a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development in October 2000.

## 9. An Organisation in Transition

During the period 2001 - early 2004, for the reasons outlined above, my publications were internal and directly related to my job role. All the documents were however in the public domain as the committee papers and policy documents can be accessed on the university's website. I have selected papers either because I remember them as being significant or they are ones I have come across recently in my current work because they are still policy; for the time being I have left my mark!

One year after the approval of the HR strategy the implementation of change was my major preoccupation (**paper 13 Personnel Service Annual Report 2001**). The first academic redundancies had been carried out and the general uncertainty had produced a range of individual casework problems. The problems exposed by casework were used to critique policy and develop staff development programmes. One good idea, that is admittedly far more commonplace now, was to devise a code of values for the organisation. The positive aspect of this was that it was supported at the highest level but unfortunately it became associated too much with a particular senior individual even though it had much to commend it. The principles are still embraced but I recall the problems in removing the terminology from the institutional lexicon. This demonstrates the need for effective leaders to allow others to own initiatives once the concept has been floated.

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Building a more cohesive, diverse and collaborative organisation was a key goal of the HR strategy. I led the establishment of a new development unit that was strengthened by secondments from the faculties and established customer facing dedicated personnel officers for groups of faculties and services. The majority of personnel policies were under review and I note that we were still managing to work with the trade unions on these despite the problem of redundancies. We had some involvement in a possible transfer of undertakings of part of the organisation to a commercial operator that eventually did not happen, although it meant implementing more commercial contracts. I remember one of the stumbling points was the cost of maintaining pensions of transferring for the potential new owners that makes their withdrawal even more sensible in today's climate.

The review in total alludes to nine major initiatives that illustrate a high level of activity and influence. I wanted my staff to benefit from the profile it gave them and I was pleased that a number of us were therefore active externally in consultancy and advisory work because we had something to offer. I think I can claim that I was at the leading edge of professional practice in that I was invited to undertake senior management pay reviews, job evaluation and Human Resource function audit by external organisations. I was also invited to join the Universities and Colleges Employment Association (UCEA) working group on Management Development and the Joint National Negotiation Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHS) Modernisation Group.

Before I turn to the critical part of the report I would like to highlight one particular experience recorded in this document. As explained earlier I was particularly attracted to the role because it included the academic development portfolio. As the core human resource functions and the equally, if not more important, teaching and learning agenda became more central to supporting the transition, it became clear to many of us that they both required “full time” attention. I had observed that there was a tendency for resisting the removal of parts of your department almost as a matter of principle. Interestingly at the time I knew that another Director particularly wanted to acquire the unit, quite logically, as part of a large learning resources service. I knew that others thought this would not be helpful to the faculties that it needed to support. I therefore volunteered to write the discussion paper that would effectively propose the removal of the unit from my service to be set up in its own right in a leading strategic role for the Institute. I believe I was in a strong position to do this because people knew that I was so supportive of the unit, having worked with colleagues to establish its importance. I was able to draw on the review of professional development I had published previously (**paper 7 “A Review of Strategies for Professional Development in Higher Education” with Neil Harris, *Perspectives The Teaching and Learning Journal of Southampton Institute* vol 10 p40-45, 1998**) to offer a critique of a range of alternatives.

The paper was clearly persuasive as a new service was subsequently established. About three years later some key staff left the Institute and as

can be seen below an integrated learning service was established with links to devolved development roles in the faculties. My rather obvious point here is that people and timing are far more important than structures and that I had used the power of knowledge in a political way to do what I interpreted was right for the organisation as a whole at that stage. Of course it was a pity for me personally that I could not be as closely involved as I had been and on reflection it took away some important links that I had with the faculties. At the same time I had enough within my remit to keep me busy and I think by then I had become far more the “personnel director who was once an academic” than the “academic who had become the personnel director”.

In the critical aspects of the review I see the roots of my eventual frustrations with the role. Management information is still an issue, not just in the personnel area; we put a lot of effort and resources into this. It takes a long time to establish what people want but that is not necessarily what they need! There are a multitude of masters in higher education wanting information in all sorts of different ways internally and externally; there is also an unhealthy obsession with, sometimes inappropriate, quantitative measures. There is also a mass of politics around who controls the choice of system such that inertia sets in.

As indicated before the job evaluation scheme is a concern in 2001, it is still not completely resolved in 2006. There are concerns about the national pay system and I was warning that we needed to take action on part-time staff

contracts as good practice and in preparation for changes in the law. These were areas that would attract additional cost and understandably people did want to hear this. I did manage to tackle the issue of supporting income diversification by developing new policy but this can only provide a framework (**paper 14 Policy and Guidelines on Consultancy and Other Professional Activities, Southampton Solent University Policy P42**). In my recent research on linking advanced scholarship to teaching it is clear the many managers and staff still believe that there is no policy until you show it to them, then they say “that’s actually very helpful”!

The above is good example of how I had become more like the policy makers at HEFCE that I had criticised. Even though the policy was properly researched and developed in consultation with an appropriate group, it was not communicated through the informal organisation. It was well debated within the committee structure but I suspect in very few other places where it mattered! Within my current research it is clear that the “reality” for many staff is their own construct based on their experiences. I can see the frustration in the current senior management team when I report on how staff interpret strategies. I knew about the problems of cultural change but I failed to make the links in some of my practice. This is the difference between “knowing about” and living that which as managers we preside over.

A number of equal opportunities initiatives were being launched but were not fully implemented. It is pleasing to note that flexitime working for



administrative staff and flexible working policies appear to be a success, although it was a long process to introduce a concept that I first came across in my first job after graduation in 1975.

I can see that I was concerned to justify the resources that I had secured for the new development unit, foreseeing a battle if we did not devise a convincing approach to evaluation. Organisational development takes time and within a very short time my senior colleagues were questioning its affordability. The drive for further devolution of central functions was also an influence here with the faculties feeling rightly pleased with the effectiveness of this in relation to registry and quality assurance functions. My personal view, which I did argue strongly at the beginning of the change programme was that the criteria should be for devolution should be primarily be provide better services to students, and secondarily to have sufficient critical mass in the resources available to make it effective and affordable.

My service in collaboration with the e development experts also took on the problem the Institute had yet to solve, that of providing an up to date on line staff CV database. Much development work went into this that involved the faculties but even when an agreed model was launched there was not enough overall drive to support it. There would be events that would make colleagues see the value of the project but of course because it was not fully populated it could not instantly be used. I have recently learned that the whole project has now been abandoned but in my current research

there are still complaints about lack of data and I myself regularly receive requests for personal data from several different sources, in different formats. Given time and support I think we would have solved most of the problems but I think people have lost patience. I think this a good example of where I do take personal responsibility but the issue for me is that I take its lack of resolution *personally*. There is a possibility that this initiative could have continued if I was there to fight it but I know that this illustrates the frustration that I would eventually feel with the role. A colleague who I shared an office with some 10 years ago in the business school said to me recently “you were always one of our best completer finishers”. In a sense this perhaps is another area that started me thinking about another change in my career as I started to see the same problems remaining unresolved. I realise the very concept of action research suggests that nothing is ever complete but I felt I was losing the energy I once had to keep up the enthusiasm. I started considering other directions, at first more senior or equivalent level posts where I felt I would be refreshed and regain my ability to influence organisational thinking.

This is another example of how now I am again a participant living in the world I am researching I have more perspective on these issues. I have other ideas now on how we could have resolved the issues more locally before acting at an organisational level. Looking back I possibly had a better perspective when I first moved over from the faculty into senior management. There were a number of senior staff that in terms of their espoused values who, like me, would have favoured an enquiry based

approach to resolving organisational issues. The standard model in this situation is to employ researchers (as I now am) to make propositions that managers can use as a basis for policy. The university created an Institutional Research Unit some years ago to do this work. This unit does some very good work but you could argue that the researchers employed in the unit are too detached from the world that they are researching. Further, senior managers and committees define the questions they are asking. I wonder if it would ever be possible to resolve this issue?

