

Psychological Contracts in a Business School Context

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Statement of Originality

I can confirm that the work presented here for the Doctor of Education at the University of Stirling is my own and has not been submitted previously for any other award.

Robert Peter Gammie

Date

Abstract

Over the last three decades the UK higher education system has operated under an ideological approach sometimes referred to as New Managerialism (Deem, 2004). The psychological contract of the individual actor within this altered environment was the subject of the research in this study. The psychological contract has been defined as an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal informal exchange agreement between themselves and their organisations (Rousseau, 1989). The thesis focused on the psychological contracts of higher education lecturers in a post-92 University Business School in the United Kingdom.

The study considered the construction of the psychological contract, the appropriateness of the initial contract, perceived influences on the contract, and behavioural consequences of contract breach and/or violation. The research was focussed on the role of the lecturer in interpreting and unpacking his/her perceptions and understandings. The research questions required data that was personal and experiential. Interviews were undertaken which allowed participants to provide life history accounts that described and theorised about their actions in the social world over time. The approach used had a number of limitations which were identified and considered within the thesis.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the research approach, the data suggested that each individual had analysed the extent to which a new employment context would deliver transactional, relational, and ideological reward. However, ideology was less relevant in making the decision to accept higher education employment than either transactional or relational elements. Post-entry, sensemaking acted as a confirmation mechanism in respect of the expectations of what the job would entail and the pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits that would be received. Initial contracts were relatively accurate in their conceptualisation of the work involved in being a higher education academic.

Within the Business School examined in this study, management decisions impacted on participants from both an economic and socio-economic perspective. Employees described how individual work contexts were altered by management decisions. Reaction to decisions depended on individual circumstances at any given juncture based on the influences from multiple contexts both internal and external to the workplace. Context was not homogenous and wide-ranging individual differences were

apparent. These contexts played a part in defining to what extent changed work environments would be accepted or not. Participants were continuously active and involved in the evaluation of the multiple contexts that were relevant to them.

The capacity to manipulate managers and influence decisions to counteract context change was also evident. The ability to thwart changes to work context varied between individuals and over time. This study identified how participants were able to create and shape their own work environment to satisfy their needs and wants during their careers within a structure that remained predominantly organic in nature despite a changing higher education environment. The goal of the employee was to create the idiosyncratic deal, the specific individually tailored work environment that would deliver the satisfaction required from higher education employment. The psychological contracts were self-focussed and self-oriented but this did not necessarily mean that employees were not also actively involved in assisting the organisation to achieve its ambitions.

The notion that a managerial agenda had resulted in the erosion of individualism in higher education was not supported. There was evidence that the psychological contract was unilaterally changed and altered by the employee whenever he or she chose, rather than a negotiated change to a binding agreement. Alteration was intrinsically a private determination and often not communicated.

Contents

	<u>Page Number</u>
Acknowledgements	i
Statement of Originality	ii
Abstract	iii
Contents	v
Bibliography	viii
Figures	viii
Tables	viii
Appendices	viii
Chapter One - An Introduction and Overview	1
1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 Thesis Structure	4
Chapter Two – An Overview of Recent Developments in UK Higher Education	6
Introduction	7
2.0	
2.1 Developments within the Higher Education Sector	7
2.1.1 University Reform	7
2.1.2 The Structure of the University	10
2.2 The Role of Academic Staff	13
2.3 Interpretation of the Managerial Approach to Higher Education	14
2.4 Summary and Conclusions	15
Chapter Three - The Impact of Higher Education Change on the Individual Academic	17
3.0 Introduction	18
3.1 The Influence of New Managerialism on Teaching and Research	18
3.2 Individual Reactions to the Changing Environment	21
3.3 Realignment of Academic Motivation	24
3.4 Summary and Conclusions	25
Chapter Four – The Business School within the Higher Education Context	27
4.0 Introduction	28
4.1 The Origin and Expansion of Business Schools	28
4.2 The Role and Purpose of the Business School	29
4.3 The Future of the Business School	34
4.4 Business School Faculty	36
4.5 Summary and Conclusions	37
Chapter Five – An Analysis of the Psychological Contract	39
5.0 Introduction	40
5.1 The Historical Development of the Psychological Contract	40
5.2 The Psychological Contract as a Schema	42
5.3 The Psychological Contract Formation and Sensemaking	44

5.3.1	The Impact on the Psychological Contract of the Socialisation Process	46
5.4	Typologies of Psychological Contracts	48
5.5	The New Psychological Contract	53
5.6	Context and the Idiosyncratic Deal	54
5.7	Fairness and Justice	56
5.8	Breach and Violation of the Psychological Contract	58
5.8.1	Type of Psychological Contract, Breach and Violation	59
5.8.2	Reaction to Breach and Violation	61
5.9	Conclusion	62
Chapter Six – Research Method		66
6.0	Introduction	67
6.1	Research Questions	67
6.1.1	Research Question One	67
6.1.2	Research Question Two	68
6.1.3	Research Question Three	68
6.1.4	Research Question Four	69
6.2	Methodological Approach	69
6.3	Data Collection	74
6.3.1	The Business School	74
6.3.2	The Role of the Researcher	75
6.3.3	The Negotiation with Management to Undertake the Study	79
6.3.4	Pilot Data Collection	81
6.3.5	Data Recording	82
6.3.6	Analysis and Reflection in Respect of Data Recording	83
6.3.7	Agreement to Participate	84
6.3.8	Interview Arrangements	87
6.3.9	Selection of Participants	89
6.4	Data Analysis	93
6.5	Summary	95
Chapter Seven – The Formation of the Initial Psychological Contract of Business School Lecturers		96
7.0	Introduction	97
7.1	The Profession Change Process	97
7.2	Rationale for Considering Business School Employment	99
7.2.1	Previous Employment and Occupational Experiences	100
7.2.2	Flexibility and Autonomy	103
7.2.3	Ideology	105
7.2.4	Work and Individual Wants Related to Higher Education Employment	106
7.3	Discussion	106
7.3.1	Concept of Schema	106
7.3.2	Knowledge of the Work Environment	113
7.4	Conclusions for Research Question One	114
Chapter Eight – The Appropriateness and Relevance of the Initial Psychological Contract		117
8.0	Introduction	118
8.1	The Appropriateness and Relevance of Individual Wants Post-Entry	118
8.1.1	Flexibility Post-Entry	118
8.1.2	Security and Stability Post-Entry	119
8.1.3	Job Satisfaction Post-Entry	122
8.2	The Appropriateness and Relevance of Work-Related Wants Post-Entry	123
8.2.1	Post-Entry Teaching Wants	123

8.3	8.2.2 Post-Entry Research Wants	124
8.4	The Appropriateness and Relevance of Ideology Post-Entry	125
8.4	Discussion	127
8.4.1	The Impact of External Policy	128
8.5	Conclusions for Research Question Two	130
Chapter Nine – Factors Influencing Participants Psychological Contracts		131
9.0	Introduction	132
9.1	The Identification of Factors Influencing Participants Psychological Contracts	132
9.2	Problems that Occurred for New Starts	132
9.3	The Influence of Management on the Psychological Contract	134
9.3.1	The Perception of the Effectiveness of Management Communication with Participants	138
9.4	Perceptions of Fairness in Relation to the Attainment of Reward	138
9.5	The Fluid Nature of the Psychological Contract	141
9.6	Discussion	142
9.6.1	The Perceived Seriousness of an Injustice	143
9.6.2	Gender, Subject Specialism, Length of Tenure and Age	145
9.7	Conclusions for Research Question Three	146
Chapter Ten – Participants Reactions to Perceived Breaches and Violations of the Psychological Contract		148
10.0	Introduction	149
10.1	Negotiated Resolution of Issues	151
10.2	Responses Beyond the Negotiation Process	153
10.2.1	Accepted Sufferance	154
10.2.2	Positive Realignment	157
10.2.3	Self-Preservation	158
10.2.4	Managed Exit	161
10.3	Discussion	162
10.3.1	Manipulation of Decision-Makers	163
10.3.2	Tolerance of Issues	166
10.3.3	The Duration of Response	168
10.4	Conclusions for Research Question Four	170
Chapter Eleven – Conclusions, Future Research and Reflection		171
11.0	Introduction	172
11.1	Reflections on the Research	172
11.1.1	Reflections on the Life History Approach	173
11.1.2	Limitations of the Research	175
11.1.3	Additional Data	183
11.1.4	Some Final Personal Thoughts on the Research	184
11.2	Overview of the Research Findings	189
11.3	The Initial Psychological Contract	190
11.4	The Appropriateness and Relevance of the Initial Psychological Contract	192
11.5	Factors that Impacted on the Psychological Contract	194
11.5.1	Perceptions of Fairness	196
11.6	Behavioural Reaction to Breach and Violation	198
11.7	Summary and Conclusions	200
11.8	Future Research	202
11.8.1	Ideology and the Psychological Contract	202
11.8.2	The Idiosyncratic Deal and the Psychological Contract	203
11.8.3	The Changing Nature of the Psychological Contract over Time	205
11.8.4	Breach, Violation and the Decision to Exit	206

11.8.5	The Impact and Influence of Context and the Psychological Contract	207
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Bibliography		209
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Figure Number	<u>Figures</u>	
1.0	The Structure of the Thesis	5
6.1	Business School Divisional Structure	75
7.1	Schema Elements and the Initial Psychological Contract Process	111
7.2	Structure of Schemas	112
7.3	Structure of Schemas Pre-Employment	112
10.1	Workplace Reaction to Issues	150

Table Number	<u>Tables</u>	
6.1	Breakdown of Participating Academic Staff by Division	91
6.2	Breakdown of Sample	92
6.3	Comparison of the Sample and Department as a Whole	92
7.1	Rationale for Changing from Industry to Higher Education Employment	98
7.2	Work and Individual Wants Related to Higher Education Employment	106

Appendix Number	<u>Appendices</u>	
1	Unit Four Assessment – Doctor of Education	225
2	Questions for Pilot Interviews	237
3	Revised Interview Schedule	239
4	Information for Participants	241



Chapter One
An Introduction and Overview

Chapter One

An Introduction and Overview

1.0 Introduction

The relationship between employers and employees has long been a source of interest to researchers in fields as diverse as psychology, sociology, economics, and business studies. One specific feature relates to what employees and employers perceive as the responsibilities and rewards associated with a particular job. The relationship between employee and employer has been conceptualised as involving a psychological contract. The psychological contract has been defined as an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal informal exchange agreement between themselves and their organisations (Rousseau, 1989). The psychological contract defines what employees are prepared to give by way of effort and contribution in exchange for something they value from their employer, such as job security, pay and benefits, or training (Newell and Dopson, 1996).

Psychological contracts were first discussed by organisational scholars in the 1960s (e.g. Argyris, 1960; Schein, 1965) and have attracted increased attention as the perception that the employment relationship has undergone a period of dramatic change in the last thirty years with the economic and political context in which both public and private organisations exist having altered. Within the public sector welfare services such as education and health experienced radical change in the face of funding cuts and government initiatives. The dynamic for such change was identified as a government-led push for tighter monetary control over public services at a time of severe resource constraint (Duncan, 1992; Farnham and Norton, 1993; Pollitt, 1993; Peeke, 1994; Miller, 1995).

Higher education establishments in the United Kingdom had been used to an environment of predictable funding and student enrolment with little overt rivalry among institutions. However, economic and political change cast universities into a significantly more competitive marketplace in an attempt to align their operation with that of profit-motivated organisations (Cohen and March, 1974; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). Deem (2004) identified that UK higher education had been the subject of a series of direct and indirect modernisation endeavours by government and university funding bodies using an ideological approach to public service management sometimes referred to as New Managerialism. This approach to higher education placed considerable emphasis on culture change

and the need to overtly manage academics and academic work. Deem (2004) defined New Managerialism as a set of ideologies about organisational practices and values which attempted to bring about radical shifts in the organisation, finance, and culture of public services such as higher education. Similarly, Gumpert (2000) diagnosed a macro-trend whereby the dominant legitimating idea of higher education had changed from higher education as a social institution to higher education as an industry. Consequently, such a change in the academic landscape had resulted in the nature of academic employment being challenged, specifically the relationship between employers and employees.

Simultaneously, in a private sector also faced with increasingly competitive operating conditions, the management of knowledge and intellectual capital was highlighted as a prime source of an organisation's competitive advantage and performance (Stacey, 1990, 1992, 1996; Greenley and Foxhall, 1996; Hamilton and Clarke, 1996; McDermott and Chan, 1996; Edvinsson and Malone, 1997; Mitchell et al., 1997; Haskell, 1998; Teece, 1998; Ulrich, 1998;). The same situation was highlighted by Groves et al. (1997) in relation to the competitiveness of a university which they believed was based on the quality of its academic staff. Thus, the psychological contract of the individual actor within this environment was of key importance. Research by Clark (1983, 1993, and 1996) and Rhoades (1990) identified that faculty had played an increasingly important role in determining how universities behaved and were organised. Accepting the importance and significance of the role of the individual actor, this thesis focussed on the analysis of the psychological contracts of higher education lecturers within a specific context.

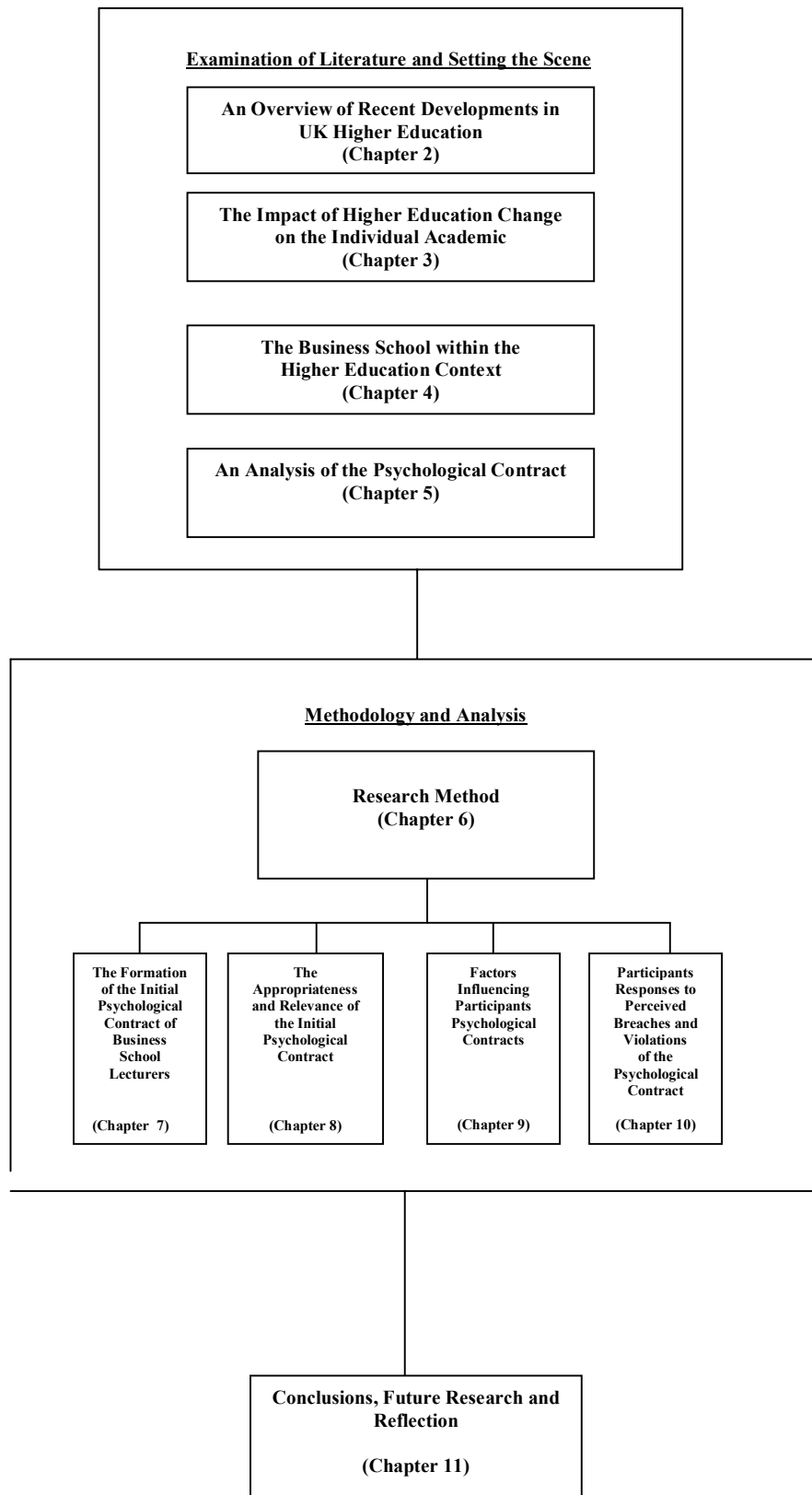
Guest (2004) argued that the worth of the psychological contract was in seeing employees as active agents in, rather than passive recipients of, the processes involved in the managing of individuals, and that close attention required to be paid to all possible factors that contributed to the individual psychological contract. Guest (2004) also suggested that greater consideration of content at the level of the individual would facilitate analysis of the employment relationship and also greatly enrich research into psychological contracts in general. Accepting the importance and significance of the role of the individual actor, this thesis focuses on the psychological contracts of higher education lecturers in a post-92 University Business School in the United Kingdom. This research considers the construction of the psychological contract, the appropriateness of the initial contract, perceived influences on the contract, and behavioural consequences of contract breach and/or violation. The research is focussed on

the role of the lecturer in interpreting and unpacking his or her perceptions and understandings. This approach allowed for examination of the way in which individuals made sense of their own life and facilitated a deeper realisation of why lecturers reacted in certain ways to events that they encountered.

1.1 Thesis Structure

Figure 1.0 was constructed to highlight the linkages between each of the Chapters. Chapters Two, Three, Four, and Five set the scene for the analysis with an examination of relevant literature. This commences with an examination of developments within the higher education sector as a whole (Chapter Two). The focus then narrows in each of the next three Chapters, first looking at the individual academic and the impact of change (Chapter Three), then the Business School within the higher education context (Chapter Four), and finally the psychological contract (Chapter Five). Chapter Six identifies the methodology that was utilised within the thesis and considers the issues that arose as a consequence of the approach selected. The analysis of the data collected is undertaken in Chapters Seven, Eight, Nine, and Ten. The thesis ends with conclusions, some suggestions for future research and reflections on the research by the author in Chapter Eleven.

Figure 1.0 - The Structure of the Thesis



Chapter Two

An Overview of Recent Developments in UK Higher Education

Chapter Two

An Overview of Recent Developments in UK Higher Education

2.0 Introduction

The aim of the Chapter is to outline the overarching higher education environment within which the research was undertaken. The Chapter provides an overview of the major developments that have occurred in the UK higher education sector with particular reference to what has happened over the last three decades. The Chapter will also consider how reform has impacted on the organisational structure of the university and the role of academic staff as a consequence of the most recent changes. The Chapter will conclude with an examination of the interpretation of the revised higher education sector by academic faculty.

2.1 Developments within the Higher Education Sector

The history of the university identifies that the medieval universities were autonomous corporations of students and masters, more groups of scholars than places (Byrd, 2001). The institution with the most sought after professors prospered and the city with the greatest attraction to the students secured the university, which was not seen as fixed or permanently sited (Daly, 1961). These universities were governed by internal rules set by the academic community itself and were self-funding, small and independent institutions catering to the elite, and governed by their own members. The university's pedagogical, social, and cultural functions were combined into an interdependent and self-sustaining set of arrangements for the creation and transmission of knowledge underpinned by the principle of university autonomy (Willmott, 1995). However, the university as an institution has been subjected to significant reform.

2.1.1 University Reform

The start of the nineteenth century marked the birth of the nation-state, which resulted in profound changes to universities (Mora, 2001). Throughout continental Europe the state began to take control of the universities which had so far retained their independent status. The objective was to make the universities work for the new liberal state and its economic needs.

In contrast, the UK chose a different route whereby the state refrained from interfering with universities and they retained their traditional status. However, when the industrial revolution made it necessary to educate large numbers of people civic universities were established with governing bodies made up of non-academics. These boards respected academic freedom and did not interfere with the academic side of university life (Mora, 2001).

However, the university sector has been subjected to considerable change in the last three decades. Neave (2006) described these changes as a move towards a more economic approach founded on the view that higher education was a resource that should be organised in a way that maximised its contribution to economic development. In this ideological context, regulation was not only legitimate but also essential to ensure economic validity. A key assumption put forward by policy makers was that academic work should be the subject of a process of demystification based on the argument that it could be administered [in the same way] as any work in any service providing agency (Williams, 1996). Equally, as higher education was provided largely through public money and affected the interests of multiple stakeholders in society, the academic profession should be called to public account rigorously and in a manner that made their performance accessible to those stakeholders. The consequence of this would be a greater control of public expenditure, a change in the public sector culture, and a shifting of the boundaries and definitions of public and private spheres of activity (Henkel, 1991).

The economic premise described by Neave (2006) identified that higher education establishments should be responsive to economic needs and it was the responsibility of the state to ensure that these institutions were held accountable to society. Universities had always competed to some extent with one another for students, resources, and prestige. However, it was only relatively recently in historic terms that higher education academics were subjected to the concept of the market, and with this ‘new managerialism’ to implement the concept. Deem (1998) defined ‘new managerialism’ as,

‘A complex ideology which informs ways of managing public institutions by advocating many of the practices and values of the private-for-profit sector in the pursuit of efficiency, excellence and continuous improvement.’
(Deem, 1998, p48)

The terms used to describe these changes to higher education were either “new managerialism” or “new public management”. Deem and Brehony (2005) stated that though some writers used these terms

interchangeably, the concepts have somewhat different connotations and origins. For example, new public management arises out of public choice theory and focuses on the development of non-bureaucratic forms of public service organisations in the context of quasi-markets (Hughes, 1994). Pollitt (2003) identified new public management as a different method of managing resources in an organisation rather than an ideology linked to a political persuasion. The debates surrounding “new managerialism” suggested a different definition. For example,

‘New managerialism is conceptualised as an ideological approach to managing public services connected to deliberate and highly politicized state regulation of and managerial power over public sector organizations.’

(Deem, 2006, p207)

Deem (2004) concluded that changes to the management of UK higher education were intended to reduce the power of professionals in public bureaucracies and change the way in which public services were organised and provided. The aim behind increased scrutiny and control was that it regulated the relationship between on the one hand, institutions and governments, and on the other, institutions and the broader community. Kenway et al. (1993) identified that in order to ensure that higher education would cost less whilst better serving national economic priorities, the concept or metaphor of the market became central to the policy agendas of governments and educational institutions, guiding priorities and funding.

Implicit in achieving accountability and quality was the implementation of external control mechanisms defined by government, for example, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for teaching. As Neave (2006) stated,

‘Seen from outside Britain, the two outstanding features in more than two decades of unrelieved re-engineering of HE in these islands are the rise of steering by agency and changes in funding – of both institutions and students. Obviously there are others. But these two represent the strategic essence of Britain’s ongoing saga of reconstructing HE. The multiplication of agencies of public purpose that bear down on individual universities and demand that accounts be rendered or practices revised is truly astounding.’

(Neave, 2006, p123)

The intention was to reassure the electorate that in moving from an elite system to a mass system, ‘standards’ would not fall along with the unit of resource. Guest et al. (1996) identified that the government was also able to use the ‘weapon’ of quality in order to bring about fundamental changes in the character of British higher education, replacing an elitist view (internalised accountability,

knowledge for its own sake) with one oriented towards serving a mass system. Groves et al. (1997), highlighted this in the quotation below,

‘Quality management has become the chosen vehicle by which macro-policy is used to ensure more effective strategic management within higher education institutions. It is directed at the audit, assurance and enhancement of both teaching and research quality – perceived by the 1992 Act as the twin primary goals for universities. In essence, the emphasis on externally-defined quality criteria for research and teaching has meant that these items have to be given strategic priority by the institutions themselves. Some manoeuvrability is allowed in deciding upon a strategic balance between the objectives of research and teaching.’

(Groves et al., 1997, p295-296)

Deem (2006) identified the main features of new managerialism since the 1980’s as being a greater emphasis on markets and competition, a concern with the assessment of unit and individual performance against targets linked to national and international league tables, and quality audit of research and teaching.

The changing face of higher education has also brought attention to how the university is structured in order to meet the challenges created by new managerialism. The next section will provide a brief overview of research in the area of organisational structures followed by an analysis of university structure and the extent to which this has evolved and changed.

2.1.2 The Structure of the University

Research into the structure of organisations has been largely based on the work of Burns and Stalker (1961, 1966) which highlighted the difference between mechanistic and organic structures. They suggested that mechanistic structures were constructed on the basis of the specialisation of functions, vertical communication, and hierarchical structures. In contrast, organic structures were characterised by collaborative efforts toward the task at hand, lateral communication which was advisory rather than instructional, and a non-hierarchical network structure.

Subsequent research in the field of organisation structure has resulted in the refinement of the definitions put forward by Burns and Stalker (1961, 1966). For example, Birnbaum (1988) described mechanistic structures as traditional, bureaucratic organisations. Birnbaum (1988) believed that a bureaucratic approach allowed for the standardisation of behaviour through rigid communication channels, control of information-gathering, codified rules and regulations, an emphasis on job

descriptions, a systematic division of labour, and hierarchical control. Similarly, Wheatley (1992) outlined a mechanistic organisation as being concerned with those things that were visible and tangible such as structures, hierarchies, rules, and policies. She viewed organic structures as being located within chaotic organisations, where order could be found within disorder, with the organisation having a focus on mission and intent rather than bureaucratic systems. She argued that an organic organisation could accomplish its goals in a myriad of ways unshackled by rules and procedures. Organic structures were found to be most appropriate in situations whereby an organisation was faced with having to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Jennings and Seaman (1994) concluded that the more dynamic, complex, diverse, and hostile an environment, the greater the requirement for flexibility and decentralisation. However, rather than a simple dichotomy between either a mechanistic or organic structure, Catts and Chamings (2006) described the concept as a continuum. Organisations could subsequently be located at some point on the continuum by demonstrating features that were both hierarchical and organic.

Cohen and March (1974) writing in the 1970's, prior to many of the managerial changes being introduced conceptualised universities as 'organised anarchies'. They described a situation where no one was definitively 'in charge' and pretty much anything could happen given the weakness of the centre combined with the scope for autonomous behaviour anywhere in the hierarchy. Cohen and March (1974) described the university as an organic structure within a mechanistic framework and suggested that although the bureaucracy was in place this was disregarded by academic staff within the workplace who basically were free to pursue whatever avenues of work they deemed appropriate. The structure of universities encouraged a situation in which many of the most important decisions about teaching and research were made by academic staff, acting on their own initiative and resenting institutional intrusion into what they saw as their time and their work (Cohen and March, 1974).

The organisational structure prevalent within higher education establishments has been influenced in the last thirty years by the increased volatility of the university sector (Deem, 1998; MacFarlane, 2005). Consequently, structures and modes of operation which were appropriate in a relatively stable environment were perhaps no longer suitable for higher education institutions operating in a more dynamic and unpredictable environment (Salauroo and Burnes, 1998). Smart et al. (1997) suggested that universities needed to adopt structures that allowed for less autocracy, more flexibility, and greater

creativity in order to deal with turbulent economic times and decreased support from governmental agencies. However, Smart et al. (1997) concluded that as a consequence of the changes in the external environment, the structure of the majority of institutions had become increasingly mechanistic. As Deem (2004) noted from her focus group discussions with academic staff from a number of diverse institutions,

‘Under the influence of changing government funding and policy, universities had become much more overtly ‘managed’. This was felt to be in a manner much more akin to a business than an educational institution, with traditional methods of departmental and academic decision-making becoming marginalised.’

(Deem, 2004, p56)

Deem (2006) suggested that institutions would be best suited to what Burns and Stalker (1961) described as an organic structure given the nature of new managerialism. However, what would seem to have happened in the last three decades is that decision-making has become increasingly bureaucratic and hierarchical, with a shift towards a more mechanistic approach to university management and operation. However, Dearlove (1998) countered the view that universities had become more mechanistic by voicing criticism of the organisation and management of universities. His criticisms were similar to those put forward almost twenty-five years earlier by Cohen and March (1974). Dearlove (1998) stated,

‘Universities may be encouraged to plan and provide mission statements but their goals are ambiguous and so guide nothing of substance; many of those caught up in administration lack understanding of organisational processes and so much is done haphazardly and hopelessly; and because academics feel that they have the personal right to pop in and veto changes of which they disapprove, it is hard to hold a consistent line of institutional development over time. Universities are high inertia systems and the formal system of governance can easily get so overloaded that everything gets mixed up and nothing much comes out by way of fundamental change.’

(Dearlove, 1998, p72)

Dearlove (1998) concluded that academic staff were still not controlled by bureaucratic, mechanistic structures. Rather, what existed was a combination of both mechanistic and organic environments that co-existed within institutions. Prior to the implementation of new managerialism, universities were placed somewhere in the middle of the mechanistic and organic structure continuum as described by Catts and Chamings (2006). However, Deem (2004) concluded that the higher education sector had responded to changes that demanded greater accountability with the adoption of a more controlling approach to managing its main assets, namely the academic staff of the institution. Nevertheless what Dearlove (1998) found was that even though there had been a significant degree of change put in place

there was evidence to suggest that the structure of the university, although notionally appearing to become more dictatorial and autocratic, still allowed for individual and collegiate decision-making. The role of academic staff in the decision-making process within the university structure will now be considered.

2.2 The Role of Academic Staff

The role of academic staff in collegiate decision-making has a long tradition in UK universities. In its purest form, collegiality implies the full participation of academics in a federal structure of colleges balancing the power of the university at the centre (Tapper and Palfreyman, 2002). In this regard, collegiality is a word closely associated with the concept of academic self-governance and cooperation in joint and consensual decision-making processes (McNay, 1998; Knight and Trowler, 2001; Tapper and Palfreyman, 2002). Becher and Kogan (1992) identified that collegiality worked on the basis of members having an equal authority in decision-making processes, the results of which must be accepted by all (Becher and Kogan, 1992). However, most modern UK universities would appear to be far removed from this pure form of academic democracy (Williams, 1996; Mora, 2001).

Williams (1996) identified that academic democracy was more weakly established at the universities founded by the Acts of Parliament and Royal Charters from the nineteenth century to the 1960s. Nevertheless, there was provision for a substantial proportion of academic staff to be represented on university councils or senates. The position of academic staff in post-92 universities was again different. These institutions were constructed as corporations with Boards of Governors. The post-92 model of university governance largely excluded academic staff with the vast majority having little or no role in the governance of the institution (Mora, 2001). Williams (1996) concluded that the change from an academic controlled environment to a managerial dominated context had resulted in a decline in the decision-making influence of academic staff and academic collegiality.

MacFarlane (2005) considered university structure and the influence of the academic and reported that although hierarchical authority had always been present in universities, the role of collegiality had regressed. He described how hierarchy in higher education establishments was now concerned with vesting decision-making authority in designated leadership roles, as might be commonly found in many business organisations. Similarly, Knight and Trowler (2001) found that at the department, school, and

faculty level, academic democracy had been in decline. This was supported by Smart et al. (1997) who identified that the weakened position of most academic staff in modern governance structures was symbolic of the shift away from a collegial to a more bureaucratic and managerial structure. MacFarlane (2005) suggested that the collegiality aspect of faculty life had been replaced by a less communal and more isolated existence. Thus, as a consequence of the reported demise of collegiate forms of governance, universities of today would appear to have little in common with those of the Middle Ages (MacFarlane, 2005). Indeed, it was suggested that both pre- and post-1992 universities had moved towards greater corporatism (Tapper and Salter, 1992; Henkel, 1997; Shattock, 2002). The reaction of academic staff in higher education to these changes will now be considered.

2.3 Interpretation of the Managerial Approach to Higher Education

Higher education policy founded on a managerial ideology has been criticised. Condemnation of new managerialism was based on the belief that higher education was concerned with more than immediate economic output and return on investment (Willmott, 1995). For example, Trowler (1997) argued that these demands challenged the intellectual autonomy that some identified as a university's defining characteristic, with inevitable and fundamental change in university policies. Meek (2000) identified that the response from academic staff to these developments had in many cases been largely negative. The reaction of lecturers was based on the premise that within academia there existed broad support for a higher education system based on the supposition that there was a moral value to education that could not be expressed purely in financial terms. However, it was argued that these moves had implications for the goals and social orientation of the university sector. As Williams (1996) indicated,

‘There is the overarching question of the extent to which it is appropriate for it [higher education] to be consumer oriented. Certainly any publicly funded higher education must be responsive to national needs as interpreted by a democratically elected government; certainly privately funded higher education has to respond to what its consumers are willing to buy. But universities have other responsibilities as well: to truth, to professional integrity and to longer term cultural traditions. They should not be subject to every whim of political or market fashion.’

(Williams, 1996, p50)

Willmott (1995) echoed the concerns of others when he stated that a policy focus based on an economic ideology constituted an agenda for the radical overhaul of the ideals by which higher education had hitherto operated. He contended that the historical ideology was under threat, with the government appearing intent on overturning the dominant collegial ethos and replacing the notion of a self-justifying and self-regulating academic community. Willmott (1995) further argued that academics and

their institutions would become vulnerable like other institutions valued for utilitarian ends. Universities would lose their exceptional status and the principle of individual autonomy by which academics had traditionally operated would be lost.

However, Watson (2000) suggested that a ‘mythological view’ of institutional history existed, principally based around the assumption that universities operated effectively in the past and would continue to do so today and in the future as a consequence of ‘eventual consensus’. Watson (2000) was also sceptical of the special pleading put forward by those within higher education. He argued that despite the slipping of pay parity and the increase in the proportion of short-term contracts, there had been little problem with the renewal of the profession, and with some exceptions (for example, the effects of government funding cuts on the university sector in the early 1980’s), no significant downsizing over the past twenty years (Watson and Taylor, 1998; Watson and Watson, 1999; Watson, 2000). Watson (2000) concluded that individuals pursuing self-fulfilling agendas had been subjected to a new and timely discipline as a result of modern developments in governance and accountability.

The evidence would suggest that there were contrasting views as to the need for new managerial type change in higher education and also the benefits and costs of such changes. Indeed, it has been questioned whether there has been any significant change in terms of how academic staff consequently operated within their institutions.

2.4 Summary and Conclusions

There was evidence that successive UK governments in the last three decades had attempted to change the way in which universities operated. It was argued that higher education was in much need of a radical overhaul to facilitate justification of government expenditure. As the sector expanded from an elite to a mass system the overall cost and the societal role of higher education was questioned. A different ideological approach supported by a managerial philosophy was enacted. New managerialism was a concept which emphasised markets and competition and stressed management as an activity in its own right. Managerialism has brought to the sector scrutiny of academic activity and output of universities by external agencies. The university structure has evolved as a consequence with what appeared to be a more mechanistic, less organic structure being the favoured approach. However, there was evidence that even though there may have been a shift towards more bureaucracy the higher

education institution was still perceived to be an organisation where academic staff were able to pursue an individual, personal agenda if they so desired.

There was evidence of many different views and interpretations of what had occurred in higher education and how this had impacted on the university. The focus of this thesis is the individual academic within a specific higher education context. Thus, the next Chapter examines the evidence on the extent to which accountability and performance evaluation had impacted upon the work and behaviour of the academic.

Chapter Three

The Impact of Higher Education Change on the Individual Academic

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The Impact of Higher Education Change on the Individual Academic

3.0 Introduction

The policy shift towards enhanced accountability and performance evaluation of higher education staff had drawn significant comment in terms of its impact on the individual. This Chapter examines the literature relating to the impact of higher education change on the individual academic. This was analysed in terms of the impact of new managerialism on teaching and research.

3.1 The Influence of New Managerialism on Teaching and Research

It was asserted that a major influence in the debate surrounding the impact of higher education change on the individual academic was the role of external scrutiny. Neave (2006) identified that the most prominent of these has been the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). It was noted by many (for example, Nixon, 1996; Henkel, 1997; Trowler, 1997; McNay, 1998; Court, 1999; Deem, 2006; Neave, 2006) as the dominant influence on academic life and was perceived as having a significant impact on the career path of the individual academic. Court (1999) in his quantitative study of university lecturers identified that the pre-eminence taken by research was to be expected given that performance in this activity was identified as crucial to the financial health and the intellectual status of institutions. However, Willmott (1995) argued that the RAE had altered the day-to-day lived experience of being an academic, with the consequent impact being a lessened sense of being able to pursue individual ideals and goals. The academic was constrained and had to follow imposed agendas. Willmott (1995) went on to question the long-term implications for innovation and development in the longer-term.

Lacy and Sheehan (1997) concluded that in both 'old' and 'new' universities academics viewed research as the key to individual progress. They also found that intrusions on research time were regarded negatively, with little recognition or reward associated with teaching activity (Lacy and Sheehan, 1997). As McNay (1998) argued,

‘The primacy of esteem given to research – and the different reward systems reflecting that – meant that teaching was seen as a lower order of activity. Research was supposed to inform and underpin it. That was always patchy in operation and, increasingly the principle has been abandoned in practice. The RAE with its consequential (if unintended) separation of the two in terms of staff, funding, structures and evaluation has abandoned the principle in its practices, too.’

(McNay, 1998, p257)

However, Taylor (1999) in his study indicated that most academics still perceived their role in terms of being both a teacher and a researcher. However, he noted that current and future employment opportunities seemed likely to disrupt this with contracts being offered on a teaching only basis. He suggested that teaching only individuals would be categorised as second-class members of the academic profession. Taylor (1999) examined the issue of academic professionalism and highlighted the importance of two ‘indexes’ for academics’ sense of professional identity. The first was the cosmopolitan values of academic freedom and autonomy, including relational values of collegiality, peer-based review and recognition. The second concerned more local, discipline-focussed values related to knowledge and research expertise. Examining these points he observed that,

‘This sense of professionalism accommodates disciplinary diversity but works against other forms of difference. In particular, it privileges the function of research over those associated with either teaching or service, as noted by many commentators, including the Dearing and West Committees. The reports of both Committees, while acknowledging the importance of research, call for a more balanced focus on all aspects of academic work.’

(Taylor, 1999, p120)

Clark (1996) suggested that the perceived increased specialisation and disciplinary focus of academic life had created a population of ‘cosmopolitan faculty’, or ‘academic tribes’ where culture and language created divisions between faculty groups. Cosmopolitan faculty members identified closely with their discipline and less so with a department or institution. As a result, success was achieved primarily through behaviours and accomplishments that were recognised nationally and internationally by their peers. Morphew (2000) suggested that cosmopolitan faculty members were less likely to derive satisfaction from positive teaching evaluations or promotion within their academic establishment. Indeed, Morphew (2000) envisioned a situation whereby academic staff could create an environment in which faculty behaved in a manner unrelated to the mission of their institution. Shils (1997) identified the ‘disaggregated university’ with individuals fulfilling their own research agendas, which appeared to be the problem that new managerialism was designed to eradicate. Silver (2003) drawing on interviews with academic staff at UK universities reported,

‘There was little sense of a culture that rested on a community of interest, shared norms, assumptions and even values that were closely associated with the institution itself.’

(Silver, 2003, p162)

MacFarlane (2005) concluded that the university was progressing towards becoming no more than a legal entity of disparate individuals rather than the ‘intellectual corporation’ envisaged by Shils (1997). The role of teaching would appear to be secondary within this environment. Nixon (1997) identified for those active in research the choice of which to pursue was straightforward. Teaching was viewed by research active staff as a relatively ‘pre-professional’ low-level competence, which can and should, be acquired largely ‘on-the-job’ through experience (Nixon, 1997). However, Nixon (1997) stressed that institutions of higher education should recognise teaching as a core activity that required clearly defined structures of professional support and career development. He also suggested that excellence in teaching must be a defining feature of ‘professionalism’ within the context of higher education. To achieve this, universities needed to support a number of cultures rather than to engage in a process of assimilation or homogenisation, and for academics to become more aware of, and to extend, their own multicultural identities (Tierney, 1997; Taylor, 1999). As Taylor (1999) identified, this would not be easy to achieve,

‘This seems like a Catch 22 situation. Academics are unlikely to unite in defence of teaching because it represents a barrier to their career prospects. Yet the only way to make teaching a valued career path, rather than a barrier to career development is to achieve a collective commitment to valuing it. Un-catching this situation will not be easy and certainly will take time to achieve it.’

(Taylor, 1999, p128)

However, to shoulder the blame for these developments on policy changes relating to RAE alone would be both simplistic and unrealistic. It may be that the RAE exacerbated this situation but it is arguable that this scenario had always existed within higher education, where individuals pursued chosen goals and set aside what they considered to be less interesting and less valuable tasks. In all organisations, not just universities, it was assumed that some activities would be revered more than others. It was evident that there were a number of individuals who believed they had prospered under this new regime whilst others perceived that they had suffered. What was not clear was the process that facilitated the creation of such positions. It was assumed that all faculty members were equally aware of the ramifications of the reward systems available, and were also cognisant of their skills and abilities. Thus, if self-selection of work activity were predominant then individuals would be aware of the outcomes likely to be associated with choices made.

The literature identified research activity as the goal of government, institutions and individuals. Each stakeholder recognised a benefit to be gained from pursuance of this activity. The government in terms of being able to monitor quality and achievement of greater accountability, the institution in terms of its ability to secure more funding, and the individual by advancement of his or her career aspirations. However, in the face of this unanimity, it would appear that although all parties seemed to be championing a single cause, they were doing so based on differing sets of needs and wants.

3.2 Individual Reactions to the Changing Environment

Willmott (1995) was critical of the process of enhanced scrutiny, of which the RAE was a crucial part, and used phraseology such as ‘surveillance mechanisms’, to highlight what he perceived to be a system of operation that achieved little in purely educational development terms. He indicated that academics would become more accountable in terms of quality and productivity. Harley and Lee (1997) offered support for this argument. They stated,

‘...as academics are increasingly constrained to produce and disseminate that knowledge that has immediate exchange-value in terms of increasing funding for research or for attracting increasingly vocationally-oriented students now reconstituted “as customers”. The consequence is a developing...proletarianisation of academic labour with academics losing not only strategic but operational control of their work.’

(Harley and Lee, 1997, p1429)

Trowler (1997) noted what he regarded as significant negative implications for the individual,

‘[They] seem to have been more successful at undermining (intentionally or otherwise) some of the more idealistic elements in existing organisational cultures than in engineering any distinctive new patterns of loyalty and aspiration. Instead of a bright new management-oriented culture there is a danger that what we are seeing is the decline of the old beliefs, replaced only by the growth of public sector anomie.’

(Trowler, 1997, p315)

Trowler (1997) was an academic researching into academia with the assumption, similar to that of Willmott (1995) and Harley and Lee (1997), that the traditional system was manifestly preferable. His research was conducted using the views of academics that had been subjected to pre- and post-managerialism, and also individuals that had commenced higher education employment under the economic ideology. Trowler (1997) identified the first group as individuals who had entered academia during the liberal ideology phase with a set of beliefs and perceptions of what education was to deliver to them as an employee. Subsequently, their understanding of what it was to be a higher education

educator had been altered. Their reaction to this was reported as being negative, with altered behavioural patterns designed to try and neutralise policy measures. Trowler (1997) offered no other explanation for this response other than to cite 'management approach' as the determinant of all troubles encountered and identified by the lecturers in his study. However, there was evidence in his study that the group that entered academic work when the economic ideology was seen to be in place had brought the ideas of the market system with them. These perceptions were founded during employment in the non-university sector. This group found the academic environment largely how they had expected it to be, and were at ease with the expectations that the university had of them as educators. Unfortunately, the conclusions put forward by Trowler (1997) were based largely on the first group, which skewed the results towards those that had been subjected to two differing ideological approaches. Little attention was given to the positive responses from the group entering academia from industry backgrounds that identified accountability and transparency as the norm.

The evidence from the group employed after new managerialism had been implemented suggested that there existed within higher education individuals who did not subscribe to the overarching negativity portrayed by Willmott (1995), Trowler (1997) and Harley and Lee (1997). Further evidence in support of this was provided by Oshagbemi (1997a, 1997b) who undertook a cluster study in the UK and identified that 81% of the higher education staff who responded to his questionnaire (in 1997a) were either happy or satisfied with their jobs. He concluded that the perception that UK academics were generally not satisfied with their jobs appeared to have been more widely publicised than well documented. Later (1997b), using the same methodological approach, he also found that the key issues that caused dissatisfaction were concerns in relation to pay, promotions and the head of units supervision or behaviour. Of those workers that were classified as 'unhappy' (approximately 19% of his sample), 92% of these were female workers which was in sharp contrast, both in the proportion of females to males in the other two groupings (happy or satisfied), and in the overall sample of university teachers. He concluded that this might suggest that female workers in universities tended to be more unhappy with their jobs than male counterparts; however, in a later study (2000a), he indicated that gender did not affect the job satisfaction of university teachers. He also identified a likelihood that younger academics working in universities tended to be more dissatisfied in comparison to older workers, a result which was supported in a similar study he undertook three years later (2000b). However, the methodology employed in the research did not allow for unpacking of the general

findings to uncover reasons for these conclusions. The results were interpreted and some implications considered, but no attempt was made to explain the findings. The work reported the state of affairs at two different times, providing consistent results which indicated that there was significant satisfaction in the higher education workforce, although the nature of the approach meant that explanations of why this was the case could only be suggested.

The work of Oshagbemi (1997a, 1997b, 2000a, 2000b) provided data that contradicted much of the evidence in this field. His work can be criticised for oversimplification of the issues involved and in its inability to provide answers to why workers were ‘happy’ or ‘unhappy’, and to separate intrinsic from extrinsic factors. It was assumed that much of this would be contextual in nature. Oshagbemi (1997a, 1997b, 2000a, 2000b) largely supported this when he outlined the issues that caused the unhappy workers to record lower scores in both 1997 and 2000. The research by Oshagbemi does not consider how attitudes and impressions had changed and altered, and if so, why this had happened and what were the context specific factors. It was evident that job satisfaction was not a simple one-factor issue, but a more complex situation impacted upon by a myriad of variables. Finkelstein (1984) examined patterns of academic staff job changes and identified that the decision to change jobs was predominantly based on intrinsic factors, such as seeking opportunities to develop through compatible, like-minded work activities and colleagues. Similarly, Manger and Eikeland (1990) found that intentions to leave a university were motivated largely on the basis of relations with colleagues. Salary or economic resources did not seem to influence the decision to remain or not. Lacy and Sheehan (1997) found that academic staff who expressed higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of job dissatisfaction highlighted the attention that must be paid to the environment (‘climate’ or ‘atmosphere’) in which they worked. Factors such as community-acknowledgement, support and appropriate levels of participation in decision-making were issues that were seen to be of higher order importance.

The literature in relation to the theoretical underpinning attached to job satisfaction was founded on the work of Herzberg et al. (1959), which posited the view that job satisfaction was not a uni-dimensional concept, and that work-related variables that contributed to job satisfaction were separate and distinct from those that created job dissatisfaction. Later research by Herzberg (1968) resulted in the development of the dual factor theory, which held that to not have job satisfaction does not imply

dissatisfaction, but rather no satisfaction, whereas the absence of job dissatisfaction does not intimate satisfaction with the job, but only no dissatisfaction. Hill (1986) argued that if Herzberg's theory was applied to higher education staff, satisfaction should come from the 'professional' model – that is, ministering to clients (students) and working with autonomy. The main sources of satisfaction should be those things intrinsic to the work – teaching, scholarly achievements and creativity, and the nature of the work. Principal contributors to dissatisfaction would be expected to be things extrinsic to the actual work – salary, fringe benefits and administrative workloads. Pearson and Seiler (1983) identified that higher order needs tended to dominate in a university setting, where academics generally had a high degree of control over content factors, including the process of teaching, and what they researched. Consequently, perceptions of the job were particularly dependent on other factors. What was not clear from this research was the impact that diminishing control over content factors would have on academics and their degree of satisfaction. Similarly, Moses (1986) found that faculty were dissatisfied with the undervaluing of teaching excellence in promotion decisions, and that prestigious and autonomous work enabled academic staff to satisfy to a greater degree needs such as esteem and self-actualisation. However, research in respect of the theoretical underpinning attributed to job satisfaction in higher education was somewhat sparse.

3.3 Realignment of Academic Motivation

This section considered the evidence in relation to the extent to which faculty had undergone a realignment of academic motivation. It was suggested that a consequent impact of the altered academic work environment was the reordering of factors that motivated academic staff as reward was seen to be directed to those who knowingly chose to restrict work to activities that would generate the greatest calculable, discernible output for the minimum risk and effort combination (Clark, 1983; Rhoades, 1990; Clark 1993, 1996; Trowler, 1997). This suggested a scenario where academics assessed the utility of each part of their work activity, and evaluated the consequent reward attached to each. In effect, a shift towards an academic labour process in which managerial direction and control stimulated, and was facilitated by, a more calculative approach among individual academics who, in response to intensified pressures, neglected or marginalised activities that were invisible to performance measures. It was noted in career theory that individuals who were motivated by 'career success' stepped away from activities that have no exchange value in terms of gaining requisite credits for career advancement (Hogget, 1994).

A further development of this theme can be ascertained from an analysis of the work of Bocoock and Watson (1994) who examined the values and attitudes of academic staff. They suggested that as a consequence of perceived change academics became passive victims who might bring about unforeseen and unwanted (by managers) outcomes. Bocoock and Watson (1994) argued that the believed inability to participate in the managerial process had resulted in many academics feeling dispirited, undervalued, and diminished in their autonomy. The resultant outcome of this was passivity and an increasing lack of empathy for the goals of the institution.

Further negative reactions to change had been reported by a number of authors who subsequently argued that the fragmentation of the academic workplace was transforming university teachers into a new proletariat whose relative class and status advantages were being significantly eroded (Wilson, 1991; Halsey, 1992; Nixon, 1996; Randle and Brady, 1997). This was perhaps to be expected, as modified university strategies as a consequence of government policy were almost certain to result in alterations in the relationship between the employer and the employee, largely irrespective of the nature of the change. However, the assumption of Nixon (1997) and Taylor (1999) amongst others was that the creation of different levels of employment within a University and valuing certain sets of skills above others was in some way unsustainable or incompatible with the liberal ideology of higher education, did not appear to be empirically substantiated.

There was evidence to suggest that there was a set of individuals who had succeeded under this new regime and others who had not. The so-called 'cosmopolitan faculty' were able to pursue a path of their own choosing. Had this been as a result of a strategic decisions made by faculty, or were they simply fortunate in comparison to the 'local faculty' who were unwilling, unable, or perhaps unaware of these circumstances? Why did certain individuals find themselves within the 'proletariat' in some contexts? Was this their preferred choice, or had it been imposed upon them? The work in this area did not appear to examine this, considering either the implications for each group or the processes involved in arriving at these positions.

3.4 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter examined the impact on the individual of higher education change. There was evidence that the dominant influence on academic life was research output. The RAE was influential in respect

of the career path of the individual academic. Lecturers perceived research to be the key determinant of individual progress and regarded intrusions on research time negatively. Nevertheless, most academics still viewed themselves as both teachers and researchers. However, it was suggested that such a position was unsustainable in the future as lecturers would be recruited to specialise in either teaching or research. A consequential impact of the altered work environment was a perceived realignment of motivation whereby faculty chose to restrict work to activities they valued. The outcome of such behaviour was described as a shift towards an academic labour process whereby individuals avoided or minimised involvement in activities that were not immediately beneficial to them.

There was evidence which questioned the suggestion that work in higher education had deteriorated post-managerialism. It was evident that job satisfaction was a complex situation impacted upon by many variables. The literature identified academic staff who had succeeded under this new regime. However, what was not clear was how they had achieved this, as research work in this area did not examine the reasons behind the differentiation noted. There were many factors that influenced academic behaviour. In attempting to understand why faculty found themselves in specific situations, research must unpack the issues that were relevant to the individual. This would allow for a heightened understanding of how academics interpreted their environment, what influenced them, and how they moulded and shaped work activity.

Chapter Four

The Business School within the Higher Education Context

Chapter Four

The Business School within the Higher Education Context

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to provide an overview of the historical development of the Business School and to identify the major issues that have confronted the Business School since its introduction to the higher education sector. The Chapter also gives consideration to a number of criticisms of Business Schools, responses to such comments and suggestions that have been made for the future of the Business School.

4.1 The Origin and Expansion of Business Schools

Business Schools were originally constructed to provide a mechanism by which disciplines that were considered relevant to the study of business and management were drawn together. They provided an organisational means by which the previously separate disciplines and subjects, such as business policy, human resource management, finance, marketing, economics, and law, could be integrated and focussed. Thus, the advent of these schools reflected the academic development of an emergent field of study (Piercy, 2000). Business Schools first originated in the US and it was during the period after the Second World War that there was an acknowledgement that some of the best students were selecting degrees in business (Starkey et al., 2004). The growth in Business Schools occurred much later in the UK, whereby only in the last twenty-five years has this picture been mirrored. Kirp (2003) identified that the high demand for business education was a consequence of students having to pay for their education and opting for degrees which increased the likelihood of graduate employment.

Kirp (2003) reported that there had been a sustained high demand in the labour market for Business School graduates in the last twenty years which was paralleled by student demand. Indeed, Starkey et al. (2004) concluded that the Business School had been *the* major success story in the university in the last quarter of a century, measured in terms of the growth in demand for its services. Further evidence of this can be seen with the target number of approximately eight thousand graduate business and management students per year set by Constable and McCormick in 1987 which was exceeded seven years later by nearly one hundred per cent. Cannon and Taylor (1994) concluded then that business and management studies undergraduate courses should be expanded by a further seven thousand graduates per year. Indeed this was almost exactly what occurred with the Higher Education Statistics

Agency (HESA) reporting approximately ninety-six thousand business and management full-time undergraduate students in 2004-2005.

The demand for places in the UK resulted in the Business School being seen by university managers as the cash cow in a higher education system faced with reduced central government funding (Starkey et al., 2004). The consequence of this was that the financial health of many UK universities was heavily dependent upon the Business School. Cannon and Taylor (1994) also suggested that Business Schools were of fundamental importance to the university by virtue of their ability to expand and recruit additional student numbers to facilitate target meeting and attainment of financial goals. In addition, business was an inexpensive subject area with a low capital equipment requirement. Cannon and Taylor (1994) further argued that the expansion of Business Schools in the UK arose partly as a consequence of the strategic need for university management to increase income over expenditure.

The success of the Business School as part of the higher education system would appear to be unquestionable based on student demand and graduate employability. However, there was criticism of Business Schools in terms of their purpose and the role that they fulfilled within society. The role and purpose of the Business School will now be explored.

4.2 The Role and Purpose of the Business School

Business Schools have attracted a degree of negative comment. Within the evolution of Business Schools, the industry sponsored Carnegie and Ford reports that considered the contribution of Business Schools were seen to be defining pieces of work. The reports, written some forty years ago, castigated the activity and output. Business Schools were criticised for shaping activity towards the needs of business. The reports claimed that the focus on business resulted in inferior curricula, students, and faculty research. The response of the Business School community was to shift towards the scholarly values of the arts and sciences faculty. The result was probably most marked in the field of research where a change in emphasis not only increased the quantity, but also changed the type of research conducted resulting in a move towards work that was more theoretical, esoteric and less applied (Ward and Chandler, 1999).

The findings of these two reports contrasted with the conclusion arrived at by another piece of seminal research undertaken over a generation later into the purpose of the Business School conducted by Porter and McKibben (1988). The methodological approach employed was such that it solicited input from both the corporate sector and from Business Schools. When the findings were compared it was found that Business School personnel saw no need to deviate from the status quo, unlike the corporate sector which was quite emphatic in its demand that Business Schools changed. Specific findings included:

1. The corporate world would like to see more ‘realistic, practical, hands-on’ education with greater emphasis on the development of ‘people’ (i.e. leadership/interpersonal) skills.
2. Both academics and corporate managers agreed that Business Schools, and their faculty, did not interact enough with the business community.
3. A relatively high percentage of corporate managers believed they were not receiving the amount of formal (systematic) management development they felt they needed.
4. Within universities and their Business Schools there was little perceived need for major changes in the way in which collegiate management education was carried out.
5. Complacency and self-satisfaction appeared to be the dominant attitudes in many schools.

Ward and Chandler (1999) attempted to conceptualise the relationship that existed between Business Schools and industry and found a unique kind of role reversal. In most academic disciplines advances in knowledge that were the product of scholarly university work drove innovations. Typically, new business ways of operating originated in the field as organisations attempted to devise some kind of sustainable advantage in the marketplace. The practice would subsequently be studied and analysed, eventually becoming part of the business curriculum. Therefore, were Business Schools doing research at all – or were they merely monitoring what was going on in practice and keeping a note of what was occurring at a particular time in business history? It was argued that the majority of Business School research was preoccupied with the describing of events that had already taken place in industry (Dickinson et al., 1983; Ward and Chandler, 1999). Consequently, industry ascribed little value to the research produced by Business Schools. For example,

‘Most Business Schools...have not been very effective in the creation of *useful* business ideas.’

(Davenport et al., 2003, p81)

In response to such criticism, Starkey and Madan (2001) suggested that Business Schools needed to concentrate on the ‘relevance gap’ between Business Schools and business. They identified that the emphasis should not be just about new, more interactive research, but for the Business School to increasingly act as a bridge in the dissemination of management knowledge. Similarly, both Pettigrew (1997) and Tranfield and Starkey (1998) argued that fundamental changes in science and technology had effectively ended the disciplinary debates that had been a major feature of research-oriented business schools. Consequently, both these studies called for cross-disciplinary research that incorporated many different disciplines that would facilitate research output that business found both relevant and useful.

However, there was evidence that Business School faculty had failed to either accept the need for applicability, or to highlight the usefulness of their work to the corporate sector (Gore et al., 1998). They identified that the goal of the Business School academic was to produce research output that would be valued as highly as possible in the next RAE. As Piercy (2000) identified,

‘There can be no doubt that one of the major topics for conversations in most university departments in the UK at the present time is the forthcoming RAE. Business Schools are certainly no exception to this - indeed, in the common situation where a university Business School is one of the largest departments in a university those conversations are likely to be particularly heated.’

(Piercy, 2000, p27)

Piercy (2000) went on to argue that many of the strategies linked to RAE improvement were likely to do fundamental damage to the capabilities of Business Schools to achieve their underlying purposes,

‘Where Business School responses to the RAE pressure really do improve the quantity and quality of useful research, then it would be foolish to have any quarrel with them. However, I wish to suggest that such examples are relatively few and far between, and what we see more commonly is policies designed to improve a department’s score on the RAE metrics, which are short-termist, short-sighted, inappropriate, and damaging.’

(Piercy, 2000, p28)

Piercy (2000) also suggested that the channeling of finite resources into one activity would mean that some other constituent part would be negatively impacted upon. There was evidence that Business Schools catered for a number of diverse constituencies, each with its own distinct sub-culture, for

example undergraduate students, postgraduate students, those participating in executive educations, funding bodies, research councils, corporate clients (Stahl et al., 1988; D'Aveni, 1996). Consequently, there was a view that the drive to achieve RAE improvement had been a contributory factor in the accusation that Business School graduates were poorly prepared for the world of business (Behrman and Levin, 1984; Cheit, 1985; Fielden and Gibbons, 1991, Dulek and Fielden, 1992; Stevens, 2000; Mintzberg and Gosling, 2002; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002).

However, both Pfeffer and Fong (2002) and Cornuel (2005) concluded that the Business School was confused in respect of which masters it should serve. The number and diversity of Business School stakeholders suggested that research was only one of many features that impacted on Business Schools. Huff and Huff (2001) identified that change for Business Schools was driven by factors that included,

‘The increasing importance of international rankings, public pressure on teaching performance and more focused agendas of government funding agencies.’
(Huff and Huff, 2001, p49)

An example of a different perspective in respect of the most significant changes that had taken place in Business Schools over the last twenty years was put forward by Cornuel (2005). He did not identify changes in the level of importance of research and commented from a European rather than UK perspective. Consequently, as the RAE was UK specific he did not consider it within his evaluation of the performance of Business Schools and his predictions for the future. The first major change he described was,

‘A trivialisation of the contents of the various disciplines that make up the field of management science. Such fields are often dispatched in much too superficial a manner, with limits being placed on potential inputs from social sciences (psychology, sociology, ethnology) and the so-called “hard sciences” (mathematics, physics, statistics, etc.).’

(Cornuel, 2005, p821-822)

The notion of trivialisation was supported by Trank and Rynes (2003) who identified that Business Schools had reduced academic standards, made courses easier and inflated grades. The purpose of trivialisation was to keep students and university managers happy. The outcome of such a manoeuvre was that Business Schools left themselves open to criticism from constituents. For example, the ability to convince decision-makers within organisations that academia had something to offer them in terms

of new ways of doing business was compromised (Lorange, 2003). Also would Business Schools be seen as the place to enroll for the best students?

The second major change that Cornuel (2005) identified related to the reliance on the case-study teaching method which he found to be poorly used in the classroom and limited in value. He subsequently concluded that the dominance of the case-study methodology raised questions about the sort of intellectual contribution that Business Schools were able to make to private and public decision-makers, and also to society as a whole. He concluded,

‘Management schools have a major role to play in training future directors and executives. What is noteworthy is how little they contribute at a social or societal level, and the extent to which their key concerns are a long way from the role that they should be fulfilling as intellectual leaders of the business community.’
(Cornuel, 2005, p822)

Gore et al. (1998) indicated that Business Schools had known that significant change was needed on how to provide students with a business education but had done little to adjust. The defence put forward by the Business School fraternity was encapsulated in the following questions and answers constructed by Gore et al. (1998):

‘Why do outsiders say we are in trouble? Why attack us for having accomplished what the, business sponsored, Ford and Carnegie reports urged us to do? We have done just what those reports demanded. As educators, we now teach what we think students need to know, not what business interests demand.’
(Gore et al., 1998, p249)

The perspective that Business Schools were providing what was required of them by industry, reflected the position of J.E. Howell, co-author of the Ford report. In an interview conducted twenty-five years after the report. He continued to warn against Business Schools heeding the wishes of business:

‘A business school has to serve the profession, but that doesn't mean that it should always do what the profession wants it to do. Its obligations are to its students and to the profession as it's emerging, not necessarily as it exists today. I think it is important that business schools stay some distance away from the business community.’
(In Schmotter, 1984, p12)

The evidence indicated that in the 1980's and early 1990's there was some support for the argument that Business Schools needed to change. However since then there has been a much greater consensus of the need to better serve constituents. For example, Stevens (2000) concluded that to keep pace with

trends such as globalisation, technology, diversity and rising expectations of consumers, the Business School had to change dramatically. Other studies identified that Business Schools required to significantly improve the quality of business education offered (for example - AACSB Faculty Leadership Task Force (1999) and the Boyer Commission, in Kenny (1998)). The identification of the shortcomings of the activities and output of Business Schools resulted in calls for significant redirection and innovation (Huff and Huff, 2001).

4.3 The Future of the Business School

Lorange (2005) called for a radical and different approach to the operation of the Business School. He suggested that the modern business school should be more of a network, facilitating business education, rather than a classic free-standing organizational entity with its own academic departments. He highlighted the importance of research in the development of outputs that were attractive to the networks that the Business School was located within. He also identified that it was through research that the Business School delivered a useful range of products and services. He stated,

‘This research must be quickly added to the teaching agenda to maintain relevance. Typically, research is more team-based, with a less classic, narrow, discipline-focus. Faculty and staff may increasingly be part of a single team, with no separate worlds for the various academic departments, compartmentalized administrative departments, hierarchies and tenure.’

(Lorange, 2005, p789-790)

Lorange (2005) concluded that the modern Business School needed to offer quality and value to all constituents that formed part of the network. The Business School needed to move away from the classic discipline-based, supply-driven model. He indicated such a model was based on the marketplace that existed in the later part of the twentieth century and would not deliver future success. Lorange (2005) advocated that a new way of working was required to prosper and deliver expectations. However, calls for new ways of working did not imply that the demand for business education would decline. For example both Pfeffer and Fong (2002, 2003) and Mintzberg (2004) identified that the requirement for business education was expected to remain strong. However, high demand for business education did not necessarily imply that the future of Business Schools was safe. Indeed as Hawawini (2005) identified,

‘Competition comes not only from other Business Schools (existing or newly established) but also from alternative providers such as corporate universities, consulting companies and firms specializing in the delivery of specific training in areas such as change management, leadership and coaching. The latter often offer a portfolio of courses tailored to a broad range of participants, from entry-level employees to board members, making them very attractive to corporate buyers of management training. And since many of them do not invest in intellectual capital, they have a lower cost base and can charge relatively lower prices for their services.’

(Hawawini, 2005, p781)

There was evidence that the marketplace for management training and education had changed and would continue to evolve. However, Cowen (1996) identified that Business Schools had been more positive and responsive to changes in the external environment than other areas of universities, and it was argued that this sector had been unnecessarily and unfairly tainted by the criticisms levelled at higher education in general. However, it was clear that further adaptation and change was required.

Another way forward for Business Schools was suggested by Pfeffer and Fong (2004). They suggested that a return to the basic fundamental principles of higher education was required,

‘We believe that an answer is for Business Schools to rediscover their roots as university departments and to become more like other university-based professional schools. Business Schools could be relevant to the managerial profession they ostensibly serve, possibly even more relevant and useful than they are today, while at the same time behaving less like the firms they teach about and more like educational and research institutions.’

(Pfeffer and Fong, 2004, p1515)

The suggestion put forward by Pfeffer and Fong (2004) has been embraced by Starkey et al. (2004) who arrived at a similar conclusion,

‘The challenge to Business School deans and to the senior managers of the university is one of re-legitimation. They have to look beyond the Business School as a honey pot to attract students and to start discussing the things that are supposed to be the university’s core and distinctive competence, the creation of knowledge and its dissemination. The dual role of the Business School should mirror the dual role of the university. It is about the preparation of students for careers through education and, through research, the generation of knowledge.’

(Starkey et al., 2004, p27)

Cornuel (2005) argued in his theoretical article that change would take place and that in the future the legitimacy of Business Schools would not be questioned. Consequently, management education would become even more valued as business becomes increasingly competitive and global. Cornuel (2005) suggested that in this respect, management education has an important part to play in the development of managers and leaders. He identified that Business Schools had a joint role to play, in educating

people how to go about the function of managing and leading, and also the development of new ways of doing these activities which would make organisations more profitable.

The future of the Business School and its role in society is a debate that is of fundamental importance to the future direction of business and management education. However, the capacity to successfully shape and influence society will be largely dependent on the faculty employed within Business Schools.

4.4 Business School Faculty

It has been suggested that the biggest challenge to the Business School community in the twenty-first century is the recruitment and retention of academic talent (Lorange, 2003; Verhaegen, 2005). Hawawini (2005) also identified that recruiting top faculty was a major challenge for both newer schools and established institutions. The difficulty in recruiting was exacerbated by the impact of the MBA on demand for doctoral programmes. Hawawini (2005) found that MBA graduates found it more attractive to re-enter the job market rather than apply for a PhD. Consequently, as demand for highly qualified faculty increased, supply had decreased.

Verhaegen (2005) identified that the number of Business Schools and other providers of management education and research had increased. He also suggested that this upward trend in numbers was likely to continue. He also highlighted that the market for Business School staff had expanded and was increasingly global with schools from all continents competing head-on with each other. In his study of sixty-nine deans or directors, and three hundred and fifty faculty members in twelve countries, he found that remuneration was considered to be less important for the recruitment and retention of staff than factors such as academic freedom, research opportunities, professional advancement and personal development. He concluded that Business Schools leaders who perceived that serious restrictions were in place which prevented the payment of competitive salaries because of institutional or government restrictions had not explored the full repertoire of alternative recruitment and retention possibilities.

Hawawini (2005) identified that one approach used in the recruitment of new faculty was to attract qualified practitioners who may or may not then enroll in a doctoral programme. Hawawini (2005) suggested that the employment of practitioners had a number of positive features. For example, at least

part of the faculty would have significant business and managerial experience and a primary interest in teaching whilst other faculty would have a focus more directed to research activity with little or no business experience. Hawawini (2005) concluded that if a Business School could create and maintain two categories of staff, this had the potential to deliver significant competitive advantage over its competitors,

‘Schools that manage that process well will have an edge over their peers as well as other providers of business education that have eschewed the more academic, research-based model adopted by top-tier Business Schools around the world.’

(Hawawini, 2005, p774)

There are a number of challenging issues that face Business Schools in the future, with opportunities for new and established schools to innovate and strengthen their competitive position. The long-term demand for business education is predicted to be strong but to ensure that the main provider remains the university based Business School the recruitment and retention of appropriate faculty is imperative.

4.5 Summary and Conclusions

This Chapter provided an insight into the historical development of the Business School. The uniqueness of Business Schools was explored. It could be argued that all disciplines possess idiosyncrasies with stakeholder groups that have distinct and often contrary expectations. The literature suggested that Business Schools had a set of stakeholders that were satisfied to different extents. For example, the relationship between Business Schools and the corporate sector was perceived to be historically dominant, but now appeared to be considered of less importance. Business faculty now had a greater allegiance to business as an academic discipline which now had legitimacy comparable to more established areas of academic activity.

It also highlighted the specific issues that have impacted on Business Schools to date and some of the predicted difficulties that lie ahead for Business Schools. Recommendations made by leading writers in relation to what needed to be done to confront these challenges were also considered. There were calls for change and counter arguments for maintenance of current practice. What was evident was that the market place for business education had changed. There was clear and irrevocable evidence that competition had increased. The number and quality of suppliers of business education had risen and growth was perceived to be an irreversible trend.

There were calls for the traditional university based Business School to implement new ways of working in order to maintain the dominant position in the market place. There was also evidence of the difficulty in the recruitment of staff of sufficient quality and a call for the recruitment of experienced practitioners to supplement research based academic staff. The blending of academic and practitioner staff was identified as a possible approach to gain competitive advantage in the market place and to maintain and enhance the applicability and relevance of a business education. The Business School would appear to be faced with a rapidly changing environment. The pressure from stakeholders would suggest that Business Schools require to modify what they do and how they do it to meet the challenges presented by an increasingly congested marketplace.

Chapter Five
An Analysis of the Psychological Contract

Chapter Five

The Psychological Contract

5.0 Introduction

Chapter Five will examine relevant literature in relation to the psychological contract. The Chapter has been structured so that it will first consider the historical development associated with the psychological contract. This will be followed by a chronological analysis of the life-cycle of the contract that will commence with an examination of the construction of individual psychological contracts, incorporating literature on cognitive schemas, in essence how individuals make sense of complex settings from incomplete information, and also newcomers' beliefs, in respect of what a new working environment will provide for them and what individuals are willing to offer. The content of the constructed psychological contract will then be considered focussing on contract typologies (relational, transactional, ideological), the new contract conceptualisation which suggests an increased self-orientation, the role of context and idiosyncratic deals, and fairness and justice. The final part of the Chapter will consider appropriate literature in respect of response and reaction to breach and violation.

5.1 The Historical Development of the Psychological Contract

The definition of the psychological contract has evolved since its introduction by Argyris (1960). Argyris (1960) created the term *psychological work contract* to encapsulate the unwritten expectations that were held by both factory employees and their line managers in respect of each other. In an overview of the historical development of the psychological contract Roehling (1997) suggested that the next significant milestone was the work undertaken by Levinson et al. (1962) who put forward a definition that focussed on mutual expectations,

‘A series of mutual expectations of which the parties to the relationship may not themselves be even dimly aware but which nonetheless govern their relationship to each other.’

(Levinson et al., 1962, p21)

Levinson et al. (1962) found that these mutual expectations were largely unspoken and therefore implied, and were often founded on the employee's experience and background before joining the organisation. Levinson et al. (1962) also identified that these expectations altered over the course of employment with an organisation. The work of Schein (1965) built on that of both Argyris (1960) and

Levinson et al. (1962). In his conceptualisation of the psychological contract, Schein (1965) also concentrated on the mutual expectations that the employee and employer had of each other. According to Schein (1965),

‘These expectations not only cover how much work is to be performed for how much pay, but also involve the whole pattern of rights, privileges, and obligations between worker and organisation.’

(Schein, 1965, p11)

Roehling (1997) highlighted that the definition provided by Schein (1965) was used as the key reference in psychological contract research until Rousseau, in her seminal article over two decades later, defined the psychological contract as,

‘An individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of the reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party. Key issues here include the belief that a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations.’

(Rousseau, 1989, p123)

The crucial features of Rousseau’s construct were perceived promises, obligations, and mutuality. Subsequently, Rousseau (2001) suggested that promises did not require to be formally articulated, but could be a result of words or actions taken in context. Hence, an employee may perceive a promise as being in existence without the employer having made a definitive announcement or declaration in respect of the matter in question. This also extended through to the observation of other employees in the workplace. For example, if a reward, be it pecuniary or non-pecuniary, was awarded to a colleague then the observer may assume that such remuneration was available to them for comparable work (Rousseau and Kim, 2003; Shore et al., 2004). In other words, the psychological contract fills both the perceptual gaps in the employment relationship and can influence day to day employee behaviour in ways that cannot be discerned from a written contract.

The definition provided by Rousseau recognised the psychological contract as a particular type of promissory contract, and because it involved beliefs, existed ‘in the eye of the beholder’ (Rousseau and McLean Parks, 1993). What was important was that the individual believed an agreement existed (even if implicit), and that some sort of promise (again, this may be implicit) had been made, and that considerations were offered in exchange. In the mind of the contract holder when this was the case, both parties were bound to a set of reciprocal obligations (Robinson et al., 1994; Sims, 1994; Sparrow, 1996a, 1996b; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). Rousseau and Ho (2000) suggested in a theoretical article

that the psychological contract was characterised by “bounded rationality” which was a term developed by the Chicago School of economists of the 1950s and 1960s. In essence, bounded rationality recognises that decision making takes place within an environment of incomplete information and uncertainty. Rousseau and Ho (2000) concluded that this reflected the employee’s incomplete, selective, and possibly distorted view of the relationship whereby individuals did not examine every possible option, rather they deliberated over the alternatives which happened to occur to them.

In summary, the psychological contract definition has evolved since it was first introduced by Argyris (1960). However, the definitions that were offered by Levinson et al. (1962), Schein (1965), and Rousseau (1989) were evolutionary in nature with subtle additions and clarifications in respect of the concept they were describing. Subsequent research in the area of the psychological contract has largely focussed on the contract once it has been formulated. However, Rousseau (2001) suggested that research was required to take a step back in the causal sequence as the antecedents and building blocks of the psychological contract remained comparatively unexplored. This stepping back included a consideration of the mental models or schemas employees held pre-employment. She suggested that both applicants and new recruits were likely to have limited or incomplete information regarding the nature of their employment relationship. Similarly, the employer would possess incomplete information regarding the recruited individual. Thus, Rousseau (2001) suggested that schema were particularly important to advancing research on psychological contract formation.

5.2 The Psychological Contract as a Schema

The concept of schemas has recently been used in research related to the construction of psychological contracts (Rousseau, 2001; De Vos et al., 2005). Schemas have been defined by a number of researchers. A schema is defined as the cognitive organisation or mental model of conceptually related elements (Beck, 1967; Horowitz, 1988; Stein, 1992), and represents an abstraction of a complex concept that has gradually developed from past experience, and subsequently guides the way new information is organised (Stein, 1992). This was similar to the description provided by Welch Larson (1994) who suggested that schemas helped make sense of settings where there was incomplete information with which to discern patterns, create meanings, and assist individuals in creating a view from the limited information available to them. Similarly, Fiske and Taylor (1984) conceptualised a schema as a cognitive structure that represented organised knowledge about a person or situation.

Fiske and Taylor (1984) suggested that each employee and employer held a unique schema developed from experiences and that differences would be particularly evident because of different educational backgrounds, work experiences, industries, and cultures. In her theoretical article using examples from her work environment, Rousseau (2001) further suggested that pre-employment schemas allowed potential employees to build a picture of what they perceived the employment experience would be like and the obligations that would be created. Rousseau (2001) also stated that the psychological contract was a cognitive schema that individuals held about the terms of their employment relationship, consisting of beliefs about what was expected to occur in the organisation and what was expected of the individual in return. Rousseau (2001) used the element of 'teaching' as an example of how schema can differ,

'Because individuals can have differences in their basic cognitive structures, elements that fit easily into one person's schema may fit less well to another's. Consider how some of my business-school colleagues see executive education as central to their professional contributions, while others vociferously reject it as a non-scholarly pursuit. This perception of executive education as a legitimate professional activity by some and 'not my job' by others, is accounted for by a variety of factors that can shape a schema.'

(Rousseau, 2001, p513)

The quotation provides an illustration of how the psychological contract can be regarded as a perceptual cognition. Consequently, it was the perception of reality, not reality as such, that was acknowledged as the focus for psychological contract research. This view was supported by the research of De Vos et al. (2005) who found in their quantitative study of new hires in large private Belgian firms that it was the perceptions of the individual and the promises that they believed they had made, and had been made to them, that were considered of relevance. They found that newcomers socially construct their evaluations of inducements by relying on the information they obtain from organisational insiders or other newcomers, particularly in relation to career development, job content, and social atmosphere. The rationale put forward by De Vos et al. (2005) for these three items being of greatest concerns for newcomers was that the written employment deal was probably less explicit in respect of these features. Rousseau (2001) also considered the complexity of schema and suggested that this was determined by the number of cognitive beliefs that were contained within the schema and the linkages between these beliefs. She also suggested that this would change and evolve over time from discrete beliefs to more elaborately organised schemas composed of many interrelated beliefs (Rousseau, 2001).

In summary, it can be seen that the concept of schema has been a relatively recent addition to the psychological contract literature. Schema were seen to have relevance by Rousseau (2001) when she identified the need to explore the formation of the psychological contract. The research into formation has identified that schema allowed the individual to create meaning from incomplete information when entering an employment relationship. But how is this meaning constructed? To address this question the concept of sensemaking has also been incorporated into research concerned with the exploration of contract formation and will now be considered in this review.

5.3 The Psychological Contract Formation and Sensemaking

The process of psychological contract construction and formation has been described as a sensemaking process. Sensemaking refers to cognitive processes that individuals employ in organisational settings and has been identified as a cycle of events occurring over time (Louis, 1980). This cycle begins when employees form unconscious and conscious anticipations and assumptions about their future employment relationships. This related to prospective and newly started employees making sense of the incomplete information they have collated in respect of the terms of their employment relationship. In her theoretical article Louis (1980) considered the literature on newcomers experiences on entering unfamiliar organisational settings and defined sensemaking as the cognitive processes that individuals employed in organisational settings to cope with surprise and novelty, aligning expectations and experienced reality. She claimed that this process of sensemaking assisted in the neutralisation of perceptions of undelivered promises or unfulfilled expectations. A slightly different definition was provided by De Vos et al. (2003) who described sensemaking as a process through which newcomers actively formed and changed their cognitive schema. These sensemaking processes were viewed as a fundamental part of the maturation of attitudes and behaviours that facilitated the effective functioning of new recruits in the workplace (Morrison, 1993; Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Bauer et al., 1998). For example, Saks and Ashforth (1997), in their longitudinal quantitative investigation of the relationships between job search effort and job satisfaction, identified a positive correlation between the time dedicated to sensemaking activity and subsequent success in the chosen employment situation. Also, Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2002) in a quantitative study of British Army recruits examining socialisation tactics, information acquisition and attitudinal outcomes, identified two stages in the construction of the psychological contract. The first stage commenced with what they described as an anticipatory socialisation phase and resulted in the development of an anticipatory psychological

contract based on images formed pre-entry into the organisation. The contract in this form was described by Anderson and Thomas (1996) as,

‘Naïve and imperfect schema about a preliminary deal that identifies what the organisation expects its employees to contribute and what rewards employees can expect to receive from the organisation.’

(Anderson and Thomas, 1996, p436)

In other words, organisational representatives, and the information they exchanged with the prospective employee, created expectations about obligations. The process involved not only discussion of formal and written agreements but also informal, unwritten information. The second phase Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2002) described as the encounter and socialisation process which occurred once employment had commenced and carried on through the early months at work. During this period individuals considered the differences between pre-entry perceptions and the actuality of the workplace. For example, when considering how medical professionals prepared for and encountered new work roles, Hallier and Forbes (2004) identified sensemaking as a process where an individual attempted to make sense of ambiguous data by the construction of plausible (although not necessarily accurate) interpretations of events. During the first months as clinical directors, promoted doctors engaged in a wide array of sensemaking activities that stemmed from the need to understand and respond to the novel responsibility, skill and social contrasts that comprised the everyday role. Hallier and Forbes (2004) found that it was not so much the differences in the day to day activities that preoccupied the attention of doctor managers, but the lack of explanation and assistance from hospital management that made the pre-entry perceptions largely irrelevant. Doctors also identified that even when there were written job descriptions they rarely matched the duties that were required. This was similar to the position adopted by Louis (1980) who suggested that prior to entry into the workplace, individuals formed conscious and unconscious anticipations and assumptions about the employment relationship. These anticipations and assumptions subsequently shaped future encounters with an employer. As Louis (1980) indicated in her theoretical article,

‘Anticipations may be formed before or after entering the organisation; anticipations and other action-guiding assumptions (e.g., cultural assumptions) may be conscious, tacit, and/or emergent, and anticipations can be focussed on oneself, as well as the job, the organisation, and its culture.’