Before moving on to fully review more recent activities, it seems right to present evidence from the transitional period that I can be pleased with. During the one of the leadership conferences it had been agreed that the senior management team would benefit from some feedback beyond the appraisal system already in place. I suggested that we tried to implement some form of 360-degree process as way of helping evaluate our effectiveness. Fortuitously one of our academic specialists in occupational Psychology approached me asking if I had any projects I would be interested in him running as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for fulfilling the requirements of his British Psychological Society membership. One of the projects I suggested was designing and running a pilot of a 360- degree scheme. He had had some experience of such schemes in industry and knew a lot of the pitfalls. The pilot scheme was evaluated using a small number of senior managers and this group were able to contribute to the refinements required in consultation with an independent individual. The discussion in this group was then shared with the wider team and the basis of the revised

scheme was constructed during an away day. This culminated in the implementation of the scheme that is still in place today (**paper 15“360 degree appraisal scheme for SMT” HR subcommittee paper 03/HR/14, Southampton Institute, 2003**)

I alluded to the issue of further devolution of previously central functions above and my position. In 2002 I carried out a piece of work that I feel was a good example of bring my professional values to bear on implementing further changes even though I was personally sceptical. I put together a set of proposals for consideration on behalf of the then Vice Principal, whose name appears on the first paper (**paper 16“ Linking Student Learning to Information” with Van Gore, Policy and Resources Committee paper 02/PRC/56 Southampton Institute, 2002**). Van was kind enough to say he could not have done it without my perspective and knowledge on the whole organisation. It was a complex proposal with wide implications and I consider that between us we constructed a very tightly argued paper. The subsequent consultation exercise I carried out genuinely affected the eventual outcome of the reconfiguration and further devolution of functions proposed (**Paper 17“Analysis of responses to Linking Student Learning to Information proposal” Policy and Resources Committee paper 02/PRC/71 Southampton Institute, 2002**).

## **10. Time for Personal Change**

In the last couple of years in my personnel role (2002-4) the most significant work I was involved in from my personal perspective was focused on the role of the academic in supporting student learning in a modern university like the one we aspired to be. A number of issues and events came together that brought me back to the desire to be involved in a research project and start writing again. I wrote the Institute's second Human Resource strategy but all strategies now had to be written to a formula, hence there was very little room for originality. I carried out a further review of management pay with input from UCEA and ironed out the anomalies that had emerged since 2000. I handled a number of very difficult cases, including defending the Institute as its sole witness in an employment tribunal. For reasons of confidentiality I am unable to reflect on these in this document. Further, I do not wish to reflect other than to say I am now sure that I was not enjoying the work any more even though I could have carried on doing it.

The requirements of RDS 2 HEFCE funding, with a very strong nod in the direction of the Higher Education White Paper, emphasised the need for explicit links between HR strategy and rewarding teaching. I had been developing a project in collaboration with an academic colleague, a Head of School, to come up with better resource model to further encourage innovative approaches to teaching and provide an equitable transparent allocation. I also came across Roz Collins, who works for and is now Head of the Institutional Research Centre at the University at a staff development

event that my service was funding on running focus groups. The institution was developing and consulting on its own definition of Advanced Scholarship as a basis for encapsulating the work of staff that supports student learning in a “modern” university. Another group that I was involved in was looking at how reward systems could be better linked to teaching; I became far more interested in these issues and the connections between them.

I was sensitive to the controversy in the sector surrounding much of the above within the sector and even the process of carrying out research on staff perspectives would need careful handling. I now knew Roz Collins and that she had long experience of using focus groups as a data collection method. I suggested to Roz that if we wanted to understand the issues better it would be far more appropriate to carry out an institutional research exercise than an HR fronted consultation. This is how we started working together with Roz and her team supervising focus groups.

*“I got to know Adam professionally during some focus group facilitator training at the university when he was the Director of Personnel. During the training we debated the value of the focus group method in eliciting rich and meaningful data. Adam in his capacity as Director of Personnel was very keen to understand academic staff morale and motivation but doubted the effectiveness of the survey method to fulfill this purpose. Around this the time the possibility of a funding stream to recognise and reward academics for teaching excellence was announced. Adam developed*

*an investigative model and as part of the Institutional Research Team I set up and ran focus groups across the university with staff. We have subsequently presented at a number of conferences on related themes. We recently had an article published in a journal and an invitation to contribute to an international journal. The research continues and we maintain a very constructive and productive working relationship, usually mutually identifying and agreeing tasks and deadlines. I personally enjoy our collaboration and hope that we will continue working together on various projects".* Roz Collins 6<sup>th</sup> May 2006

At the same time as this work was going on I was having conversations with my line manager about my feelings about the job and that I could not really see a future continuing in the role indefinitely. I disclosed that I had looked at academic roles elsewhere but had not found a suitable post at a salary that I thought could be adjusted to. One day he had some news for me that he thought would probably be of no interest but he said there was the possibility of a post becoming available as a Principal Lecturer in HRM. Apart from adjusting to the salary I realised that I was interested and could see that my experience would enhance the services I could give to the Business School and its students. To my surprise my family and friends thought it was a great idea seeing the salary as a non- issue compared with the enjoyment they thought I would derive from returning to an academic role. Looking back I did not have much chance to fully dedicate myself to teaching and

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scholarship previously because I was very quickly promoted during the expansion of the Institute.

Having spent a number of years under the pressure you have to accept in a an HR Director's role in a period of considerable change there followed a period of indulgent relief after I had actually secured the post. There were messages encouragement, which I stored in my in box as I think they show the appreciation that others had for my skills, influence and authority in my field. These can be found in Appendix 3.



## 11. Return to Academic Life

By Spring 2004 I was in the business school and was making a good start to reintegrating with new and former colleagues. The work I was doing on reward and teaching had its first exposure as a conference paper at the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) in Cardiff in April. This was a useful link back into the scholarship aspect of academic work and it created sufficient interest from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) that we were asked if they could publish it on their website. This finally appeared in the Autumn of 2004 ( **paper 18 “*Perceptions of rewarding excellence in teaching: carrots or sticks*”, with Roz Collins, available at: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources)).**

We were not actually happy with the paper because it was still really work in progress and we were already working on further developments but we have had interest in the work as a result of its publication.

**Pat Young University of the West England**

**To: Roz Collins <Roz.Collins@solent.ac.uk>**

**cc:**

**Subject: RE: work on rewards for teaching**

Thanks for your reply. I have a copy of an article written by you and Adam Palmer called 'Perceptions of rewarding excellence in teaching:

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carrots or sticks?

It says the paper represents work in progress and subsequent to this the authors have undertaken further research particularly into the relevance of motivation expectancy based approaches to rewarding staff.

I would be very interested to read this.

Hope it makes sense now

Best wishes, Pat

**From David Gosling former Head of Educational Development, University of East London**

Roz,

I have a copy of your paper with Adam Palmer 'perceptions of rewarding excellence in teaching: carrots or sticks?'

It has the HEA logo on it, but I do not have the full reference.

I am interested in the work you are undertaking and wondered if you could (a) let me have the reference for this article and (b) point me to any other published or unpublished work you have on this project?

David Gosling

**From Adelaide Australia**

Dear Roz,

I am writing as Executive Editor for a new journal we are starting called Tertiary Learning and Professional Development

(<http://www.tlpjournal.org>), and would like you to consider writing a

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paper for consideration by the referees of the journal.

The international journal, Tertiary Learning and Professional Development (TLPD), allows practitioners in tertiary education (higher education, universities and community colleges, technical and further education) to publish evidence-based papers that demonstrate a link between organisational and staff development activities and teaching, learning, staff and support outcomes. This peer-reviewed journal publishes original papers and literature reviews that show the impact that development activities have on the quality of learning and teaching, the student experience and progression or the professional development of either academic or non-academic staff in tertiary institutions.

I was wondering if you would consider writing something related to rewards for teaching staff and its relationship to improvements in the student experience? I think this is an important area that would be of interest to a wide group of readers.

I would be pleased if you could let colleagues know about the new journal.

Regards

Geoff

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I worked on completing the full version of the paper for publication by developing the rationale for revisiting expectancy theory as a framework for evaluating the complex dimensions of academic staff motivation. I also included some further work questioning the construction of templates for defining excellence in teaching predominantly designed by educational developers rather than subject based practitioners. This was presented at the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning conference May 2005 and subsequently published in May 2006 (paper 21 “Rewarding Teaching Excellence: Motivation and the Scholarship of Teaching”, with Roz Collins, *Journal of Further and Higher Education* vol.30, No.2 pp193-205, 2006).