(Louis, 1980, p244)

Thus, once employment commenced employees were likely to encounter factors that might initiate a course of events resulting in views being altered and revised (Louis, 1980). Louis (1980) also suggested that newcomers had special sensemaking needs. In particular they required help in interpreting events in a new setting, including surprises, and assistance in appreciating situation-specific interpretation schemes or cultural assumptions.

The relationship between psychological contract formation, sensemaking, and socialisation was considered by De Vos et al. (2003) in a quantitative study of newly recruited employees in eight large Belgian firms in three sectors (telecommunications, consulting, and banking and insurance). De Vos et al. (2003) described a process of sensemaking through which newcomers came to understand, interpret, and respond to the workplace. They concluded that it was important to view the psychological contract as a dynamic set of expectations which, at least during the socialisation process, was affected by interpretations of events that occurred once employment had commenced. The impact of the socialisation process on schema will now be considered.

5.3.1 The Impact on the Psychological Contract of the Socialisation Process

The findings of De Vos et al. (2003) supported the suggestions made by Rousseau (1995, 2001) whereby schema were viewed as dynamic and were most likely to change when people were motivated to make the cognitive effort change required. Such change was most likely to occur towards the end of the encounter and socialisation phase described by Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2002) because of increased awareness of the work setting. Research into psychological contract formation by Robinson et al. (1994) and Anderson and Thomas (1996), indicated that during the socialisation process incoming employees developed a perception that the organisation had not promised sufficient reward in return for the expected contribution of the employee. The notion of employees over-promising was also supported by Robinson et al. (1994) who identified that employees had altered their views on what they would provide to the organisation based on the reality they had encountered.

Heath et al. (1993) in their theoretical paper suggested that individuals' perceptions about what they were entitled to receive were not likely to change to the same extent as the contribution they were willing to make to the organisation, perhaps suggesting that employees' perceptions of their own promises were more adaptable than their view of the promises made by the organisation, which were seen as fixed and unchangeable (Heath et al., 1993). For example, Robinson et al. (1994) in an exploratory longitudinal study of ninety-six business school alumni, identified that a sample of graduating MBA students reported increased perceptions of their employer's obligations to them one year after graduation, yet these same employees indicated reduced individual obligations to the organisation during that time. The population was sampled at two points in time, with a questionnaire distributed three weeks prior to graduation and another some two years later. Both questionnaires assessed employee beliefs regarding obligations to employers and employer obligations to them. They concluded that the mutual employer-employee obligations that new employees perceived changed markedly during the initial years in an organisation. The research of De Vos et al. (2003) also concluded that employee expectations changed as a result of information they compiled post-entry. They also noted that there was evidence to suggest that employees altered their psychological contract without reference to their employer, which supported the significance of sensemaking processes in the workplace. They stated,

‘Newcomers use their experiences within the work environment as feedback about their initial expectations and that they are flexible in adapting their initial expectations based upon this feedback. The evidence for unilateral adaptation of perceived promises provides a first empirical confirmation of the importance of sensemaking processes after organisational entry.’

(De Vos et al., 2003, p541)

In other words, individuals were more inclined to alter what they said about what they were willing to provide to the organisation once they had undergone socialisation into the organisation. This suggested that after a period of time experiencing what the organisation was willing and able to provide to the individual he or she was more likely to change their side of the agreement than the employer.

The sensemaking research in respect of psychological contracts has suggested that sensemaking is part of an ongoing process whereby individuals alter pre-entry thoughts about a work environment. These thoughts were subjected to a process of socialisation where the individual experienced the workplace and consequently ascribed an interpretation of how similar or not the job was compared to pre-entry

perceptions. The evidence suggested that at least some part of the psychological contract was subjected to change because of the sensemaking process.

Another feature of psychological contract research has identified the existence of three major types of psychological contract, transactional, relational, and ideological. The development and definitions associated with these types of psychological contracts will now be considered.

5.4 Typologies of Psychological Contracts

To begin with, psychological contracts were viewed as containing both transactional and relational aspects (MacNeil, 1985; Rousseau and Wade-Benzioni, 1994). Transactional contracts were described as containing terms of exchange that had monetary value and were part of the reciprocal process of providing reasonable effort for both monetary and non-monetary rewards (Marks et al., 1996). Chrobot-Mason (2003) suggested a definition of transactional contracts such that they involved only specific, monetary exchanges between the employer and employee over a finite period of time. Thompson and Bunderson (2003) in their theoretical article further elaborated on the nature of transactional contracts and drew on the work of Rousseau and McLean Parks (1993) to provide the following description,

‘Organisational inducements within transactional contracts are calculated to fulfil the minimal, narrowly specified requirements to receive those economic rewards. Because employees are concerned about themselves as the primary beneficiaries of the exchange, transactional contracts imply an egoistic or instrumental model of human nature.’

(Thompson and Bunderson, 2003, p574)

In other words the transactional element of the psychological contract comprised of a narrow set of carefully defined obligations that the individual had promised to deliver in return for monetary reward. As Thompson and Bunderson (2003) stated this was likely to be negotiated by the individual so that the transactional component of the psychological contract provided sufficient economic reward for the employee based on his or her perception of their value to the organisation.

Relational contracts on the other hand contain terms which may not be readily valued and which broadly concern the relationship between the individual employee and the organisation (Guzzo and Noonan, 1994). Relational components encompassed factors such as provision of commitment, organisational loyalty and trust in management on behalf of the employee, in return for competent

management, opportunity for input and sense of belonging (Maguire, 2002). Maguire (2002) undertook a case study in one of Australia's leading banks after a period of downsizing and found that traditional loyalty to the organisation and continuance commitment had become less important as the organisation pursued more transactional relationships with their employees and as employees were encouraged to engage in more self-interested protean careers. Thompson and Bunderson (2003), identified the implications of such a contract,

‘Employees with a relational contract contribute their commitment and involvement to the organisation often in the form of organisational citizenship behaviours, with the belief that the organisation will provide loyalty, a sense of community, and opportunities for professional growth. In this relationship the beneficiaries of the exchange are largely local (i.e. the employee and his or her organisational community). Relational contracting relies on a collective or socialised model of human behaviour.’

(Thompson and Bunderson, 2003, p574)

This suggested that relational contracting was characterised as a relatively more pervasive, comprehensive, and renegotiable set of obligations. The elements within a relational contract were perhaps less tangible than transactional elements. Relational elements suggested that the individual was less concerned about him or herself and had a greater concern for wider community aspects of the organisation and its stakeholders. Bunderson (2001) also noted that the relationship between an employee and his or her employing organisation was complex with both transactional and relational components. This finding was similar to the conclusions from other researchers who found evidence to indicate that the transactional and relational aspects of the psychological contract interacted and impacted upon each other (e.g. Rousseau, 1990; Guzzo and Noonan, 1994; Hallier, 2000).

The identification of transactional and relational contract types has contributed significantly to the research in respect of psychological contracts and to a greater understanding of how and why individuals respond to change in the employment relationship. However, Rousseau (2001) suggested that a third component might be important and identified that ideology could also be a significant aspect of the psychological contract for some individuals. Similarly, Thompson and Bunderson (2003) concluded that a new form of contract had emerged that went beyond the accepted bipolar framework and incorporated ideology as a third focus. Based on a review of seminal statements from social exchange theory (e.g. Blau, 1964), Thompson and Bunderson (2003) indicated that the study of psychological contracts could be enriched by considering ideological rewards. These ideological rewards were defined by Thompson and Bunderson (2003) as being credible commitments to pursue a

valued cause or principle (not limited to self-interest) that were implicitly exchanged at the nexus of the individual-organisation relationship. In terms of employee obligations, ideological currency would take the form of contributions toward the organisations capacity to pursue the cause. A number of examples of what may constitute an ideology-infused contract were provided,

‘In an ideology-infused contract there is an assumption that the employee is willing to contribute extra role behaviours such as voluntary helping or advocacy, perhaps outside the organisation, in order to support the pursuit of the espoused cause. The cause may be as grandiose as “promote world peace” or as quotidian as “buy only American products”. Furthermore, the cause need not be viewed as noble or altruistic (e.g. “targeted hatred” as an ideology). The salient beneficiary of this relationship is some constituency – however distal or poorly defined – that is assumed to benefit from the organisation’s actions (e.g. “the poor”, “society”, “endangered species”, “future generations”, or “people like me”). Ideology-infused contracts invoke a principled or altruistic model of human nature.’

(Thompson and Bunderson, 2003, p576)

The hypothetical illustrations provided by Thompson and Bunderson (2003) were consistent with the definition that they had suggested and further instances of the role of ideology was evident in other research. For example, Bergin and Ronnestad (2005) undertook a qualitative study that involved the interviewing of health professionals in a period of significant change. They identified that both the choice of profession and to work in the public sector were decisions made to satisfy specific wants and desires that were ideologically based. Consequently, employee perceptions about the organisation’s obligations were not grounded exclusively in personal reward but also in the promotion of a cause that the individual highly valued. As George (2001) claimed in his keynote speech to the Academy of Management in the United States upon his award of US Executive of the Year 2001, based on his many year’s of corporate experience rather than empirical research,

‘Although everyone wants to be fairly compensated for his or her efforts the real motivation for many employees comes from believing that their work has a purpose, and that they are part of a larger effort to achieve something truly worthwhile.’

(George, 2001, p3)

If employees were to be rewarded in terms of work that had a purpose as George (2001) identified then in terms of organisational inducements, ideological currency would take the form of perceived organisational obligations to support a cause or principle, and to give employees legitimate claim to participation in the cause. Rousseau (2001) indicated that ideologies normally existed prior to an encounter with a particular employer and that believers of a particular ideology were more likely to react negatively if the employer failed to fulfil commitments in that domain. Again using the study of

Bergin and Ronnestad (2005) as an example, the informants described a need to escape from a situation that was described as difficult and stressful because of changes that negatively impacted on the ideological aspects of their psychological contracts. However, the interviewees then outlined a scenario where they took many days of sick leave and preferred to endure the conditions believing that exit was not an option because of their ideological commitment to the profession they had chosen.

The notion of ideology implied that organisations had a single ideology but this was not necessarily the case. For example, Bunderson (2001) reported two distinct but potentially co-occurring ideologies among medical practitioners. These were (i) an *administrative ideology*, represented in terms of a hospital's role as a 'market enterprise', and (ii) a *professional ideology*, characterised by the doctor's perceived duty as servant to the community. Bunderson (2001) suggested that these ideologies moderated how individuals responded to their employer's fulfilment of obligations, with administrative ideologies affecting responses to administrative obligations, such as efficiency and coordination, whereas professional ideologies affected responses to employer fulfilment of obligations to provide quality patient care. A similar finding was reported by Thompson and Bunderson (2003) who advocated that employee beliefs about the organisation's obligations were not based solely on personal benefits or entitlements but also the organisation's commitment to and embodiment of the principle. They suggested that the defining aspect of ideology-impacted contracts was that organisational membership was to some extent founded on a perception that the organisation would construct an environment whereby the employee could play a role in assisting the cause.

Thompson and Bunderson (2003) also suggested that within an ideology impacted contract there existed the assumption that the employee was willing to contribute extra role behaviour in order to support the pursuit of the espoused cause. Contracts that contained ideological elements were identified as being similar to transactional contracts in that they incorporated unambiguous non-negotiable elements, related to factors that assumed a moral significance among individuals who championed a specific ideology.

Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) preceded the work of Bunderson (2001) and Thompson and Bunderson (2003), but their findings were similar. In their quantitative study that incorporated occupations from clerical to professional, they found that employees perceived their work in one of three ways - a job orientation (focus on financial rewards and necessity rather than pleasure or fulfilment; not a major positive part of life), a career orientation (focus on advancement), or a calling orientation (focus on

enjoyment of fulfilling socially useful work). They reported that differences in respondents' perceptions of their work could not be reduced to demographic or occupational differences. They also examined responses from a homogenous subset of administrative assistants, which showed that they were, like the total sample, distributed evenly across the categories of job, career, and calling. Those with a job orientation viewed work as an opportunity for economic maintenance or advancement (transactional contract). Alternatively, those with a career focus concentrated on establishing connections, pursuing opportunities for status advancement, and enjoying integration within an occupational community (relational contract). Employees with a calling orientation perceived work as an expression of self and a lifetime commitment, perhaps to the detriment of the individual in purely economic terms. This was further supported in a study by O'Donohue et al. (2004) who interviewed scientists at what they described as 'one of the world's most diverse scientific research organisations with an international reputation for its scientific achievements' (O'Donohue et al., 2004, p4). O'Donohue et al. (2004) found that,

'Although both transactional and relational components to the psychological contract are evident, scientists' concerns cannot be fitted neatly within the relational/transactional characterisation of the contract. The inducement to contribute seems to tap into ideological rewards i.e. the rewards associated with being involved in some intangible principle or with benefiting society, or some segment of it.'

(O'Donohue et al., 2004, p7)

They concluded that ideologies may be significant in the psychological contract particularly for professional employees. Their study found that individuals seemed to be refocussing their allegiance and career aspirations towards an ideology rather than an organisation.

Research activity in respect of psychological contract typologies has for some time identified the existence and nature of both transactional and relational aspects. The definitions and component parts of both transactional and relational contracts have been relatively unchallenged. However, this has now been supplemented with the addition of the ideology-infused psychological contract which identified that a third influence existed for some individuals in certain contexts. The evidence suggested that where ideology was in existence it played a significant role within the employment relationship and would suggest that the acceptance of the two-part (transactional and relational) psychological contract had changed. The constituent parts of the psychological contract have been

closely scrutinised and a number of researchers have suggested that there may now exist a 'new' psychological contract which has a different focus and orientation.

5.5 The New Psychological Contract

It has been suggested that increased interest in psychological contracts over the last decade had originated from the view that the nature of business operation had altered significantly (for example Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman, 2004). Part of this was focussed on the employment relationship whereby the increasingly competitive work environment resulted in the need to lower costs. This was especially relevant in industries with high wage bills. Techniques to lower labour overheads were employed, such as the use of contract and ad hoc staff, and the outsourcing of both core and non-core activities. Consequently, long held views in respect of factors such as job security which were prevalent throughout many industries, and particularly the public sector were challenged (Willmott, 1995; Deem, 2004).

This altered environment resulted in the suggestion that a new psychological contract had emerged (e.g. Hiltrop, 1995; Herriot and Pemberton, 1997a, 1997b; Maguire, 2002). The new contract had a self-reliance orientation that was significantly removed from the concept of 'devotion' to a specific employer, with the role of the organisation open to debate as individuals moved with much greater frequency between different employers to attain the rewards that they believed were due to them (Maguire, 2002). For example, Hall and Moss (1998) described this as the new protean career contract and defined it as being independent and directed by the needs and values of the individual, with success being described as internal (psychological). Given this definition, the importance of the psychological contract in providing a schema for employees to develop a set of expectations concerning mutual obligations between themselves and the organisation is problematic. Maguire (2002) examined to what extent this increased emphasis on self-serving personal and organisational strategies rendered the psychological contract irrelevant. Maguire (2002) found that the psychological contract continued to provide a means of establishing effective relationships between organisations and their employees. Assertions that the workforce was more likely to change employment rather than remain with an employer if there was a perception that a better deal could be struck elsewhere was not empirically supported by this study. However, within this finding it was also suggested that employers would require ways of adjusting the terms of the psychological contract to meet the needs of a potentially

increasingly mobile and less predictable workforce (Maguire, 2002). This result would seem to support the research of Pascale (1995) who seven years earlier had concluded that only around one-tenth of the workforce possessed the entrepreneurial traits and initiative deemed necessary to be able to implement the new free-agent relationships characterised by the employability-based psychological contract.

The evidence in respect of the new psychological contract has suggested that employees may become more mobile. However, the evidence to date is inconclusive in terms of the frequency of individuals choosing to leave organisations to pursue better employment opportunities. Nevertheless, it would appear that increased mobility was likely to become more of a phenomenon with a workforce increasingly self-focussed as a consequence of organisations becoming more competitive. The psychological contract in such an environment would tie the individual more to a profession rather than an organisation.

It has been suggested (for example, Rousseau and Fried, 2001; Shore et al., 2004) that the uniqueness and peculiarities of each work context could allow for the negotiation between employer and employee of specific work arrangements. Such agreements have been referred to as idiosyncratic deals, and it could be argued that the existence of such understandings may negate the need to change employer. The next section will consider work context and the creation and importance of idiosyncratic deals.

5.6 Context and the Idiosyncratic Deal

The role of context within the analysis of psychological contracts was highlighted by Shore et al. (2004) who argued that context was not homogenous, but varied considerably from one individual to the next, even for employees undertaking similar or identical tasks within an organisation. Shore et al. (2004) defined context as,

‘The setting, or what surrounds, the locus of obligations. Context contains the terms and conditions of the relationship. Accordingly, context presents both constraints and opportunities that influence the links or connections that individuals and organizations are able to make with each other and with other entities.’

(Shore et al., 2004, p325)

It was evident from the definition provided by Shore et al. (2004) that they were of the view that employer/employee relationships were impacted upon by context and the psychological contract of the

individual would also be shaped and influenced by context. They also argued that context was both multifaceted and multidimensional and that in psychological contract research this was important because,

‘It suggests that different aspects of context will have different relevance for different types of relationships. Multiple contexts can represent complementary interests and demands. More often however, different contexts represent competing interests and demands that will differentially influence interpretation of obligations and fulfilment from the perspectives of both individuals and organisations. Thus, there is no one context and it is important for researchers to recognise the simultaneous influence of multiple internal and external contexts.’

(Shore et al., 2004, p325)

In other words, each employee was faced with many contexts, both within and outside of the organisation, each of which would impact to some extent on his or her psychological contract. The complex nature of context supported the suggestion by Rousseau (1989) that the psychological contract was based on an idiosyncratic *belief*. Shore et al. (2004) also espoused the proposition that psychological contracts encapsulated specific beliefs idiosyncratic to the relationship in question. Rousseau (2001) also suggested that some elements of a schema may be widely shared by people who work in the same setting or occupation or by members of a particular societal culture. However, others may be idiosyncratic, tied to particular individual experiences with their current employer or throughout their career. The notion that employees will have particular, individual elements that they wish to incorporate within their unique psychological contract is consistent with the definition put forward by Rousseau (1989). However, it does raise the question in respect of how an individual could engineer a situation whereby his or her specific idiosyncrasies were incorporated into the contract? The ability to negotiate different treatment to others in the same context was the focus of a theoretical article by Meckler et al. (2003) which suggested that human behaviour in organisations was motivated by more than tacit agreements to abide by group norms and written or unwritten expectations of reciprocity. They highlighted that motivation was also tightly linked to the fulfilment of idiosyncrasies. Meckler et al. (2003) defined an idiosyncratic deal as,

‘Those features of employment that the individual worker receives that differ from what workers in similar roles receive...Idiosyncratic deals arise when workers negotiate different treatment from their employers from that received from comparable others.’

(Meckler et al., 2003, p223)

In other words, idiosyncratic deals were person-specific and encompassed features of employment that went beyond the obvious features of pay and duties and could also encompass factors such as hours, location, travel, skill development, and mobility. Meckler et al. (2003) suggested that the leverage an individual had to construct his or her own idiosyncratic deal was based on predisposition (i.e. willingness to negotiate), credentials, occupation, status, and marketability. The research by Meckler et al. (2003) was supported by the findings of Rousseau and Kim (2003) who in a quantitative study considered a situation where individual workers reported having received different treatment from their peers. They found that this special treatment negatively impacted upon the quality of co-worker employment relations. In departments where certain individuals had negotiated idiosyncratic deals, co-workers were more likely to report procedural and distributive injustice than employees in departments where such agreements were not present. Over time, such arrangements resulted in a number of widely divergent psychological contracts among workers in a firm and unless idiosyncratic deals were managed properly, their proliferation had the potential to undermine trust and cooperation at work.

In summary, it was evident that the creation of an idiosyncratic deal within a context meant that certain employees had the predisposition and ability to create a psychological contract that provided for them the work environment that they desired and also gave the employer what they perceived as a satisfactory return. However, it has been suggested that the notion of idiosyncratic, individual arrangements creates the potential to engender a situation whereby those individuals within the same context not able to construct such a deal, or not aware that such deals were available or possible, would raise the question of fairness and justice if these deals became evident. The notion of fairness perceptions, and how they are managed, are arguably central to the state of the psychological contract and will now be considered.

5.7 Fairness and Justice

Individual perception about the fairness or otherwise of any decision or behaviour will have a significant impact on the extent to which a decision or action is accepted or not. Leventhal (1980) argued that individuals were more likely to accept the responsibility for their problems if they believed that the decision was fair, and Thompson and Heron (2005) stated,

‘Perceptions of fairness are inextricably bound up with the notion of the psychological contract because, in a sense, the contract reflects employees’ views of the extent to which justice has been done. Employees have expectations of what the organisation should do in relation to the distribution of resources such as reward, careers and development and when these expectations are not met, they perceive this as injustice.’

(Thompson and Heron, 2005, p387)

This means that for all employer actions, whether explicit or implicit, written, or unwritten, employees will make a judgement on the decision taken and apply their own perception of the fairness of that action. For example, Kickul (2001) found that justice played an important moderating role between the psychological contract and employee attitudes and behaviour. In her study of three hundred and twenty-two employees from a variety of organisational settings, Kickul (2001) reported that deviant work behaviour was higher when both procedural and interactional injustice was reported. Procedural justice was defined here as the employer following accepted rules and guidelines in the decision-making process and interactional justice related to the relationship between the individual employee and others in the workplace, normally interpreted as his or her line manager.

There was also evidence suggesting that employees’ perceptions of the quality of interpersonal treatment received while being managed (interactional justice) could be highly influential in shaping employees’ attitudes and behaviours (e.g. Bies and Moag, 1986; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002). For example, Coyle-Shapiro (2002) concluded that managers who created a strong ethical work context as a consequence of fair and just procedures and also created and nurtured high quality relationships with employees, benefited from higher levels of employee commitment.

The research of Kickul (2001) also revealed that procedural justice had a significant effect on responses to employer’s decisions that impacted on transactional features of the psychological contract, such as monetary reward. Kickul (2001) reported that interactional justice significantly impacted upon responses to management decisions that related to relational features, such as autonomy within the workplace. However, Turnley and Feldman (1999) explored the role of moderating factors such as availability of alternative employment in a study of eight hundred managers and found that procedural justice did not moderate the relationship between the psychological contract and a range of outcomes (exit, voice and loyalty). Similarly, in a study that involved longitudinal analysis of four hundred and eighty public-sector workers Coyle-Shapiro (2002) found that neither procedural nor interactional

justice had a moderating role in the relationship between the psychological contract and organisational citizenship behaviours.

Research into distributive justice has tended to focus on economic aspects such as employee reaction to salary (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998, 2001). However, it has been recognised that other factors, such as interesting and challenging work, can be important socio-economic rewards and there was also evidence that other types of reward could carry symbolic significance, such as the allocation of a larger office than colleagues at a similar grade (Greenberg, 1988). It was evident that many rewards can simultaneously provide both economic and socio-economic meaning and Thompson and Heron (2005) concluded that by accepting the role of both economic and socio-emotional rewards, the psychological contract can broaden the understanding of the role of procedural and interactional justice perceptions.

To summarise, the research has suggested that justice perceptions play a part in shaping employees' views of their relationship with their employer. Organisations will be faced with individuals who believe that they have completed their side of the psychological contract but perceive that the employer has failed in their agreed obligation to the employee. Research has suggested that the mismatch in perceptions can result in what has been termed a "breach" or "violation" of the psychological contract. The concept of breach and violation will now be discussed in more detail.

5.8 Breach and Violation of the Psychological Contract

Whilst the formation of psychological contracts has been an area of more recent interest, breach and violations of contracts has been the subject of significant research in this area. Psychological contract violation has been defined as a failure of the organisation to fulfil one or more obligations of an individual's psychological contract (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Robinson and Morrison, 1995). However, Morrison and Robinson (1997) argued that this definition focussed on the rational, mental calculation of what individuals had or had not received, and downplayed the emotional aspect of violation. Consequently, Morrison and Robinson (1997) made the distinction between psychological breach and violation. This has not always been undertaken in the psychological contract literature with the terms often used interchangeably and without explanation of their meaning.

Morrison and Robinson (1997) conceptualised breach as an employee's cognition that the organisation had not been successful in meeting at least one of an employee's perceived obligations. Breach was the recognition of this occurrence. Morrison and Robinson (1997) suggested that this might be a relatively short-term phenomenon with individuals subsequently re-engaging with their original psychological contract. Conway and Briner (2002) also suggested that breach could occur on a daily basis and was part of organisational life, and essentially caused the employee little concern. Alternatively, breach may progress to violation. Morrison and Robinson (1997) characterised violation as,

‘An emotional and affective state that may follow from the belief that one's organisation has failed to adequately maintain the psychological contract.’
(Morrison and Robinson, 1997, p230)

In other words, contract breach (cognisance of broken agreements) and violation (emotional reaction to breach) are distinct phenomena, and it was possible to experience several breaches without violation. Rousseau (1989) suggested that contract violation was more than merely the failure of the organisation to meet expectations, because essentially the employee perceived that a promise had been broken and it was more personalised. Consequently, responses were more intense because respect and codes of conduct were called into question. Morrison and Robinson (2004) also highlighted that the relationship between breach and violation was moderated by an interpretation process that involved fairness judgements and causal attributions by the employee.

The nature of contract breach and violation will now be examined in respect of the types of psychological contract previously considered, namely transactional, relational, and ideological.

5.8.1 Type of Psychological Contract, Breach, and Violation

Thompson and Bunderson (2003) suggested that a critical distinction between transactional and relational contracts was scope, which was significant because it impacted upon what constituted a contract breach or violation. According to theorists (for example Rousseau, 1989), transactional contracts contained a narrow set of carefully defined obligations such that transactional contract breach was relatively black and white. Relational contracts, on the other hand, were a relatively more pervasive, comprehensive, and renegotiable set of obligations. In other words, relative to transactional breach or violation, relational breach or violation was more sensitive to subjective judgement and social construction.

An interesting aspect of the scope of ideology-related contracts was that they allowed for the expansion of the criteria for breach or violation of the psychological contract. A definition of ideological breach was put forward by Thompson and Bunderson (2003), based on the Morrison and Robinson (1997) general definition of psychological contract breach. Thompson and Bunderson (2003) suggested that it could be construed as an employee's cognition that the organisation had deviated from a perceived ideological obligation. Similarly, Thompson and Bunderson (2003) used the same basis to construct a meaning for ideological violation. This was defined as the negative emotional response (e.g. moral outrage) that may, under certain circumstances, result from ideological breach. It has been suggested by Bunderson (2001) and Thompson and Bunderson (2003) that the inclusion of ideological currency into the psychological contract has allowed for the consideration of explanations of contract breach and violation that extended beyond those provided by theory on transactional and relational contracting. Moreover, incorporating ideology into the psychological contract helped to explain why some employees may remain loyal to an organisation despite breaches in the economic and socio-emotional aspects of the psychological contract. The likelihood of ideological violation was considered by Morrison and Robinson (1997) and they found that violation depended on whether the larger social contract, in which organisational action was embedded, justified the decision. If employees recognised that the pursuit of the ideology in question required to be balanced with other legitimate claims to the resources being allocated their emotional reaction to breach may be lessened.

The research has suggested that psychological contract violations need not originate solely from perceptions of direct personal mistreatment by an organisation, as implied in most psychological contract research, but may also emanate from a perception that the organisation has abandoned an espoused principle or cause, although there is no empirical research to substantiate such a perspective. When the psychological contract was infused with ideology, personal violations could result from global actions that may not directly impact on observable aspects of an employee's role or tasks. Existing literature does not however elaborate on how employment relationships premised on ideology differ from those that are not, nor on how employees react to unmet ideological obligations.

The research to date suggested that breach and violation were based on the interpretation of events that impacted on the employee. The implications of breach and violation on the employee will now be considered.

5.8.2 Reaction to Breach and Violation

Findings from a study by Morrison and Robinson (1997) suggested that breach or violation of the psychological contract was multi-faceted because it incorporated a wide-range of responses. This was substantiated by other research which indicated that at one level responses included disappointment, frustration and distress (e.g., Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Pate and Malone, 2000). More extreme emotional responses were also recorded such as anger, resentment, bitterness, and indignation (e.g., Rousseau, 1989; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Pate and Malone, 2000; Sutton and Griffin, 2004; Lemire and Rouillard, 2005). For example, Pate and Malone (2000) undertook a quantitative study that involved semi-structured interviews with twenty employees who, five years prior to the research, had been made redundant by an organisation. They found both attitudinal and emotional responses. The emotional responses indicated that violation as opposed to breach had occurred and were expressed typically as: anger, a feeling of betrayal, revenge against the company and any individual involved in the violation, and hatred. Pate and Malone (2000) suggested that the strength of emotional response was a consequence of employee perception that the organisation could have honoured the psychological contract but chose not to do so. The attitudinal outcomes tended to be directed towards other constituents: employers in general, their current employer and other company agents including work colleagues, typically represented by an inability to trust, reduced loyalty and a negative perception of others. The data also revealed that those reporting negative current employment relationships demonstrated greater levels of resentment towards the previous employer than those reporting favourable current employment situations. This had not resulted in negative attitudes towards employers in general, however the emphasis in respect of their current employment relationships was focussed on the transactional rather than relational aspects.

Other research has shown that violation has also been associated with behavioural outcomes such as lowered organisational citizenship, reduced commitment, satisfaction and trust while cynicism increases (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Robinson, 1996; Herriot and Pemberton, 1997b; Sturges and Guest, 2004; Othman et al., 2005). As a result when an individual's psychological contract was violated the employment relationship had subsequently been more calculated and transactional, but how far it moved along the continuum was related to the strength of the perceived violation (McLean Parks and Kidder, 1994; Pate and Malone, 2000). Responses to violations, particularly in relational contracts, were often found to be severe and that once violated,

relational contracts tended to become transactional and self-interested (Rousseau and McLean Parks, 1993). However, Pate et al. (2003) examined an industrial textiles company, using both quantitative and qualitative data, and found that violation impinged on employee attitudes but not on behaviour. The qualitative data explained this finding in terms of two contextual issues. The first of these was labour market conditions and a perception of job insecurity, and the second was a sense of collegiality and pride in the job.

The evidence suggested that behavioural reaction to breach or violation can be either a function of many interacting variables or a reaction to one issue that had a particularly strong weighting ascribed to it by an employee. It was also apparent that different aspects of the contract be it transactional, relational, or ideological had a degree of importance attached to it by each employee based on the significance of the element at any given point in his or her career. Thus, response will depend on the precise nature of the psychological contract of the individual. Employees that have experienced a perceived breach or violation react according to the perceived magnitude of the event as construed within the psychological contract. This could result in exit from the organisation or alternatively it could be categorised as trivial and ignored by the employee. Reaction could be a short-term phenomenon but there was also evidence to suggest that altered work behaviour may endure for a prolonged period. Thus, the evidence suggested that behavioural reaction to breach and/or violation was situation specific and individualistic, although types of response in terms of attitude, emotion or behaviour were largely similar.

5.9 Conclusion

The definition associated with the psychological contract construct has remained relatively unaltered since Rousseau put forward her conceptualisation almost two decades ago. The psychological contract research community have largely accepted her definition and activity has subsequently focussed on other factors concerning the employment relationship and the psychological contract. The research has found an increase in the complexity associated with the construct. A number of new facets have been explored and some of the established frameworks have also been challenged.

Research over the last thirty years has predominantly concentrated on the behavioural reaction associated with either the breach or violation of established psychological contracts. There was

evidence to indicate that a considerable volume of research continued to examine this issue. However, the construction of the contract had been the subject of research activity since Rousseau (2001) first brought this to the forefront of attention as a topic that required some consideration. Prior to her call for attention to be paid to the formation of psychological contracts, there had been an acceptance that a psychological contract was in place for each employee.

The evidence in relation to psychological contract construction has examined the cognitive schema of individuals about to enter an organisation and how meanings and understandings were formed from limited information. The period after entry has been analysed in terms of sensemaking whereby the socialisation phase provided the opportunity for the new employee to alter what he or she was prepared to exchange. The evidence would seem to suggest that after socialisation the employee was particularly motivated to change his or her understanding of the contract. A change by the employee invariably involved giving less than what he or she had originally promised. The conclusion by the employee that he or she had over promised was justified on the basis that expectations created by the agents of the organisation were unrealistically high. The ability to renege on agreed work would seem to be linked to the notion of the idiosyncratic deal whereby an employee negotiated a better overall reward package than his or her work colleagues. However, during the socialisation process the psychological contract would appear to be altered unilaterally by the employee without consultation or renegotiation with the organisation.

The unilateral disregard of an agreed promise would appear to lend weight to the notion of the new psychological contract with the individual focussed on his or her own career rather than organisational needs or wants. Although empirical research in respect of the concept of the new psychological contract was inconclusive, the evidence that related to both sensemaking and the idiosyncratic deal suggested that achievement of personal wants and desires was an important facet of employment. There was also evidence which suggested that throughout the life-cycle of the contract the individual employee continually interpreted relevant events and considered how these could impact on his or her psychological contract. Whether the depth or frequency of analysis of these events by each employee had increased as a consequence of changes in the economic context was unclear. However, the evidence did suggest that employees were concerned with engineering a situation such that maximum reward from the organisation was achieved. It could be argued that the nature of employment has

always created a situation whereby the employee attempts to get the best deal that can be negotiated. However, it may be that the notion of individual reward maximisation has increased as a consequence of increased competitiveness and cost reduction. Indeed, there would seem to be evidence that psychological contracts have become less focussed on the organisation and increasingly self-oriented.

The concept of the new psychological contract being more self-focussed was perhaps at odds with some of the research in respect of the ideologically-infused contract. This suggested that some employees were concerned with a cause and where this was evident it was perceived by the employee as a key constituent within the work environment. This does not however suggest maximisation of individual reward but pursuance of a particular belief. The psychological contract with ideology as a major constituent part also had a consequential impact in respect of the scope for breach and violation. There was evidence presented which suggested that breach and violation could occur in an ideology-infused contract even though the offending decision would not appear to directly impact upon the individual. Research suggested that many decisions perceived as perhaps irrelevant to some employees did have the potential to impact on a much wider array of individuals. This was equally as likely to occur in the construction stage of the psychological contract, the socialisation process, and for the individual that had been with an organisation for a prolonged period.

The notion of the self-fulfilling, internally-focussed psychological contract with an individual largely unconcerned with the organisation (with the exception of the ideology infused contract) was also relevant to the research into fairness and justice. The evidence in respect of fairness and justice indicated that these two elements played a significant role in impacting upon psychological contracts. However, significance was not reported in all studies, but within the context of an increasingly competitive operating environment for both the public and private sector and the consequent scarcity of resources for rewarding employees, it is increasingly likely that employees will analyse the extent to which they perceive treatment received as fair. The analysis of fairness and justice would appear to be an ongoing process that occurred from the time the individual considered joining an organisation. Thus, the research into fairness and justice would also lend weight to the concept of the constantly evolving, dynamic nature of the psychological contract in the workplace.

The research into psychological contracts has continued to unpack the complexities of the employment relationship. This has resulted in the examination of areas that were previously unexplored as well as increasing the depth of knowledge and understanding in facets of the field that have been examined extensively over the past forty years.

Chapter Six

Research Method

Chapter Six

Research Method

6.0 Introduction

The overarching aim of the thesis was to examine the psychological contracts of Business School lecturers. The intention was to focus on the individual actor, to facilitate a greater understanding of their interpretation of the features that resulted in the formulation of psychological contracts, the issues that subsequently impacted upon them, and the reaction of individuals to such events. This Chapter describes and explains the method used to answer the research questions and the rationalisations that shaped the research design. A number of methodological limitations were also subsequently identified when reflecting on the thesis and these are highlighted in the Chapter and discussed further in Chapter Eleven.

6.1 Research Questions

This study focussed on the individual actor and attempted to explicate and unpack individual interpretations of factors that were relevant to the psychological contract. Four research questions were constructed: -

- 1 How were the initial psychological contracts of Business School lecturers formed?
- 2 To what extent was the initial psychological contract an appropriate and relevant construct?
- 3 What were the factors that impacted upon the psychological contract of participants in this context?
- 4 How did participants respond to perceived breaches and violations in their psychological contracts?

6.1.1 Research Question One

The first question attempted to determine how the initial psychological contract was formed within the context under analysis. The aim was to encourage the academic to explore the reasons for entering the Business School environment and the perceptions and expectations held on making this decision (Rousseau, 1989, 1995; Shore and Tetrick, 1994). The intention was to examine the schema of the participants and the sensemaking process that was undertaken in the formulation of psychological contracts. The research to date in the field of psychological contracts had not focussed on the

formation of the Business School psychological contract or the sensemaking process involved in a change of profession. Some empirical work has been undertaken in respect of the impact of socialisation on the psychological contract (e.g. De Vos et al., 2003) and Rousseau (2001) also highlighted the importance of examining how contracts were formed. Hallier and Forbes (2004) examined professionals changing roles and the consequent impact on the psychological contract but this was within an occupation. They stated,

‘When considering the potential usefulness of sensemaking and the psychological contract, the conventional starting point might be to focus on how individuals prepare and encounter new work roles.’

(Hallier and Forbes, 2004, p1385)

Change of profession had not been explored and the question examined the influential factors prior to entry and how these were made sense of in the construction of a psychological contract.

6.1.2 Research Question Two

The purpose of this question was to explore the extent to which the initial psychological contract was a valid and relevant construct once the participant had experienced the Business School. The intention was to examine the appropriateness of the initial contract and the extent to which it was an enduring construct once the participant had increased knowledge of the work environment.

6.1.3 Research Question Three

The intention in respect of research question three was to consider the issues that arose for the individual in the workplace. The aim was to explore how the individual perceived issues in the Business School environment that they considered had some degree of impact for them in the workplace. The intention was to try and better understand how issues were evaluated and made sense of by the individual in respect of the psychological contract. This question focussed on the lived experience of work within a Business School setting and subsequent issues that impacted upon psychological contracts. The aim was to unpack how participants rationalised and explained the relevance of issues that they encountered. What was not evident in the research to date was why some issues were evaluated as serious by some and relatively minor by others. This part of the research attempted to explore why certain issues were seen as major factors (a violation) that had a significant impact on how the individual perceived the work environment and for others the same issue was perhaps interpreted as relatively minor and largely of no consequence (a breach, or perhaps irrelevant).

6.1.4 Research Question Four

The fourth question related to the behaviour of the participants as a consequence of issues that were identified. Existing literature indicated that once psychological contracts were violated they became increasingly transactional and self-interested in nature (Rousseau and Wade-Benzioni, 1994; Herriot and Pemberton, 1997a, 1997b). The assumption was that if violation had occurred individuals would concentrate activity in areas that generated personally valued reward and return (McMurty, 1991; Boccock, 1994; Boccock and Watson, 1994; Jary and Parker, 1995). The question also facilitated an examination of the extent to which the individual was able to influence or change his or her work environment. The increase in bureaucracy towards a more mechanistic university structure would suggest that the individual had less scope and freedom to respond to change (Smart et al., 1997; Dearlove, 1998; Salauroo and Burnes, 1998). The question allowed for an analysis of the impact of any change in organisational structure on the psychological contract of participants. The next section will consider the methodological approach that was used to gather data to answer these questions.

6.2 Methodological Approach

The approach employed in this study utilised elements of ethnography and life history within a case-study model. The reasons and rationalisations for deciding upon such an approach will now be outlined and explained.

The study was based on a case-study of a post-92 Business School. Hartley (2000) identified that a case study was not a method but a research strategy and within this broad approach a number of methods may be used. Stake (1995) also argued that a case-study was not a methodological choice in itself but defined the boundaries and focus of the research and that the principal aim of a single-case study was to understand the dynamics present within a specific setting. Similarly, Barley (1990) identified that the case study can explore behaviour which is informal, unusual, secret, or illicit, and can be used to understand everyday practices and their meanings to those involved which would not be revealed in brief contact. The case study is particularly suited to research questions that require detailed understanding of social or organisational processes because the data is collected in a particular context (Hartley, 2000).

A further rationale for collecting and analysing data from one Business School was the evidence that suggested that there was a growing interest in understanding context as an explanatory factor in organisational behaviour. For example, Rousseau and Fried (2001) were of the view that contextualisation was more important in contemporary organisational behaviour research than had been previously thought because of the rapidly diverging nature of work which can substantially alter the underlying causal dynamics of worker-organisational settings. Similarly, Shore et al. (2004) argued that it was increasingly important to acknowledge the effect of context within research that examined the relationship between the employee and the organisation, and that context was not homogenous but rather it could differ substantially from one individual to another, even for those performing the same work for the same organisation. They stated,

‘We argue that context is complex; it is multifaceted and multidimensional. There is no such thing as ‘one context’ for an individual. For example, an individual in a traditional job might be embedded in nested contexts involving the job, work group, department, division, organisation, occupation, labour market, family, and national culture. Within the organisation, social, physical, and structural aspects of context might also influence the relationship...Thus there is no one context and it is important for researchers to recognise the simultaneous influence of multiple internal and external contexts.’