At the end of 2004/5 academic year I was awarded funding by the university to work on a project “Linking Advanced Scholarship to Teaching”. The scholarship I have been undertaking in this area and by knowledge of the university at all levels was very helpful in my application. This project is nearing completion at the time of writing. This is a university wide research project to explore the links between staff advanced scholarship and teaching, including ways in which these might be better exploited for the benefit of students. Reflections of staff, from a range of disciplines, on their practice have been gathered from over fifty interviews structured around key questions developed from relevant literature. The data was validated by a series of focus groups where the results were shared with participating staff.

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**I have had a paper on this accepted for the “Improving Student Learning” which takes place at the University of Bath in September. The paper builds on the work of other researchers for example, Brew (1999), Jenkins (2003,2004), Laskey (2004), Amey and Brown (2005). Discussion is invited on broader recognition of what, than has hitherto been the case, is valued as scholarship and has benefits for student learning. It is suggested that the “hidden” scholarly activities of staff, essentially those performed as an integral part the teaching role, should be made more transparent, recognised and celebrated.**

**A PhD student, Kate, from the Faculty of Technology has been drawn into the project in carrying out some of the interviews and analysing a share of the data. I have therefore asked her if she will present the paper with me, which will hopefully lead to her achieving a publication. She has already found the material useful to prepare her own paper to a conference on teaching coastal management. Kate and I shared our work as a session on the post- graduate learning and teaching certificate for staff at the university.**

**I also became involved in some other work on my return to the faculty. I was asked to join an externally funded project on improving employment diversity in small business in the Southampton area. I was soon leading the organisation of the research and the writing up the results. Again a PhD student, a former small business owner Nigel Bradley, was drafted in to carry out the initial literature search. Once the focus group work and case**

studies had been completed I turned the materials into a paper that which I presented at the conference “Corporate Social Responsibility: thought and practice” University of Glamorgan UK, 2004. The paper was selected for publication later this year (paper 19 “Developing Diversity in SMEs in the Health and Social Care sector and Business Support Industries:

collaboration between a city, a business school and employers” with Nigel Bradley *Social Responsibility Journal Vol. 2 No.2 pp194-200, 2006*)

A specified outcome for the funded project was a report for Southampton City Council. The work we had done for the paper was reconfigured in a report format that included more detail from the focus groups, case studies and interviews. The requirement to come up with recommendations to inform the City’s economic development strategy meant that it is written in quite a different style. (paper 18 “Identifying ways forward in diversity within SMEs” with Patricia Park, Jackie Wright and Nigel Bradley, *A report written for Southampton City Council of research carried out by Southampton Business School and Diversity Dynamics under the European Social Fund Article 6 project to develop an Integrated Employment Strategy for Southampton 2005. Available at*

[http://www.invest-in-southampton.co.uk/images/FinalReportart6\\_tcm29-137205.pdf](http://www.invest-in-southampton.co.uk/images/FinalReportart6_tcm29-137205.pdf))

The different writing styles required for academic and other audiences in is striking as you move from one role to another. When I moved out of my academic role into Human Resources, I can remember being told by the then

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Principal, “Adam I don’t want a discursive paper, give me some proposals”, I took the point. When I moved back in to the faculty I showed my abstract for the Corporate Social Responsibility conference to a colleague for comment and his helpful feedback was “ ....it reads like a business project proposal, you need to change the style to invite more openness to challenge”. These perspectives are helpful to my self- awareness and by adapting I think I can offer my professional practice in a variety of settings.

Much of my time in the last two years of course has been spent teaching, this is after all at the core of the job. I feel I now have a lot to offer my students because of my recent HR experience in a time of change. I think it is may be fair to claim that I am unusual in that I have actually experienced managing change and strategy development. These activities are difficult for many academics to actually have experienced even though they have an excellent critical knowledge of models, cases and writers. I teach the following units: “Managing Change”, “Managing Diversity and Equal Opportunities” on the Masters programmes, “Contemporary HR Issues” and “Personnel Management” on the undergraduate courses.

I am encouraged to receive appreciative feedback having been away from the classroom for some time. I include a few examples in appendix 4.

A major change for me coming back into teaching was the availability of learning technologies. In most of my courses I use Learnwise the university’s

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virtual learning environment for sharing materials and communicating with students outside the classroom. The impact for me, although of course I knew about its importance to the learning and teaching strategy from my previous role, was all the more dramatic for being out of teaching for eight years. The facilities and flexibility it affords in delivery makes many aspects of the role of tutor easier to manage. Having said that not all staff or students are comfortable using it. I find I can spend far more time devoted to learning activity and interaction in the classes because students can access all the materials they need on Learnwise. I very rarely need to take any materials to classes with me because they can be accessed wherever I am, gone are the days of struggling to lectures weighed down with handouts. Using a photocopier is a relatively unusual activity.



## **12. Improving my Research Practice**

This chapter reflects critically on my work thus far as research and reflective practice. It looks forward to how the lessons I have learned might inform my practice and those of my fellow colleagues in HR. It draws attention to the learning I have gained through the compilation of this submission by evaluating my methodological approach and provides a personal agenda for further improvement of my research practice.

### **The Influence of Situatedness**

Much of my work is influenced by “situated learning”, it involves learning in the workplace about the workplace (Collins and Duguid, 1989 in Cohen et al, 2000). A great deal of it has been part of my own professional development as well as being a basis for intervention and change in organisations. This discussion concerns the claims for AR as a methodological approach and my identification of where my work aligns with these. I appreciate they are claims and it is therefore important to appreciate where they and my work can be questioned.

Usher, R. *et al* (1997) criticise Schon’s work on reflective practice for omitting to reflect on his own models in action. It is argued that he does not identify the importance of situatedness in practitioner’s experience. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) identification of its significance in learning needs to be

addressed in assessing my own learning journey. By moving in and out of the different roles in my career I have had the opportunity to act at the centre of various communities of practice. When I started to teach in higher education my appreciation of the wider context was limited but when I became confident to contribute my perspective it opened up whole new community of internal and external colleagues. Similarly on becoming an HR Director I initially felt I was on the periphery of the HR community but as I developed my practice in that context I came to be accepted and invited to contribute externally. In this way my opportunities to learn in different situations give me a sensitive appreciation of different contexts and its effects on what participants in my projects identify as their reality. The experience of these different situations means that I have a perspective that interprets my research as an HR practitioner and as a practising university teacher.

Shotter (1993) quoted In Reason (2000) provides another dimension to learning from social situations. This is depicted as knowing of the third kind as opposed to knowledge. This is more what I have to offer than knowledge on its own, my published work is evidence of my contribution but increasingly these try to present the conversations of participants in organisational contexts. However, I need to extend the outcomes of my research such that it increases its impact on developing participants' own aptitude for inquiry. On the other hand I hope I have shown through this submission of my work that I "know" because I have acted in my practice as a result of increasing my knowledge. Paper 7 on approaches to academic development shows that my learning through inquiry (knowledge) was a

prelude to proposals for how this would be delivered in my own organisation (knowing). In contrast, mainly through experience rather than research, I came to know about the challenges of the diversity agenda. I was then able to use this experience in preparing the prompts for focus group conversations in the employment diversity research (paper 19). This in turn made a contribution to knowledge at a conference and in a refereed journal.

### **Reflection and Reflexivity**

Berg (2004 p.154) characterises reflexivity as a reflective concern on the part of the researcher. I need to understand more about how much I am part of the world I am investigating. I would suggest that I am coming closer to developing the capacity to having this internal dialogue about what I know and how I came to know it in the preceding paragraphs. It is clear to me that I do not want to just examine facts. I want to know how people experience phenomena (teaching more students, students coping in HE, SMEs and diversity issues) and seek to provide interpretations of their experiences. In the future I probably need to make more explicit my capacity to question how I interpret my findings.

A strength I ought to build on more to influence others is what colleagues have argued is my fairly unique experience of developing HR practice in a teaching role and a senior management role. In a way I should be in a better position to have critical conversations with myself when drawing conclusions

from my inquiries. A paper on advanced scholarship (AS) and its links to teaching I recently presented internally and externally I hope shows that I have begun to take this approach, particularly as I wrote up the paper for publication when the fieldwork was completed. I think this excerpt from the conclusions demonstrates this:

“For those colleagues who have worked long and hard on the development of the AS strategy at the university some of the above (criticisms of policy implementation) possibly makes very frustrating reading. However the authors would make the plea that what people have said to us represents their reality. One of the writers has had the benefit of experiencing from both perspectives the dissonance between espoused official strategy and the way it is interpreted or even ignored. The underlying cultural dimensions have far more influence than all the work that has been done on AS policy. On a more positive note it can be seen that there are signs of change and genuine appreciation and support for the university’s position on AS. Participants in the research were pleased that the university was taking the time to consider how it could improve its practice and their involvement in it.

The literature on the links (or lack of them) between research, scholarship and teaching in universities helps to make sense of some of the findings in this study and encouragement to persevere with the paradigm of AS at the university.” (Palmer, Pike and Fletcher p 7)

### **Practitioner Researcher or Action Researcher?**

I am aware that there are several interpretations of Action Research (AR). As Gray (2004 p 374) quoting Dickens and Watkins (1999) points out, “there is still no definitive approach to Action Research and no unified theory”. I have tended to apply the approach that is usually accepted amongst business and management researchers because that is my background. I think I can qualify this by arguing that the majority of my contributions result in outputs “derived from involvement with members of an organisation over a matter of genuine concern to them” (Eden and Huxham 1996 p75).

In relation to Argyris et al’s (1985) definition of AR, my research efforts are on real problems in an organisation(s) and are designed to find a solution. I also believe that other aspects of his influence are seen in that I have sought to embrace a his “ Model 2” values of seeking valid information, sharing control and surfacing conflicting views in my work. In this sense I strived to contribute to more informed decision-making at a time of great change in my organisation and its environment. I have examples of this in the problems I have sought to solve: teaching more students, how to reward teachers, how to improve employment diversity in small businesses, how to gain support for an HR strategy. I have engaged in a process of problem identification, planning, action and evaluation. This cycle is represented in the papers submitted. For example papers 2,5,6 and 9 track the

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identification of the problem of teaching more students with less resources that led to the planning of a programme of research which involved the staff and eventually students in contributing their concerns and perspectives on resolution. Action was taken through sharing findings internally and externally and proposing a way forward in course redesign and development seminars to share practice. The resulting undergraduate success unit was evaluated to assess how far it was meeting the needs of staff and students. The outcomes of the project contributed to academic theory in that it challenged the widely accepted notion that students were prepared for the challenges of undergraduate study through the day to day teaching of business disciplines as if by osmosis.

Further characteristics of AR are suggested by Eden and Huxman (1996) as outcomes. AR has implications for situations other than the one studied. This is evidenced in my work in that it was of sufficient interest to be published in peer reviewed journals. The writing of papers for publication involved grounding the analysis of project outcomes in theory. The papers show how gradually our thinking changes about how we might better support student learning from a business skills based approach, to an integrated approach and then a critical thinking based unit.

On the other hand Jean McNiff (2002 p.6) provides a different perspective in her definition.

“Action research is a term which refers to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be. Because action research is done by you, the practitioner, it is often referred to as practitioner based research; and because it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your work, it can also be called a form of self-reflective practice.”

To her the idea of self- reflection is essential in AR. The approach is very much focused on why you do what you do and why you are the way you are. This is followed by investigating what you have gone through to arrive where you are and how you might through this understanding continue to develop yourself and your work. In this sense what she describes is the process that should take place through the production of my context statement. Using this perspective would suggest that my publications do not satisfy this criteria for AR in that they are mostly concerned with participants and organisations rather than just myself. My context statement is an attempt to go through this sort of process but as it stands it could be argued to be incomplete in that I have not exploited its potential to inform future decisions on how I develop myself.

Reviewing my work thus far leads me to question how much personal change could be achieved through some of the approaches to research I used. For instance much of my thinking is restrained by trying to satisfy organisation and government policy conventions in developing new ways of doing things

rather than examining my own reasons for interpreting what is the “right thing to do”.

With reference to Robson (p535) I have done my research with limited time on top of my usual roles. At times I have taken a sufficiency approach to solving problems, I am less confident when challenged about methodological issues by experts with more experience; I am trying to solve problems by selecting appropriate interventions. Insider problems are clearly an issue but I have had the privilege of having “high status” in the university for long periods that gives me access to participants at all levels in the organisation. Having gone back and forth between roles I have a wide perspective on different interpretations of the reality of the university, I have been fortunate to have many insider opportunities. However, I consider myself a reasonable judge of when it is more appropriate to use more “independent” researchers e.g. when I collaborated with Roz Collins, an institutional researcher to carry out the primary research that contributed to paper 20 on rewarding teaching and motivation.

Cohen and Manion (1990) was a book I used during my MSc studies that influenced my reasoning in choosing and applying research methods to my earlier studies. I returned to a later edition of this book recently to reconsider the discussion on AR in relation to my past work (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000)). I enjoy the quotation from Lewin(1948) in Cohen et al(2000 p 226) “that research that produces nothing but books is inadequate”. My work no doubt has many faults but I think I can claim that



each piece presented here has led to change and improvement at a local level as well as publication.

The uses of AR cited include changing teaching methods, learning strategies and continuing professional development for teachers. My work with Harris and later Lawson sought to do this with students and staff. The work was used in staff development workshops and the post-graduate teaching and learning certificate for discussion of changes to course design and delivery, as well as encouraging colleagues to engage in their own research into their practice.

Cohen et al 's (2000) review of the different conceptions of AR on the one hand reminds me that I need to be clearer about the aspects I am drawing on and their justification in work that I claim to be AR. On the other hand in each interpretation I find aspects that are features of my approach. In terms of definitions my work can be described as disciplined inquiry where an attempt is made to improve practice as proposed by Hopkins(1985) and Ebbutt (1985). Many of my projects are examples of Cohen and Manion's (1990) small-scale interventions in the functioning of the real world of Southampton Solent University and close examination of the effects of such interventions (papers 2, 5, 6 and 9). I would argue that they also demonstrate the more careful, systematic and rigorous planning, acting, observing and reflection than one would usually do in everyday life described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1992). I think I can also cite this process in a less formal sense in my approach to HR policy and strategy

development, for example the papers on establishing a new learning and information service.

A feature of my work is collaboration and therefore in one sense it satisfies the notion that AR must be collaborative. However it would be difficult to claim that all the contributions of staff were critically examined in action. It was difficult to arrange for these opportunities to see staff implementing their practice and as can be seen data was generated through semi-structured interviews. On the other hand I would argue that the outcomes of the work with Harris did come about from critical examination of our practice as course design and development leaders. The work with Lawson could also be questioned as AR but again this collaboration involved evaluating practice in two university business schools as critical friends with a view to improving our practice. In this sense like all research methods they are not always applied in isolation because in order to examine our practice we had to gain an insight into the practice and perceptions of others (our colleagues and students).

Robson (2002 p 534-535) provides an analysis of the types of research that a practitioner researcher might be engaged in with an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of the role. "A practitioner researcher is someone who holds down a job in a particular area and is, at the same time, involved in carrying out systematic inquiry which is relevant to the job".

My papers on preparing students for the challenges of undergraduate study fall into to this category; they are specific to a situation I found myself in as

a teacher and an academic leader. Even though the resulting papers have been published, the objectives were quite local.

I have never been a full time researcher, hence a lot of the work I do has to have a pay off for me in helping me do my job better or for my sponsor or employer if it is funded. The predominantly insider research that I have written up may be criticised by Winter (1987) for not making clear enough my influence on the research process to be cited as AR. Up until now I have not explicitly expressed the effects that my actions, values and situation might have on my interpretation of the results of my research.

When I look at the way in which I have categorised my work in other parts of this submission I think it would be more accurate to say that much of my practitioner based research borrows from the processes of Action Research and displays some of its features. However it is not what some purists would call AR. It could be argued to fall more into the category of Management Action Science described by Gray (2004) in that I kept more control of the research process and choosing interventions than in participatory action research.

As I have said elsewhere my HR research projects, whether internal or external, place me more in the position of “independent” researcher or consultant. As I hope I have demonstrated in my comments on ontology and epistemology I am very sceptical of the human capacity for independence but I know that I have borrowed from methods that are much criticised by

the proponents of AR for their claims to objectivity. Hence whilst I might be facilitating part of someone else's AR cycle I am supporting one stage in the cycle, usually evaluating the outcomes of actions taken by others. In the future I might utilise an action research cycle that I facilitate and evaluate but involve participants in contributing and acting themselves. This might take the form of Kemmis and Wilkinson's (1998 p21) cycle. Planning change, acting then observing what happens then, reflecting on processes and consequences, planning further action and repeating the cycle. Finally ensure that a participative collaborative style is employed to "democratise" the process involving people in setting agendas, discussing findings and ways forward with participants gaining commitment to completion and acting on findings.