(Shore et al., 2004, p325)

Thus, the importance of examining individual perspectives within a defined context determined that data should be ascertained using an approach which allowed for detailed descriptions to be collected.

Many previous studies in the psychological contract field have focussed on breach and violation using attitudinal-rating scales to explore the nature and content of the psychological contract in respect of breach and violation. These studies essentially involved the researcher selecting transactional and relational aspects and then measuring employee perceptions of their employer’s obligations towards them. However, as Herriot and Pemberton (1997b) pointed out the psychological contract is specific to individuals and to understand fully required a more expansive and interpretive approach to the investigation. The methods used must therefore permit access to people’s social meanings and activities and involve close association and familiarity with the social setting. This suggested that elements of an ethnographic approach would be appropriate. Ethnography is a style of research rather than a single-method and uses a variety of techniques to collect data. This style of research can be defined as,

‘The study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods which capture their social meaning and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally.’

(Brewer, 2000, p10)

A further definition was provided by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) who characterised ethnography in the following way,

‘...the search for universal laws is rejected in favour of detailed descriptions of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture of the social rules or patterns that constitute it.’

(Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p8)

Ethnography’s range of techniques includes in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, personal documents, and vignettes, alongside participant observation. These methods are also used in non-ethnographic research and what distinguishes their application in ethnography is that they are employed to meet the objectives that distinguish it as a style of research, namely the explanation of social meanings of the people in the setting by close involvement in the field. Lofland (1971) summarised the objective of such an approach,

‘...to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. Its object is to find out what kinds of things that are happening rather than to determine the frequency of predetermined kinds of things that the researcher already believes can happen.’

(Lofland, 1971, p76)

In a similar vein to the view put forward by Lofland (1971), Scott and Usher (1996) argued that the only real purchase we can have on knowledge was through the perspectives and viewpoints of those actors that were central to the setting being studied. Thus, to generate the data described by Lofland (1971) for this study, in-depth interviews were undertaken with participants from the Business School.

The research questions related to the behaviour of participants as well as their current and historical perceptions. It was deemed fundamental that participants were allowed to speak for themselves and consequently the study incorporated life history technique into its approach as this allowed participants to describe and account for their actions in the social world over time. The subjective interpretation of the situation in which people find themselves, past or present, is its cornerstone (Jones, 1983; Plummer, 1996; Cohen and Musson, 2000). As such, life history prioritises individual explanations and

interpretations of actions and events, viewing them as lenses through which to access the meaning that people attribute to their experience as Musson (2004) stated,

‘The life history method does recognise the collusion of the researcher in the research process. Allowing people to explain for themselves the experiences of contradictions and confusions, moments of indecision and turning points can illuminate our understanding of how individuals and organisations function more than methods which reduce experience to abstracted definition and moribund descriptions.’

(Musson, 2004, p34)

This method allowed participants to talk about their life histories in order to unearth their understandings and charged the researcher with listening to their stories. Plummer (1983) identified that people did not tend to describe their experiences or their sensemaking processes in terms of succinct, abstract generalisables and that people constructed narrative accounts as part of the sensemaking process. This was evident in the data collection for this study as participants described issues and situations that were ascribed importance and relevance by them. In essence, the unique, self-defined decisive career moments of each participant.

The use of life history approach whereby the researcher is asking participants to use his or her memory to answer questions must be defended in terms of both validity and credibility. Thompson (2004) stated that the general perception in relation to retrospective interviewing, and the nature of memory, has changed considerably,

‘The curious thing is, looking back at it, there was very little in social science literature about retrospective interviewing. It wasn’t an issue that had been thought about very much, although nearly all social science, to some extent, involves memory, and some of it is entirely based on long-term memory.’

(Thompson, 2004, p81)

Thompson (2004) also noted that the search for the individual understanding of certain situations was the most compelling feature of retrospective interviewing. He concluded that the majority of research interviews were designed such that the interviewee was asked about historical events or activities, and it was how individuals remembered what had occurred that was of interest.

Thompson (2004) identified that in the early seventies the acceptability of retrospective interviewing as a valid research approach focussed on the reliability of remembered evidence. Musson (2004) suggested that the concern emanated from a positivist perspective in trying to discover whether or not

people were telling the truth. It was not until later in that decade that the argument changed to focus not only on what people had said and whether it was true, but how they remembered it, which resulted in a greater understanding and acceptance of life stories. Thus, life stories were perceived as having a different kind of credibility. As Thompson noted,

‘I think the change in attitude towards life stories was a really important insight and has tremendously influenced subsequent work.’

(Thompson, 2004, p82)

The life-history approach in this study made use of autobiographical accounts using in-depth interviews. It allowed participants the opportunity to describe their careers in order to consider the interplay between life and career activities. The interviewees were able to elucidate on the relative importance of features such as satisfaction in the job, coping with conflicts, and relationships with co-workers and significant others. The advantage of this approach was that the data had the ability to illuminate career reality because it emphasised the interpretations of everyday experiences as explanation of behaviours.

The approach in this study generated data at a particular point in time and asked for participants to examine and explain in detail why they made certain decisions and selected particular courses of action. However, inherent within this method was the assumption that perceptions and viewpoints changed over time. Thus, it was assumed that interpretations and statements made at the time of the interview were not necessarily permanent. Consequently, there was a possibility that participants might describe behaviour over time that was contradictory and decisions that were subsequently reversed. When such activities were evident, these were explored with participants as to the reasons and rationales for change.

Therefore, in summary, the approach used in this study utilised elements of ethnography and life history within a case-study model. In essence, the case-study allowed for boundaries for the research to be set. The requirement for the in-depth description of social meaning within a historical analysis of the experiences of participants resulted in an approach being constructed that the author believed at the time would allow for the research questions to be comprehensively explored. However, it became evident in hindsight that this was not the case and upon reflection a number of decisions taken in relation to the methodological approach were deemed to be inappropriate.

The methodological limitations of the study have been identified in this Chapter and are also considered in Chapter Eleven. With hindsight, it was apparent that if a number of other data sources had been utilised and additional ethnographic techniques employed, the supplementary data collected would have allowed for greater elucidation of the research questions.

This section has outlined the general method and approach that was used and why this was selected. The next section will describe in detail how the data was collected.

6.3 Data Collection

The data was ascertained through in depth interviews which were constructed using a framework that was designed to facilitate sufficient flexibility to allow for the exploration of issues that were deemed relevant by each academic. An overview of the Business School is given below followed by a description of the processes and procedures involved in data collection.

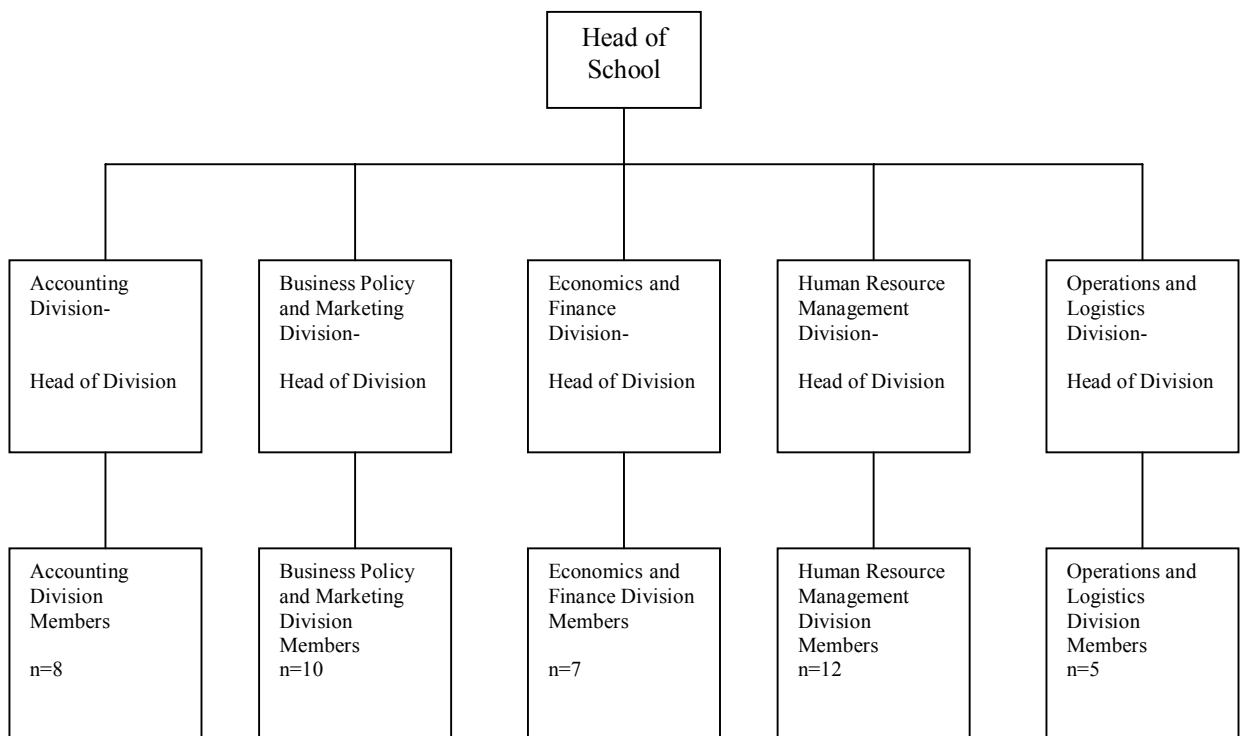
6.3.1 The Business School

The research was based in a Business School located in what Thorne and Cuthbert (1996) would describe, based on their analysis of the UK University sector, as belonging to a group they termed as 'Market Bureaucracy' institutions, which were post-1992 universities with a mainly teaching orientation. It was accepted by Thorne and Cuthbert (1996) that within institutions, specific Departments/Schools could fall into different segments of the typology they had constructed. The Business School analysed in this study had ambitions to move into the group termed the 'Managerial Market' institutions; former polytechnics with a research agenda in addition to being teaching institutions.

The Business School had stated objectives that related to improved quality of undergraduate students, increased numbers of postgraduate students, an extended portfolio of corporate clients, and a general statement relating to the improvement of quality of research output. The objectives had no formal hierarchical ordering but were attempting to satisfy a plethora of stakeholders and to achieve targets in a number of different areas. The assumption being that the School was responding to the needs of business, students, and the academic community.

The Business School had five Academic Departments (Accounting; Economics and Finance; Human Resource Management; Operations and Logistics; Marketing and Strategy). The reporting structure involved each Division Head having responsibility for activity which included the allocation of workloads, creation and implementation of a teaching and learning strategy, research direction, target setting, leadership, and annual staff appraisals. This was overseen by the Head of School who provided overall strategic direction. The positions of Head of Division and Head of School were permanent. Individual members of staff fulfilled a multiplicity of administrative roles as well as a myriad of teaching responsibilities which usually involved delivery at both postgraduate and undergraduate level.

Figure 6.1 Business School Divisional Structure



The next eight sections will describe how the research was undertaken in respect of the role of the researcher in the study, the negotiation with management to undertake the study, the pilot study, data recording, an analysis and reflection in respect of data recording, the processes involved in securing agreement to participate, interview arrangements, and the selection of participants.

6.3.2 Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher requires to be considered in all research. In this case the researcher was a lecturer in the Business School based in the Economics and Finance Department with no line

management or strategic decision-making responsibility, in essence an academic member of staff at the bottom of the pile. It has been suggested that the closer the researcher worked to the group the greater the likelihood of adequacy, defined as the ability to generate competent data (Bruyn, 1966). The researcher can observe the members and query them in respect of answers they presented if there appeared to be some discrepancy between what was reported and what had occurred. In addition, the familiarity the researcher had with words and phrases that were specific to the context under examination reduced the possibility of misunderstanding of meaning. Knowledge of context specific phraseology helped avoid the misconstruing of issues and points with time not spent asking for clarification of jargon and allowed for interjections to be substantive rather than trivial.

Costley and Gibbs (2006) provided an appropriate description of the type of research that was undertaken for this thesis. They stated,

‘Research involving friends, work colleagues and other professionals raises issues of ethics in different ways from those where the relationship of the researcher to the researched is more transitory, informal and definable. The latter allows researchers to distance themselves from the research setting and detach themselves emotionally from the research context. Work-based researchers are unable to do that.’

(Costley and Gibbs, 2006, p89)

Costley and Gibbs (2006) considered how the researcher should behave given the relationship described in the above quotation. They acknowledged that their concern was the ethics of using others in ways that might serve investigative purposes but result in some harm to the participants in any study. They considered the notion of caring for colleagues rather than the weaker and more accepted notion of not harming them. The concern for the well-being of participants was articulated by Aristotle (1985) who called for the virtuous person to behave as a virtuous person would behave, not in an instrumental way to achieve a specific goal.

Crucial to the acknowledgement of context and the role of the researcher in the whole research process was the recognition of the researcher’s own position. The importance of being reflexive when writing up the results was important in this process. Reflexivity involves both an openness and honesty about the researchers’ own position and given the close proximity between the researcher and respondents it was clear that the personal attributes of the researcher and how they were perceived were going to have some bearing on the data collection process. As Brewer (2004) highlighted,

‘In as much as ethnographic descriptions are partial and selective they are tied to the particular researcher and the contingencies under which the data were collected. The traditional criteria for evaluating ethnography become problematic, as terms like ‘validity’, ‘reliability’, and ‘generalisability’ lose their authority to legitimate the data. Thus the need for reflexivity, that is to reflect on the contingencies that bore upon and helped to ‘create’ the data as a partial account. Thick descriptions do not represent ‘reality as it is’ because such descriptions are selected from the various competing versions of reality that could have been produced and end up presenting a partial picture: if ethnographers see themselves as cameras ‘telling it like it is’, the picture is blurred because there is more than one image on the lens.’

(Brewer, 2004, p316)

Brewer (2004) identified that data emerges as a direct consequence of the method used and consequently it is structured by the social activity which constitutes the method employed. Brewer (2004) stated that this was especially relevant within an interview setting whereby the researcher structures the interviews and imposes an agenda on them. In addition, the interviewer and interviewee do not operate on a level plain, as Ball (1984) stated,

‘The interviewee is asked to elaborate, illustrate, reiterate, define, summarise, exemplify and confirm matters in his talk in ways that would be unacceptable in other talk situations. The interviewer controls the specification of topics and maintains a verbal monitoring of the speech situation...The rules of conversational discourse are flagrantly disregarded in the name of social science...The interviewer comes to ‘know’ his subjects without ever necessarily having to engage in a reciprocal process of personal ‘social striptease’.

(Ball, 1984, p86)

Within this study, it was perceived that the data required to be sufficiently detailed to facilitate elucidation of the research questions. In order to achieve the appropriate depth of description the researcher believed that it was essential that suitable levels of trust needed to exist between the interviewer and the interviewees. Thus, the building and sustaining of trust with the participants in order to generate detailed and intimate data in respect of the psychological contract of those who participated was required. Brewer (1994) identified that as a relationship is built up and trust developed, researchers are viewed differently by the participants and this bond of trust is premised on the same qualities people bring to all relationships – honesty, friendliness, reciprocity, openness, communication and confidence building (Brewer, 1994). Brewer (1994) further highlighted that trust normally builds slowly and getting people to converse when trust had not been established was difficult. Brewer (2004) identified that the development of trust was a problem that could be compounded when people within an organisation were suspicious of the management’s motives in permitting access. It was perceived that as the researcher was one of the staff this would probably

result in questions relating to trust and power. For example - why trust an individual who had been given approval to undertake research on fellow colleagues by the Head of School? When planning the research approach it was assumed that trust with colleagues had been built up over a period of time as a consequence of the researcher being open and friendly with the academic staff. In discussions about why individuals had agreed to participate in the study, friendliness and trust in the researcher were identified features. These statements by participants required examination to ascertain the extent to which these claims were genuine. However, such an analysis was not undertaken at the time and the rationalisations presented in respect of agreeing to take part were accepted without further investigation. Subsequently a retrospective examination of statements made by participants in relation to the reasons for agreeing to take part resulted in a number of questions being highlighted in respect of the veracity of the rationales provided, which are considered later in this Chapter as well as in Chapter Eleven.

The notion of hierarchy within the interviews was also considered in that there might have been a different relationship between lecturers (people at the same grade as the researcher), and senior lecturers. However, on reflection the influence of hierarchy was not evident and did not appear to impact upon the length or the in-depth nature of the interviews. Gender and age were also considered. A consideration before the interviews related to possible gender differences. Would women participants feel comfortable with a male researcher? Awareness of the possibility meant that an enhanced sensitivity to potential difficulties such as possible claims that a male researcher would not be able to understand female rationalisations to the same extent as that of male participants. However, with hindsight both male and female interviews were perceived to be equivalent based on discussions with participants after the interviews. It was perceived that the descriptions from both male and female participants were comparable in terms of the quantity and quality of data. The interviews were not shaped to incorporate feminist issues, and no assumptions made that women were any different from men in respect of their psychological contracts. In respect of age, the same conclusion can be drawn in that no differences could be reported in terms of the quality and quantity of the data collected as a consequence of age.

The next section will consider the negotiation that was undertaken with the management of the Business School in order that the study was permitted to take place.

6.3.3 The Negotiation with Management to Undertake the Study

When the study was proposed and the fieldwork undertaken neither the University of Stirling, where the Doctor of Education was being undertaken, nor the university where the Business School was located had formal ethical guidelines or an ethics committee. Agreement for the research and the approach that was to be used was given by the University of Stirling based on the document that was produced for the fourth assessment as part of the taught element of the Doctor of Education programme. A copy of the fourth assessment is included as Appendix One. This paper described the research method that was to be undertaken and was approved by the Course Management Team for the Doctor of Education programme at the University of Stirling.

The fourth assessment paper was passed to both the Head of the Business School and his/her line manager, the Dean of Faculty. Both agreed that such research was appropriate and could be conducted within the Business School. Written agreement was received from the Head of School to pursue the research. The Head of School requested clarification on some minor points which was provided. Discussion took place in terms of how a better understanding of the psychological contract of academic staff would be an interesting and potentially useful research study. Also discussed was the potential for participants to criticise management, as this had been the outcome of numerous psychological contract studies. The Head of School was advised that allowing research on psychological contract to take place in the Business School would probably result in him/her being criticised.

The Head of School perhaps displaying significant foresight agreed that the results were of greater significance than any personal criticism and a deflated ego. However, on reflection there was probably a degree of naivety from the Head of School in his/her agreement to sanction the research. The Head of School was largely unaware of psychological contract research and the criticism of management contained therein. The author offered to provide relevant journal articles and although the suggestion was refused an appropriate example was provided to the Head of School, namely Robinson and Rousseau (1994). He/she later confirmed that he/she had read the abstract and conclusion and found no reason to alter the decision to allow the research. It was assumed by the author that as the Business School was perceived by the management as being a successful entity in terms of student numbers and financial stability the findings of the study would present the leadership in a positive light.

It was agreed that the findings would be discussed from a general perspective with the Head of School after the interviews were completed. The Head of School was not allowed access to field notes but was given draft copies of the analysis Chapters to allow him/her an overview of the preliminary results. The reason for giving him/her the aforementioned work was the notion of transparency, to allow stakeholders access to the work whenever possible. The problem associated with revealing draft work was that interpretations of the data, inferences, and conclusions were subsequently altered and modified as the work progressed. However, it was decided at the time to allow access rather than cast a veil of secrecy over the findings.

Revealing partially completed work was perceived as being a relatively high risk strategy but the researcher wanted the Head of School to be aware of what was happening, what was being said, and some of the tentative conclusions that were being teased from the data. The intention was to keep the Head of School as fully informed as possible so that he/she did not withdraw support as the research neared its conclusion. It was perceived that the Head of School had placed trust in the author to undertake the research and present the findings in a manner that reflected what had been described. The appropriateness of allowing the Head of School access to the draft analysis is examined in Chapter Eleven.

The reliance on one individual was a stressful and worrisome experience. For example, what would have happened if the Head of School were to leave and be replaced by someone not supportive of the research? However, most research ultimately hinges on the decision of one individual who is charged with the authority to give or withdraw support. The Head of School never intimated that he/she had any intention of removing support and remained supportive of the research despite the criticism within the interviews. The Head of School explained that continued support was a matter of integrity in that a promise and commitment had been made and would be adhered to irrespective of any personal feelings of discomfort caused by comments. Thus, it was perceived that the Head of School wanted to enhance the development of the work environment through the unpacking of psychological contracts.

In order to test the proposed research approach a pilot study was undertaken. The next section will consider the data collected in the pilot interviews and the revisions that were made as a result of the experience and knowledge gained from this exercise.

6.3.4 Pilot Data Collection

The interview template was tested with four pilot interviews. The individuals selected for this were based at a different School in the same University as the Business School. Agreement was given by the respective Head of School where the pilot participants were situated to undertake the research and a copy of the fourth assessment paper was provided by way of explanation about the research. The individuals were chosen randomly. The possibility of interviewing Business School academics from another University was considered. However, it was decided that individuals within the same University as the Business School would be more appropriate as they would have been subjected to the same University ethos, culture, and leadership style as the Business School staff.

A template was constructed which was organised into sections that matched the research questions. This is included as Appendix Two. The first two pilot interviews highlighted that the template was overly detailed and prescriptive, which resulted in the creation of a highly structured environment that did not allow for interviewees to stray from the course the template was setting for them. A revised template was constructed and is contained in Appendix Three. This template was used for the two further pilot interviews and subsequently for data collection for the study. The main difference was the reduction in the number of pre-prepared questions, which had the impact of significantly reducing the formal structure that directed the interviews. The first template provided a route map that was followed in a regimented, orderly fashion with the interview following a path that had been set by the interviewer. However, with the revised template as the interviews unfolded they took their own direction with issues of importance being identified by participants.

The interview questions were designed to avoid focussing on specific issues identified in the literature. For example, at the start of the research it had been assumed that 'new managerialism' and education policy would be identified by participants as influences on their psychological contracts. The supposition being that higher education operating with a different ideology would impact on the lives of all higher education employees. Consequently, a conscious effort was made to set these views aside by not asking questions that related to such issues. Interestingly, such a linkage was not highlighted in the interviews. However, as the lived experience was unpacked connections and associations were revealed that highlighted the complexity of multiple interrelated contexts.

A particular issue that was highlighted within the pilot study related to the recording of the data which is examined and discussed in the next section.

6.3.5 Data Recording

The researcher had assumed that in conducting non-standardised interviews tape recording would be the preferred method of data recording with all interviews subsequently being transcribed. However, participants were reluctant to have interviews recorded and indicated reticence in respect of participation in discussions of this nature if responses were to be taped. This issue was raised in the first two pilot interviews. As a consequence of this, the possibility of taping was discussed with the other two individuals selected for the pilot. In addition, six of the academic staff from the Business School who had been chosen to take part in the research were randomly selected and then consulted in relation to data recording. A number of questions were asked by academics, of which the following were a representation: –

'Will this be used as a management decision-making tool?'

'Why have I been selected?'

'Was my Head of Division or the Head of School involved in picking who would be involved in this research?'

'Is there any chance that something I might say could turn up somewhere else?'

Unpacking this it was found that permission from each of the two respective Heads of School (the Business School and the pilot School) engineered a response similar to that described by Brewer (1994) in his study of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) whereby suspicions in respect of the motives of management in relation to the research were voiced. In many ways this study and that of Brewer differed but there were similarities in that both were attempting to uncover in-depth information about public sector employees. The response of the Business School academic staff would appear to be similar in terms of management suspicion which was demonstrated in phraseology such as: -

'I don't trust them',

'You never quite know what they are up to', and

'I've been caught by them before'.

'They [the tapes] could fall into the wrong hands.'

Individuals stated that they were willing to talk at length and in depth but only if there were no taped records. The academic staff involved at this stage indicated that they would be more open and honest if the interviews were recorded in another way. Brewer (1994) in his study reported that recording data

needed to be handled sensitively and identified the taking of notes to be an appropriate method whereby the maintaining of trust with participants was of paramount importance in the collection of meaningful data. Brewer (1994) identified that the development of a consensual relationship with participants was deemed to be of particular relevance in accessing the views and beliefs of police officers, as they were not in any way compelled to provide data. Similarly, it appeared that Business School staff were not comfortable committing often strongly held views to tape. Thus, based on the evidence gathered at the pilot phase it was decided not to use tapes but to take notes of the interviews.

The interviews lasted approximately three hours as notes were taken and then read back to each interviewee to ensure that the understanding taken from the statements and description of events was that of the participant. This was deemed necessary so that each participant had the opportunity for correction or further elaboration in order to maximise the credibility and validity to the data. The accounts were agreed by participants post-interview. Single quotation marks (‘) were used in the analysis chapters to indicate that what was displayed was not a verbatim quotation but a précis of what was said.

The next section provides an analysis in relation to the decision to take notes rather than to tape the interviews.

6.3.6 Analysis and Reflection in Respect of Data Recording

In considering the most appropriate approach to data recording it was perceived that intimacy with participants was required in order that the researcher could identify how each had experienced the Business School context. It was perceived that such intimacy would facilitate accurate interpretations of setting-specific meanings (Bruyn, 1966; Brewer, 1994). Consequently, it was rationalised that the upside of note taking was that it had the potential to put participants at ease which could result in openness and frankness that may not have been otherwise achievable.

In hindsight the researcher perceived that intimacy with participants had resulted in the creation of detailed, experiential accounts. However, it was evident that intimacy was not constant and varied for each participant. Nevertheless, in all the interviews the level of intimacy appeared to increase as the psychological contract was gradually unpacked and explored.

After the interviews were completed the aspect of taping was gain considered and with hindsight it was perceived that the reluctance to agree to tape recording may have been because of reasons other than those specified at the time. For example, participants may have wished to use the research to communicate a negative message to management. However, to have such a comment on tape would have been a conclusive and definitive piece of evidence should the tapes ever be accessed by a third party. Conversely, if a perception or attitude changed, an individual could reject or refute notes as being inaccurate or perhaps not reflecting what they had said or meant.

Another similar reason may have been that participants sought to create a situation whereby they were able to take advantage of the research environment to pursue their own agenda by transmitting views to the Head of School which could not be attributed to a specific individual. Thus, it may have been that for some prospective interviewees they were ensuring that there was little possibility of negative consequences ensuing from participation in the study.

Examining the decision not to tape from a retrospective perspective it would have been beneficial in terms of the reliability and validity of the data to have further explored the rationalisations put forward in respect of the reluctance identified by participants to be taped. At the time, the author believed that the reasons put forward were genuine and straightforward, but with hindsight this may not have been the case. The matter could have been pursued further if additional data had been gathered as opposed to accepting the prima facie case put forward by academic staff. The issue of data recording is further explored in Chapter Eleven.

The next step in the process was approaching staff and getting their agreement to participate in the study. This is described and evaluated in the next section.

6.3.7 Agreement to Participate

All of the Business School academic staff were informed in writing by the Head of School of the research that was to be conducted. It was stated that it was up to each individual whether or not they wanted to participate in the study. The Head of School outlined to all potential informants the objectives of the investigation and identified that a document (the fourth assessment paper) which outlined the scope and nature of the research was available should staff wish to access more detailed

information. Within this document the nature of the research was identified, the research questions, the methodological approach that was to be used, and the planned output. The ethical considerations were also outlined. A modified version of the fourth assessment document (Appendix Four) was posted on the Business School intranet which allowed all members of staff access at their own discretion. This document explained to all potential participants why the research was being undertaken and what the involvement would be if they were selected. In addition when each person was approached about taking part they were provided with a copy of Appendix Four.

It was evident that when the request was made to take part in the study, knowledge of the researcher undertaking the Doctor of Education was widespread in the Business School. For example, when a member of staff was approached and it was explained that the research was part of a Doctor of Education programme, individuals would be aware that the degree was being undertaken at the University of Stirling. However, participants had questions. Was the research only for the purposes of the doctorate? Had there been a need to sell the work to management to get agreement to undertake the research? The notion of selling research to decision-makers was described by Johnson et al. (1999),

‘The need to gain and maintain access to the research setting can pressurise the researcher into presenting themselves as “helpful” to key stakeholders and impel them into a consultancy role. This process often begins at an early stage in the research due to the need to acquire collaborating organisations or research sites...the emphasis is upon presenting research as attractive and useful to (managerial) gatekeeper audiences. The result is that the research agenda can be influenced from its initiation as it is often implicitly advertised as involving cost-free consultancy elements...and develop projects that researchers know they can “sell”.’

(Johnson et al., 1999, p1241-1242)

When academic staff were approached the scope of involvement was outlined. This identified the type of questions that would be asked and the method of data recording. It was made clear to all Business School staff that they could withdraw from the research at any time and that all data provided by them would subsequently be removed from the thesis. It was identified to participants that they would be given access to all the notes that were taken in relation to them. They were given guidance that if they disagreed with any point this would be removed or amended. Also, if a participant perceived that he or she could be identified from a piece of text then this would be changed or deleted if he/she was uncomfortable or unhappy with the passage.

All participants selected agreed to take part. Analysing why there were no rejections it was perceived at the time that the academic staff had a desire to talk and discuss work as this opportunity had not been provided either formally or informally in a format that was considered meaningful to them. In addition, the researcher believed that as the method of data recording was not threatening, staff were comfortable with the parameters of the approach being used. In addition, the promise of confidentiality and anonymity which were highlighted on several occasions (in the modified fourth assessment paper; when each academic was approached to participate; at the start of the interview; when the analysis chapters were given to each participant to scrutinise) appeared to play a significant role in the behaviour of those involved.

At the commencement of the research it had been perceived that academic staff in the Business School would enthusiastically participate in the research and be keen to contribute. The author believed that he was a popular and unthreatening figure within the context. Consequently, a perception was formed that colleagues would be both candid and forthright in discussing their psychological contracts. When undertaking the data collection it was perceived that the participants displayed both interest and passion. However, with hindsight it may be that other alternative motivations had played some part in the behaviour of interviewees. For example, it was perceived by the researcher at the commencement of the study that there was trust in the researcher whereby participants described issues and situations that were both personal and sensitive. However, as identified earlier in this Chapter, an alternative explanation in hindsight may have been that participants viewed the research as an opportunity to communicate to the Head of School using a platform whereby they were protected from any comeback or retribution. In essence, the research may have given participants an opportunity to vent frustration and anger at management. Indeed, it may have been that some participants did not ask for alteration of field notes or draft analysis chapters because they perceived that they were protected by the veil of anonymity promised by the researcher. Conversely, perhaps some participants wanted to be recognised by management and as part of the rationale for taking part in the research it was important that certain statements were attributable to specific individuals? Such activity would suggest that individuals participated in order to deliver messages to management rather than to aid and assist research activity. Indeed, it is conceivable that a number of other alternative explanations for participation and behaviour within the interviews could exist.

It was subsequently perceived that it might have been possible for staff within the Business School to deduce the identity of specific individuals within the draft analysis chapters. The notion of the identification of the individual was discussed with each participant when they were provided with drafts of the four analysis chapters. The drafts were modified so that they only included the sections that related to each participant. Participants were asked to consider if they still wished to be included in the research or have elements of the text changed. All participants indicated that they did not require changes to be made or for any comments they had made to be withdrawn. However, with reflection it was evident that the draft analysis chapters that were passed to the Head of School included material whereby it was possible to identify some staff members. In hindsight this was an error by the researcher and violated the ethical undertakings given to participants even though they did not ask for changes to be made.

When reflecting upon the thesis it was evident that the reasons for agreeing to take part may have been based on a positive rationale (e.g. assist the researcher in his research), or perhaps a negative perspective (e.g. management criticism in a protected environment of anonymity). Indeed, certain individuals may have been influenced by a combination of both positive and negative aspects. Unfortunately, in depth analysis in relation to reasons for agreeing to be part of the research was not undertaken. However, with the benefit of reflection such an exercise would have been incorporated into the research. The reasons for agreeing to participate are further discussed from a retrospective perspective in Chapter Eleven.

6.3.8 Interview Arrangements

A suitable date, time and location were agreed. It was highlighted to each participant that the interview would last about two to three hours and that no preparation was required. The selected individuals were given the amended fourth assessment and it was stated that more written detail about the research could be provided if required. Alternatively prospective participants were encouraged to contact the researcher with any queries before the interview. It was also stated that the interview could be cancelled at any time if the individual subsequently decided not to take part as participation was voluntary. There were a number of interviews that required to be rescheduled but there were no withdrawals. In some instances a second interview took place which was initiated by an academic who wished to engage in further debate. Eight participants approached the researcher for further discussion.

The interviews allowed participants to follow a path of their own choosing and to talk for long periods about things that they considered important. During the interview the researcher spoke infrequently. It was perceived that the social interaction with participants required consideration of the impact that the researcher had on the social setting under investigation. This entailed an iterative analysis of the interview process throughout the fieldwork. For example – have the interviews been conducted in the same way throughout the process? Am I doing anything differently in relation to the collection of data? Are the participants answering in different ways – and if so, why? Consequently, each interview was analysed after it had taken place.

It was evident that participants who were interviewed later in the sequence had more knowledge of the details of the study before the questioning commenced. Participants identified that they had talked to others about the interview experience. Participants who were interviewed later in the cycle described how they had been looking forward to contributing as previous informants had talked positively about the experience. The early participants had described the interview as challenging and interesting, exploring issues and describing how they had arrived at decisions. The notion of enjoyment in the research was also noted by Bergin and Ronnestad (2005). They also used a qualitative approach to examine psychological contracts in the public sector. They interviewed eight health care professionals during a period of significant financial cutbacks. They described the reaction of individuals when interviewed,

‘In the beginning of the interview the informants were asked to describe their work situation and assignments they had. It was evident amongst almost all of the interviews that they welcomed the opportunity to share their concerns about the topic. A common remark was that they had never before delved particularly deeply into their relationship to their assignment and this process initiated new insights. After the interview the informants said they would discuss the issues and their new insights with their colleagues. This positive experience of being interviewed was probably related to the fact that it was very uncommon that another person showed an interest in their situation and tried to understand their experiences of the subject.’

(Bergin and Ronnestad, 2005, p358)

Thus, it was perceived during the interviews and in retrospect that the participants did enjoy the experience of talking about their psychological contracts irrespective of their motives for participating. The next section will outline how the participants for the study were selected.

6.3.9 Selection of Participants

It was decided that the study would include staff that were employed by the institution and exclude individuals who had left the context. The rationale for focussing on incumbent staff was based on the aim of the research being to try and gain a deeper understanding of the interpretation of individuals in relation to actions and events that impacted upon their psychological contract within a specific context. The research considered why participants reacted as they did over the duration of their employment with the Business School. It was perceived that interviewing individuals who had left the context would have extended the scope of the research to include consideration of explanations in respect of the rationale(s) for exit and why such a strategy had been employed in comparison to academic staff who had remained within the institution. However, in hindsight the inclusion of staff who had exited the Business School would have strengthened the data. The decision to exclude previous staff was a limitation of the methodological approach and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eleven.

The study was concerned with the role of the individual in interpreting and unpacking his or her perceptions and understandings. This approach allowed for examination of the way in which each person made sense of factors that impacted upon their lives and subsequent reactions to events that were encountered. The research focussed exclusively on members of staff who had no line management responsibility. This allowed for both lecturers and senior lecturers to be included, but the Division Head for each of the cognate areas and the Head of School were omitted from the selection process.

The reason for the exclusion of supervisory staff was based on the rationale that the research was concerned with the elucidation, analysis, and reaction of individuals to management decisions, as well as other significant events that participants identified. It was perceived that the inclusion of line managers would have necessitated a matching exercise to consider the intentions and understandings of both parties in relation to specific decisions as well as subsequent behaviours and actions. In addition, Casey (1993) identified that organisational research often had a managerial focus, largely ignoring that organisations were made up of many diverse groups of people. Consequently, Casey (1993) concluded that the voices of those below managerial level were rarely heard in research. It was decided that the study would adopt the approach of listening to the voices of those with no decision-making authority in respect of other faculty members. However, subsequent examination of the decision to exclude line-managers would suggest that the data would have been considerably enriched and allowed for a much

greater degree of validity and reliability to be attached to the conclusions, had individuals with supervisory experience been included. The implications of not incorporating line-managers are further discussed in Chapter Eleven.

Each staff member was selected using a stratified random sample, stratified by Division so that a distribution across the School based on this variable could be achieved. Disciplinary based research (for example Becher, 1989; Trowler, 1997) has been prevalent within the field of higher education and was deemed appropriate as Business Schools are traditionally structured around a number of related but distinct specialist areas. To ensure that all Departments were represented an arbitrary cut-off point was selected whereby a minimum of half of each Department would be interviewed. Individuals were then randomly chosen from the population of staff until at least half of each discipline had been selected. In total there were twenty-four interviews conducted.

The rationale for using this approach was to give assurance to each participant that he or she had been chosen using no pre-determined criteria. This was explained to all staff when they were approached. Only full-time academic staff were included in the analysis, thus the peculiarities of part-time working were not considered. A breakdown of participating academic staff by Division is contained in Table 6.1. The characteristics of the individuals selected were examined using a number of categorisations that have previously been used in higher education research. Additional details about the sample are presented in Table 6.2. A comparison of the sample in relation to the cognate area as a whole is presented in Table 6.3. The categories were length of employment, gender, research active or not, and position in the hierarchy of the organisation. The data in Table 6.3 suggested that the sample was broadly representative in each of the categories constructed. The percentages were included for illustrative purposes and indicated significant similarity between the population and each subset. Examples of where these categories have been used before and definitions where appropriate are provided below:

- (i) Length of Employment (Trowler (1997), noted differences in the approach to academic work and the perceptions of academic staff who had been in post pre-92, in comparison to those who had joined higher education post-92).

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- (ii) Gender (Yeatman, 1995; Lacy and Sheehan, 1997; Oshagbemi, 1997a, 1997b, 2000a; Goode and Bagilhole; 1998).
 - (iii) Research Active (Defined as having at least one piece of work published in a refereed journal - Wilson, 1991; Nixon, 1996; Harley and Lee, 1997; Court, 1999; Taylor, 1999; Oshagbemi, 2000b).
 - (iv) Position in Hierarchy (Defined in this context as being Lecturer or Senior Lecturer - Bocoock, 1994; Lacy and Sheehan, 1997; Trowler, 1997; Court, 1999).

Table 6.1 - Breakdown of Participating Academic Staff by Division

Academic Division	Total number of academic staff	Number of individuals who participated in the research
Accounting	8	4
Business Policy and Marketing	10	6
Economics and Finance	7	4
Human Resource Management	12	7
Operations and Logistics	5	3
Total	42	24

Table 6.2 - Breakdown of Sample

Department	Research Active or Inactive		Employed Post 92 or Pre 92		Senior Lecturer or Lecturer		Male or Female	
	Active	Inactive	Post 92	Pre 92	Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	Male	Female
Accounting	1	3	4	0	1	3	1	3
Business Policy and Marketing	1	5	5	1	1	5	5	1
Economics and Finance	2	2	0	4	3	1	4	0
Human Resource Management	0	7	6	1	2	5	3	4
Operations and Logistics	0	3	1	2	2	1	1	2
Total	4	20	16	8	9	15	14	10

Table 6.3 - Comparison of the Sample and Department as a Whole

Department	Research Active or Inactive <i>(Active: Inactive)</i>			Employed Post 92 or Pre 92 <i>(Employed Post 92: Employed Pre-92)</i>			Senior Lecturer or Lecturer <i>(Senior Lecturer: Lecturer)</i>			Male or Female <i>(Male: Female)</i>		
	Sample	Staff NOT Selected	Department as a Whole	Sample	Staff NOT Selected	Department as a Whole	Sample	Staff NOT Selected	Department as a Whole	Sample	Staff NOT Selected	Department as a Whole
Accounting	1:3* (25%:75%)	3:1 (75%:25%)	4:4 (50%:50%)	4:0 (100%:0%)	2:2 (50%:50%)	6:2 (75%:25%)	1:3 (25%:75%)	2:2 (50%:50%)	3:5 (38%:62%)	1:3 (25%:75%)	1:3 (25%:75%)	2:6 (25%:75%)
Business Policy and Marketing	1:5 (17%:83%)	0:4 (0%:100%)	1:9 (10%:90%)	5:1 (83%:17%)	4:0 (100%:0%)	9:1 (90%:10%)	1:5 (17%:83%)	0:4 (0%:100%)	1:9 (10%:90%)	5:1 (83%:17%)	3:1 (75%:25%)	8:2 (80%:20%)
Economics and Finance	2:2 (50%:50%)	1:2 (33%:67%)	3:4 (43%:57%)	0:4 (0%:100%)	0:3 (0%:100%)	0:7 (0%:100%)	3:1 (75%:25%)	2:1 (67%:33%)	5:2 (71%:29%)	4:0 (100%:0%)	3:0 (100%:0%)	7:0 (100%:0%)
Human Resource Management	0:7 (0%:100%)	0:5 (0%:100%)	0:12 (0%:100%)	6:1 (86%:14%)	4:1 (80%:20%)	10:2 (83%:17%)	2:5 (29%:71%)	0:5 (0%:100%)	2:10 (17%:83%)	3:4 (43%:57%)	2:3 (40%:60%)	5:7 (42%:58%)
Operations and Logistics	0:3 (0%:100%)	0:2 (0%:100%)	0:5 (0%:100%)	1:2 (33%:67%)	1:1 (50%:50%)	2:3 (40%:60%)	2:1 (67%:33%)	0:2 (0%:100%)	2:3 (40%:60%)	1:2 (33%:67%)	1:1 (50%:50%)	2:3 (40%:60%)
Total	4:20 (17%:83%)	4:14 (22%:78%)	8:34 (19%:81%)	16:8 (67%:33%)	11:7 (61%:39%)	27:15 (64%:36%)	9:15 (38%:62%)	4:14 (22%:78%)	13:29 (31%:69%)	14:10 (58%:42%)	10:8 (56%:44%)	24:18 (57%:43%)

*Each ratio in the table represents the split by category in terms of participants, non-participants, and the department as a whole. For example the ratio of 1:3 in Accounting for the Research Active or Inactive category in the Sample column indicated that 1 member of staff who was interviewed from this Department was research active, whilst the other 3 who participated were not. In the next column, the ratio of 3:1 indicated that 3 of the staff not selected were active and 1 was inactive. For the department as a whole the ratio of 4:4 meant that 4 were active and 4 were inactive.