My more recent work within the university is discussed below to show how my practice is changing.

### **Reflective Practice**

Throughout I can see how I used prior learning, sometimes formal learning, in new experiences. For example using interpretations of expectancy theory to make sense of staff perceptions on rewards for teaching (paper 20), using Knowles (1978) and Handy (1989) to make sense of the journey students have to make on their way to graduation and employment (paper 2) and considering the response of small business to diversity using business case and social justice models (paper 19).

Although there was limited time to think around the way prior learning and experience framed my response to resolution of problems in my HR role I can see that sub -consciously I was using cumulative combinations of learning and experience to make sense of the challenges. It is not seen as appropriate or required to fill strategy papers with discourse on methodology, epistemology and ontology but I think a critical reader could detect these coming through. In the production of papers 11-16 I strived to give as much opportunity for interested colleagues to contribute their interpretation of where the organisation should be going. In this formal position I had to synthesise these expectations in a way that aligned with the strategic agenda, an agenda that they were involved in setting. The outcome would have its critics but part of my maturity at that time was to apply my abilities pragmatically within given timeframes and resources. As academics we still have, albeit also with limited resources, the opportunity to be more methodical and critical. However as I have said elsewhere if you are commissioned to carry out a project your sponsors will want sufficiently workable proposals as well as discourse and this limits the action that you can personally take. Hence individual action research and reflective practice is perhaps a purer form of the genre.

In my recent research on Advanced Scholarship, to be published in 2007, I believe I have moved forward with using the opportunity of a university sponsored project to do what Winter(1996 p13-14) calls risk disturbance and create plural structures. The internal report presents some very different

interpretations and harsh critiques of university strategies and policies in action that are taken for granted by some university managers. It is a pity this forthcoming work was not ready for submission as a publication at the time I was completing the context statement and public works for examination to see how I have moved on. The work involved individual interviews, focus groups with interviewees and others to “validate” initial findings and external discussion on the basis of the question “is this a situation (the findings) you recognise?”.

I was asked recently how I might use this research subversively referring to Karl Marx’s Theses on Feuebach; the task (in research) is not merely to understand and interpret the world but change it. I had not thought of the work in this way before, in fact I was quite concerned that my honesty in writing up our findings would cause some anger and irritation. In my present role though I was comfortable that this was exactly what I should be doing and hold back on massaging the interpretation. At the same time I suppose I am being subversive because I would like to rock the boat on Advanced Scholarship rhetoric by exposing the reality in the university. I am hoping that it can be used as a lever for more resources and support for the faculties so that we might progress on the issue and divert resources that are perceived as wasted on central regulatory services to “police” policy. After the interviews with staff I made sure they were aware of the levels of resources available for supporting teaching and learning that I believed were not being dispersed openly or equitably and encouraged them to contact key personnel to apply pressure.

The reflections above bring me back to re-evaluating my previous work. Zuber-Skerritt (1996 p.99) presents a cyclical model of action research that integrates AR with organisational change theory of Lewin (1952). If I look at the university's actions on AS it has sought to follow a similar cycle in developing it's strategy. I have been drawn in again with my colleagues in the later stages to "monitor the whole revitalization process" and "reflect on the results and draw conclusions". The test for the university is to see if the cycle is restarted by "redefining the business plan". Here also lies the problem with my work, although a lot is said about collegiality in universities the criteria are in reality difficult to fulfil across an organisation. Morrison (1998) presents these as being essential for AR to be successful. These are concerned with equal rights, transparency, accountability and the power of argument over position. I have strived to satisfy these criteria in my own actions but I would never claim to have fulfilled them in other people's eyes. I could easily be accused of using my positional power in previous roles to gain acceptance of my ideas or least be insufficiently critically aware of how this might limit how people give me feedback. On the other hand I believe I showed some maturity in my thinking when as HR Director I involved more "independent" focus group facilitators on the rewarding teaching project. Again that probably shows the lack of faith I had that the organisation culture reflected espoused shared values.

In many ways then I have set myself up for criticism of my work falling

within the realms of AR, as in its quest for academic respectability it is harder to satisfy the criteria of the more sophisticated models. As Reason and Bradbury (2000) highlight the one area on which action researchers agree is that objective knowledge is impossible, pointing out the political influences and privileges that those who hold power over knowledge. The democratisation of knowledge is a tough agenda to satisfy. The participative role of the action researcher it is argued prevails upon us to critically evaluate our own role in the world in which we live. I need to articulate my position more clearly in my work and show how I am true to the ethos of AR, although to be fair to myself I do explain my situation in relation to the subject matter of my papers.

### **Ethics**

Just as there is little agreement on definitions of AR there is a similar situation as regards ethical frameworks. Some of the more recent literature on HR has considered the role of ethics in how HR decisions are made and implemented. An influential contribution to this debate is Winstanley and Woodall (2000) "The Ethical Dimension of Human Resource Management". This has resonance for me reflecting on my recent past in that put simply they are discussing the possibility of putting back the ethics in HRM. My early development in learning about HR took place at a time when the human relations school (Herzberg, Maslow, McGregor) were pretty central to personnel practice, not to mention the relevance attached to the sociology of work in the study of employee relations. I think it may have been to my personal cost that I carried vestiges of this earlier learning into a modern HR



role. Many, most notably Legge (1995), have continually challenged HRM to deliver the good practice it promises alongside so called hard performance management.

Considering the role of ethics in HRM has led to a debate that parallels the AR discussion above about which ethical framework is the most appropriate and how important it is for practitioners “to be ethically aware of how their own disposition affects the choice of an ethical framework” (Winstanley and Woodall, 2002 p5). I can see that despite how I would like to see myself as an HR practitioner I have been drawn into practising ethical egoism and utilitarianism to support implementing the harsher aspects implementing business strategy. I have read aspects of political theory and philosophy in the distant past but am only beginning to make the connections when I look at discussions of ethics.

Having worked alongside HR professionals and educators I can see similarities in approach to ethics in taking action to resolve problems but I have not until recently made the time to think about the effects that dilemmas have had on me. I can claim to believe strongly in the rights of individuals in the Kantian sense but I know I would often look to the business case to support difficult decisions about people. I am as guilty as anyone else in using the mask of balancing stakeholder interests because it supported actions that had to be taken as a result of economic circumstances.

This raises particular issues about how in my research and practice I ensure that an ontological and epistemological position that recognises my

influence on the knowledge acquired is not used in a way that exploits my organisational position. This would have been particularly important when I held the position of HR Director where potentially I could have used the outcomes of inquiries to adversely affect the lives of people who willingly gave their time as participants. I am confident that my values are reflected in my published work in that the common theme is “improvement” for staff and students. On the other hand where my public works demonstrate processes of strategy development and consultation it was clear to contributors that major change was planned and they knew the influence I would have in any consequent resource decisions.

I have to say that the above statements until now would be explained by my particular values and approach rather than a highly developed awareness of what Costley and Gibbs (2006) have recently identified as the “ethics of caring”. Their work derives from the concerns they have to ensure that insider research work based projects submitted for Masters and Doctoral awards involve additional ethical dimensions to those carried out by external researchers. I have said earlier that I am more confident in my proposals when they are based on disciplined enquiry but I have never believed that this gives me a basis to assert my version of reality as the only answer, although I will ask opponents to identify the basis for their assertions. As I continue to learn more about these challenges I will take these concerns forward in my future work and find a way to make these explicit to those who have a stake in the outcomes of my research and indeed the work based projects of my students.

## **Transformative Learning**

In thinking through this penultimate reflective chapter I am increasingly struck by what I “know” has not been used to maximum effect in achieving change. I had the positional power and personal influence over others to do this but in a way can achieve more in changing how I think and act now as an individual. Understanding the way to achieve change is to harness the capacity of individuals to acquire new perspectives is one thing but to support this process in a resource constricted managerial environment is another.

Mezirow (1991 p.2) in his influential work on adult learning argues that adults “discover a need to acquire new perspectives in order to gain a more complete understanding of changing events and a higher degree of control in their lives. The formative learning of childhood becomes transformative learning in adulthood”. Further, he argues that this requires changes in “praxis” as well as behaviour that are defined as the creative implementation of a purpose. This leads me to consider how I could better support learning and change for others and how what I have presented here has led or will lead to change in my practice.

Mezirow emphasises the importance of meaning perspectives as a frame of reference that can inform or distort how we think. I do not think I am untypical of many who may “know this” but however act without conscious reference to it. I think my public works show the meaning schemes that

have been applied through my career but as such these are not specifically articulated in them. My beliefs in independence of thought equity, fairness, transparency, and integrity; influenced by my developing knowledge of social science, management theory and education; my levels of confidence, sensitivity and self-awareness; my values of respect for difference, justice, caring and honesty. However I also see these being tempered or compromised by my inclination to try and solve problems within the terms of reference and external economic constraints.

As for transformation or emancipatory action I have come to the conclusion paradoxically that in making my claim for my D Prof. I have come to realise the limitations of aspects of my work. This is because I have put my work and myself forward for intensive critical scrutiny. In that sense I see much of my work has been trying to resolve increasingly challenging problems without the realisation that the lack of awareness of self produced a crisis that eventually caused me to change my role. However I have to say I feel more powerful in my current role to support change in my practice and others than in a senior positional role of power.

### **13. What next?**

The work on Linking Advanced Scholarship to Teaching is important, as it will inform the university's strategy for how it presents its particular contribution as a university. I believe it is a good example of the university being prepared to look at itself critically and seek out good practice. I think the idea of a university like ours commissioning an enquiry into its practice in a scholarly way is entirely appropriate. It also makes me very aware of the need to ensure that my scholarship informs my teaching and helps my students. I think the issue will be an important one as research funding is concentrated in a smaller number of universities (Locke 2004) in the UK. Those who are less well funded need to demonstrate how they are offering a university level experience that is different but meets the needs of stakeholders in Higher Education.

The work carried out on diversity in employment has attracted the interest of a colleague who teaches Economics who has developed a labour market analysis of the results that will be submitted to a journal. This is another example of the value of collaboration and sharing resources in improving the value of work through critiques and further development of knowledge.

Looking back at the reflections contained in this document it might be helpful before I move on to imagine what I would say to the major institutions I have interacted with in the past about being an HR Director in the UK Higher Education sector. If any of them were interested enough to

hear my perspective and invited me to submit a paper these would be my thoughts.

To the university I would say being an HR Director is one of the most difficult roles because of the contradictions within an academic institution. A university, for example, will probably wish to portray itself as a learning organisation that espouses the values of collegiality and tolerance. At the same time he/she is now expected to apply the harder edged HR practices believed by the public sector to be so effective in business. It is hard for universities to ignore the demands of increased regulation that requires them to show that they are adopting good practice in the human relations aspects of HR whilst applying the requirements of an increasingly tight financial environment. This has the effect of portraying the university in one way for marketing purposes to students and employees e.g. caring, quality, development, but in practice struggling to keep the institution viable through an inevitably more regulatory approach. It seems to be the fashion to see HR actions as strategic if they reflect the values of goal attainment models of change management. To this end if you can put a number on an objective, lots of dates and targets it's "strategic".

At the very best I would say that within the tightly controlled requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE), a university can indulge in some contingency approaches using alternative scenarios. My values are more aligned with stakeholder and multiple accountability models of practice that assume the need to

have conversations in a way that shows the organisation cares about the consequences of its actions, even if the message is not welcome, and confront criticism in an honest way. I think I would say to the university that I enjoyed most the contribution I made when it needed someone to think deeply about how we might appeal to hearts and minds across the university. When the university could own its approach to these matters, I felt we were making progress.

I would therefore say to HEFCE that although they can say that every university has an HR strategy, they can not claim to know more than that which is submitted on paper to tick all their boxes. I would say that they missed an opportunity to encourage imagination and innovation in the way university HR strategies were developed. I once witnessed a HEFCE consultant present a paper at a University Personnel Association conference in 2003 berating universities for their “1970s” approach to HR and yet it was required that we should all have quantitative measures for every objective. My approach prior to HEFCE’s intervention was to use these measures where appropriate but to engage staff more in “imagining” what the university would look/be like in 5 years if each objective were achieved. I was very influenced by Gareth Morgan (1986) and his subsequent work on the importance of stories and symbols in organisational change whereas HEFCE themselves seem to be restricting us all to Management by Objectives.

I was of course pleased that QAA commended our HR strategy in 2000 but I think they would be interested in the way we had to modify it. I suspect the

composition of QAA panels is such that they may have more empathy with the approach we were taking at that time. I do not know how much QAA and HEFCE talk to each other about the criteria they use to make judgements but I would recommend an exchange of ideas.

Another agency that HEFCE might wish to coordinate its activities with is the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) that requires a series of returns about staff data annually from each university. It might be assumed that HESA has all the data needed for universities to benchmark their staffing data with other institutions. I discovered that HESA could sell my university this data as a “service”. We purchased this data as a “report” that turned out to be a print out of raw data lacking any accompanying narrative or analysis. These demands for data in different formats are repeated across universities in all areas of their work. I agree that we have to be accountable for how we deliver our services but the current structures are reducing university management to a continuous reporting exercise.

Finally, I would wish to convey the following to my professional body, the CIPD. Over the years I have found their publications and information service to be a valuable resource in developing ideas. In more recent years they have also provided more in the way of research reports that in my return to an academic role I have more time to make use of. However much of the research work I have come across is in the standard format of quantitative studies based on questionnaires that tell you, for example, how many HR directors have implemented flexible working policies in their organisations.



Similarly the People Management magazine tends to feature lots of successful organisations achieving outstanding results with the latest HR fad. This lack of an employee perspective in the research into the effectiveness of HRM practice has been highlighted by Guest (1997), Guest (2002) and Legge (1998). I would say to the CIPD it would help practitioners to hear how employees experience these policies and learn from their accounts of them in action. These are the stories I tell my students when they offer formulaic solutions drawn from models, I try to convey paradoxes and contradictions of strategic intention and practice in action.

All the recent research work I have done and the process of reviewing my professional development thus far has led me to thinking about how I might act to improve the service I can offer to students and other clients. I would like to improve my practice by making clearer links between my research, scholarship and their learning. I would like to help students with the enthusiasm and potential to develop their research for wider dissemination. I am interested in using what I have learned from compiling this submission in bringing different dimensions to my teaching and project supervision. I would wish that I could in this way make a contribution to developing more managers to challenge their practice and accepted ways of working.

Although I think I can claim to have been an action researcher in the past, I have had the opportunity to visit more recent literature that has introduced new perspectives on how I might carry out future work. I have over the year become more interested in the phenomena of work- based learning and its

further potential as a route for professional development accreditation. I would like in some way to be involved in this sort of work either by developing a model at my own university or joining an established team part-time or full-time elsewhere.

The process of compiling this submission has had a profound effect on me by clarifying where I can feel most comfortable with what I contribute and its alignment with my values and beliefs. I am now able to live these more in the work that I currently do and I am content. This does not mean I will not continue to learn and search for new ideas or challenges; on the contrary I have a feeling that I am on the brink of something new. I see no point in regretting some of the experiences I had as a senior manager, positive or negative they enrich what I have to offer to others. In many ways I am privileged to have had the opportunity to utilise academic skills in developing HR practice and HR practice in enhancing my teaching.

In my current research I am able to conduct enquiries and make proposals that can be used by others to solve problems if they wish. I can be listened to or ignored if I tell people what they do not wish to hear. I find this a much better place to be because I can live with this honestly knowing that I have done my best to present evidence in a properly conducted enquiry, others may wish to select what matches their interpretation of reality for their purposes but I now have the luxury of leaving it to them to decide how they are to act on it.

## Doctorate of Professional Studies by Public Works

I am grateful that through the work I have done for this submission I have benefited from the advice of my supervisors Peter Critten and Carol Costley who have introduced me to other ways of compiling evidence and interpreting its value. I have learned so much about myself through this period of reflection and I am far clearer as to why my career and my thinking has developed in the way it has. It is as if I have pressed the pause button for the first time in my life and emptied it onto these pages. I would like to think that I have acquired new skills with which I can now help others to go through a similar process to demonstrate their learning and have a clearer idea about how they want to live out their values.