The next section will consider the data analysis process that was undertaken.

6.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed initially using the research questions as the basis for unpacking the data. The data collated within each research question was subjected to a categorical analysis, with the data compressed into a number of themes for each of the research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Agar, 1986). This was an iterative process that facilitated the identification of numerous terms and concepts and involved assembling these into themes that defined similar ideas, issues, or relationships.

This was achieved by selecting sections of text where participants had described aspects that related clearly to one of the questions. There was much overlap as participants told stories of issues or problems they had encountered, how they had dealt with them and how they had behaved. The data for each question was grouped together and considered for each participant. The analysis involved reading and re-reading of the accounts and allowed for the development of themes for each participant. This was then followed by comparison of themes between participants and focussed on convergent concepts, decisions, and actions, and their relations to the evolving themes that had emerged. A consequence of this was the merging of some overlapping categories to allow capture of informant categories at a higher level of abstraction as the analysis was extended beyond the individuality of each participant's perspective.

Questions were then posed that confronted why each theme was considered relevant and what other interpretations could be made in respect of the statements being made? This iterative process of examination and re-examination of the data facilitated a deep understanding of the data and allowed for alternative explanations to be considered. For example, when a participant considered ideology as an important consideration, to what extent was this driven by a desire to become an educator, or was it perhaps a by-product of another more significant life issue? A further example related to individuals highlighting issues that had been a major concern to them at a point in their Business School career, but although the issue remained, it was no longer considered significant. Was this a breach, a violation, or both? Why had the level of importance changed? What had caused individuals to re-categorise issues in the workplace? Questioning, re-reading, and careful consideration of the data was required to consider the complexity of the situations that were described.

The process was repeated for the other questions. The data was then examined in terms of the individual participant across each of the four questions to consider relationships and linkages between initial sensemaking, issues that caused concern and subsequent behaviour, or some combination of these factors. This was again followed by a comparison between participants in terms of potential linkages and similarities. The analysis was again subjected to questioning in terms of alternative interpretation and consideration of whether the data supported the analysis, discussion, and conclusions.

The data for each theme was then deliberately left untouched for a period of time and then reconsidered to allow time for the researcher to examine the analysis from a refreshed perspective to consider the extent to which the interpretations made were both accurate and believable. Although the advantages of being immersed in the data are evident, distancing and then becoming re-immersed was a useful method of ensuring that the analysis had been robust and that the differing perceptions, influences and interpretations of each individual within the setting had been captured and presented. The analysis for each research question resulted in data that required to be expressed in ways that were most appropriate for the themes. Consequently, diagrams, models, figures, and précis were constructed. The analysis of the data did not utilise any of the computer packages available in relation to qualitative research. However, in hindsight it would have been appropriate to utilise such facilities in the analysis process in order to, at the very least, create an alternative perspective against which the manual analysis could have been compared.

The analysis was presented to the participants during the iterative process of writing-up the results. The aim was to validate the results by giving the participants opportunities to scrutinise the analysis to see whether or not what had been concluded resonated with their own understanding of the environment. The participants did not request changes to the results and were content to discuss the issues raised and the conclusions drawn using a positive, supportive approach. However, the issue of reflexivity demanded continuous questioning and checking of the data to explore the potential for alternative interpretations was undertaken. For example, retrospective analysis described earlier in this Chapter identified that there may have been a number of different rationales for supporting the research other than the perception the researcher had when the research approach was decided. A critique of the research process and a reflexive consideration is undertaken in Chapter Eleven which highlights that

the methodological approach had a number of limitations which may have resulted in the rationalisations and conclusions in respect of the behaviour and decision-making of participants being open to alternative explanations. However, limitations in respect of the data collected meant that different rationales could not be comprehensively explored. The reflection in Chapter Eleven will further examine the research approach.

6.5 Summary

The research questions required data that was personal and experiential. Therefore, the approach used in the study utilised elements of ethnography which allowed participants to provide life history accounts that described and theorised about their actions in the social world over time within a specific context. This resulted in the collection of data relative to the psychological contract of each participant using a Business School as a case-study to define the boundaries of the research. The approach allowed for each of the research questions in turn to be explored and examined. However, the methodological approach used was subsequently reflected upon and a number of limitations in the research design were identified, as well as flaws in the rationalisations that were used as the basis for a number of the decisions. A full discussion of these weaknesses is contained in Chapter Eleven. It was evident that on a number of occasions the reasons put forward to explain and justify the approach used were subsequently identified as having been instrumental in creating a data set that could have been improved upon to facilitate greater elucidation of the research questions.

The aim of Chapter Six was to outline the method that was used. The data will now be analysed and discussed in the next four Chapters.

Chapter Seven

The Formation of the Initial Psychological Contract of Business School Lecturers

Chapter Seven

The Formation of the Initial Psychological Contract of Business School Lecturers

7.0 Introduction

Chapter Seven is the first of four chapters that analyse and discuss the data gathered from the interviews. The Chapter will consider the expectations and assumptions individuals had in respect of Business School employment and how these influenced the construction of the psychological contract.

The research question was,

How were the initial psychological contracts of Business School lecturers formed?

7.1 The Profession Change Process

The interviews revealed that all participants had been employed in industry and that this was their first position in higher education. The interviews also identified that each individual had a particular dissatisfaction with life prior to joining the Business School. In some instances this was work related, for others it was non-work issues, and for some both were evident. The data in relation to the rationales for changing from industry to Business School employment is presented in Table 7.1. The purpose of Table 7.1 was to identify if there were any differences between the whole group and subsections of the sample (gender and length of service). Three main rationales were identified - ideology, flexibility and autonomy, and previous employment experience. For the latter two this was further broken down into two more subsets. For each of these rationales two statistics were included in the table. The first identified the number of times this rationale had been cited as the main reason for changing from industry to Business School employment. The second statistic identified how many participants had cited the rationale in an interview. For example, in relation to ideology as a rationale for change, three individuals cited this as the main reason, but all twenty-four had intimated that ideology had played some role in the decision to change employment. A third statistic was also calculated which identified the average number of reasons cited by the whole group and by the various sub-sections of the sample. This was calculated by summing all of the cited rationales and then dividing by the numbers of individuals in that group or sub-group.

Table 7.1 Rationale for Changing from Industry to Higher Education Employment

Rationales for Change					
	Ideology	Flexibility and Autonomy		Previous Employment Experience	
		Childcare Issues	Pursuance of Other Interests	Career Crossroads	Stress of Business
Whole Group (n=24)					
Average Number of Reasons Cited	3.0				
Main Reason for Change	3	3	1	7	10
Total Number of Instances Cited	24	9	6	17	17
Average Number of Reasons Cited	3.2				
Main Reason for Change	2	0	5	5	1
Total Number of Instances Cited	13	2	11	10	6
Average Number of Reasons Cited	2.8				
Main Reason for Change	1	3	0	2	5
Total Number of Instances Cited	11	7	0	6	7
Average Number of Reasons Cited	3.0				
Main Reason for Change	2	2	0	1	7
Total Number of Instances Cited	12	4	3	9	9
Average Number of Reasons Cited	3.0				
Main Reason for Change	1	1	1	6	3
Total Number of Instances Cited	12	5	3	8	8

The explanations and rationalisations given for selecting Business School employment will now be explored.

7.2 Rationale for Considering Business School Employment

Analysis of the rationale for the selection of work within higher education identified five factors that will be considered under three main themes. These will be briefly introduced in this section and then examined more fully later in the Chapter. The first theme was previous employment and occupational experiences whereby the experience in the work immediately prior to the Business School was such that it was described as a feeling of industry pushing the individual out of that setting. Interviewees described how they were unable to cope with what they perceived as continually increasing demands associated with the work environment in which they were based. For example,

‘It was just pressure, pressure, pressure. Targets, target, targets. From one month to the next. If you reached the target, next month it was higher. If you didn’t you got a right rollicking. Money was great, but so what? I would wake up at a night in a sweat thinking about work. In the end it became the only thing in my life.’
(Lecturer)

The second theme related to lifestyle influences and desires and was concerned with the flexibility and autonomy that was available in the workplace. There was a perception that the industrial employment setting was unable or unwilling to meet any requirement for work flexibility or autonomy, which was again perceived as the individual being tacitly pushed out of the business organisation where they were located. For example,

‘The way it was going was obvious and I suppose the signs had been there for a long time. I felt more like a number than a person in a big personality free organisation. There was no longer a place for a bit of originality, some clever thinking, maybe a different way of doing things. It all had to be done one way. There were no prizes for being different.’
(Lecturer)

The third theme was ideology, whereby it was identified that there existed a pull towards working in a Business School,

‘It was a bit of a shock - a university lecturer? Me? And then I thought why not? I thought I would be good at it, and the more I explored it the better it looked.’
(Lecturer)

These themes were not mutually exclusive. There was evidence that individuals had selected employment within academia for a combination of reasons but in each case there was a dominant factor which had triggered consideration of a move and which subsequently featured within the constructed schema on commencement of work at the Business School. The average number of factors cited by the

respondents was three (see Table 7.1). The minimum number of factors identified was two (n=10) and the maximum number was five (n=1). The remaining respondents were spread equally between three (n=7) and four (n=7) factors. When the group was considered in terms of gender and length of tenure there were no major differences except that in terms of gender female respondents required flexibility and autonomy for a different reason than their male counterparts (childcare issues in contrast to pursuance of other interests).

The analysis will now consider each of the three broad categories identified as the rationales for change. The first to be examined will be the impact of previous employment and occupational experience.

7.2.1 Previous Employment and Occupational Experiences

The participants identified that a perception had existed whereby the pressure, stress, and organisational workload expectations associated with their positions within the business world had increased. A comparative analysis of participants' perceptions of academic work in relation to their own lived experience of business revealed a perception that academia was viewed as potentially being markedly less stressful. Two examples are provided which illustrate this point,

‘I was after a career change. I had been working for a massive multinational for the best part of twenty years. Then, I had a bit of an issue in my personal life and left. I was looking for a different sort of work, something where I wouldn’t have to stay up all night worrying about things. I don’t do that here.’
(Lecturer)

‘My salary is poor in comparison to friends that are roughly the same age as me and who went to University at about the same time. Some are earning three times what I am. I knew the money was rubbish when I came. But I wouldn’t change places with them. High salary brings high risk. Been there done that. We don’t have that risk. We will always have our jobs – really no matter what we do. What this actually means is that there’s no real heat or pressure on us.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The comments above were typical of business professionals who perceived that the pace of change within the Business School was not matching that of the external environment. Consequently, academic work was viewed as relatively protected from market forces compared to what had been experienced within industry based employment. It was evident that the psychological contract in its formative stage was with the profession of higher education academic rather than with the institution.

Specific organisation issues were not considered with the perception being that a university was a stable, reliable employer. For example,

‘Why do you think I joined? It’s cushy – why should I get a job in the real world? My job is secure – oh yes – there is absolutely not a chance in hell that I am going to lose my job – who can say that in industry? This is arguably the most secure job that you can get. It has a guaranteed income – you can add to it fairly straightforwardly, and the net result is a ludicrous income for what we are expected to do.’
(Lecturer)

The notion of stability and a job-for-life culture were identified irrespective of when the individual joined the Business School and these features were viewed as being significantly different from the industry experience they had encountered.

The data in Table 7.1 highlighted that “stress of business” was the largest identified rationale for moving to academic employment. The longer tenured individuals entered academic employment at a time when the higher education environment was relatively static in nature and all but one highlighted the stress associated with business life as the most significant reason for change. In contrast, those with less than ten years academic employment suggested that “career crossroads” was more of an influence. However, it was evident from the interviews that both “stress of business” and “career crossroads” were factors based on changes that had occurred in the industrial environment. Individuals perceived that they had been pushed out of industry employment rather than pulled towards academic work. The pull towards academic employment occurred subsequent to the push factors having determined that change was required.

Whilst “stress of business” and “career crossroads” have been identified as separate components it was emphasised during the interviews that the two issues were related, with uncertainty over job prospects being a causal factor in the creation of work-related stress. This was particularly the case for those that had been employed at the Business School for more than ten years. The participants who had most recently changed employers to join the Business School indicated that they had moved jobs on a number of previous occasions. There was a perception that changing employment, and indeed profession, was not a particularly significant event in the labour market of the last two decades. Business professionals were aware of frequent job change, accepted it, and reacted accordingly,

whereas for longer tenured academic staff job uncertainty during their time in industry appeared to cause greater levels of anxiety and angst.

Seventeen academics identified that finding themselves at a crossroads in their career had been an influence in their rationale to change and seven stated that this had been the main factor behind the decision (see Table 7.1). Of this seven, two were unemployed and two others perceived that they were about to find themselves in such a predicament,

‘I knew I was going in the next round of cuts. I just started looking around for another job and saw the advert.’
(Lecturer)

‘I got in here completely by chance. There was a change of ownership in the company where I was working, and as often happens in these situations I backed the wrong runner, and so in the end I got the chop.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The comments above describe two similar situations whereby individuals were forced to look for alternative jobs with industry positions being their first choice. However, both happened to come across the Business School advertisement as they were perusing job vacancies and then made speculative applications that resulted in the attainment of lecturing positions within the Business School. A further three intimated that they had been disgruntled in their previous positions, and were searching for something that was more relevant to both their career and life goals at that particular time. For example,

‘I have financial security and stability through what I did before therefore the money side of things was not that important when I was looking for a job this time round. I was looking cos I was bored where I was and a new guy had come in with a whole bunch of MBA type ideas. Definitely time to get out. The main thing for me was domestic stability – getting a job that meant not having to move house. The children were happy at their school and I had a big role at the golf club. I had also done a bit of guest lecturing in my previous job, had enjoyed it, and thought ‘why not’ when the opportunity presented itself.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The three participants who provided the statements above highlighted that the opportunity to work in the Business School had rather unexpectedly presented itself to them. The choice of employment sector had not been a carefully planned sequence of events, more a speculative opportunistic application based on necessity, need, or desire for something different.

7.2.2 Flexibility and Autonomy

The consideration of the lifestyle associated with work in the University sector was a feature in the choice of career for fifteen of the academics. This was articulated as the requirement for flexibility and autonomy in relation to family commitments and/or the desire to pursue other interests.

In respect of family considerations, individuals had constructed pre-entry assumptions that incorporated perceptions of how such employment could facilitate altered personal and family circumstances through opportunities for greater autonomy and flexibility in the workplace. This was a non-work related issue that was identified as playing a significant part in influencing the decision to change profession. For example, one participant described how there had been a serious illness within his/her family which meant that he/she perceived that a traditional industry based, full-time position with the rigidity normally associated with employment of this type was incompatible with his/her revised needs and wants. Consequently, he/she believed that Business School employment could accommodate full-time working and the altered personal requirements that he/she faced, as is evident in the following statement,

‘The flexibility I knew I could get here was why I came. It means that I can do work at home or in the office.
(Lecturer)

Three female academics indicated that flexibility was the most important issue whereas no males cited this as the most important factor. The three women stated that the overarching reason to transfer from business to academic employment was based upon flexibility in employment related to childcare issues. There was a perceived need to find a profession that would allow for the continuation of work in a challenging and stimulating environment. Salary was not an issue but it was intimated that any work position would have had to provide sufficient scope for independent action and decision-making to permit them to be the dominant parent in respect of childcare. For example,

‘I wanted to get back to working, but that simply wouldn’t have been possible at the level that I had been operating at before. We could afford for me not to go back at all, but I wanted to exercise my brain. I couldn’t have gone back to industry at a lower level than I had left – I just couldn’t have handled that at all. I was genuinely interested in teaching, but hadn’t really thought about it as a career move until I saw the advert.’
(Lecturer)

All three women had professional partners employed within industry, which did not in their opinion permit equal sharing of childcare duties. Consequently, the women chose to change profession and move to the Business School which they perceived would provide the employment flexibility that would accommodate both work and family. The desire for flexibility was particularly relevant in situations where pre-school children were involved as there was an identified need to provide cover for unexpected occurrences. This was perceived as being at its peak for children below the age of school attendance. Subsequently, when school age was reached there was a belief that the requirement for employment flexibility was reduced.

For a number of individuals the opportunity to pursue management consultancy on a part-time basis whilst working full-time at the Business School was an attractive proposition,

‘I like to do stuff outside of this place. I make about as much again from my outside stuff. In this place nobody prods you with a stick. It is up to you what you do as long as you keep the powers that be happy. That’s why I joined.’
(Lecturer)

The experienced rigidity of industry was rejected in preference to the perceived self-management (autonomy) associated with the Business School environment. This was described as having the choice to do academic work when the individual considered it appropriate as opposed to being forced to undertake activity in a prescribed timeframe, which was perceived as being the norm in industry employment. The assumption being that this would facilitate the construction of work patterns that were predominantly individually tailored and permitted the creation of another business venture. Thus, the perception was that there would be security from the salary received from a large organisation and also the opportunity to pursue a second source of income.

The overriding perception prior to entry was that individuals were predominantly employed as teaching members of faculty. The perception created was that individuals would be subjected to reasonable hours, manageable workloads, moderate levels of stress, autonomy, and flexibility in return for appropriate reward, and job satisfaction. The academics’ views were based on a comparison of experience in industry and limited information gathering. The nature of discussion in the literature that examined the complexity and pluralistic nature of the academic environment had not permeated to these business professionals largely because they had superficially explored the environment.

7.2.3 Ideology

All interviewees identified a desire to become involved in teaching which was subsequently broadened out to include a desire to help others in their development as individuals and to make some sort of positive contribution to the wider community and society. This interest had been developed through links with the education system such as studying for a higher degree, ties with the University sector in relation to research projects, or delivering lectures to students in a visiting lecturer capacity. For example,

‘I had also done a bit of guest lecturing in my previous job, had enjoyed it and thought ‘why not’ when the opportunity came along.’
(Lecturer)

The perception gained from being a student was a particularly strong constituent and was identified as an influential factor in the pre-entry visualisation of academic work. For example,

‘I never really thought about being a lecturer when I was a student. But when the chance came for me to do this type of work I thought back to my time at university and tried to think about the job they did and how much they seemed to enjoy it.’
(Lecturer)

The data identified that only three individuals identified ideology as the main reason for joining the Business School. This suggested that although an ideological perspective was in place prior to joining it was not the primary reason to change profession for most respondents. The three participants who had identified ideology as the main reason for change had been with the Business School for more than twenty years and also identified that teaching was an activity that had always been a primary goal,

‘I always wanted to do teaching from as far back as I can remember. I like doing it and I enjoy the subject area I am involved in. I enjoyed school when I was there and that was probably the catalyst for where I am now and what I am doing. I hated the thought of working in an office. I tried it and it definitely wasn’t me.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The small number of respondents that highlighted ideology as the main reason for joining made similar statements, which identified that teaching in a higher education establishment, had been a long held desire. Similar statements about interest in teaching were expressed by the other participants however this followed other reasons put forward as the main driver for change. The decision to enter Business School employment was based on the formation of a set of wants that each individual perceived could be delivered within an academic work context. These wants will now be considered.

7.2.4 Work and Individual Wants Related to Higher Education Employment

The generation of information resulted in the refinement and clarification of wants associated with Business School employment. The data in respect of pre-entry expectations is presented in Table 7.2 and categorised in terms of work-related wants and individual wants. The number of work related and individual wants was relatively small at the commencement of employment. The participants identified that the individual factors were, in general, initially more important than the work factors.

Table 7.2 - Work and Individual Wants Related to Higher Education Employment

<u>Work Related Wants Pre-Entry</u>	<u>Individual Wants Pre-Entry</u>
To be a good teacher	A working context with less stress and more job satisfaction
To do research	A safe, secure job with little chance of redundancy
To help others develop as individuals	Salary to maintain lifestyle
To contribute to the wider community and society	Lifestyle flexibility and autonomy

The data in Table 7.2 identified that the work related wants were ideological in nature. However, ideology for the large majority was a secondary rationale. The individual wants were related to the desire to leave industry and the problems that had been encountered in that work environment.

7.3 Discussion

The purpose of this Chapter was to consider the antecedents and building blocks of the psychological contract within a Business School context. The constructs associated with the formation of the psychological contract and the schemas individuals held when entering employment were examined.

7.3.1 Concept of Schema

Rousseau (2001) and De Vos et al. (2005) brought the concept of schemas to the fore in psychological contract research. Rousseau (2001) identified that the antecedents of psychological contracts were activated largely through pre-employment experiences and recruiting practices and that prior to

employment workers could possess beliefs regarding work, occupations, and organisations generally. There was evidence in this study that pre-employment assumptions and perceptions existed and that schema were constructed through prior socialisation and were related to *previous employment and occupational experiences* (stress of business; career at a crossroads), *lifestyle influences and desires* (salary to maintain lifestyle; greater flexibility and autonomy to pursue family or other non-work interests), and *ideological views* (to be a teacher; to undertake research; to contribute to the wider social community; to develop others). The first two elements were strongly linked with the potential for either to occur first and subsequently trigger the other. For example, a person suffering stress in the workplace may look to his or her lifestyle and conclude that change was required. Conversely, the desire to pursue a family may require greater work flexibility and autonomy than a current industry-based career and subsequently a career crossroads was reached whereby a decision was required in terms of the next move that needed to be made within the labour market. This would suggest that both employment experiences and lifestyle desires could influence each other and were the initial drivers of employment change.

In respect of economic reward, this was not a major issue of concern pre-entry. Whilst a certain minimum level was identified, there was a perception that this was achievable in the Business School. This would appear to support previous research into the relative lack of importance attributed to remuneration within academia whereby it had been highlighted that intentions to *leave* a university were also not motivated by salary (Finkelstein, 1984; Manger and Eikeland, 1990; Lacy and Sheehan, 1997). Exploration of the minimum level identified that there already existed a notion of financial stability within the sample. The interviews revealed a group of businessmen and women that had chosen to become business educators after having generated, in their consideration, relative financial security from other work activity. Whilst all the participants were recruited at lecturer level, most of the appointments were made at the top or near to the top of the salary scale. This was rationalised by the interviewees as being necessary to satisfy the minimum salary constraint that was part of the criteria that required to be fulfilled in order to make the change.

What was evident was a perception that opportunities afforded by Business School employment had the potential to satisfy altered individual and work related wants. The decision to move to the Business School was informed through information gathered and synthesised about what such an employment

setting could deliver to that individual and the suitability of the person to such a position and environment. The prospective lecturer compiled a portfolio of evidence that subsequently informed the decision to change employment and formed the building blocks of the psychological contract. Three sources were identified with the influence of each varying between individuals:

- 1 Perceptions gained through personal experience of academic institutions. This was accumulated as a student and for some through interaction with a Business School through previous employment.
- 2 Experience of teaching gained in a number of different settings, including business-related training and guest lecturing at institutes of higher education.
- 3 Information and data gathered at the recruitment and selection phase.

There was evidence that career decisions were being made on views and perceptions generated from memory and based on the academic environment that each had experienced. The decision to change profession was subsequently described as having been founded on incomplete as well as outdated information.

The data indicated that pre-employment schema in respect of Business School academics entering academia for the first time from industry-based backgrounds were initially focussed on what employment in this sphere would broadly entail in comparison to where they were currently located. Subsequently, an emergent awareness of the ideological rewards was described. The ideological perspective was not an afterthought but chronologically it featured in schema once other parts of the work were considered and evaluated as satisfactory. This would suggest that ideology was perhaps a reaction to the possibility of pursuance of a career in a Business School once the opportunity had presented itself. However, ideology, as Rousseau (2001) and O'Donohue et al. (2004) both suggested then became a component that individuals perceived as a crucial element to the decision to move into higher education rather than alternative industry-based employment. Figure 7.1 has been constructed to represent the process that was undertaken.

Rousseau (2001) also suggested that schemas existed on a number of different levels (see Figure 7.2) whereby elements had both a vertical and horizontal level of abstraction. The vertical aspect indicated

degree of importance associated with the element ascribed by the individual and although three levels are represented in Figure 7.2, she identified that this was a hypothetical representation and as familiarity with the organisation grew then more levels would probably be evident. The horizontal aspect indicated that there may be a number of factors at the same level of abstraction although the directional arrow is largely left unexplained. The data in this study suggested that at the commencement of Business School employment the number of components was small and were on three levels as identified in Figure 7.3.

The highest level was that of ideology. Although it was evident that this existed prior to encountering the work environment it was an element that was derived subsequent to other aspects of the work being deemed acceptable. The other facets were labelled as *required* elements, for example a minimum level of salary to maintain current lifestyle, and *desired* elements, such as enhanced job security. Both required and desired elements could be transactional or relational. The arrows in Figure 7.3 indicated that elements could move between each of the three levels and that schema components were dynamic and flexible as information was encountered or circumstances for the individual change and alter. The data identified that all *required* elements had to be fulfilled for the individual to consider the employment viable and the greater the number of *desired* elements the larger the incentive to join the organisation.

The number of elements identified was small which resulted in schemas being relatively straightforward and uncomplex at the time of employment commencement (see table 7.2). The evidence identified that in general the individual factors were more important than the work factors. The relatively greater importance associated with individual factors suggested that schema were constructed with a self-reliance orientation with prospective academic staff pursuing work which satisfied personal wants but not the maximisation of economic reward. The comparative unimportance of pecuniary reward was contrary to the research to date (e.g. Maguire, 2002) which suggested that in an increasingly competitive marketplace professional employees selfishly pursued economic reward and showed allegiance to self-appeasement and ignored corporate loyalty. However, the data in this study identified a heightened self-focus that was consistent with the conclusion put forward by Hall and Moss (1998) which stated that the psychological contract was increasingly independent and directed by

the need and values of the individual with success described as internal to the individual. This was consistent with the results for this study as internal success was identified as both lifestyle and ideological in nature at the commencement of work in the Business School. Simplistic schema were constructed largely as a consequence of a lack of knowledge and understanding of the environment about to be entered. The process of knowledge attainment will now be considered.

Figure 7.1 – Schema Elements and the Initial Psychological Contract Process

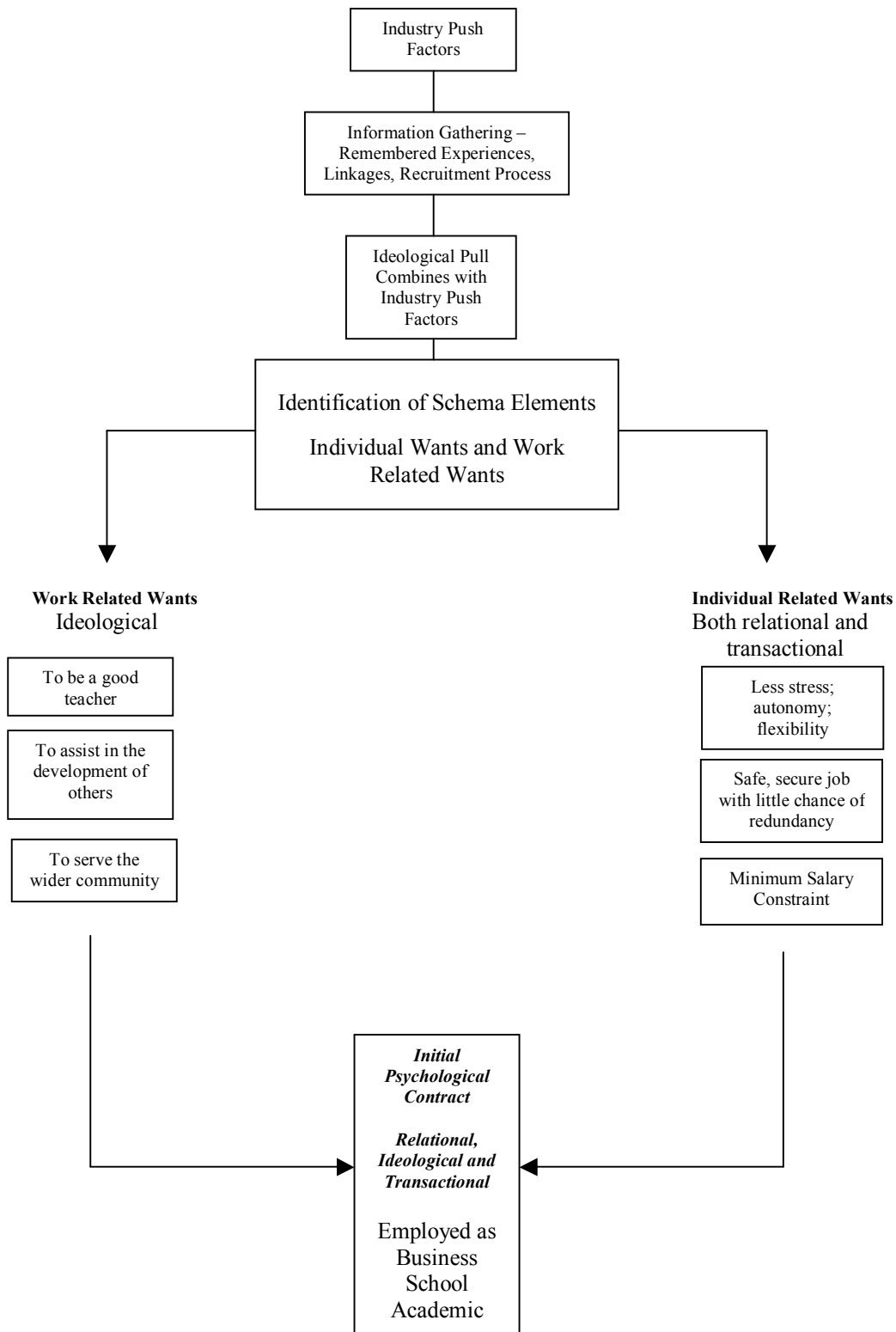
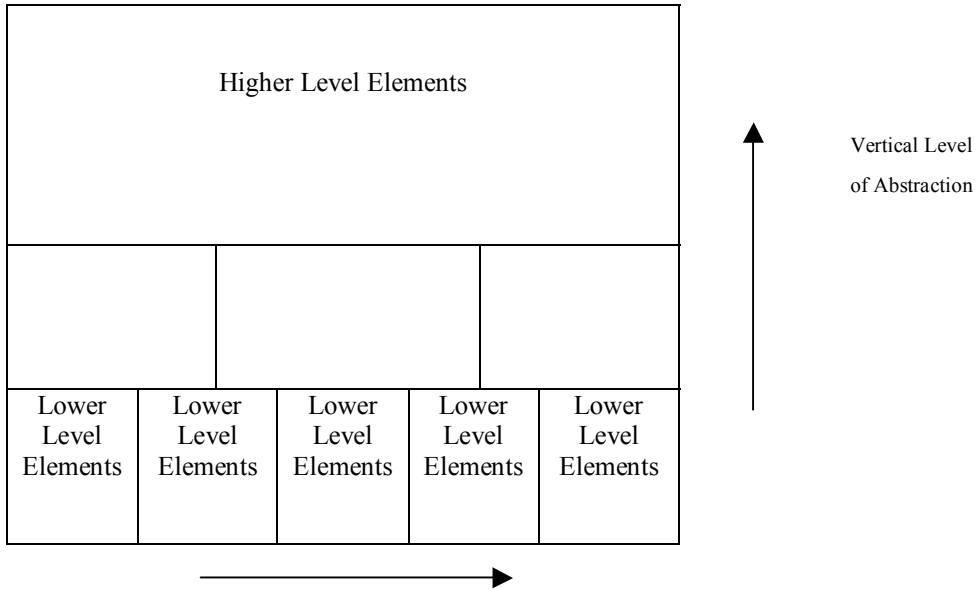


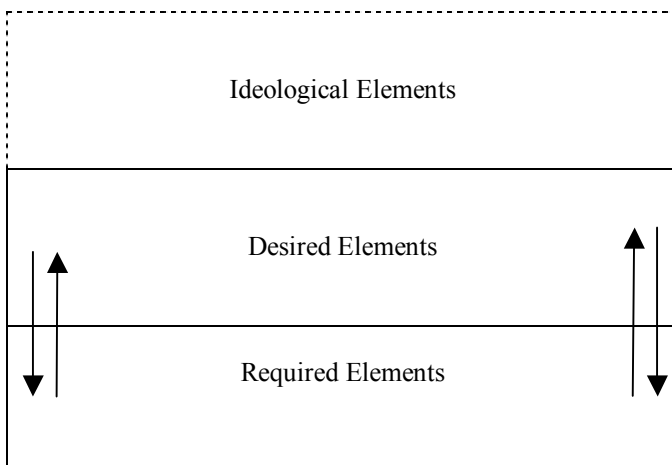
Figure: 7.2 Structure of Schemas



Horizontal: Elements at a Particular Level of Abstraction

Source: Rousseau (2001, p514)

Figure 7.3 Structure of Schemas Pre-Employment



7.3.2 Knowledge of the Work Environment

The assimilation of knowledge that was undertaken in order to develop an understanding of work at the Business School, in essence the sensemaking process, was unchallenging and accepting. De Vos et al. (2003) described the process of sensemaking as the mechanism by which newcomers actively formed and changed their cognitive schema. De Vos et al. (2003) accepted that schema were already in place at the commencement of work and concentrated on how post-employment these evolved. However, in taking a step back in the process the data in this study identified that sensemaking at pre-entry was similar to that described by Hallier and Forbes (2004) whereby individuals attempted to make sense of information to construct a plausible interpretation of what work in a Business School would entail. The interpretation in this context was undertaken after minimal information gathering which was contrary to that of Louis (1980) and Rousseau (2001) who both identified that anticipations and assumptions before entering an organisation were focussed on data collected from a plethora of sources and considered many wide ranging aspects that included the job, the organisation, and its culture.

The academic staff who participated in the study subsequently described themselves as being naive in the assumptions made about how the job would fit with them as individuals, based on a set of perceptions constructed without in-depth research into the nuances, complexities, and negative aspects of the job experienced by incumbents. There was no evidence of detailed interaction between prospective lecturers and serving academics within the Business School prior to job commencement whereby expectations and obligations could have been discussed and explored. The data supported the findings of Anderson and Thomas (1996) who described the construction of naïve and imperfect schema in respect of what the individual would have to give and what he or she would get in return.

The prospective Business School lecturers in this context were content with the constructed schema because the job appeared to deliver an improved work and non-work environment. The industry-based professionals wanted to believe that higher education would produce what the imperfect schema suggested. Consequently, further information gathering was not undertaken. The extent to which individuals new to the higher education environment were aware of the imperfections of schema was only apparent once employment had commenced. The sensemaking process was undertaken with a bias towards believing that this was a career move that would be pursued, thus an overly positive and optimistic prejudice was attached to information about the job that resulted in a plausible rationale for

change being constructed. The required and desired elements were fulfilled and at this juncture, an informed decision to select employment in the Business School was made. Perhaps the collation of further information by the participants may have resulted in negative aspects of the profession or the organisation being highlighted, therefore to avoid such an occurrence additional data was not gathered.

7.4 Conclusions for Research Question One

The information derived from the interviews suggested that each individual had analysed the extent to which employment within a Business School in a post-92 University with a predominantly teaching *raison d'être* would deliver. Once the decision had been made to enter this context, the schema was simplistic in its initial form.

The data highlighted a process of exit from one profession and entry into another. This involved the construction of schema in respect of work in a different context that was predominantly based on a set of perceptions based on limited information. Individuals brought with them sets of values, attitudes and expectations, which supported conclusions made by Trowler (1997). However, these were relatively few in number and narrow in focus. There existed a perception that being a Business School lecturer would be markedly different to that of being a professional in industry and that academia possessed the requisite characteristics to satisfy the needs and wants the participants had at the time of entry.

The schema included transactional, relational, and ideological elements. The transactional aspect related to economic reward whereby individuals accepted rather than negotiated economic reward with the requirement being maintenance of lifestyle level rather than the maximisation of economic reward. This was contrary to the accepted definition of this term which suggested individuals negotiated maximum economic reward based on the perception the participant had of their value to the organisation (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). Relational elements as defined by Guzzo and Noonan (1994) were concerned with the relationship between the individual employee and the organisation and there was evidence of such elements within the schema of the interviewees in relation to the perceived flexibility and autonomy that could be ascertained within academic employment. A slightly different perspective was suggested by Thompson and Bunderson (2003) who identified that relational aspects

were more concerned with wider community aspects and its stakeholders, which was similar to the third component of ideology identified by Rousseau (2001). Thompson and Bunderson (2003) also examined the concept of ideology and concluded that ideology was a third focus to supplement transactional and relational components.

The evidence from this study identified that ideology was a feature that played a major role in the schema of individuals. However, for most participants this was only relevant once required and desired transactional and relational elements were satisfied. For the majority of the sample ideology in itself would not have been a sufficient driver to change profession. Ideology was used as a post-decision justification rather than a key driver for the large majority of academic staff in this context. The ideology identified was a commitment to teaching and the development of students, which went beyond self-interest and was used as a justification for the lack of emphasis in respect of economic reward. This was contrary to the findings of Bergin and Ronnestad (2005) who found that the choice of public sector employment was predominantly based on ideological values. However, the evidence from this context was that neither economic reward nor ideology was identified as the overriding motivator for employment choice in this context, but both played a role in the sensemaking process. There was a perception that the Business School would provide an environment whereby employees could legitimately contribute towards the cause identified. Similarly, using the definitions produced by Wrzesniewski et al. (1997), the individuals within this context created perceptions and assumptions that in changing employment they had enacted a shift away from a job orientation (focus on financial rewards and necessity; work identified as not being a major positive part of life) and career orientation (focus on advancement), towards a calling orientation (focus on enjoyment of fulfilling socially useful work).

The data also suggested that individuals selected employment in this context for a combination of reasons. This was consistent with Kanter (1977, 1989) who debunked the 'myth of separate worlds' when examining the interaction between job experiences and life off-the-job. The view that the work of an academic had become increasingly pluralistic and complex was not apparent prior to entry into higher education. Individuals recruited within the last two decades did not have an awareness of the increased disgruntlement of those within the higher education arena (Nixon, 1996; Trowler, 1997; Court, 1999). The change in ideological approach from liberal to economic that many within academia

had unequivocally rejected was not a major consideration in the decision to move professions (Zlotkowski, 1997; Baker, 1999; Meek, 2000). Issues that dominated the life of academics had not permeated to the business professionals moving into this arena, as individuals had not allowed negative elements to enter schema prior to moving into the Business School environment. For example, the predominance of the RAE, cited by many within academia as being the dominant influence in academic life (McNay, 1998; Court, 1999), was not a factor in the schema constructed by business professionals moving into this Business School environment. This was perhaps to be expected based on rationale for change and the imperfect and limited data collection undertaken. There was an ignorance of many features based on incomplete schema based on information gathering and sensemaking prior to commencement of employment that was deliberately superficial.

Chapter Eight

The Appropriateness and Relevance of the Initial Psychological Contract

Chapter Eight

The Appropriateness and Relevance of the Initial Psychological Contract

8.0 Introduction

Chapter Seven examined the reasons identified by business professionals in respect of the decision to select Business School employment as the most appropriate career path. Chapter Seven also provided an insight into the formulation and component parts of the psychological contract. Chapter Eight will now focus on the validity of the original contract. The research question examined in this Chapter was,

To what extent was the initial psychological contract an appropriate and relevant construct?

The analysis of the data in Chapter Seven identified a number of themes which will now be considered. Participants described what they wanted before and after they entered the Business School. The interviews revealed that before entry these fell into three broad categories, individual wants, work-related wants, and ideological wants. The appropriateness of these categories will now be considered.