This then has been my account of how I developed professionally to a stage where I had the confidence and the support of others to undertake a role of considerable influence in an organisation at a time of major change. I am sure a contributing factor to being able to embark on this was that I had demonstrated that I was prepared to express my ideas in the external domain and think deeply about how to resolve the issues that are outlined on page 2 of this submission. I think what I brought to the role in the first five years had a good match with what the organisation required in an HR Director and I was able to work well with a relatively “blank sheet”. For all sorts of reasons, as I have tried to show, the environment became increasingly frustrating and I lost the energy and enthusiasm to keep resolving the same problems. I particularly realise now how much I was missing the freedom to speak my mind with confidence. I believe that whilst I was able to publish and collaborate with my colleagues this validated my

proposals. A colleague I had worked with closely for many years commented that he noticed that I had changed and appeared to have lost confidence, this was in the year leading up to my decision to find an alternative role. In my current role I feel far more at ease being able to have the time to carry out research and being a participant in the environment I am investigating.

Now I am reconnected with the core business of the university I intend to continue establishing collaborative partnerships to carry out research, course development and consultancy. I do not intend making any detailed plans, I enjoy the random way in which opportunities occur to take on new projects and help others develop their own experience in these. A paper I presented with Kate Pike in Bath recently was oversubscribed much to our surprise and I can see through the interest it caused that it may lead to external partnerships. Whilst I have been compiling this submission I have submitted a proposal for a new Masters degree in the business school that will go forward for validation this year. The working title is MA Professional Development and will be offered by work-based learning. This has come about in part because of my exposure to the Middlesex “model”; this is another serendipitous opportunity. At the same time I have discovered that the course team for the Masters in Education are interested in revalidating their course as a work-based programme, we have decided to work together and share ideas. Finally I feel ready to move on to another phase in my career but I will be careful to ensure that it allows me to live by my values and beliefs.

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**Appendix 2 Co-author permission statements**



Doctorate of Professional Studies by Public Works

**Submission for the award of Doctorate of Professional  
Studies by Public Works (Developing Professional HR Practice  
and Teaching in the University Sector)**

**By**

**Adam Palmer BA MSc PGCE FCIPD**

**Principal Lecturer in Human Resource Management**

**Southampton Solent University**

**Southampton**

**University of Middlesex**

**March 2006**

## Statement from Co-author

This is to certify that Adam Palmer made a major and significant contribution to the following papers:

Patricia Park; Adam Palmer, Jackie Wright, Nigel Bradley (2004) Identifying ways forward in diversity within SMEs *A report written for Southampton City Council of research carried out by Southampton Business School and Diversity Dynamics under the European Social Fund Article 6 project to develop an Integrated Employment Strategy for Southampton*

Signature..........Date.....3 Oct 2005

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## Statement from Co-author

This is to certify that Adam Palmer made a major and significant contribution to the following papers:

- 1.1 Adam Palmer and Roz Collins(2004) Perceptions of rewarding excellence in teaching: carrots or sticks? *Linking Strategy and Students: making connections through educational staff development* Staff and Educational Development Association conference Cardiff UK
- 1.2 Adam Palmer and Roz Collins (2004) *Perceptions of rewarding excellence in teaching:carrots or sticks*. Available at: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources)
- 1.3 Adam Palmer and Roz Collins (2005) Perceptions of Rewarding excellence in teaching: motivation and the scholarship of teaching. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. vol/part no: , under consideration. section: , p. [Awaiting Publication]

Signature.....*Roz Collins*.....Date.....*18-10-05*.....

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*Sent to Adam Palmer.*



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This is to certify that Adam Palmer made a major and significant contribution to the following papers:

- 1.1 Graham Benmore and Adam Palmer (1995) Human Resource Management in Small Business: keeping it strictly informal *The strategic direction of human resource management* Nottingham Trent University UK
- 1.2 Graham Benmore and Adam Palmer (1996) Human Resource Management in Small firms: keeping it strictly informal. *Small business and Enterprise Development Journal*. vol part no: . November. section: 3. p109 –118
- 1.3 Graham Benmore and Adam Palmer (1998) Mitarbeiterführung und personalmanagement in kienunternehmen. *Zetschrift für Kleinund Mittelunternehmen*. vol part no: . Jahrgang. section: 46. p1-15


Signature..... GT Benmore ..... Date. 4/10/05 .....

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## Statement from Co-author

This is to certify that Adam Palmer made a major and significant contribution to the following papers:

- 1.1 Adam Palmer and Nigel Bradley (2004) Developing Diversity in SMEs in the Health and Social Care sector and Business Support Industries: collaboration between a city, a business school and employers *Corporate Social Responsibility: thought and practice* University of Glamorgan UK
- 1.2 Adam Palmer and Nigel Bradley (2005) Developing Diversity in SMEs in the Health and Social Care sector and Business Support Industries: collaboration between a city, a business school and employers *Corporate Social Responsibility: an international journal*. vol/part no: , accepted for publication summer/autumn

Signature.....  ..... Date..... 10/10/2005 .....

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This is to certify that Adam Palmer made at least an equal contribution to that of the other co-authors in the production of the following papers:

- 1.1 Neil Harris and Adam Palmer (1994) Doing more with less: improving the quality of the first year experience on business undergraduate courses within the context of a diminishing resource base *7<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the First Year Experience* University College Dublin Ireland
- 1.2 Neil Harris and Adam Palmer (1995) Improving the quality of the first year experience on business undergraduate courses within the context of a diminishing resource base". *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. vol/part no: , Autumn. section: 3, p63-74
- 1.3 Neil Harris and Adam Palmer (1996) Preparing students for the Honours Challenge *Global perspectives of the First Year Experience* University of York UK
- 1.4 Harris NG Lawson D and Palmer A (1996) Critical thinking in UK and US undergraduate business programmes: implications for course design *4<sup>th</sup> international improving student learning symposium* University of Bath UK
- 1.5 Harris NG Lawson D and Palmer A (1996) A collaborative approach to improving students' critical thinking on business undergraduate courses in the UK and USA *3<sup>rd</sup> International conference Educational Innovation in Economics and Business* Orlando Florida USA
- 1.6 Neil Harris and Adam Palmer (1996) Preparing students for the Honours Challenge. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. vol/part no: , Autumn. section: 3, p31-44
- 1.7 Neil Harris and Adam Palmer (1996) Transferable Intellectual Skills in Vocational Degree programmes *15<sup>th</sup> conference of Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia* Melbourne Australia
- 1.8 Harris NG, Lawson D and Adam Palmer (1997) Critical Thinking in UK and USA undergraduate business courses: implications for course design in: *Improving student learning through course design*. Oxford : OCSLD. pp277-290
- 1.9 Harris NG and Adam Palmer (1997) Thinking their way to success: first year students talk back *10<sup>th</sup> International conference on the first year experience* University of Warwick UK

- 1.10 Neil Harris and Adam Palmer (1997) Staff attitudes to professional development: meeting the needs of the academic customer *Learning in a changing environment* Educational Innovation in Economics and Business Napier University Edinburgh UK
- 1.11 Harris NG Lawson D and Palmer A (1998) A collaborative approach to improving students' critical thinking in the UK and the USA in: *Innovation in Business Education: theory and practice*. Dordrecht, London, Boston : Kluwer. p229-245
- 1.12 Harris NG and Adam Palmer (1998) Critical Analysis, what does that mean? Providing the tools to be a successful student *11th International Conference on the First Year Experience* University College Dublin Ireland
- 1.13 Harris NG Lawson D and Palmer A (1998) A collaborative approach to improving students' critical thinking in the UK and the USA in: *Innovation in Business Education: theory and practice*. Dordrecht, London, Boston : Kluwer. p229-245
- 1.14 Harris NG and Adam Palmer (1998) Critical Analysis, what does that mean? Providing the tools to be a successful student *11th International Conference on the First Year Experience* University College Dublin Ireland

Signature..........Date.....18 October 2005.....