8.1 The Appropriateness and Relevance of Individual Wants Post-Entry

Before starting at the Business School, participants identified a relatively small number of individual wants. These related to flexibility, security and stability, and job satisfaction. The relevance and appropriateness of these elements post-entry will now be examined.

8.1.1 Flexibility Post-Entry

The notion of flexibility pre-entry was articulated as the requirement for flexibility and autonomy in relation to family commitments and/or the desire to pursue other interests. The interviews revealed that a desire to pursue business activity external to the School but within the safety net of full-time employment remained (for example, management consultancy or market research projects). The safety net provided a financially secure environment whereby business opportunities could be explored with the knowledge that a guaranteed income would be assured if ventures were to fail. However, what was also evident was that subsequent to joining the Business School the number of individuals who cited flexibility as a want had increased. This increase was explained in terms of the lived experience of the context revealing to those who had not considered the pursuance of entrepreneurial activity that a dual career was available and permissible. For example,

‘I came to the university because work had really got to me. I came here and it was much better, much more relaxed. Really enjoyable. But then after a while boredom set in and I started looking about for something to keep me occupied. I was scared to go back to a real job, but I needed something. I thought about research but it didn’t do anything for me. So I decided to set up a little sideline doing bits and pieces of consultancy. I’m still doing it. I just pick it up now and again when a bit of work comes along. I don’t go looking for it but if something crops up I’m happy to do it.’
(Lecturer)

The comment above depicted how flexibility facilitated job satisfaction within the workplace. The individual described how an element of dissatisfaction had occurred with Business School work but this had been dissipated through the availability of flexibility. Participants identified that they had become cognisant of such activity through the observation of others and copied what they were doing. Similarly, individuals became aware that parenthood was a viable proposition now that the rigid work patterns encountered in previous industry work environment had been left behind. The participants also identified how the need for flexibility could change. For example,

‘When my kids were at School, I needed to drop them off and pick them up. You couldn’t do that unless you had a job and a boss who could give you the room to do this. That’s why working here has been so good for me. Now the kids have left I can work any hours at any time and it’s good to help others that are going through what I went through.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The scenario described above was similar to many descriptions provided by participants in relation to wants that were once deemed important altering as individual circumstances changed. The initial psychological contract in respect of flexibility was a relevant component post-entry for individuals in this context. Participants described the requirement for flexibility as being similar, and sometimes greater, than their pre-entry expectations. Flexibility was also incorporated into contracts when pre-entry it had not been considered.

8.1.2 Security and Stability Post-Entry

Before entering the Business School participants believed that employment in this context would be safe and secure. This want remained a feature post-entry. The interviews revealed that participants had viewed the job as being secure over the duration of their employment. The participants described a myopic conceptualisation of the work context. Participants were largely unconcerned with issues beyond the immediacy of the Business School. The interviews suggested that academics perceived work as occurring predominantly in the microenvironment of the Business School. For example,

external quality assessment mechanisms were identified as having little direct impact on the individual. However, participants did not describe a static environment and changes were identified. For example,

‘I think increased workloads are for those who want heavy workloads – I don’t, therefore it is much the same as it was ten years ago. I really don’t see the quality frameworks now as being that much different to what they were ten or fifteen years ago. Certainly they have different names but the way they do things and what they look at hasn’t really changed very much.’
(Senior Lecturer)

There was a view that decisions that impacted on individuals were judgements made by the management within the Business School. There was a presumption that Business School employment would provide them with a secure and long-lasting employment position based on what was identified as past success being repeated in the future,

‘If we keep on doing much the same things as we have been doing, keep an eye on our markets and implement changes to what we are delivering and how we are delivering it, the School will remain a success.’
(Lecturer)

Participants described having experienced extensive workplace scrutiny in the business environment. The nature of the inspection was perceived to be significantly more rigorous in industry than that encountered in the Business School. The participants revealed that there was an appreciation of the role and need for external scrutiny. However, as external quality evaluation of teaching had always taken place, such scrutiny was perceived as necessary and therefore accepted. There had been little awareness of the format of workplace scrutiny pre-entry, but there had been an expectation that this would be in place in some form based on previous work experiences.

Compared to previous employment situations, participants’ perceptions of safety and security of employment increased as they became absorbed within the work environment. Participants described the Business School as an autonomous decision-making unit, which was protected and sheltered from the competitive pressures they had faced in industry. The participants also described a perception that the Business School was not exposed to the difficulties that other university departments faced as student numbers were regularly above the targets that were set. Consequently funding was believed to be secure for the long-term.

There was evidence to suggest that those who perceived that things had significantly changed during their employment had been at the Business School for more than a decade. For example,

‘Subconsciously I was escaping from the heat of industry and saw the academic environment as a way of doing this. Now over twenty years down the line, I see the pressure as being the same as it was in industry. Things have certainly changed.’
(Senior Lecturer)

Long tenured staff described an environment whereby continuous work modification and adjustment had occurred. The participants also identified that the greater the period of Business School employment, the greater the likelihood that academic work became more like how participants remembered the business world. These individuals still wanted security and believed that the Business School was able to provide this, but to a lesser extent than when they had joined. However, even though there was a view that it was now a less secure job, it was still perceived as more stable than industry employment.

Financial reward was identified pre-entry as being a relatively unimportant feature. Participants described having moved out of industry with little concern for the financial aspects associated with a career in academia. Post-entry, salary remained relatively inconsequential. External peer group (i.e. known individuals employed in industry) comparison was prevalent. For example,

‘High salary brings high risk – we don’t have that risk. We will always have our jobs – really no matter what we do. What this actually means is that there is no real heat or pressure on us as individuals.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The evaluation of known individuals in industry work settings revealed a perception that commercial employment resulted in a much greater financial return. However, there was also an appreciation of the negative side attached to such a choice. Thus, the importance of pecuniary reward had not altered during Business School employment. The desire for security and stability remained valid. Views as to the extent of the security offered varied between participants and were largely associated with the length of tenure.

8.1.3 Job Satisfaction Post-Entry

The notion of job satisfaction continued to be highlighted as a want that was relevant post-entry. This was cited pre-entry as being concerned with the reduction in stress that had been experienced in industry. In addition, greater job satisfaction was perceived as being of greater relevance than pecuniary reward. The importance of the financial package remained of less importance than job satisfaction. For example,

‘The job here looked like it would be a cakewalk compared to where I was. The heat was really on me and both barrels were always pointed in my direction. I got out of that. It’s been great here. There are things that give me a serious headache, but that’s relatively speaking. It’s a million light years better.’
(Lecturer)

The above statement provides an example of the enduring notion of the desire for job satisfaction and the comparison applied to previous experiences. The individual identified that work in the Business School had been problematic but this had been relatively minor in comparison to workplace issues encountered and experienced elsewhere.

Again, knowledge of the environment added to the detail described in terms of what delivered job satisfaction. Descriptions of scenarios revealed that wants were not independent and impacted upon each other. For example, the increased awareness of what Business School employment entailed, revealed a relationship between job satisfaction and the work-related wants associated with teaching and research,

‘If I have to teach those first years again I’ll scream. I get nothing out of it. They get nothing out of it. Why do I get allocated them every year? I hate it. I’ve told everybody I hate it. It gives me nothing. I end up giving them a rubbish tutorial.’
(Lecturer)

The above example highlighted how a particular issue impacted on the specific want of a participant to be a good teacher and to achieve job satisfaction. What was evident was that as participants became more experienced and conversant with the actuality of the work of a Business School academic, situations were described that simultaneously related to issues in respect of both individual and work related wants.

8.2 The Appropriateness and Relevance of Work -Related Wants Post Entry

The next analysis considers the appropriateness and relevance of initial work-related wants. Work activity was predominantly related to teaching which was consistent with expectations prior to entering the Business School. The concept of wanting to be a good teacher and to do research remained valid, with the former still more prominent than the latter although the balance had been slightly redressed. An additional work-related want identified was promotion. The desire for promotion was not related to either teaching or research. However, as a consequence of being embedded within the context promotion was described as something that was desired. Promotion was not mentioned in relation to the original psychological contract. The absence of promotion in the initial contract was perhaps related to the lack of knowledge about the new work environment. In addition, participants described previous work experiences whereby further promotion within such contexts was identified as unlikely. Consequently, there was no indication that career advancement was in the cognitive schema of new starts. However, post-entry it was described as relevant once knowledge and experience of the context had developed.

8.2.1 Post-Entry Teaching Wants

A new want that occurred post-entry was a desire to minimise teaching hours. The minimisation of teaching hours was identified as being consistent with aspiring to become a good teacher and the achievement of teaching excellence. The interviews identified that participants wished to specialise in a particular topic rather than teach a large number of modules at a more superficial level. Alternatively teaching specific groups of students was also identified as a desire. For example, teaching only postgraduate students, or delivery of bespoke courses to professional managers on executive education programmes, were cited as activities that gave some participants greater satisfaction. To attain such a focus, participants were of the view that a reduction in teaching hours was required. Consequently, a more focussed teaching workload was desired.

The counter view to wanting less teaching hours was the desire by a small number to undertake more teaching as this was perceived as the main source of job satisfaction. The original psychological contract identified a desire to do good teaching. However, what had transpired was that participants were much more aware of what was involved in relation to teaching. There were many different facets and aspects. Participants varied in their views as to what parts of teaching were considered attractive

to them. Again, increased complexity in respect of this aspect of the job was apparent. What was also evident is that within the auspices of teaching and assessment, a wide spectrum of unexpected activities was described. Participants believed themselves to be involved in a vast and undefined range of different teaching related features, with new factors being introduced to add further complexity to the situation with what appeared to be increasing regularity. Pre-entry discussions relating to teaching had concentrated on the amount of time that would be involved in face-to-face teaching. However, the time spent on classroom delivery was perceived to be small in relation to the working week. The reality experienced, irrespective of when the participants had joined the Business School, was higher than expected teaching workloads.

It was evident that a more detailed understanding of teaching had been ascertained post-entry. The complexity of this element within the psychological contract had increased from the pre-entry conceptualisation. The added complexity resulted in the description of many problems and issues in relation to teaching activity which impacted upon other aspects of the contract. The validity of the original psychological contract in respect of teaching was questioned by the participants. The lived experience of teaching was for the most part significantly different to what had been anticipated and suggested that the psychological contract in this respect had been naive.

8.2.2 Post-Entry Research Wants

The research aspects of the role were described by a much larger number of participants post-entry. The more recently recruited staff revealed a greater appreciation of research output as a relevant aspect of higher education employment. However, there was a view that the management hierarchy within the Business School did not perceive research output to be of fundamental importance. There was also a perception that the management position on research may change in the future based on the view that the RAE was of increasing importance to all universities. Thus, there was acknowledgement of the enhanced significance of external quality assessment in respect of published research work. However, as there has been no internal management drive to pursue research, it was viewed as an activity largely undertaken for personal gratification. The view of research was similar post-entry to pre-entry in terms of being a peripheral activity that may or may not play a part in future work activity. However, research for a number of participants had been incorporated into the psychological contract as a consequence of increased knowledge of the higher education context.

Another feature that was described post-entry was the desire by those who already had undertaken research, to help and assist others to participate in this activity. This was described in connection with the ideological aspects of the psychological contract whereby the desire to help students and the wider community was extended to colleagues within the institution.

The research aspects of the psychological contract were again clarified post entry. The relevance of research was apparent and the desire to pursue this facet increased. Participants described a change in emphasis between teaching and research that developed as knowledge of the Business School and the wider context increased.

8.3 The Appropriateness and Relevance of Ideology Post-Entry

The third strand of the psychological contract was concerned with the ideological aspects associated with work in the higher education context. The initial contract identified ideological aspects as the development of others in society, and societal contribution. The only addition to ideology was the identification by a small number of academics that they wished to help others with their research. The ideological aspects of the original contract were clarified and more precisely articulated.

The ideological aspects in terms of contribution to the development of students remained an important feature. Student development was identified as relevant irrespective of the length of employment, although the degree of importance assigned to this varied over time. Two examples are provided,

‘The non-financial aspects are more important to me than the money side of things – I mean things like student feedback, being asked to write references by students, and being asked by students to help them with their personal problems. The money is fine – I do get a little bit fed up with not getting a reward based on how good a job that you do – the result is that there is no incentive – you start to feel – what is the point of trying hard – but I suppose it is my own sense of pride that makes me want to do as good a job as possible – but nobody has ever said well done – or, for that matter, what a terrible job you did there – or even something in between! The result is that I don’t know if I’m doing a good job.’
(Lecturer)

‘There were certainly fewer students when I first started. It was a time when there were no modules or semesters – there were subjects and terms. The academic year was structured to allow you time to develop ideas and to explain things to students. It also gave them time to go away and do some of their own research on areas that they found difficult or were interested in. This simply doesn’t happen nowadays. It’s now just one big rush to get through things – to get them ready for the exam – that’s all they are interested in. Thus, student interaction is much less – there is no time for discussion about things. The students are basically left to get on with it.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The comments above were typical of the satisfaction and reward derived from student development and how this had altered over time. Issues arose in respect of imposed change such as the move from face-to-face to on-line tutoring. Changes in pedagogy were identified as problematic. For example, on-line tutoring was described as providing a reduced sense of fulfilment and satisfaction, allied to the belief that this approach to delivery would only increase in the future.

Another change in pedagogy that was interpreted negatively was a decision to alter delivery of modules from small group teaching to a mass delivery system using a larger number of lectures and a reduced volume of tutorials. The ideological satisfaction from these approaches was identified as significantly less. Issues were identified that related to the perceived reduced contribution that participants believed they were making to student progress and development. Conversely, other staff commented on this change but did not perceive it to be an issue that caused them concern notwithstanding that satisfaction from teaching was part of the psychological contract. For example,

‘The basics of this job haven’t changed over the years – you still have to be able to teach. Certainly the numbers have increased but it doesn’t matter if there is thirty or three-hundred, the fundamentals don’t change – you may have to adapt things slightly but that’s not difficult. You get to know the good students and you help the bad ones along.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The change was accepted as unproblematic based on a perception that it was still teaching and making some sort of contribution to the development of the student, albeit in a slightly modified format. Thus, a situation was described whereby change within the context was evident but the impact on ideology varied. Participants were still teaching even though it may have been different to what they had experienced in the past in terms of the volume of the workload and the pedagogical approach.

The interviews identified that ideological aspects of the original and subsequent psychological contract were perceived to be of less significance than either work-related or individual wants. Ideology was identified originally as the third aspect considered after both individual and work related wants were satisfied. The perception of ideology as being less important had not changed once employment in the context had been experienced.

8.4 Discussion

The interviews revealed that the experience of Business School employment resulted in the clarification of wants as participants became more familiar with the environment. What was identified as being important pre-entry was still relevant but greater detail was attached to each theme. It was evident that some wants were fixed whilst other wants were transient with individuals adjusting needs and wants as personal circumstances altered and/or interpretation of the environment changed.

The psychological contract based on individual, work, and ideological wants endured from pre-entry through to individuals with over twenty years of experience. The process of sensemaking resulted in elucidation and detailed explication of components, but schemas were largely unaltered. The notion of interdependence between wants was also described as an enhanced understanding of the context developed. Pre-entry wants were largely free-standing and viewed as separate components. However, experience of the work environment revealed that decisions could impact on more than one individual or work related want.

The sensemaking process has been described (for example, De Vos et al., 2003) as a process through which newcomers actively formed and changed their cognitive schema. Saks and Ashforth (1997) described the sensemaking process as a fundamental part of the maturation of attitudes and behaviours that facilitated the effective functioning of new recruits in the workplace. They also identified that sensemaking allowed for the development of more multifarious and dense psychological contracts (Morrison, 1993; Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Bauer et al., 1998). However, the evidence in this study suggested that psychological contracts had greater clarity post-entry rather than becoming more complex, although a small number of additional elements had been incorporated. Clarity had been incorporated into the psychological contract as a greater understanding of the context and the higher education environment had occurred. This was similar to previous research which suggested that schema were dynamic (for example, Rousseau, 1995, 2001; De Vos et al., 2003) and change was likely to occur because of increased awareness of the work setting (Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002). The data from this study found that the sensemaking process was described by the participants as a continuous and ongoing course of action, and although relevant to new starts, was also applicable to employees with well developed knowledge and experience of the context. The process was both dynamic and incessant as participants attempted to make sense of ambiguous data. Thus, although

Saks and Ashforth (1997) and De Vos et al., (2003) concentrated on new starts, it was evident that sensemaking continued throughout employment with participants interpreting events and circumstances as they arose.

Rousseau (2001) considered the linkages between cognitive beliefs and suggested that these would change and evolve over time from discrete beliefs to more elaborately organised schemas composed of many interrelated beliefs. Participants described elements that were not independent or of equal importance. This was similar to the conclusion of Shore and Tetrick (1994) who identified that individuals possessed views that had different weighting, some that were fixed, whilst others were more pliable and flexible. There was evidence of change in terms of the degree of importance and relevance attached to components. The notion of how different components within the psychological contract were seen as more or less relevant facilitated different explanations to relatively similar circumstances over time. Sensemaking was a career long phenomenon with participants involved in the creation of believable (to them) evaluations of events.

What appeared as naive and imperfect schema, similar to that described by Anderson and Thomas (1996), were subsequently described by participants as relevant and appropriate. However, the participants appeared to be involved in a process of post hoc justification in respect of the move to higher education. Participants described what they perceived at the time of entry to be a radical choice of job. However, they were still employed in the position. The enthusiasm and degree of willingness to change career direction may have had some impact upon the rationalisation that the job was largely what participants had expected it to be like.

The discussion will now consider the impact of external policy on the participants in this study.

8.4.1 The Impact of External Policy

The respondents identified a conceptualisation of their work environment that largely ignored issues beyond the boundaries of the Business School. There was a perception that they were in secure and long-lasting employment positions whereby external pressures were not a major consideration. This was consistent with the views held when joining the Business School and the movement away from the stress associated with industry. The initial psychological contract incorporated for many individuals a

notion of pressure removal, stability, and security. This remained in place as the relative pace of change was perceived to be slower than had been experienced in industry, and the view that external policy was not a major feature for the Business School academic. The basis for evaluation was the perception of what work was like in the business environment, which acted as a dampening influence in relation to academic change.

In relation to the changes that had occurred in higher education, such as massification, and increased scrutiny through surveillance of activity using quality systems and processes, the wants reported were largely unrelated to such features. The literature had suggested that individual academics were perhaps ultimately concerned about examination through the public forum of the RAE, and less at the micro level of the organisation or at management levels lower in the hierarchy (e.g. Nixon, 1996, 1997; Gumport, 2000). However, there was a perception that external quality assessment mechanisms had made little impact in this context. The participants were not, for the most part, concerned about examination through the RAE. Similarly, it was viewed that the QAA impacted to the same extent as previous entities charged with the scrutiny of a particular facet of higher education. This perhaps explained why issues were not ideological but more concerned with individual and work wants. Issues were largely described as being created by actions and decisions that occurred within the context of the Business School. This resulted in criticism of the decision-making process and the implementation of decisions. There was no evidence of negativity directed at the University management or policy makers at the macro-education level.

The changes in higher education had not been rationalised as fundamental to the psychological contracts of those within this context. There was some evidence to indicate that this was linked to the duration of higher education employment, which suggested that the greater the time spent in the Business School, the more it was perceived as moving towards the industry-world left behind. There have undoubtedly been changes in higher education policy, but these were not rationalised as fundamental to the psychological contracts of those within this context. Policy within higher education (in the terms highlighted by Willmott (1995), Nixon (1996), and Gumport (2000), for example), had not resulted in the creation of issues that were considered important, perhaps because of the relative position of ideology within the psychological contract identified here whereby both work and individual wants were more relevant and issues that were identified related more directly to these areas.

8.5 Conclusions for Research Question Two

The psychological contract of the Business School academic was described as having changed minimally as a consequence of the knowledge and experience gained post entry. Sensemaking acted as a confirmation mechanism in respect of the expectations of what the job would entail and the pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits that would be received. The approach to employment choice in this context was perhaps a reaction to events in other contexts, but once the decision had been made justification of the decision was undertaken. The initial cognitive schemas were validated and sensemaking provided clarity and focus. However, it would appear that individuals did broadly understand what work in the Business School context would entail when they accepted the position. Awareness of the relevant job aspects facilitated a relatively smooth transition from one occupation to another. Thus, the initial psychological contract was an important factor in determining the degree of adjustment required by new starts.

However, the interviews consistently provided descriptions that highlighted the relevance of the work context. Elements of dissatisfaction were attributable to within-context decisions. Much less influence was attached to externally initiated factors such as educational policy and reforms. The identification and categorisation of issues will now be considered within the next Chapter.

Chapter Nine

Factors Influencing Participants Psychological Contracts

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9.0 Introduction

Chapter Eight considered the relevance and appropriateness of the initial psychological contract. Chapter Nine considers the participants' lived experience of work within the Business School. This Chapter will focus on the factors that caused participants to perceive that contracts had been breached or violated. The research question examined in this Chapter was,

What were the factors that impacted upon the psychological contract of participants in this context?

9.1 The Identification of Factors Influencing Psychological Contracts

The terminology in this Chapter reflected the descriptions of events and circumstances provided in the interviews. Participants did not use terminology such as "breach" or "violation" as this was not how they evaluated or appraised issues or problems that they had encountered in the workplace. However, as Morrison and Robinson (1997) identified, violation and breach are distinct phenomena. They defined contract breach as cognisance of broken agreements, and violation as the emotional reaction to breach. Participants described problems and issues that occurred and the consequent impact these had on the psychological contract. The essence of this study was to capture the descriptions of the participants and how they evaluated decisions that occurred. Workplace issues were described by participants that included both violations and breaches.

The interviews revealed that psychological contracts post-entry were relatively stable and largely based on their original conceptualisation. However, the lived experience of the Business School was accompanied by many issues and problems that impacted upon the psychological contract. Participants described scenarios that had occurred throughout their employment. The analysis will commence with a consideration of issues that related to new starts.

9.2 Problems that Occurred for New Starts

The participants described how problems occurred when they commenced work in the Business School. For example,

‘In the first year or so everything was new and I enjoyed taking on the responsibilities. People were saying I was daft taking on so much and I was working day and night to make things work.’
(Lecturer)

The lecturer who provided the above statement then asked for some time off in lieu that he/she believed was due because of the volume of work activity that had been undertaken. When this request was rejected, the participant described how he/she felt let down as a consequence of this treatment. The example above was a typical description of a first experience of unfairness. The interviews revealed that when participants were new starts they were ascribed tasks that in hindsight were valued least by incumbents. With no prior exposure to employment in a Business School, the perceived unfair allocation only became evident once the individual had developed an understanding of the environment. The perception of unfairness was accompanied by a feeling of naivety, and a sense that the participants had been exploited. Participants also rationalised that they had been misled in relation to teaching workload during the recruitment phase. For example,

‘They said about eight to twelve hours teaching a week. Yeah, that would’ve been great. Try about sixteen hours on average with all the other stuff mixed in. But it’s the same for all the new boys.’
(Lecturer)

The participants also described a lack of information post-entry. For example,

‘A big negative was the lack of training involved when I started. I was promised a lot of help by my Division Head as I had never done any teaching before, but there was nothing. Nobody told me anything about systems and procedures. There was no manual – it was all a bit haphazard. I moaned about it but nothing was done. Coming from the environment I have, where everything comes from a procedures manual, I found this quite disturbing. There was no School or Division induction, no introduction or explanation of something like the academic regulations. There were loads of different little bits and pieces coming at you from all directions. I was completely confused for weeks and irked that this could happen to me. It was all nice and jolly before I got here, then splash - get in at the deep end.’
(Lecturer)

As awareness of the inaccurate description of the nature of the work became evident, and knowledge of the environment and context increased, individuals became increasingly aware of the mismatch between what had been described and their lived experience. The perception created pre-entry was appropriate for a minority, but teaching activity was always greater than the level portrayed during the recruitment process. However, within one subject area the management of new employees was praised. The following statement came from a participant employed in the last ten years,

‘I didn’t get the crap when I first started, which is the normal case scenario. I have seen others given the dross because they are bottom of the pile. It’s very demotivating for them.’
(Lecturer)

The interviews suggested that new starts were given an impression of work in the Business School during the recruitment phase that was different to that experienced by the majority of new starts. Although work was related to teaching (which was the pre-entry expectation), the volume was larger than had been expected. Knowledge of the workplace also revealed that the number of teaching hours was larger than incumbents. The data suggested that new starts were managed differently to those that had been in place longer, but this was not always the case, with some participants describing how they had been sympathetically managed when they had been new starts.

When participants believed they had been treated differently this provoked criticism directed at the individual who was attributed as having created the false perception. The view that decision-makers had been disingenuous in respect of pre-entry promises was described as problematic in terms of the implication for the degree of believability that could be subsequently apportioned to subsequent statements made by those charged with supervisory responsibility. The influence of management on the psychological contract will now be further considered.

9.3 The Influence of Management on the Psychological Contract

Participants described their relationship with the management hierarchy within the context. The relationship that each participant formed with relevant decision-makers was identified as being relevant to the attainment of wants. Participants described many situations whereby they believed they had been subjected to unfair decisions. The sense of unfairness of treatment was not confined to the period immediately after entry. For example, the following is a scenario described by a participant who had been in higher education for more than ten years who perceived that any protest he/she made was invariably ignored,

‘I’m seen as the ‘dumping ground’ in my division. I feel that I get penalised for being able to cope in difficult situations.’
(Senior Lecturer)

Interpretation of the fairness of decisions was based on how comparable others had been treated. These comparisons could be with others located in the context, with people in other educational

establishments, or occasionally individuals located in industry. The fairness described in the statement above related to the inequitable distribution of workload which impacted upon the ability of the individual to achieve job satisfaction. The individual wanted to teach, but perceived that being asked to do significantly more than others was unfair. Another academic commented that he/she was disaffected by a lack of appreciation in relation to the contribution that he/she believed had been made to the Business School. The individual was bemoaning a lack of recognition for work done believing it to be manifestly unfair treatment. The participant also suggested that he/she was being prevented from developing within the organisation thus not being allowed to maximise potential. The participant identified how both individual wants and work wants were affected.

Participants described the creation of false hope whereby academic staff perceived that certain assurances had been made, but these were subsequently not delivered. The description of promises not being carried out was again associated with the perception of fairness. Some individuals described hopes being quashed whilst others described them being delivered. Thus, depending on the perceived extent of the mismatch between promises and delivery, this was perceived as problematic. For example,

‘I enjoy the job. However, things have cropped up that turn me into a grumpy old woman. This mostly stems from being told something is going to happen and it doesn’t. This is bad form but I can live with it. What really gets me going is when I get let down and somebody else runs off with my prize.’
(Lecturer)

A further example of expectations being created related to those participants who were keen to undertake research activity. Participants described how decision-makers within the context had created opportunities for some and not for others. The perception of being prevented from doing research, especially when it was perceived that there was a growing importance attached to research, was described as a serious issue.

There have already been examples cited within this analysis of issues in relation to teaching. The desire to be a good teacher was identified before entry and continued to be relevant during employment. The evidence in relation to new starts was described above. The interviews identified that once knowledge of the environment had increased, individuals were motivated to alter the level of

teaching to suit specific needs and wants. For example, a reduction in teaching hours in order to specialise was identified. However, this was not always achievable,

‘I have tried to get a reduction in my teaching workloads to concentrate on working with the corporate clients. At the moment I’m trying to do this with a massive teaching load, while others seem to get off with doing virtually nothing.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The participant who made the above statement went on to describe how he/she had tried to get things changed but had been unsuccessful. He/she went on to highlight how after a period of time failing to change factors within the workplace, the level of enthusiasm he/she had in relation to trying to alter things had declined and acceptance of situations became a more likely response.

The opposite position was also described whereby individuals wanted to increase their number of teaching hours but were unable to attain the appropriate teaching workload,

‘The quality of job is not as good now as when I first joined. There is not as much job satisfaction. I have less teaching, and I am involved in distance learning, which is not as good in that there is less direct involvement with students.’
(Senior Lecturer)

There did appear to be a relationship between teaching issues and the length of time the individual had been located within the Business School. Nine of those employed for greater than ten years (out of thirteen) reported a teaching workload that was either broadly similar or less than at the start of their academic career. This particular group identified that the teaching environment had been more stable when they had joined the School, with less courses and fewer students. For example,

‘I do think that workloads have gone up for some – but not for me. Increasing workloads are largely self-induced. Those that want to get on are always firing new initiatives out. This gives them more work to do. This is fine if you want to get promoted. I knew that I wasn’t going to get any higher than where I am now, so when I got there I knew there was no point pushing on for anything else. I’m quite happy to do my bit, but I’m not going to do anymore. What’s the point – there is nothing in it for me. I won’t say no to anything – but I certainly will not be putting myself forward.’
(Senior Lecturer)

‘There is a view that workloads have increased, but I see this as a consequence of poor individual management. I do less teaching now than I have ever done. A moaning culture has crept in to make sure that staff numbers are maintained. Students certainly demand more now – they moan more, this then translates into staff moaning about students.’
(Lecturer)

It was evident from the comments above that it had been possible to maintain an acceptable level of teaching (a work want), which also impacted on job satisfaction and flexibility (individual wants). All participants described how issues had occurred in relation to teaching at some point. However, the degree of seriousness ascribed to the issue varied. For example, one academic identified how he/she was forced to undertake an increased teaching workload. The increase resulted in the participant being unable to continue with a balance of activity which allowed sufficient flexibility and autonomy to achieve the same level of work satisfaction that had previously been available. The participant revealed that the reduction in flexibility and autonomy was a major issue,

'I hate the office. It has a negative influence on staff output, well certainly mine. I was doing lots of online teaching from home, but now I have to come in to do more face to face – I don't know why. This means my work week is more fixed, regimented than it was. It has made me think about the number of hours I'm working and my contract hours are something I'm now much more aware of.'

(Lecturer)

The above example was provided by a participant who had moved to higher education because of the stress of business and found working at home to be productive, relaxing, and enjoyable. The withdrawal of a valued non-pecuniary reward was an issue that caused significant concern. The interviews revealed that wants were interdependent. For example, in the scenario above the erosion of flexibility impacted on job satisfaction. Thus, two separate wants were impinged upon as a consequence of one decision.

A further example was described by two academics who had cited stress of business as the major determinant for profession change and indicated that they wanted to be in control of their teaching and to teach as little as possible. They identified that giving up a career in business because of stress alerted them to the issues that had caused this. For both these members of staff, control of the fundamental work activity was deemed crucial to the psychological contract of both. Thus, when additional teaching activity was allocated to them, the degree of upset was significant. A further scenario related to a situation where a participant described being allocated modules to teach that were not directly related to his/her area of expertise. However, the individual perceived that as long as there was sufficient time to prepare then this was undertaken and accepted as unproblematic.

9.3.1 The Perception of the Effectiveness of Management Communication with Participants

The communication between participants and decision-makers within the hierarchical structure was also described as having created problems. For example, one participant described having to develop distance learning resources in a timescale that he/she perceived was impossible. He/she believed that the request to undertake this task had been handled in a dictatorial fashion and consequently enthusiasm for the task was reduced. The participant went on to say that although the required materials were created they were of a variable standard. The participant stated that the reason that some of the materials were of lesser quality was because there had been no communication or negotiation as to the best way to approach the task. The participant went on to say that in hindsight he/she could see the necessity for such materials as new markets had opened up as a consequence, but also noted that the whole process could have been completed in a more user-friendly way that would ultimately have produced better learning resources.

The communication issue highlighted in the above example was described as having created an unpleasant working atmosphere. The participant described how a series of similar decisions had been made with which he/she disagreed. The participant identified that a number of relatively minor decisions had resulted in there being a cumulative negative impact on his/her psychological contract. The aggregation of small problems had resulted in the creation of a general perception that work in the Business School was not what they had previously experienced, or what the participant wanted the work to be like.

9.4 Perceptions of Fairness in Relation to the Attainment of Reward

The attainment of financial reward was not perceived to be a major concern pre-entry. The interviews revealed that salary remained of minimal concern to participants. However, non-pecuniary reward in the form of recognition and status was described as a concern. Participants described how they wanted to receive the same reward as others for comparable work. For example,

‘What I want is the same as the next man. I do about twice the amount of work as ‘Lecturer X’ yet I know for a fact that he gets at least ten grand more than me. He came in higher up the scale than me and now he does nothing and I get shunted off with promises of jam tomorrow. I want the bloody jam today. It has been jam tomorrow for about five years now.’
(Lecturer)

There was also evidence from promoted staff in respect of appropriateness of reward. Two examples are provided below whereby both participants perceived that their contribution towards the overall goals of the School had brought insufficient reward,

‘The money reward is crap for the work I do and the responsibility I have. I could make a complete balls-up – and bang there goes a quarter of a million pounds of income to the University. I want salary to reflect performance. I don’t care how this is defined. They can define it any way they want.’

(Senior Lecturer)

‘The money we get is on the edge of being worthwhile. However, the biggest issue as I see it is the problems with flexibility of salary scales. The University and the School could do a lot more to recognise people. Those doing more, contributing more to the goal and targets of the School should be rewarded accordingly. This apparently can’t happen – therefore what is the incentive? All the Senior Lecturers basically get the same although there is a huge disparity in workload and contribution.’

(Senior Lecturer)

The implication was that both individuals believed that they were charged with making significant strategic decisions and were not rewarded accordingly if this resulted in significant revenue streams to the School. Both academics compared themselves to other senior lecturers in the Business School who they described as having much less responsibility, but were rewarded similarly. It was again apparent that the issues had occurred due to the perceived inequity of distribution rather than the level of remuneration.

The desire to achieve a promoted position was related to the perception of fairness of the reward structure and was described as having created significant angst and torment. The interviewees described an attitude of professionalism whereby they wanted to do the best they could in the job. Participants described how their contribution was subjected to an ongoing process of self and peer evaluation whereby individuals examined their own input as well as that of colleagues. The example below was provided by a participant who had been employed for over a decade and was disillusioned in respect of his/her inability to advance within the hierarchy. The disillusionment was based on his/her perception of relative contribution,

‘Looking back it was obvious that I had no chance from the outset of getting the promotion – it had nothing to do with my ability – I was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. It had nothing to do with my performance – which was excellent. There has been a lack of transparency and integrity. But, I believe that I have demonstrated that I’m not beaten – I’m not in the huff, but I have never been so annoyed. I want the recognition so that everybody can see that I am doing a good job, I just want rewarded for what I have done. I don’t feel well rewarded.’
(Lecturer)

The statement above highlighted the notion of both distributive and procedural justice. The example highlighted that not only were the ends of social exchange important, but also the means (procedural justice) by which those ends were attained. Participants also described the formal process of performance appraisal within the University as being central to issues that were described in terms of procedural justice. The phrase that was most commonly used in relation to this system was ‘waste of time’. There was a view that performance examination had little relevance to the development of participants, largely because the appraisal process was perceived as being more important to the participant than the appraiser. The statements below provide evidence of the typical perception of the appraisal mechanism within this context. The first two are from the same participant,

‘I have backed out of the staff development process for the last two years. I think it is pointless.’
(Senior Lecturer)

‘I really don’t think that anybody really cares what makes me tick – just as long as I keep doing what I’m doing.’
(Senior Lecturer)

‘The staff development process is a joke. It is simply a paper chase that goes through the motions of evaluation and development planning.’
(Lecturer)

Individuals who believed that they should have been promoted but were not, described the process of career advancement as unclear, illogical, inconsistent, and lacking in transparency. There were different understandings of the process and the criteria involved. The perception existed that advancement was largely based on the whim of the individuals involved in the selection procedure. The consequent outcome was articulated as disillusionment and resentment towards the participants involved in the promotion decision-making. For example,

‘I am more than just slightly pissed off that the rules of the game always seem to be changing – sorry – there don’t seem to be any fixed rules of the ‘promotion game’! Every time I seem to do the things that people appear to gauge as important, then something else is seen as more important and that elusive chance of promotion is snatched away from me.’
(Lecturer)

The academic staff who identified that they were content to remain at the grade they had achieved, described reward and satisfaction from non-pecuniary features of both the work and non-work environment. There also existed a perception that the opportunity cost in terms of the financial reward gained in return for the additional workload that would accompany such a promotion made it an unattractive proposition.

9.5 The Fluid Nature of the Psychological Contract

The participants described the fluid nature of the psychological contracts. Individuals identified how the ascribed importance of components could increase or decrease. For example, one academic described a situation whereby he/she had pursued promotion during his/her first ten years at the Business School. However, promotion had not been attained and he/she described a perception of procedural, interactional, and distributive injustice. The issue was described as serious. However, the participant had subsequently reached a conclusion that promotion was no longer a major feature of his/her career within academia and a revised psychological contract had been formulated such that issues that related to promotion were no longer relevant,

‘I’ve been screwed in relation to promotion, but I suppose with hindsight it’s a blessing. I feel that I have been treading water over the years. I’m in a contained comfort zone that I’m happy with. I’m now more selfish and do more research for myself. My emphasis in the past has been on helping other people, and on helping others to succeed and being happy with their success. But I am now going to do more research on my own. I no longer think about promotion. It’s gone.’
(Lecturer)

Interestingly, the above participant subsequently altered the position described above. However, the methodological limitations alluded to in Chapter Six and discussed more fully in Chapter Eleven, resulted in this alteration in perspective and behaviour being further analysed.

Another example was articulated by a participant who described how he/she had been required to teach more hours which had reduced his/her flexibility and resulted in his/her ability to work at home being compromised. However, as this coincided with his/her child leaving school the importance of flexibility was reduced, although it remained a part of the psychological contract. Consequently, what would have been a significant issue was now considered to be an inconvenience.

The description of issues altering and the dynamic nature of the psychological contract were features of the participants in this context.

9.6 Discussion

Participants described how the leadership of the Business School influenced the work of participants. Situations and circumstances were described in relation to decisions that were considered to be unfair. What precisely constituted unfairness varied considerably from one individual to another, reflecting differences in how each participant viewed his/her position in relation to comparable situations. As Shore et al. (2004) suggested it was important to recognise the simultaneous influence of multiple internal and external contexts and the varying impact each could make on the psychological contract. There was support of the assertion made by Shore et al. (2004) that context could differ significantly from one individual to the next even when carrying out similar jobs or tasks within an organisation. The range of perceived unfairness identified in this study included situations and circumstances whereby participants believed that they had been discriminated against which resulted in unmerited advantages being afforded to others.

It was evident that some individuals were independent entities concerned solely with self-fulfilment whilst others were interdependent. The notion of interdependency identified that individuals focussed not only on themselves, but relevant others. For example, if a participant perceived a colleague in the same cognate discipline was able to reduce his/her teaching workload for no transparent or discernible reason, then this may be viewed as unfair. Subsequently, the participant may pursue a similar reduced teaching schedule even though he/she had been satisfied with the volume of teaching activity that had been previously allocated. However, for some there was little value given to comparisons, if indeed they were undertaken, and what others had achieved was of no consequence.

The study identified that evaluations about the fairness or otherwise of decisions was a process undertaken by most participants. The study concurred with Thompson and Heron (2005) in that the psychological contract reflected individual understandings of the degree to which justice has been done. The term justice here being descriptive in orientation, identifying academic's perceptions of what constituted fairness in terms of his/her psychological construct.

Employees had views on all situations that impacted upon them. For all employer decisions, whether explicit or implicit, written or unwritten, employees made a judgement on the decision taken, and applied their own perception of the fairness of that action. Examples of distributive, procedural, and interactional injustice were described. However, the type of injustice was not material. What was important was the identification and evaluation of the degree of injustice as perceived by the individual.

9.6.1 The Perceived Seriousness of an Injustice

Participants described being misled before starting and after commencing employment. The conclusions participants arrived at as a consequence of initial sensemaking were often considered inappropriate due to false information being generated from trusted individuals within the organisation. Participants described how this had caused irritation. However, individuals described being appeased when it became apparent that differential treatment of new starts was a frequent, almost normal occurrence. New starts were subsequently pacified if they perceived that he/she had not been specifically or singularly maltreated. If a participant believed that he/she had been unfairly dealt with in comparison to others then the issue was serious, however at the other end of the spectrum, if all academic staff in the context had been treated in the same way then this was largely, but not universally, accepted as a legitimate and acceptable work practice.

There was a perception that issue seriousness was correlated to the relationship between the academic and hierarchical decision-makers within the Business School and had the potential to be a significant feature in the determination of work-related satisfaction. The perceived creation of false hope was described as the belief that an academic held that he/she had been promised, either tacitly or explicitly, a change in some facet of work. If this was subsequently not delivered, an issue was identified. Resentment as a consequence of this was directed towards the individual attributed with the cause of the unfulfilled promise (procedural justice).

The interviewees suggested that injustice was largely dependent upon the closeness, scale, or uniqueness of the inequity. For example, in relation to closeness, if there was a perception that a person in the same subject area was promoted undeservingly (in the view of the participant), as opposed to somewhere else in the university or even in another cognate area, the categorisation of the issue by the non-promoted person was likely to be shaped accordingly. The more distant the inequity,

the less the perceived scale of the action, and/or the greater the number of individuals it impacted upon, the less likely it was to be perceived as a serious issue.

In respect of scale, if the recipient of a promotion had been rewarded in the eyes of the non-promoted academic for very little relative contribution, the seriousness of the issue would be greater than if the reward was considered to be deserved or appropriate. Scale and distance were interrelated to some extent, for example if an undeserving promotion was awarded close by this had a much greater impact than the same decision taken in another part of the University.

The uniqueness of the injustice can be illustrated using teaching allocation as an example. Participants described issues that related to the teaching (and associated administration) of students. Long-serving faculty identified that the average teaching workload had increased in terms of the numbers of student's that required to be taught and the number of hours that had to be dedicated to teaching activity. However, this was not perceived as a problem in itself if it was seen to be part of a general increase across the staff population. If this was the case then, although an issue, it was relatively small. However, perceived inconsistent or unfair allocation was a more significant issue. If a participant believed that only his/her teaching workload had increased, then the uniqueness of the situation resulted in a significant issue for the individual. It was apparent that some individuals were resistant to the increase even if all staff had experienced such a development. Thus, a change could result in many different interpretations of the seriousness of issues. In general, long-serving faculty indicated that although there had been an overall increase in teaching this had not significantly impacted upon their workload. The obvious question that this raised was how could some individuals achieve a better perceived teaching allocation than others?

A question in respect of the discussion contained in this section was, to what extent could the severity of issues be identified or predicted by the participants, or by those managing the participants? A serious issue for one member of staff might be considered trivial by others. Issues were inherently individualistic in nature as they required analysis and interpretation of circumstances that were specific in importance to the individual. In addition, at different points in the career or life of an individual, certain factors were weighted more heavily and decisions that impacted on an important want at one point in time may in later years be trivial or irrelevant. For example, long tenured academic staff who

had not achieved promotion after more than twenty years of service and nearing retirement age were no longer as interested in the advancement of others in the hierarchy whereby previously this was described as being of significant concern. Therefore, issues in relation to promotion were perceived to be less serious than earlier in his/her career, assuming that this was something that he/she wanted to happen. The next subsection will discuss the impact of gender, subject specialism, length of tenure and age in order to evaluate any trends or differences that arose as a consequence of these categorisations of staff.

9.6.2 Gender, Subject Specialism, Length of Tenure and Age

Examination of issues in terms of gender, subject specialism, length of tenure and age were undertaken. Some of these features have already been considered in the discussion. However, specific facets relating to these categories of participants have been further highlighted in this section. In respect of gender, there were no discernible differences in respect of the issues described, although the need for flexibility and autonomy was linked more towards family matters rather than entrepreneurial activities. However, when a reduction in flexibility occurred this resulted in an issue being identified as a consequence of the perceived failure of the individual to undertake the non-work activities that had previously been undertaken. The negativity associated with a diminution of flexibility was not gender specific but related to both work and non-work factors in the life of an individual. The lack of gender difference supported the findings of Ward and Sloane (2000) who found that women in academic settings reported similar levels of satisfaction. Although satisfaction levels were not being explicitly considered in this study, the conclusion that women evaluated their satisfaction levels within a higher education setting at a similar level to that of men intimated that gender differences were not significant.

Issues were not distinguished by length of tenure or age which was contrary to the findings of Oshagbemi (2000a, 2000b). He found that among university lecturers in the UK employment, longer tenure at their current university correlated with job satisfaction. The results from this study suggested that issues still arose for longer tenured academics which were similar to those that were described by more recent recruits. There was no suggestion in this study that issues ceased to arise or were less frequent in nature as length of employment increased. There was evidence of participants evaluating issues differently during their academic employment. The evidence in respect of subject specialism again did not suggest any recognisable patterns that could be attributed to this factor. The discussion

has largely focussed on factors within the Business School and also the non-work environment of the individual.

9.7 Conclusions for Research Question Three

The interviews revealed that perceived unfairness in respect of the decision-making of leaders within the context impacted negatively upon the psychological contracts of participants. Perceptions of the seriousness of issues varied between participants. The context was shaped by leadership decisions which were interpreted and evaluated as to their appropriateness and acceptability to each participant based on their psychological contract at that juncture. Decisions were evaluated by participants in different ways. If one individual was promoted then he/she will be happy but others may or may not be depending on their evaluation of the merit of such a decision. Evaluation of decisions was inherently individualistic in nature and it was apparent that the perceived seriousness of an issue could alter over time. It was also evident that even though all individual, work, and ideological wants were satisfied, issues could still arise if it was perceived that inequity, in whatever form, had taken place.

The management hierarchy were criticised for decisions that impacted on individuals. However, as leaders they were charged with decision-making. Leadership decisions were described mainly in terms of efficiency improvements, resource utilisation, pedagogy, organisational structure, and new product development. The decisions by the leaders shaped the work context. Evaluation of decisions was based on the effect each had on the work context of the individual. Participants agreed with certain decisions when the result was a work context that was either improved or unaltered. The participants held the leadership of the Business School accountable for the creation of issues. However, to blame management may not be entirely appropriate, as the role of the leaders was to create the work context that would best achieve the goals of the School. It was the mismatch between the context that had been created, and the wants of the individual, that would appear to result in issues being identified. To direct responsibility for disgruntlement at the decision-maker rather than the context would appear to be misdirected. Decision-makers will make good and bad decisions. The role of management is to achieve the goal of the organisation. Human capital is the most important resource of the university. Consequently, ensuring that the maximum return is generated from this resource would appear to be a realistic assumption. The participants highlighted ideology but were primarily concerned with the construction of a work context that would deliver their individual and work wants. Participants

conceptualised what the shape of the work context should be to achieve these wants. Participants required the desired context to match the actual context. When a mismatch occurred then issues were identified. The behavioural implications of issues will now be considered in Chapter Ten.

Chapter Ten

Participants Responses to Perceived Breaches and Violations of the Psychological Contract

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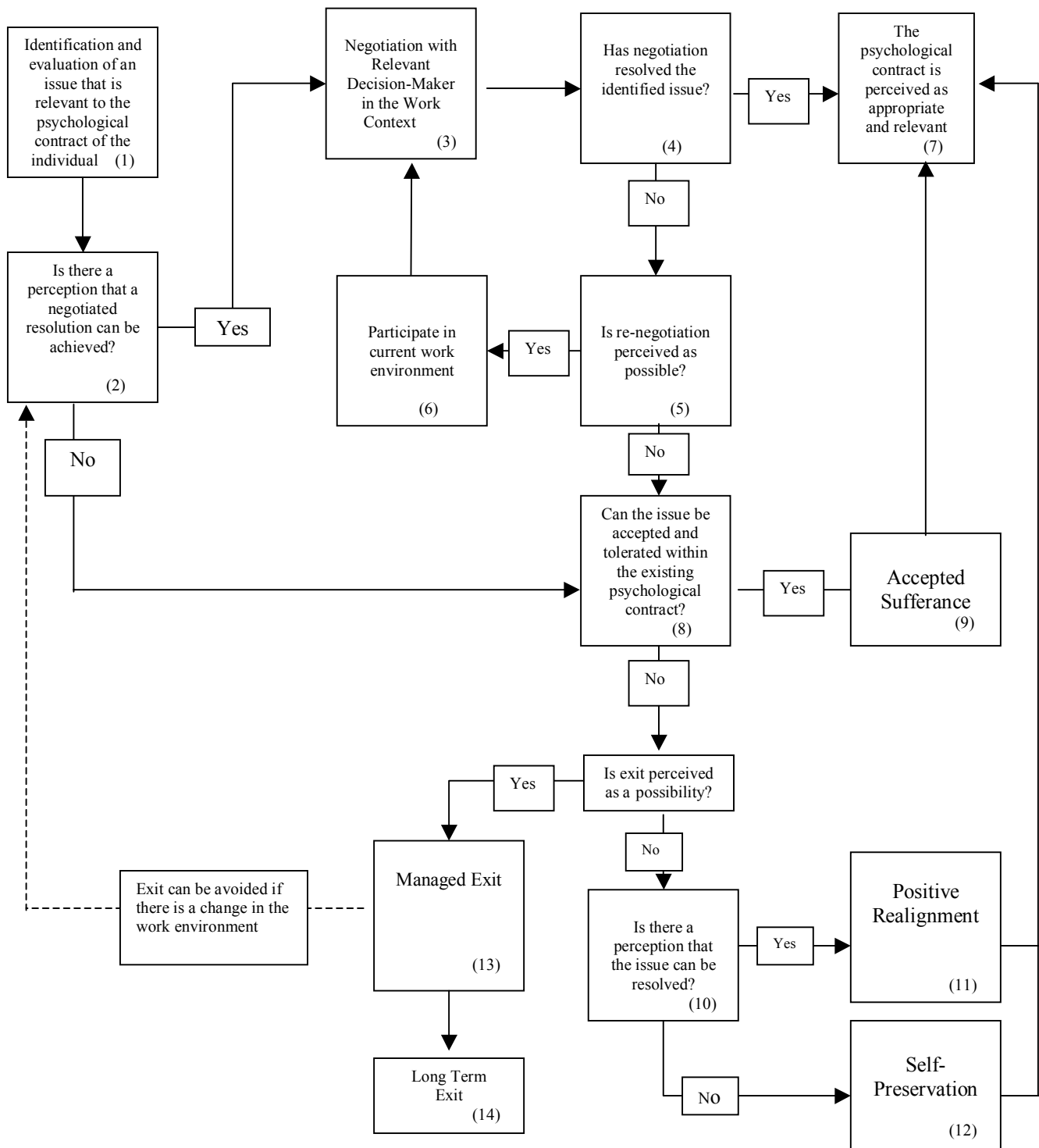
10.0 Introduction

Chapter Seven examined initial psychological contracts and how these were formulated. Chapter Eight considered the relevance and appropriateness of the initial psychological contract. Chapter Nine then analysed the factors that were identified as problematic for participants once they had experienced the Business School context. Chapter Ten considers the response of participants to issues identified by them. The research question was,

How did participants respond to perceived breaches and violations in their psychological contracts?

The questions used to unpack reactions were constructed within the interviews. For example, once an issue had been highlighted, a question such as ‘did you do anything about this?’ was used to engage the academic in an examination of his or her response. This would often be followed up by ‘and then what did you do?’, or ‘did you do anything else?’ in an attempt to uncover the full extent of reaction. The responses are presented in Figure 10.1. The analysis will consider these responses and has two parts. The first examines the negotiation process that attempted to resolve issues. The second considers responses that occurred as a result of perceived negotiation failure. A discussion of the main points from the analysis is then undertaken. An important caveat in relation to the analysis contained in this Chapter is that the study focussed on academic staff employed by the Business School and individuals that had chosen to leave the institution were not included. The exclusion of staff who had exited the institution was rationalised and justified in Chapter Six, however on reflection this has been identified as a methodological limitation inherent within this thesis and is considered more fully in Chapter Eleven.

Figure 10.1: Workplace Reaction to Issues



10.1 Negotiated Resolution of Issues

Participants described how they assessed and evaluated the likelihood of altering decisions that had created an issue. If there was a perception that some degree of change to the work environment could be accomplished then a process of negotiation would be undertaken. The negotiation process was undertaken in an attempt to resolve an issue or to modify circumstances in order to lessen the impact of the issue. For example,

‘I could see that there was going to be night teaching coming up. It was my turn. Everybody else had already had a go, but it was for two nights a week for the whole semester plus a couple of Saturdays. I got out of it by claiming that I was really involved in developing new ways of delivering to one of the full-time classes and that my input was invaluable. It wasn’t a lie. I knew that if I put it in such a way as to make it sound that I was doing something new and smart I would get exactly what I wanted.’
(Lecturer)

The example above identified that the perception of success was considered to be high before negotiation took place. The participant was able to enact a situation whereby his or her constructed psychological contract remained appropriate and relevant. The negotiation process is represented in Figure 10.1 as progressing from box (1) to box (7). The Figure identified that box (6) and box (7) may not be required and in the above example a resolution was achieved without recourse to extended or further renegotiation.

When negotiation was to be pursued, participants entered into a dialogue with the appropriate decision-maker. Normally, the initial meeting was an informal discussion. Subsequent to the negotiation, participants described how they evaluated the extent to which he or she perceived this had been a success. If it was viewed as a success then the breach or violation was resolved. However, if the negotiation was perceived to have failed, or be only a partial success, then participants were faced with a dilemma as to whether or not they believed that further negotiation would provide a resolution. The participants described instances whereby they believed that further negotiation might be successful. Consequently, participants described how they continued to work with an unresolved breach or violation before attempting further negotiation. Subsequent negotiation could be with the same individual or with others more senior in the hierarchy, and occasionally the human resource manager and trade union officials were involved.

An example of an issue not being resolved through negotiation related to an individual who queried why some colleagues had received upgraded computers and others, including him/her, had not? What was the rationale for selection? The participant described the issue as serious in that he/she believed it to be a tacit message in relation to relative value attributed to staff by decision-makers. He/she explored this with the appropriate decision-maker who had made assurances that he/she had not been involved in the decision, but would find out what the criteria had been. Subsequently, no explanation had been forthcoming in the agreed timeframe which further agitated and upset the participant leading him/her to believe that the initial supposition had been correct. Consequently, issue seriousness increased due to the lack of further information. What was evident in this example was a failure in the first stage of the process to construct a solution and the perceived seriousness of the issue being altered accordingly. The participant viewed further discussion as a pointless activity and the individual was left to evaluate further response possibilities.

The example above highlighted that if negotiation was unsuccessful and the academic believed that further iterations would not alter the outcome irrespective of which parties were involved in the discussion, the extent to which the issue was fundamental to the individual was considered. Participants described how, in some instances, it was evident that academics were prepared to accept some issues within psychological contracts. For example, one participant described how another member of staff had been allocated an office space. The participant believed that his/her contribution to the Business School had been at least equal to if not greater than the individual who had been given the office. The participant then described how he/she had raised the matter with management but felt that he/she had been given explanations that were deemed to be unsatisfactory. However, the participant went on to describe how the issue was subsequently viewed as irrelevant,

‘I’m happy enough. I like the work and most things about it. This grated with me, but it passed - the wound healed – and now I don’t think about it.’
(Lecturer)

The interviews suggested that satisfactory negotiated resolution was largely dependent on knowledge of how to manipulate, influence, or control the systems, procedures, and individuals within the work context. Specifically, negotiated resolution was perceived as being positively related to the relationship

an individual had constructed with decision-makers in the Business School. An example of manipulation is provided below,

‘The longer you are here, the easier it is to make your own position. You know what you can get away with – who can change things and how to get round them.’
(Senior Lecturer)

Participants described relationships with decision-makers whereby issues were easily resolved. If a positive relationship was in place, participants described how they were able to construct a work situation that delivered his or her needs and wants. Participants described feelings of anger and frustration when confronted with a situation whereby a resolution could not be negotiated. For example, one participant described how he/she was the most recent recruit into a division and was charged with undertaking a plethora of administrative duties that others in the same division were not. The participant highlighted that he/she was on a temporary contract and desperate to secure a permanent position. The participant stated how upset he/she felt at being singled out for what were perceived to be demeaning tasks but was of the view that there was no alternative other than to complete the duties. The participant believed that there was knowledge of his/her contractual circumstances throughout the Division, which resulted in the participant being treated differently to other members. The participant perceived that his/her situation was unchangeable until a more junior staff member was recruited and the administrative tasks could then be passed on. The example highlighted the situation of a relatively inexperienced participant trying to secure a permanent full-time contract and as a consequence he/she was unable to resolve the perceived inequitable treatment.

The interviews suggested that participants manipulated decision-makers. The manipulation of decision-makers did not always result in issue resolution. Participants described other responses when negotiation had failed to resolve an issue.

10.2 Responses Beyond the Negotiation Process

The participants described situations which had not been resolved through negotiation, or negotiation had been avoided. The interviews suggested that beyond the negotiation process, self-management of the situation was undertaken. Four response types were identified. These were (i) Accepted Sufferance, (ii) Positive Realignment, (iii) Self-Preservation, and (iv) Managed Exit. These four response types will now be considered.

10.2.1 Accepted Sufferance

The participants identified that when issues had not been resolved through negotiation, or negotiation had been avoided, there existed a notion of “accepted sufferance” whereby issues were accepted. In relation to Figure 10.1 the participant would be faced with the question (box 8) – can the issue be accepted and tolerated within the existing psychological contract? The individual may have rejected negotiation, or negotiation may have taken place and not succeeded. The individual was then faced with the dilemma as to whether or not the issue could be accepted and tolerated within the existing psychological contract. If the answer to that was yes, then “accepted sufferance” was the response.

The work context was less satisfactory for the individual. Wants were no longer attained to the same level and the psychological contract was modified accordingly. The interviews suggested that accepted sufferance could occur in relation to breaches or violations. There was a perception that in electing for accepted sufferance the position relating to the issue would not alter.

Rationalising the decision to accept a less satisfying work context, participants described the ideological aspects of the job. For example,

‘I came to teach. I didn’t expect all the other bits, like meetings, admin, and even selling the courses. I got out of sales to come here. Now I’m back selling. Trouble is I’m really good at it. But what that means is that I can’t get out of it. I try every year but nobody listens. I hate it, it’s boring. I’ve had it with selling. But I won’t leave. It would mean going back to selling full-time!’
(Lecturer)

The example highlighted the role of ideology and the above scenario also described a perception of being trapped in the Business School, with little possibility of resurrecting a professional career outside of the context. For example,

‘There have to be rewards in this job that are not related to money, otherwise I certainly would not be here. I suppose another element in this is my age. This is the longest job that I’ve ever had. I would need to find something where I could enjoy what I was doing at least as much as here. The only real possibility is to go part-time and do some academic and some consulting work – a couple of the guys here have already done that and I could possibly see myself going down that route. The only problem would be the pension implications of doing something like that, as it is all calculated on your final salary, which is daft really.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The example provided evidence to support the perception of being trapped within the context due to factors that could not be changed. A number of participants who were close to retirement cited the relevance of the pension provision as the reason for staying.

The interview with a participant nearing retirement revealed an individual with a perception of being unfulfilled in terms of work achievements. The participant described how his/her individual, work, and ideological wants had been satisfied to a degree, but there existed a perceived inability to utilise the negotiation process to its maximum. Unpacking reasons for this highlighted a belief that he/she was unable to persuade decision-makers to accept the respective merits of his/her arguments. The opportunity to exit was not possible. The individual believed he/she was trapped, with no option but to accept a degree of sufferance. However, within the statements below it was evident that in choosing to remain within the Business School, the individual believed that this decision was the correct outcome in the long run. Thus, although there was now a degree of accepted sufferance, when the participant evaluated the entire Business School employment experience wants had been attained in many previous years. A number of statements made by the academic are included in relation to his/her views and perceptions. These were selected from different parts of the interview,

‘I am disappointed at my lack of progress beyond Senior Lecturer level. I’ve had a number of different positions and responsibilities but none of them have resulted in a promotion as such.’

‘I think that I’m now treading water, not really getting anywhere and am probably a little bit too comfortable. I have been here for about ten years too long. I still enjoy teaching and used to put forward my ideas all the time. I used to be an important player, now I’m seen as an old goat sniping from the sidelines. I’m sure the powers that be want me to resign, they never ask me to do anything, and I never put forward my ideas anymore – although I still have plenty – what’s the point?’

‘The initial plan when I took the job full-time was to spend three years looking around and thinking about where I wanted my future career to be. However, my kids started to appear, which ruined my chances to up and go. Opportunities to go were there but the overall fit wasn’t quite right, and I spurned them all. Looking back I probably made the right decisions.’

‘The financial rewards are something that is quite interesting. They are just enough to ensure that the marginal benefits of moving [out of higher education] are not quite enough to justify the inconvenience and hassle of making that move. Any job would have had to have paid significantly more than I’m getting here to offset the advantages of working here. Added to this is the pension anxiety that creeps in after a certain age, probably around about fifty. This means that if you change jobs then you seriously have to consider the implications to your pension arrangements.’
(Senior Lecturer)

It was evident that long-standing academics in this context believed they were unable to effectively manipulate decision-makers to the same extent later in their career at the Business School as had been achieved on previous occasions. Participants described how they had entered the negotiation process on a number of occasions but now perceived this as a strategic option that was increasingly unlikely to deliver change for them. The reduction in success suggested a gradual shift towards failure in the negotiation process and acceptance of issues that they would have attempted to resolve earlier in their careers. Although familiarity with the process was identified as important in the achievement of a positive outcome, this appeared to reduce over time, especially as retirement approached. For example,

‘I am more relaxed in the job now that I have ever been; I am less inclined to waste energy. I know where to direct my energies. I have goals. The main one is to retire in 2-3 years and enjoy the rest of my life. I can’t influence things like I used to, so I don’t try – it’s much less stressful this way.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The perception that wants in the future could be achieved was also described as a rationale for accepting decisions in the short-term. The two quotations below are from one participant in support of accepted sufferance,

‘I get paid a substantial salary for a job I enjoy. It is more than my Dad ever got paid! Certainly if I had stayed where I was I would have got paid significantly more, but I didn’t like the working regime. I prefer to have lots of flexibility in my working life. The flexibility allows me to do additional days elsewhere that are remunerative.’

‘The holidays are great. I think it would be fair to say that I’m not hugely interested in work. I have no real ambition. I don’t like having to do things. The good thing here is that you don’t have to do stupid things like book your holidays four months in advance. I can stay at home and work there when I want to do. These things are all great perks and it’s really why I’m here at all.’
(Lecturer)

The participant described a lack of ambition and drive to pursue career goals and an acceptance of the environment constructed by decision-makers. The individual perceived the context as being less favourable than previously experienced, but was prepared to accept the altered context rather than challenge the working environment.

There was evidence that a number of elements were influential in the selection of accepted sufferance as a response.

10.2.2 Positive Realignment

Another response was labelled as “positive realignment” and involved the participants attempting to resolve the problem that he/she had encountered. In relation to Figure 10.1 the individual would be faced with the question in (box 8) – can the issue be accepted and tolerated within the existing psychological contract? If the issue could not be accepted and tolerated within the existing psychological contract, and exit was not feasible, the participant was faced with another dilemma (box 10) - is there a perception that the issue can be resolved? If the answer to that was yes, then “positive realignment” was the response.

Positive realignment was a problem-solving approach based on the perception that participants could create a situation whereby wants could be achieved. An example of a positive realignment response was described by an individual who had failed to secure a negotiated resolution when asked to do more teaching. The participant described how he/she had taught basically the same amount for a number of years and was surprised to be asked to do more. The participant stated that he/she was unhappy with the change but was told that he/she had to do more because other staff in his/her cognate group had been subjected to increased workloads. The participant described annoyance at this change in the work context and decided to reorganise the course he/she had been asked to teach and put more self-study into the module. The end result of this reorganisation of the course was that the students received the same hours as before whilst the participant also managed to minimise the addition to his/her workload. The participant revealed that he/she had not told anyone of his/her intentions or actions before or after altering the course. He/she simply solved the problem that had occurred.

Similar to the individuals who had engaged in acceptance sufferance, job satisfaction was highlighted as an individual want in terms of the need for work as a means of providing an intellectual pursuit that remained satisfied. The participants also intimated that ideological reward had some impact in the decision to remain. Subsequently, issues were viewed as a challenge to overcome and resolve. For example,

‘I was asked to teach the MBA. I didn’t want to do it. I don’t like the people who come on these courses. But I couldn’t get out of it. So I decided to make it a completely different course, innovative and exciting. Something they had never seen before. Try to take them somewhere different. It worked to a certain extent, but certainly made things better for me, almost enjoyable.’
(Lecturer)

A further example related to an academic who described an issue as being one that related to fairness in respect of reward. For example,

‘What I mostly do is internal business management. I look at the way things are going in the areas that I have responsibility and attempt to manage them as best I can. Nothing is really thrust upon you, I go and look for work when I want to – when there is a project that interests me then I go for it. When I have taken things over, it has been pushed by me.’
(Senior Lecturer)

The participant who provided the quotation above went on to describe how he/she believed that to survive in the academic environment effective self-management was required. He/she described such behaviour as being similar to practices adopted in industry whereby problems were solved either by yourself or with the help of your team. The participant also stated that throughout his/her career it was considered normal behaviour to avoid involving the relevant line manager unless a situation was particularly serious. The participant believed that as a Senior Lecturer he/she could influence management, not by negotiation, but by altering work activity to produce more quantifiable outputs and sacrificing less measurable activity, such as informal discussion with students. Positive realignment was undertaken without recourse to negotiation, as well as being undertaken as a consequence of failed negotiation. In essence, an individual may decide to solve the problem through self-management and bypass decision-makers believing that approval or agreement from such individuals was unnecessary or unlikely to be awarded.

10.2.3 Self-Preservation

The first two response types, “accepted sufferance” and “positive realignment”, identified a desire to remain employed by the organisation and to continue to contribute towards the goals of the Business School. Both responses involved creating the most appropriate environment whereby a satisfied psychological contract could be achieved. The third response to be analysed was labelled as “self-preservation” and will now be considered. In relation to Figure 10.1 the individual would again be faced with the question - is there a perception that the issue can be resolved? If the answer to that was no, then “self-preservation” was the response.

Self-preservation was a response whereby individuals concentrated on a self-focussed strategy. Participants described how they had sacrificed conformity to the ideals of the Business School, and rejected affiliation to the institution and to colleagues, in order to concentrate on personal goals. The

response was a self-styled, radical route with the individual in opposition to decision-makers and to a lesser extent with other colleagues and was evidenced by an increased scepticism associated with the notion of collegiality and the role of goodwill.

The response was described as contrary to the normal work ethic of individuals. The response was based on what individuals described as being good for them, with little consideration given to either the organisation or other individuals in the work context. The examples below provide an overview of the perceptions of why this response was selected,

‘Some people are simply not managed and the Business School has no management system that allows members of staff to weigh up their own individual agenda versus the agenda of the School. As an individual I know how to do this but my own sense of innate responsibility towards the students will not allow me to give any of the tasks allocated to me a lower status – it’s just not me, but after a while you have to look after yourself.’

(Lecturer)

‘I’m powerless within the Business School to effect any change. I’m working all the hours in the day – the nature of the job means that I have to be here to answer the queries of the corporate clients – in effect be at their beck and call. So don’t mention time off in lieu to me as some sort of compensation – it’s just fanciful nonsense. I have been asked to do more and more – and there is no reward at the end of it – great. I have tried all avenues but to no avail – all I get is more responsibility with no authority.’

(Lecturer)

‘I don’t see an easy end to this, as there is no framework for getting this changed. I feel completely powerless to do anything about my position as my workload and responsibility goes up and up and up. I am expected to do more and more for the same return. In any commercial organisation this position would be completely unsustainable. This is a hierarchical thing – the Business School is a hierarchical organisation with rigid layers of management that are impenetrable. In the end, something has to give and that means looking after number one.’

(Senior Lecturer)

The situations described in the statements above were similar in that all three outlined how participants had undertaken a more self-focussed approach. Each had a clear understanding of his or her role within the context and identified what would improve the work situation. The increased personal focus evolved in conjunction with the rejection of the notion of collegiality and withdrawal, to differing degrees, of goodwill. Examples of this type of behaviour included participants not being as responsive to requests for assistance in helping colleagues with projects, rejecting increases in teaching and/or administrative workloads, and refusing to take classes for others who were undertaking university related activities. Such behaviour was perceived as necessary to alter the work context of participants. For example,

‘The Business School agreed to let me do more research. However, since this was agreed absolutely nothing has changed – if anything my workload increased, which means that I haven’t looked at my research for months. As I said there was no scope at all for workload negotiation. The amount of effort and confrontation is huge, for incremental change in workload – and then you’re seen as a whinger. That’s when I started taking short-cuts and started saying no to everything I could. I’m definitely not as popular as I used to be with anybody.’
(Lecturer)

The statement above described how the goals of the School were given less credence. A further example of “self-preservation” is outlined in a series of comments from one participant,

‘I don’t conform to the norm. I am slightly more outspoken than most. Does this mean the Business School cannot accommodate me? Can the system not cope with someone who is slightly different? It certainly appears not. I am frustrated by the lack of recognition. I don’t want more money. I have plenty of that. I want to be rewarded for my efforts and for others to say – yeah, good job. I don’t think this will ever happen. I simply cannot begin to add up the hours that I work for the place. But it all comes back to this recognition stuff. Where is the incentive? I am personally motivated, but there has to come a point where you have to take a step back from this and ask – what is the point? Then you look to your own agenda.’

‘My aim now is to publish profusely. I know I can publish at least three high quality articles a year. I am only taking this career path as the University has backed me into a corner. I made a conscious decision to redefine my territory, my position within the organisation. My boundary became my research. It became the single most important issue in my work life. Situations backed me into a corner. My interpretation of this was that the system did not want me. Well too bad, I’m not going anywhere and I’m now doing what I want to do.’

‘I am now looking around for the right opportunities for me to develop. Most of what I do is generated by me – I open and close doors. It is really up to me what I do next. I believe that I was very loyal to the organisation, other lecturers, and the students. But I couldn’t accept being treated like a dog time and time again. It’s time to look after me.’

‘I have been treated appallingly but I look around at the bigger picture. I have a nice lifestyle. I really enjoy the job. I get a lot of personal satisfaction out of what I do. I am now making myself happy.’
(Lecturer)

The individual described how he/she perceived that the Business School did not understand his/her wants. The participant went on to explain how he/she had tried to remedy the situation, before eventually deciding upon the need to resort to self-preservation behaviour.

The self-preservation response differed from the first two response types examined in the Chapter based on the rejection of the goals of the Business School, with a much greater self-orientation to the psychological contract.

10.2.4 Managed Exit

The fourth response type was labelled “managed exit” and was pursued by participants who perceived that exit was the only strategy available. In relation to Figure 10.1, the individual would have identified that the issue could not be accepted and tolerated within the existing psychological contract, but exit was perceived as desired and feasible and “managed exit” was the response. Participants described how strategies were put in place to facilitate exit. The interviews suggested that individuals pursued activities that would make them more attractive to other employers.

The interviews identified similarities between self-preservation and managed exit. The behaviour was broadly comparable. However, the rationale for the activities selected differed. Once exit had been identified as the appropriate course of action, participants described how actions were directed towards making this more attainable. For example, one participant described a situation whereby a promise had not been delivered. Subsequently, exit was cited as the desired long-run outcome as a consequence of the perceived seriousness of the issue and an entrenched belief that a resolution would never be achieved. A revised set of wants were constructed that concentrated on individual marketability with the ultimate goal of moving out of the Business School. The delivery of short-courses to corporate clients was identified as the method by which attractiveness in the labour market could be enhanced. To achieve this, the individual withdrew from most other activities, and commitment to both the School and students was described as being markedly less. The reduced contribution to the goals of the Business School was perceived as irrelevant as the revised contract was geared towards individual improvement, based on an identification of what he/she defined as attractive credentials.

Research publications were also cited as a means by which exit could be achieved. For example,

‘I want to leave. I’m going to leave. But I want to stay in academia. I’ve done loads of teaching, but I need some research papers to make my CV look better. I’m trying to do that at the moment by being woeful at all the other things. It’s brilliant. If you do things really badly it takes you no time at all and eventually they take you off it and give it to some one else. What a hit. Means I can do research, get some publications and leave.’
(Lecturer)

The example above demonstrates the lack of allegiance to the Business School and also the absence of thought for the impact of his/her action on others, such as colleagues and students.

The analysis of the responses to issues has identified a negotiation process and four types of response that were described. The next part of this Chapter will discuss these findings.

10.3 Discussion

The ability to successfully negotiate issue resolution (or minimisation) was described as being linked to the perceived capability of an individual to manipulate appropriate decision-makers within the context and create (or maintain) a work environment that resulted in a satisfied psychological contract. This was similar to the notion of the creation of an idiosyncratic deal and consistent with the theorising of Meckler et al. (2003) who suggested that idiosyncratic deals arose when workers negotiated different treatment from their employers in comparison to equivalent others. The evidence would suggest that the situation remained similar to the ‘organised anarchies’ described by Cohen and March (1974) pre-managerialism, and supported more recently by Dearlove (1998) who concluded that academic staff were still not controlled by bureaucratic, mechanistic structures. However, it does raise the question in respect of how an individual within an institution that was skewed towards an organic structure could engineer a situation whereby his or her specific idiosyncrasies were incorporated into the contract? Also, why were some individuals able to do this whilst others were either not able to, or perhaps chose not to do so? Meckler et al. (2003) also suggested that the ability to negotiate different treatment to others in the same context was dependent upon the leverage an individual had to construct his or her own idiosyncratic deal which was based on predisposition (i.e. willingness to negotiate), credentials, occupation, status, and marketability. However, this generalised theorising did not explain why some individuals were willing to negotiate and others not? To what extent did status, credentials, occupation, and marketability play a part in the creation of an idiosyncratic deal in a specific context where these factors were the same or similar for all incumbents?

The evidence in this research suggested that the creation of an idiosyncratic deal depended on the ability of an individual to successfully negotiate the achievement of an existing, altered, or new individual, work, or ideological want. In essence, an individual may have in place a number of negotiated idiosyncratic deals, or alternatively he or she may perceive that there were no such agreements in place. Scenarios were described whereby change occurred that resulted in a perceived impact on the psychological contract of the individual and negotiation in respect of the maintenance or

creation of an idiosyncratic deal in respect of a particular want was considered. Alternatively, change could be accepted and tolerated without challenge.

10.3.1 Manipulation of Decision-Makers

If change was not accepted or tolerated, the creation or maintenance of an idiosyncratic deal was normally dependent on the ability to manipulate the relevant decision-maker. Manipulation could also extend to include colleagues and others outside of the immediate context. The term manipulation has a negative connotation, but this was not intended in its use here and it is defined as being able to influence, control, or manoeuvre others into agreeing with the point of view of the individual.

The ability to manipulate decision-makers was viewed as a transient capability, dependent on many factors. The relationships with decision-makers were perceived to be particularly salient in this respect. Each relationship was not static and could change and evolve gradually over time, or alter significantly from day to day. The perceived ability to increase or decrease negotiated success was rationalised as a consequence of a change in the relationship with a decision-maker. The dynamics of relationships in the workplace were described as being altered by both parties. In addition, there was a perception for some that success in the manipulation of a decision-maker was subject to the notion of diminishing returns whereby after several negotiations over a prolonged period there was evidence to suggest that the capacity to reach a deal declined. Participants rationalised the decline as a consequence of a combination of the evolution of a relationship, and the deterioration of influence held by an individual who had been in a context for a significant period. For example,

‘They used to listen to me when I was seen as the up and coming star. Now I’m seen as a moaning old git. Bit embarrassing really, and I suppose frustrating that nobody listens anymore. I just keep my head down and accept that things aren’t really that bad or that different.’
(Senior Lecturer)

There existed a perception that relationships were also based to some extent on the value and worth that the individual perceived that the Business School placed on the employee, which was similar to the concepts of status and marketability suggested by Meckler et al. (2003). For example, if an individual perceived that he or she was relatively important in relation to comparable peers, then the ability to manipulate decision-makers was perceived as greater than individuals who believed that they were of lesser value to the Business School. The evaluation of importance was again dynamic, as the value of

the individual grew stronger or weakened. For example, in areas where recruitment of appropriate academic staff was particularly difficult (such as supply-chain management), the participants in this field described how they believed that they were more able to create idiosyncratic arrangements than others in the Business School. Such a view was based on the knowledge that they were a rare commodity in the labour market.

Participants from other disciplines were of the view that recently recruited lecturers in supply-chain management received different treatment from other new starts. The behaviour towards supply-chain lecturing staff was not arranged or negotiated by the employee, but it created the perception that they were regarded as having greater value to the Business School. The perceived enhanced importance subsequently facilitated the pursuance of idiosyncratic deals. Conversely, economics as a subject discipline was perceived by the participants within this specialism as a declining area of expertise. Thus, the capacity to negotiate idiosyncratic deals was less, especially for new starts where supply exceeded demand.

However, the enhanced capacity to negotiate idiosyncratic deals based on subject specialism was not described as a long-lasting feature. The relationship that was constructed with decision-makers and colleagues replaced the importance of subject specialism once familiarisation between the parties had been established.

In this study, the relationship that was described as being of greatest relevance related to the individual and the closest decision-maker in the hierarchy. The relationship was predominantly founded on the individual fulfilling the wants of the appropriate decision-maker. If these wants were met then a relationship was constructed that would facilitate the negotiation of deals. For example, if an individual continuously rebelled against his or her teaching workload then this was likely to cause upset to the relevant decision-maker. Therefore, such actions would not assist in the development of a working relationship that would facilitate the creation of idiosyncratic deals. However, if an individual invariably accepted what he or she was asked to do, and perhaps volunteered for a little more, then the possibility of a relationship developing which facilitated deal creation increased.

There was evidence to suggest that if there was a change in personnel and individuals were faced with a different decision-maker the rules of engagement would alter. Relationships would require to be constructed with a new set of expectations and ways of working. There was evidence whereby individuals that had a perceived negative working relationship with a decision-maker such that idiosyncratic deals were unattainable, now had the opportunity to create an improved working environment as a consequence of a new and different relationship. The converse was also described whereby a new line-manager had altered the approach to teaching which had impacted on the job satisfaction of incumbents who were subsequently unable to manipulate the new decision-maker, unlike the previous post holder who had been manoeuvred into maintaining the status quo for a substantial number of years for one or two individuals in a cognate group. The differential treatment subsequently created an issue for the staff forced to accept change. The notion of interdependency was relevant as the behaviour of individuals within a context had the potential to impact, either directly or indirectly, on others within that context.

The desire to manipulate decision-makers was a feature that altered over time. The decision to attempt manipulation was dependent upon the extent to which there existed a belief that success was achievable. If the individual perceived the creation of an idiosyncratic deal could be achieved then there was a desire to put this in place. However, the experience of manipulation also created an awareness of the significant energy and drive required to undertake such a process as opposed to acceptance or tolerance. The proximity to retirement and age were again relevant as a lack of vigour became more evident and the desire to shape the work environment was reduced. There was also evidence as to the nature of the seriousness of the issue. If it was deemed trivial at the point in time when it arose then acceptance within a psychological contract could be deemed as the most satisfactory way to proceed at that juncture.

In summary, it was evident that the creation of an idiosyncratic deal within a context meant that certain employees at any given point in time had the predisposition and ability to create a psychological contract that provided for them the work environment that they desired. The capability to put in place such a deal was dynamic and was determined by the perceived seriousness of the issue and the extent to which there existed a belief that a deal could be achieved. The inability to put a deal in place resulted in many subsequent responses.

10.3.2 The Toleration of Issues

Chapter Nine identified that participants were involved in a continuous evaluation of the psychological contract because of the constant change particularly in relation to decisions taken within the immediate work context. However, there was evidence of a level of toleration in relation to issues. “Toleration” was described as the extent to which a participant was prepared to accept decisions by the Business School that impacted negatively upon the psychological contract such that exit was not perceived as the appropriate response. The degree of tolerance increased as a consequence of positive experiences in the work context and decreased as a result of negative experiences. The notion of tolerance helped explain why individuals who had experienced serious issues had chosen not to exit. However, it would have been interesting to discuss the notion of tolerance with individuals who had left the Business School. Data from previous employees of the Business School would have provided an interesting basis for comparison.

There was evidence that tolerance was related to whether participants had successfully achieved their wants. As the attainment of wants increased, participants were more likely to be tolerant. Individuals described peaks and troughs in relation to the satisfaction of wants that correlated with the level of tolerance held. The level of tolerance was influenced by a number of features. It was evident that the extent to which wants could be satisfied within the current work context in comparison to other employment alternatives was a relevant factor. The perception in respect of what alternative employment would provide was a dynamic notion that varied over the duration of the employment within the Business School. Both Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight identified how participants first joined the Business School with the perception that this work environment would deliver individual, work, and ideological wants. Conversely, near the end of employment (e.g. retirement), there was some evidence that needs and wants were not being delivered. However, tolerance was high because participants felt they were trapped within the environment.

The perceived marketability of the participants to other employers also impacted on tolerance. If, for example, an individual perceived that opportunities were available elsewhere then tolerance was reduced. Another influence on tolerance was the perceived seriousness of the issue and the desire not to create friction with decision-makers if an issue was gauged to be trivial. Participants also identified that tolerance was related to the perceived ability to do anything about an issue. Similarly, the

identification that the individual was not being singled out for negative treatment resulted in the issue being tolerated to a much greater extent. When all facets were considered by the individual, a level of tolerance was tacitly calculated.