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## Statement from Co-author

This is to certify that Adam Palmer made a major and significant contribution to the following papers:

- 1.1 Adam Palmer and Ashok Ranchhod (1994) Cosyfeet *Enterprise in Action conference* University of Nottingham
- 1.2 Adam Palmer and Ashok Ranchhod (1995) Cosyfeet. *Small Business Enterprise and Development Journal*. vol/part no: , July. section: 2, p77-92.
- 1.3 Adam Palmer and Ashok Ranchhod (1995) Best foot forward- a strategy review. *Management Case Quarterly*. vol/part no: , Autumn. section: 3, p14-23.

Signature..........Date.....17<sup>th</sup> Oct 2005.....

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## Statement from Co-author

This is to certify that Adam Palmer made a major and significant contribution to the following papers:

Southampton Institute (2002) Policy and Resources Committee paper *Linking student learning to information* 02/PRC/56

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## **Appendix 3 Correspondence from Staff**

**The Dean of Southampton Business School**

To: GRP\_SBS  
cc: (bcc: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute)  
Subject: Re: staffing announcement...

Dear All,

After a number of years of leading HR in the Institute to meet the considerable challenges facing a modern HEI, Adam Palmer has been discussing with colleagues for some time a possible return to academic life. I am pleased to confirm that Adam has moved to the post of PL in HRM within the Management School of SBS effective from 23 February.

Adam was appointed as Director of Personnel in September 1996. Since then Adam has made a substantial contribution to the Institute. His achievements have included the development, funding and implementation of an HR strategy across the Institute, and the successful management of organisational change, which has helped shape the Institute.

I am sure SBS colleagues will join me in wishing Adam continued success at the Institute. I know that Adam is looking forward to contributing to the future success of SBS and the Institute, and I am personally looking forward to working with him.

Regards,

Tom  
**Head of Leisure and Marketing School**

To: Adam Palmer/HR/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc:  
Subject: Hi

Nice to have you back in academia  
Good luck

Jenny

**Reader in Business Strategy**

To: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc:  
Subject: Re: staffing announcement...

Hi

Very pleased to welcome you back. Hope you are not immediately sucked into the nonsense when you get here.

Steven

**Senior Lecturer in HR subject group**

To: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc:  
Subject: Welcome back

Adam

I have just heard the news that you will be returning to the HRM group and wanted to express my delight at the news. I hope that you will find the change suitably stimulating and enjoyable. I think that your new (old) colleagues and students will benefit greatly from your decision. It is good news for the HRM group.

Anne sends her congratulations and best wishes too. I shall also look forward to having a chat over a pint at a convenient opportunity.

Regards

Graham

Dean of Academic Quality

To: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc:  
Subject: All the best for the future

Dear Adam

This is just a brief note to wish you all the very best in your new role.

It's also a chance to thank you for all the help and wise advice that you have given to me over the years as a Service head. I've always appreciated the care with which you gave that advice and I've always found it to be spot on.

Many thanks

Kindest regards

David

----- Forwarded by David Parry/ASQS/Southampton Institute on 25/02/2004 19:10 -----  
-----

To: Roger Brown/PMG/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Van J Gore/PMG/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, David W Brown/PMG/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Henry Slater/PMG/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Philippa Smith/PMG/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, David Heffer/FT/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Tom Thomas/SBS/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Howard Rose/FMAS/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, David Parry/ASQS/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Karen Everett/Finance Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Clive Welstead/Campus Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Phil Green/SR/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Clive Welstead/Campus Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, John Millican/WMC/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute

cc:

Subject: Adam Palmer

Dear all



This email is to confirm that the arrangements that Roger briefly referred to at the leadership event regarding Adam have now been confirmed. Staff in Personnel Service and SBS have been informed today.

After a number of years leading HR in the Institute to meet the considerable challenges facing a modern HEI, Adam has been discussing with colleagues for some time a possible return to academic life. I am pleased to confirm that he moves to the post of Principal Lecturer in HRM within the Management School of SBS with immediate effect.

Adam was appointed as Director of Personnel in September 1996. In the time since then, Adam has made a substantial contribution to the Institute. His achievements have included the development, funding and implementation of an HR strategy across the Institute, and the successful management of organisational change, which has helped shaped the Institute.

I know that we all wish Adam continued success, in a role that gives even more scope for him to demonstrate his qualities of leadership, thoughtfulness, caring and creativity. He tells me that he is looking forward to challenges ahead and to contributing to the further success of the Business School and the Institute.

With best wishes

John

**Director of Warsash Maritime Centre**

To: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc:  
Subject: Best wishes

Adam,

Thanks for everything you have done for WMC, and me personally, since I took over here at a difficult time almost three years ago. I'll miss your support. And I'm very glad you are staying in the Institute. Every good wish.

John

To: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc:  
Subject: Good Luck

**Personnel Information Officer**

Adam

I would just like to wish you good luck with your return to academic life. You have been a great help to me over the last seven years and I have learnt a lot from you. Obviously you will not be disappearing completely and we will be able to say Hi on those occasions when our paths cross.

Anne

**Research Professor**

To: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc: Roger Brown/PMG/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, Van J  
Gore/PMG/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute, John Latham/PMG/Southampton  
Institute@Southampton Institute  
Subject: research

Dear Adam,

Firstly I must say how delighted I am that you will be rejoining SBS.

Secondly it gives me the opportunity to invite you to join in a research bid that I am currently putting together and to which I think you will be able to make a great contribution. It is called 'Improving Health through Human Resource Management' and so far I have put together a team including SBS as the research organisation; Portsmouth Hospitals (NHS) Trust, and Disability Dynamics. We are also trying to get Fareham and Gosport Hospital Trust on board as well. This is a fully funded research project funded by the Department of Health Policy Research Programme; the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and the Association of Healthcare Human Resource Management and will last for three years with possible future offshoots.

I do hope you feel that you can join us in this bid.

I look forward to working with you

best wishes

Patricia

**Head of Construction and Engineering**

To: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc:  
Subject: You

Adam,

It was good to bump into you late on Friday afternoon. I had genuinely been thinking about you shortly before we met, as I had heard your news and was concerned that this move was what you wanted. It was therefore fortuitous that our paths crossed as they did.

I can quite see how the pressures at that level would become wearing after a number of years (something I'll need to consider if I try go any further), and although your new role won't be without its own tensions, there are lots of advantages of an academic post.

Wishing you well and thanks again for the support you've given me over the last three years.

Peter

ps Was the house any good?

## Deputy Vice Chancellor

To: Adam Palmer/Personnel Service/Southampton Institute@Southampton Institute  
cc:  
Subject:

Adam

Just to wish you all the best in your new HR academic leadership role within SBS, to say I genuinely think you have made the right choice, to thank you for all the help and support you have given me personally and to say I look forward to us working together in the future.

Warmest regards  
Van

## HR colleague on national steering group

To: Adam Palmer <Adam.Palmer@solent.ac.uk>  
cc:  
Subject: Re: ..did I see something?.

aha

I wondered.....good for you.

wish you every success & u will be missed

best  
Hillia

best of luckAt 11:20 01/04/2004 +0100, you wrote:

>Dear Hillia  
>  
>I have returned to academic life  
>  
>Best wishes  
>  
>Adam

Hillia Holland (Mrs)  
Personnel Manager  
Room B1

## **Appendix 4 Student email correspondence**

**27<sup>th</sup> June 2005 undergraduate business student**

Dear Mr Palmer,

I would like to express my appreciation for all this time you were my Personnel Management tutor. I have found the way of leading this course interesting and challenging.

You showed us a different; more interesting way that seminar can be led. I feel that in this way I can remember more from seminars than when the subject is presented in monologue.

I am pleased I could study at Southampton Institute and that I was given a chance to study in an "English" way, which gave me a lot of new experience and knowledge. I am sure I will be going back to Poland more confident and open-minded.

I wish you all the best. I hope to see you again during our graduation.

Best Regards,

Wojciech Mytko

**18<sup>th</sup> May 2006 undergraduate business student**

hi adam

just wanted to send you a quick email to say, 'THANK YOU'.

when i started your unit at the beginning of the year, i had little knowledge (and interest) in personnel. However, through your teaching, i have realised the importance of personnel and now find it an extremely interesting area of business!

regards, heidi

**24<sup>th</sup> May 2006 MBA student**

Adam

You might be interested to know that I have written and printed my dissertation, and all that remains to do is to get it bound. So hopefully it will all be over in time for a nice sunny bank holiday weekend!.

Many thanks again for your suggestions and help over the last few months

- it was a pleasure to work with you.