Two different categories of tolerance were identified. The first was positive tolerance whereby issues that could not be resolved through negotiation resulted in the response type being either “accepted sufferance” or “positive realignment”. Both were identified as behaviour that continued to embrace the goals of the Business School. Thus, motivation in respect of work, and contribution to the Business School was maintained.

The second category was negative tolerance whereby participants remained within the Business School but developed a self-oriented perspective. A psychological contract with an increased self-orientation was constructed, which was similar to the finding of Rousseau and McLean Parks (1993). Negative tolerance resulted in “self-preservation” and “managed exit” responses. Both Maguire (2002), and Hall and Moss (1998), described a new psychological contract which had a self-reliance orientation independent of an employing organisation and directed by the needs and values of the individual, with success being described as internal.

Participants also identified that wants were largely being satisfied, thus exit was rejected in three of the four responses identified. Ideology was a particularly salient feature in respect of non-exit. Thompson and Bunderson (2003) defined ideological breach as an employee’s cognition that the organisation had deviated from a perceived ideological obligation. Participants described ideological reward as being attained irrespective of changes in the work context. Change in the Business School was identified but this appeared to impact upon individual and work wants. However, ideology was used as a barometer by which other issues were evaluated. Participants described ideological rewards being largely unaffected by change and a reason to tolerate the altered work context.

A similar suggestion was made by Thompson and Bunderson (2003) who indicated that the incorporation of ideology into the psychological contract helped to explain why some employees might remain loyal to an organisation despite breaches in the economic and socio-emotional aspects of the psychological contract. The data also supported the findings of Morrison and Robinson (1997) who

found that ideological violation depended on whether the larger social contract, in which organisational action was embedded, justified the decision. For example, in this study participants described changes in evaluation and assessment of both teaching and research (QAA, RAE). Participants identified that the assessment process was determined by government policy. Participants accepted that assessment and evaluation would take place, thus ideology was unaffected.

The research to date (for example, Bunderson, 2001; Rousseau, 2001; Thompson and Bunderson, 2003), which suggested that ideology moderated how individuals responded to their employer's fulfilment of obligations was supported in this study. However, the conclusion by O'Donohue et al. (2004) that professional employees focussed their allegiance and career aspirations towards an ideology rather than an organisation was only partially supported. Ideology was an important element of the psychological contract, but issues were described that related to organisational decisions in the immediate context. Identification of the desire to resolve issues was also contrary to the notion that the new psychological contract would be less related to the organisation.

In summary, the level of tolerance was a variable, dynamic commodity that was determined by individuals based on individual, work, and ideological wants. As wants were altered, tolerance was impacted upon. Examples included proximity to retirement and pension implications, attractiveness to other employers, the ability to negotiate alterations to the work environment, knowledge, and experience of other work contexts, and the seriousness attributed to an issue that did not appear to be resolvable.

10.3.3 The Duration of Response

The final part of this discussion will consider the extent to which a response was a short-term feature or whether once selected it remained in place for the duration of the employment experience. Participants described how they had responded at different points in their Business School employment. For example, one participant described his/her current position as being located within the positive realignment group. However, he/she identified having previously pursued a "managed exit" response. The participant described how he/she perceived that exit was the only alternative available. Subsequently, the participant had decided to remain after an unanticipated change in the composition of the management hierarchy. Thus, from a situation where an individual had been close to exit, a change

in personnel had transformed his/her perception of the work context. Therefore, response type was not necessarily a fixed position that could not be retracted from.

Previous research has identified a wide range of responses, which included disappointment, frustration, distress, anger, resentment, bitterness, and indignation (e.g. Rousseau, 1989; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Pate and Malone, 2000). Other studies have shown that issues that impact upon the psychological contract can result in behavioural change such as lowered organisational citizenship, reduced commitment, satisfaction and trust and increased cynicism (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Robinson, 1996; Herriot and Pemberton, 1997a). What was apparent in this study was that both attitudinal and behavioural responses were evident, and that reaction and response from an individual was specific to an issue at that point in time. The decision to exit could be reversed as a consequence of change within the context. Such change may be planned or unplanned. Indeed, it was evident that when exit was planned and then rejected, the employee was enthusiastic and committed to the goals of the organisation. However, as noted earlier in this Chapter (as well as in Chapter Six and Eleven), the Business School lecturers who had chosen to exit would have added to the analysis had they been included in the study.

Pate et al. (2003) suggested that issues could impinge on employee attitudes but not on behaviour, depending on labour market conditions and the perception of job insecurity, and also a sense of collegiality and pride in the job. There was evidence to support the conclusions of Pate et al. (2003) although to suggest that there were no behavioural changes as a result of serious issues within the workplace, even though attitudes had altered, was not supported in this study. For example, it may be that accepted sufferance revealed no visible outward signs of behavioural change. However, it was a calculated response to a change in the work context.

In this study it was evident that participants pursued a response for a defined period of time. Individuals had the capability to respond differently depending on their interpretation of the work context, which evolved on a day-to-day basis. For example, participants identified reduced commitment and lowered organisational citizenship. The participants went on to describe how commitment and citizenship had both subsequently increased due to altered circumstances.

10.4 Conclusions for Research Question Four

Participants' responses to issues were influenced and impacted upon by features that were considered personally important. Similar issues could transpire again later in the career of participants, but this did not necessarily mean that the same course of action would be followed. Response was determined by the individual and dependent on a range of aspects, some of which remained constant, whilst others changed in the relative importance and weighting attached to them. The organic nature of the Business School facilitated individual action being taken in response to issues.

The study identified that a degree of tolerance existed for all participants. Tolerance was a dynamic concept that ebbed and flowed as the context changed. The role of ideology, which was somewhat of a secondary notion in the original psychological contract, was much more visible and influential once participants gained experience of the environment. When change in the work context negatively impacted on an individual, ideology was described as a key feature in the determination of tolerance.

The notion of individuals as passive and accepting of decisions (Trowler, 1997) was not evident as each change in the work context was subjected to scrutiny and appraised as to its impact on the psychological contract and what response was possible. The individual was active in respect of all decisions that had either a direct or an indirect likelihood of altering his or her work environment. The desired response was described as not always being within the reach of an individual; consequently, alternatives were considered and pursued. Thus, passivity was not the situation that was evident in this context as individuals attempted to manipulate those around them to alter their work context to facilitate a satisfied psychological contract.

The data collected in this thesis facilitated to an extent the unpacking of the psychological contracts of a sample of Business School lecturers within a specific context. However, it was evident in Chapter Six that the analysis and conclusions presented in Chapter Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten were based on a research approach that was retrospectively identified as containing a number of limitations. The methodological shortcomings will now be considered in Chapter Eleven along with some final conclusions and a number of ideas for future research.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusions, Future Research and Reflection

Chapter Eleven

Conclusions, Future Research and Reflection

11.0 Introduction

The final Chapter commences with some reflections on the research that has been conducted. The findings are then examined and conclusions drawn. The Chapter ends with a section that contains some suggestions for future research.

11.1 Reflections on the Research

I began the research for this thesis because I was interested in the notion of difference between individuals. Why did people choose certain paths in their working lives? Why did seemingly (in my eyes) excellent ideas or decisions often come up against entrenched resistance? Conversely, why were so many dire initiatives (again in my opinion) accepted and implemented within the workplace to such dismay and disdain from some staff, whilst others were delighted, and others perhaps largely ambivalent? The concept of the psychological contract appeared to have validity in attempting to explain the reaction and behaviour of individuals when faced with problems in the workplace.

I was of the opinion that research into the psychological contract could assist in developing greater understanding of why the participants in the context being studied decided upon certain actions and how these decisions were then enacted. The extant literature described negative behaviour as a consequence of breach or violation. However, such a conclusion provided more questions than answers. For example, did all employees behave in the same way, or just some? How did those that did not react negatively behave, and why did they differ? How long did such reaction last: was it for the entire duration of the employment with the organisation, maybe for one or two days or perhaps somewhere in between?

The intention was to generate accounts of the reality perceived by a sample of higher education lecturers in a Business School setting. What was evident at the end of the research was that by presenting the diversity and complexity of the lecturer's lives the concept of 'difference' was prioritised (Bhavnani, 1994). As Casey (2003) stated when considering research into women's experiences,

‘By re-thinking the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and in incorporating difference, researchers can discard the notion that subjects of research are simply powerless victims without the ability to form analysis of their own lives...By placing emphasis on difference, it is possible firstly to recognise the situated-ness of knowledge claims, and secondly to begin to react against assumptions of ‘women’ as a universal category which provide no account of the diversity of women’s lives.’

(Casey, 2003, p110-111)

The notion of difference in the lives of a sample of Business School lecturers was considered using an approach that drew from the principles of ethnography in structuring the interviews to elicit data about the life history of participants. The rationale for employing the chosen approach was based on the assumption that the most appropriate method of generating information about social groups and to gain access to the difference between individuals within groups was to get as close to the group as possible. The appropriateness of the life-history approach will now be considered.

11.1.1 Reflections on the Life History Approach

The use of life history as a suitable approach was reflected upon. Life history was used to elicit the understandings and sensemaking of each participant in relation to his or her psychological contract. The interviews necessarily ranged widely over many different topics using open-ended questions to maximise discovery and description. However, Fine (1994) warned that in using such an approach the search for the complete and coherent was a delusion. During the thesis I was aware of the limitations of the approach and the cautionary note provided by Fine (1994), and I also found the quotation below by Munro (1998), who examined the life history of women teachers, particularly useful especially when analysing the data and attempting to draw tentative conclusions,

‘In collecting life histories of women teachers I find myself situated in a paradoxical position. I know that I cannot “collect” a life. Narrative does not provide a better way to locate truth, but in fact reminds us that all good stories are predicated on the quality of the fiction. We live many lives. Consequently, the life histories in this book do not present neat, chronological accounts of women’s lives.’

(Munro, 1998, p137)

As stated above, the collection of data involved asking people to talk about their lives in order to unearth their understandings. This meant listening to their stories. The participants did not describe their experiences or sensemaking process in terms of succinct, abstract generalisations. I had expected exaggerations and embellishments to be incorporated into stories in order to justify why decisions had

been made and to give emphasis to particular issues. As Gabriel (2000) highlighted, stories are emotionally and symbolically charged narratives. However, Gabriel and Griffiths (2004) also identified that part of listening to stories is to accept what is said, but also to be aware of the limitations of the process that is taking place,

‘In telling a story, the requirement of accuracy is relaxed in the interest of making a symbolic point. Poetic licence is the prerogative of storytelling.’
(Gabriel and Griffiths, 2004, p115)

Gabriel (2000) also provided what I found to be a useful elucidation of the issues that surrounded the use of stories in research. The quotation below was especially pertinent during the iterative analysis of data,

‘Stories are narratives with plots and characters, generating emotion in narrator and audience, through a poetic elaboration of symbolic material. This material may be a product of fantasy or experience, including an experience or earlier narratives. Story plots entail conflicts, predicaments, trials, and crises which call for choices, decisions, actions and interactions, whose actual outcomes are often at odds with the characters intentions and purposes. Stories do not present information or facts about events, but they enrich, enhance, and infuse facts with meaning. This is both their strength and a potential weakness.’
(Gabriel, 2000, p239)

I found that stories naturally flowed from participants by way of providing examples and rationalisations for their behaviour. Thus, when using this method I was aware that there was a risk of regarding stories as facts. Gabriel (2000) stated,

‘Stories will often compromise accuracy in the interest of making a point or generating an emotion: they may focus on the incidental details...they may contain inconsistencies, imprecisions, lacunae, non-sequiturs, illogicalities, and ambiguities. Ultimately, the truth of a story lies not in its accuracy but in its meaning.’
(Gabriel, 2000, p115)

Indeed, it was evident that the stories presented a partial, selective commentary on work in the Business School and the impact such employment made on the lives of the participants. I was also cognisant that the rendering of lived experience into a life story was one interpretive layer, and the move to life history added a second layer and a further interpretation by the researcher. Goodson (1992) wrote about the distinction between stage one where an informant relates his or her life story and stage two in which a life history is constructed. The distinction between life stories or narratives and life histories is therefore important. Moving from life story to life history involved a move to account for historical

context, which was a slow, iterative, and painstaking process to ensure that the life stories were placed within a broader historical context. The logic for life histories was identified by Goodson (2001),

‘The concern is to provide communications that cover the social histories and, indeed, social geographies in which life stories are embedded; without contextual commentary on issues of time and space, life stories remain uncoupled from the conditions of their social construction. This, above all, is the argument for life histories rather than life stories.’

(Goodson, 2001, p139)

The research undertaken in this study asked the participants to describe their lives using their own words and to explain in depth why they had made certain choices and decisions. The stories that transpired facilitated the creation of life histories. Thus, when reflecting on the study I believe that the Business School lecturers behaved in the same way as participants in other research (for example, Munro (1998)) in the way they used stories to illustrate the points they wanted to make to the researcher. However, it was important to allow the participants to tell me what their views were about what was important to them. However, the reflective analysis in respect of this thesis did identify a number of methodological limitations, some of which were highlighted in Chapter Six, which will now be discussed in the next section.

11.1.2 Limitations of the Research

With the benefit of hindsight, it was evident that the empirical research undertaken for this thesis had a number of limitations. The study analysed a Business School in a post-92 university and as Thompson and Bunderson (2003) suggested a focus on one organisation does raise the question of generalisability. In essence, would the same pattern of results be found if a different context was considered? They suggested that differences might be evident in terms of culture, structure, or history of the organisation or work unit. Thus, the findings from this thesis should be considered in light of the peculiarities of the context that was examined. The findings from this study provide an illustration of how the psychological contracts of twenty-four Business School staff at a post-92 university evolved over time. However, it may be that the sample was a group of disaffected former industry based employees who would be unhappy wherever they worked. Whilst aspects of the psychological contract and behavioural reaction and implications of breach and violation will be transferable to other organisations and contexts, they must be explored within these specific cultural, structural, and organisational environments. It should also be highlighted that the data reflected the individual and subjective perceptions of participants prompted by interview questions and consequently should in no way be

construed as definitive or absolute. However, research on the psychological contract, which is informal and dynamic in nature, will always be fraught with methodological limitations and results will always be tentative in nature and should be interpreted accordingly.

The decision to measure the perceptions of the psychological contract of participants by asking them to describe their experiences was also a limitation. Each response was a subjective measure that was methodologically biased by its very nature. That said, both Robinson and Morrison (2000) and Lemire and Rouillard (2005) believed that giving people the opportunity to examine their psychological contract was a better approach than calculating the difference between perceptions of what they were promised and their views of what the organisation effectively delivered. The problem with the last measure is that it does not take into account the changes in the psychological contract over time.

It was evident in hindsight that participants assessed and in some instances exploited the research situation. This was described by Johnson et al. (1999),

‘The participants will evaluate the impressions they acquire about a researcher and thereby gauge, for instance, the extent to which he/she is competent, knowledgeable, helpful, trustworthy, manipulable or exploitable: processes which may be exacerbated by members’ heightened sensitivity stimulated by their awareness of participating in, and possibly being the focus of research.’

(Johnson et al., 1999, p1236)

I found the above quotation particularly insightful when examined in conjunction with the results from the study. What was especially relevant was the evaluative behaviour of participants in relation to scenarios that were encountered. The manipulation of decision-makers was similar to the notion of participants manipulating or exploiting the researcher. What was evident was that the interviews were a social interaction within the workplace similar to the encounters participants had described with decision-makers. In considering how to recognise such behaviour, I was cognisant that the interviews facilitated in-depth unpacking of issues that were raised by the participants. The length of the interviews was determined by participants and allowed detailed analysis of specific examples. Thus, the participants selected the examples and constant asking of ‘why’ questions to clarify statements allowed for, what I perceived to be at the time, an in depth examination of the decisions that participants had made.

However, I had not anticipated that some participants might have used the interviews as a showcase for venting dissatisfaction. There were occasions whereby I felt that the interviews were being used as an outlet for the wrath of the participants. Nevertheless, such emotional utterances provided a fascinating insight into the issues that each employee considered important. A gamut of emotions were demonstrated by participants. I observed what I perceived to be happiness, sadness, anger, dispiritedness, irritation, frustration, resentment, contentment, satisfaction, resignation, acquiescence, envy, and jealousy. The list is not definitive and participants often displayed many of these features during their interview. However, what the study did not explore was the extent to which the situations described by participants were transient in nature. Perhaps a recent event had caused angst and consternation, which had been the main focus of the individual at the time of the interview. However, if the interview had been undertaken perhaps a number of months or years earlier or later, would a different response have been given by the participant? Thus, were some responses driven by recent issues, although important at a particular point in time that were possibly not influential within the psychological contract of the individual in the longer-term? For example, one lecturer identified that he/she was no longer interested in gaining promotion and would now pursue research activity for reasons associated with personal satisfaction. However, I subsequently observed that this participant had secured a promoted post. Clearly, it would have been interesting and beneficial to this research to interview the individual about such a change in perspective. It may have been that at the time the interview was undertaken he/she was perhaps experiencing a particularly negative work period. This example was not an isolated occurrence and it was evident that if additional ethnographic techniques such as participant observation had been incorporated into the approach alongside supplementary interviews, the conclusions arrived at may have been different. Certainly, the validity and reliability of the results would have been enhanced.

Consequently, the retrospective analysis of the methodological approach resulted in the conclusion that the reliance on a single interview did not allow for data to be collected that could fully answer the research questions that were posed. In hindsight, the methodology was limited in that the analysis was based on events that had occurred in the past and in undertaking one interview it was only possible to gauge how identified factors had impacted upon the psychological contract up to the point when the interview took place. Relying on the memory of participants provided data that described historical decision-making. However, the undertaking of two or perhaps more interviews would have provided

data that allowed for analysis of specific influences that impacted upon decisions and reduced the reliance on remembered understandings in relation to significant events. Indeed if an individual had experienced a particularly difficult time when the interview was undertaken he/she may have made statements which were appropriate at that particular point in time. However, it is possible that in hindsight participants may have acknowledged that such comments were largely irrelevant to their psychological contract in the longer-term.

Interviewing the participants on a number of occasions would also have provided a more detailed and in-depth understanding of individual psychological contracts, particularly in relation to research question four. This would have allowed for, amongst other things, an examination of the stability of the psychological contract over time. For example, the first interview could have established a benchmark psychological contract which could then have been subsequently examined through further interviews. Thus, with the benefit of hindsight a multi-interview approach would have produced a more comprehensive set of data.

A further limitation of the study related to the decision to exclude individuals with line management responsibility. In Chapter One of this thesis it was identified that the psychological contract involved both the employee and the employer. However, as identified in Chapter Six, this study examined only one party to the contract (the employee) and excluded the other (the employer). I now believe that the one party approach was a weakness in the methodological design. The decision to focus on one party mirrored a number of other studies in the field of psychological contract research e.g. Pate et al. (2003), Hallier and Forbes (2004), and Bergin and Ronnestad (2005). However, it was evident that in these studies the research questions constructed by the author(s) were such that the analysis of only one party to the contract was appropriate. However, it has been recognised that the perceptions and understandings of both employer and employee can add considerable weight and authority to research findings (Shore et al., 2004). Reflecting on the approach used in the study, resulted in the conclusion being drawn that the research questions would have been answered more comprehensively, and consequently the conclusions would possess greater validity and reliability if both parties to the psychological contract had been interviewed.

The explanations and rationalisations given by participants in the interviews were not challenged or counterbalanced by other data, thus the veracity of comments was accepted by the author as a consequence of the research approach that was utilised. For example, if an individual was asked to undertake an alternative pattern of work, perhaps evening teaching for the first time, and considered this to be unfair. What the study did not examine was the extent to which the perceived unfairness was supported or refuted by the respective decision-maker(s) or other colleagues. Was the participant who described the issue simply being asked to undertake what other colleagues were doing and perhaps he/she was unaware that this was the case? Alternatively, had the participant been treated in a more favourable way than colleagues had in the past and this decision was merely redressing the balance? Further reflection also identified that there was a need for the researcher to recognise that the data could be subject to different interpretations and explanations. An example of this was that as the research was undertaken with the agreement of the management of the Business School, I may have been used as an unsuspecting courier of information to the Head of School. Participants may have perceived that the conduit provided by the study was an appropriate mechanism to facilitate the transfer of information. Thus, the perception that the participants were open, transparent, and frank may have been no more than an elaborate subterfuge by interviewees to gain access to the strategic decision-makers within the Business School. Again, it could be suggested that further interviewing may have allowed for such schemes to be identified. The inability of the research approach to uncover whether or not such a deception had taken place was a limitation of the study and another valuable lesson learned in terms of future research design. If I had been the unwitting messenger transmitting information to the Head of School then there existed the possibility that I was provided with data that presented a picture that the participant wanted to portray to management. Thus, the data collected may or may not have represented what actually occurred in the workplace.

From a different perspective, it was entirely plausible that some colleagues may not have wanted to admit to the participant researcher that although they disagreed with management judgements, the decisions were in fact a rational and equitable interpretation of acknowledged criteria that had been used in the past. For example, some participants suggested that in respect of promotion a change in emphasis had been employed in relation to the importance of public research output as a consequence of the Research Assessment Exercise. However, for participants to focus on this aspect of the criteria other possible explanations were conceivably ignored in relation to why promotion was awarded to

other individuals. There was also evidence provided whereby participants described how the criteria for promotion had apparently changed to suit other faculty members. However, the study was unable to verify if such an occurrence had actually taken place. Perhaps there had simply been a reinterpretation of existing guidelines? Or possibly another candidate who had applied for the same post possessed considerably more experience or had a greater list of achievements in a number of different facets related to the position? However, the participant may have chosen to highlight an area (e.g. research publications) whereby he/she could attribute blame for rejection as a consequence of an unannounced, tacit change in policy rather than admit and accept personal weaknesses to the researcher. Similarly, rejection may have been rationalised by the individuals in terms of others being at fault rather than having to admit their own shortcomings to the participant researcher.

Indeed, participants who had been promoted expressed few qualms or reservations in respect of the process that had resulted in their elevation to a higher status. The study did not include the management decision-makers involved in promotion interviews, thus the ability to verify assertions that promotion decisions were unfair could not be made from the data. Again, the lack of additional information about the promotion process would suggest that if both parties had been included in the study (employee and employer), the validity of conclusions would have been enhanced. This again highlighted a deficiency in the data collection approach.

A number of other dimensions, which were alluded to in the thesis but not fully explored, related to life stage, gender and prior experience. The data that was collected permitted some analysis of these areas but not for an in depth investigation of the relevance that each of these categories had on the psychological contract of participants over time. Again, a more robust methodological approach would have facilitated analysis of these areas which again may have provided alternative explanations for the responses of participants in relation to perceived breach or violation.

The methodology chapter (Chapter Six) provided a justification for only including in the sample individuals who were currently employed at the Business School. However, when reflecting upon this decision I subsequently concluded that this was an error of judgement. The experience and knowledge that I gained from undertaking the doctorate resulted in the view being formed that the findings would have been more valid and reliable had I incorporated individuals who had left the Business School into

the thesis. The inclusion of former staff would have been particularly useful in relation to research question four whereby a number of participants described how they had discarded exit as a behavioural response to issues encountered in the workplace. In essence, the decision not to exit was self-evident in that if they had chosen to leave the Business School they would not have been included in the study as a consequence of the research design. Interviewing individuals who had exited would have allowed for analysis and comparison of the psychological contracts of both current and former employees.

Thus, to identify that exit was rejected without considering the explanations of those individuals that had chosen to leave suggests that the conclusions in respect of research question four would have incorporated significantly greater dependability and trustworthiness had departed staff been included. Consequently, I would acknowledge that although the decision to focus on current staff appeared logical at the time, it was in hindsight a decision that did not allow for the capture of data that would have facilitated a greater understanding of behavioural reaction in relation to breach and violation. When deciding upon the approach I thought that I had been both thoughtful and thorough, but clearly, this was not the case. It became apparent when reflecting upon the thesis that I had not carefully and rigorously thought through the spectrum of ramifications associated with different research approaches. Subsequently, a key learning outcome in completing this thesis was that a diligent and assiduous approach is required in constructing a research method which will facilitate the collection of appropriate data to answer the research questions posed.

As a consequence of undertaking this research I have learned that there is a need to consider from a range of different perspectives the rationale for excluding any individuals from a research study, and the potential implications in respect of any conclusions that can be drawn if specific sub-sets of individuals are not included. I believe that the decision to exclude departed staff was a misjudgement based on a lack of understanding at the time of the possible consequences of such a decision. The doctoral process has revealed that I need to fastidiously and meticulously prepare in advance of data collection and to explore the rationale for each decision that is taken in deciding upon the best approach to answering research questions.

In hindsight, I believe that the use of more interviews or other ethnographic techniques would certainly have increased the dependability and trustworthiness of the conclusions drawn from this study. For example, it has already been noted in the thesis that there was no testing for misinformation introduced

by the participants (or the researcher) and that there may have been instances when participants intentionally created distortions. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) comment,

“...the co-operative posture [from participants] that characterizes most inquiry is a case of misplaced confidence; that everyone has something to hide; and that investigators are well advised to adopt an investigative posture.”
(Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p303)

Thus, participants may not have been as forthcoming as was initially perceived by the researcher. If the approach described in the quotation above had been implemented, evidence of unscrupulous behaviour may have been identified. It has also been noted that the validity and reliability of findings would have been enhanced through the undertaking more than one interview. If this had been allied to the persistent observation of participants by the researcher between interviews over a prolonged period, and the inconsistencies introduced and discussed at subsequent interview situations, I believe that it would have been much more likely that deceptions or fronts would have been identified. It was also evident that had I been more sceptical at the early stages of the research design perhaps such activity would have been considered and the approach modified accordingly.

The use of other methods to triangulate the data would again have been beneficial in improving the dependability and trustworthiness of the findings and conclusions of the thesis. A number of alternative sources of data have been suggested in this Chapter and the use of multiple interviews with participants and also the inclusion of line-managers would also have added to the credibility of the findings. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) concluded,

“In summary, we believe that it to be the case that the probability that findings (and interpretations based upon them) will be found to be more credible if the inquirer is able to demonstrate a prolonged period of engagement (to learn the context, to minimize distortions, and to build trust), to provide evidence of persistent observation (for the sake of identifying and assessing salient factors and crucial atypical happenings), and to triangulate, by using different sources, different methods, and sometimes multiple investigators, the data that are collected.”
(Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p307)

A lack of triangulation in the methodological approach meant that verification of explanations and conclusions was not possible. In the context of the doctorate being a learning experience, it was evident that I had not fully considered the requirement for a broader range of data. This could have included additional documentary evidence to support or refute assertions and claims, a greater number

of interviews with participants, and also the interviewing of line managers (the next section 11.1.6 Additional Data, deals more fully with this point). Thus, it was evident that collecting data from only one party at a single point in time allowed for alternative explanations to be put forward in respect of the data that was collected.

11.1.3 Additional Data

The study could have been strengthened through the collection and analysis of additional written data relating to participants. For example, a specific memorandum or e-mail that related to particular events or situations that the participant believed was valid and important enough to describe and elucidate upon during the interview. In terms of validity of the data, documents that referred to identified circumstances could have been a useful and intriguing reference for the participant and the researcher to subsequently discuss and unpack. Notwithstanding the obvious limitation in respect of such data whereby documents could have been destroyed or communication had been spoken rather than written, some degree of print data relating to highlighted situations could have added to the study.

Further insight could also have been ascertained from the curriculum vitae of each participant. Such documentation might have been informative in terms of the career path of the participants and facilitated a greater depth of understanding of past decision-making in respect of job movements. For example, had the participant moved frequently between jobs whilst in industry employment? Had the duration of Business School employment been significantly different to previous industry positions? If the time employed in academia was inconsistent with historical work patterns, what were the reason(s) for the change? The study focussed on the decision to move to employment in a Business School and did not explore employment data other than the last one or two industry jobs. Such analysis may have provided further understanding in relation to subsequent decisions and behaviour.

It would also have been interesting to unpack and analyse the career appraisal documentation of participants. The data contained in these documents may also have given further insight into the changing nature of what was considered relevant and important to participants over the duration of their Business School employment. What had been documented as an early career focus? Had this changed? If so, what were the drivers behind such change? To what extent was there consistency between the documentary evidence and the interview data? If there were inconsistencies, how and why

had these occurred? Clearly, access to appraisal documents would have required the agreement of both the management within the institution and the individual participant. However, if such documentation had been available it would also have been interesting to consider from a number of different perspectives relating to the changes in higher education.

The attainment of appropriate ethical clearance in relation to accessing written data would obviously be of paramount importance and the written agreement and acceptance of all relevant parties would require to be sought before such documents could be examined. Again, the issue of anonymity would require to be addressed. However, although it is acknowledged that it may be difficult to gain the appropriate permissions in order to view such documentation, I believe that if these issues were to be overcome the data that would be made available would add to the analysis of psychological contracts within this Business School context.

The previous section outlined limitations within the research approach and identified that the inclusion of line-managers would have been beneficial. Research that considered the perceptions of both management and staff would be an interesting exercise as the actions and motives of line-managers in making and implementing decisions were not tested. Indeed, Thompson and Bunderson (2003) identified that the interpretations and perceptions of different parties to decisions in the workplace was an area of research that should be explored in the future. In essence, if the psychological contract is to be considered as an agreement between two parties then it should be examined and considered from the perspective of both participants. Similarly, data in relation to former employees could have provided an interesting basis for comparison and a fruitful area for future research.

11.1.4 Some Final Personal Thoughts on the Research

I perceived that on reflection the interviews were invariably enjoyable experiences for the researcher and the participants. I was fascinated to hear individuals talk about their lives and careers. Participants were intrigued that someone else would be interested in their history and their evaluations and rationalisations. Participants talked with passion and gusto about both the highs and the lows of their work experience.

I found that researching others in the workplace and then returning to become one of the faculty was relatively unproblematic in the first instance. However, what I had not considered was how circumstances and roles can change and alter. For example, after the data had been collected and analysed, I was promoted to a position that involved some degree of administrative accountability for a degree programme. The position involved close dealings with a small number of the participants in the research. I did not have line-management responsibility for any of the interviewees, but I was no longer at the lowest level in the hierarchy where I had been located when the interviews had taken place. The interviews had been undertaken with academic staff who were at least at an equivalent position in the organisation. Information was conveyed on this basis and the relationship with some participants, possibly all, altered as a consequence. Perhaps participants had assumed that such a situation might arise when agreeing to take part. Consequently, had they participated based on a view that it would allow them to influence the thinking and decision-making of an individual who may be in a position to influence their lives in the future? I considered on many occasions after the interviews had been completed why individuals had chosen to take part. Were there other reasons besides those that the participants had outlined to me in relation to being interested in the notion of the psychological contract and perhaps believing that such research may be of benefit to the Business School? For example, did they feel particularly obligated to do so because the Head of School had agreed to the research? Did they believe that the researcher was perhaps a 'favoured son' of the Head of School and to reject such a request would subsequently reflect poorly on them at some consequent juncture? It is probably reasonable to conclude that some individuals may have perceived that as well as perhaps being interesting and potentially beneficial, participation might possibly accrue some benefit to them in the future. Awareness of the potential benefits of expressing views in respect of the workplace, including line-managers and the Head of School, may have negated apprehension and enhanced enthusiasm to participate. The concept of alternative reasons for agreeing to participate was highlighted in Chapter Six and also earlier in this Chapter. On reflection I perceived that for some participants a complex interaction existed between wanting to help, a desire to get a point of view across to decision-makers, and an investment in a perceived 'favoured son' that may bring some reward in the future. It would appear that participants may have had a single or a combination of rationales that determined their motivation and decision to take part. However, I had not explored in any real depth the reasons behind the decision to participate. This lack of analysis suggested that I was perhaps overly willing to accept statements that were made and that I was not rigorous enough in challenging

what participants had said at the time. Looking back this was probably associated with a desire to negotiate agreement with academic staff to take part and consequently I believe that I deferred to requests rather than query and examine what was being said. This situation highlighted a flaw in my approach to research at that time which was highlighted through the undertaking of this thesis. A valuable lesson was learned in terms of the need to overcome the desire to collect data before being fully cognisant of all ramifications and possible limitations and weaknesses of the research design. There are a number of examples of a lack of foresight and detailed planning that have been identified in this thesis, both in this Chapter and in Chapter Six.

A further example of an issue that was not fully considered at the commencement of the research was the possibility of amended relationships. This should always be a feature of undertaking research in one's own organisation that is fully examined and acknowledged when designing a method of data collection. As a consequence of the research, I perceived that relationships were not altered in a negative way with participants. However, such an outcome was more fortune than design. Subsequent to the initial perception that researching fellow workers and then returning to be one of them was unproblematic, a number of challenging situations did arise. Knowing information about individuals and the factors that they considered important to them, sometimes intimate details in relation to major traumas that occurred in their lives, proved difficult to deal with on a number of occasions. For example, during private conversations individuals have talked candidly about matters raised during the interviews and how these issues have changed and altered. On other occasions I have perceived that participants tacitly alluded to factors highlighted in the interviews during exchanges with them. Thus, I formed the view that some participants believed that I was genuinely interested in their lives (which I was) and that I would be available as a sounding board to discuss issues on an ongoing basis, which was not an expected outcome of the research. The trouble that I had with such a development was that during the interviews I was asking questions and probing issues where necessary. I was not providing any suggestions on how to change or improve the issues being described. However, I perceived that there was an expectation post-interview that I would provide advice or direction. I have tried to deal with such situations sensitively and tactfully, attempting to listen and query when appropriate and let each individual find their own path through to a resolution which they were comfortable with implementing.

There have also been instances when I have observed participants reacting negatively to decisions. Whilst other faculty had on occasion been somewhat surprised by the reaction of an individual, I would find myself privately understanding and empathising with the position they had taken. There have been circumstances where I believed that, armed with knowledge of the life history of participants, I could have played some part in finding solutions to problems. I have found myself both during and after the observation of events and incidents in the Business School, believing that there was a possibility that I could have contributed, possibly in a mediatory capacity, to helping participants and their line-managers find better solutions. However, the nature of the research prevented disclosure of relevant data by anyone other than the individual concerned, which meant that I had to suppress these thoughts. Thus, although I have often found myself concerned for participants I have been unable to help or assist them. Consequently, I have found myself witnessing situations and then being frustrated at the futility of my position. What was also evident was that irrespective of the passing of time, the giving and receiving of such private information has had an enduring influence on the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Consequently, the notion of care and concern for work colleagues was a fundamental requirement for this study.

The consideration for others transcended into how I have subsequently interacted with both colleagues and with people in other facets of my life. Noddings (1984) theorised caring as a three-phased social process consisting of engrossment, empathy, and disposition to act on behalf of another. The notion of caring was operationalised in this thesis through the engrossment with the lives and careers of participants. I deliberately allowed interviews to focus on the concerns of employees. The aim was to create the perception that the exploration of their career was for the benefit of the individual and my role was to empathise with their rationalisations. Thus, caring was more than a superficial clarification of the safeguard mechanisms that were in place, it was the reframing of the research project as a mutual activity.

The process carried a moral obligation not to betray the trust of the participants. Baier (1995) described this position when she considered that in moral trusting,

‘...one leaves others the opportunity to harm one...and also shows one’s confidence that they will not take it. Reasonable trust will require good grounds for such confidence in another’s good will.’

(Baier, 1995, p235)

The emphasis at the core of moral trusting was the recognition of the integrity of the researcher and the researched. The nature of the questions posed for this thesis made it necessary to generate data that would unpack the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions in relation to the psychological contract of each participant. With hindsight, it can be seen that the participants revealed harrowing accounts of personal strife and also examples of creating situations where others had suffered in the workplace as a consequence of their actions. I believed at the time the data was collected that each participant was of the view that such information was being given in confidence and would not be misused.

The detailed and highly personalised nature of the data suggested that participants were largely both accommodating and forthcoming, notwithstanding that some participants may have been using the research for any one of a number of alternative reasons which were highlighted earlier in this section. A number of questions were posed - why did participants choose to reveal their private thoughts and details of their innermost lives when they could have been much more guarded and reticent? Why did participants appear to trust the researcher? There is no single answer to either of these questions. I formed the view that the approach was personality driven which suggested that not all individuals would be suited to qualitative investigation within their own work context. That said, what are these characteristics? It would seem that the ability to empathise with participants coupled with the creation of an environment whereby the interaction with the participant is not perceived as a research project in its normal sense. The interviews need to be perceived by participants as an event for their benefit which will contribute in some way to an improved work experience. However, it is conceivable that participants may have chosen to hide matters from the author and it must be acknowledged that some participants will almost certainly have elected to keep some facets of their lives to themselves.

I believe that researching work colleagues was achieved through a combination of the safeguards that were implemented and communicated to participants, and also the creation of a caring and empathetic environment. The latter was of particular importance as it was the social interaction between researcher and participants that was the key element in this study. However, in reflecting on the research process it became evident that an ethical issue had not been fully addressed when providing drafts of the analysis to the Head of School. Although I had attempted to anonymise the analysis, it was evident that these drafts contained comments that could have been attributed to specific members of staff within the Business School. From a retrospective standpoint, disclosure of the material in this

form would not have been made as it violated the undertakings of confidentiality given to participants. I believe that this error may have occurred as a consequence of the researcher being a colleague of the participants and possibly having a different conceptualisation of anonymity compared to that of an outside observer. However, this is certainly not a definitive explanation and it may have been that the anonymisation of the data was simply inadequate at the time it was passed to management. Nevertheless, for whatever reason, it was subsequently evident that I had erred in making accounts available to management which were later further impersonalised for inclusion in the thesis. As a consequence of this miscalculation, I have learned that the ethical consideration of all parties must be rigorously examined on a continuous basis throughout the duration of any research project or activity.

The research undertaken for completion of this thesis has been a thought provoking process. It has been a continual learning experience. The process has also resulted in the development of a heightened degree of resilience and determination. A never-ending process of iteration was expected and discussed with colleagues who had already embarked on the process. However, it is not until such events are experienced personally that they can be fully appreciated.

The research has proved a valuable experience in understanding the nature of the thought processes of individuals in the workplace. The study was also important in the development of a greater understanding of the care needed when exploring the lives of others and what was important to them. In hindsight, I was privileged to gain access to the detailed and private nature of the scenarios that were described by the participants. The experience has fundamentally changed my perceptions and views in relation to how others conceive and interpret the workplace.

11.2 Overview of the Research Findings

The psychological contract has received much attention over the last two decades. Much of the research has focussed on two areas. One theme has examined the changing nature of the psychological contract and the subsequent development of the self-focussed, 'new' psychological contract (e.g. Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). The other major topic of interest has been the destructive consequences of psychological contract violations on employee's attitudes, work behaviour and turnover (e.g. Turnley and Feldman, 1999; Conway and Briner, 2002). However, the nature of the study in this thesis was to examine the psychological contracts of a selection of Business School

academic staff. The approach allowed participants to describe, interpret, and rationalise events that had taken place during their time as business educators. The study examined the appropriateness and relevance of the initial psychological contract. It then considered the factors that impacted on the contract and the subsequent reactions of individuals to perceived breach or violation. What this study attempted to do was unpack ‘how’ and ‘why’ employees came to decisions in relation to their psychological contract.

11.3 The Initial Psychological Contract

Rousseau (2001) identified that the antecedents of the psychological contract were activated largely through pre-employment experiences and recruiting practices. Prior to employment workers could possess beliefs regarding work, occupations and organisations. The research findings in this thesis supported the notion that psychological contract formation was set in motion preceding entry to the workplace. However, participants who had entered in the last twenty years reported little knowledge of a higher education system that had undergone ideological transformation (Willmott, 1995; Trowler, 1997; Deem, 2006). The notion of ‘new managerialism’, implemented to wide scale condemnation from those within academia was a conversion that had gone largely unnoticed by the participants during their employment in industry. Similarly, before joining the institution the participants had little awareness of the criticisms of Business Schools in respect of both purpose and role (Howell, 1984; Cheit, 1985; Fielden and Gibbons, 1991; Dulek and Fielden, 1992; Stevens, 2000; Mintzberg and Gosling, 2002; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Cornuel, 2005). The demands to change dramatically in order to keep abreast of developments such as globalisation, technology, diversity and rising expectations of consumers, (for example, Dickinson et al. (1983); Porter and McKibben (1988); Starkey et al. (2004)), were also unknown prior to entry.

There was evidence in the study that pre-employment assumptions and perceptions existed. The participants identified that when they were considering joining the Business School they collected information that formed the building blocks of the psychological contract, which supported the theoretical assertions by Rousseau (2001). The psychological contract of prospective Business School lecturers in this sample was constructed under the influence of both internal and external factors which concurred with the findings of Herriot (1992).

The sample described how they had gathered and interpreted information pre-entry. The job related data was subsequently moulded into a cogent, coherent argument which concluded that Business School employment would satisfy the wants that the participants had prior to entry. The positive elements of the work were accentuated whilst negative aspects were ignored or filtered out within the information analysis process. The participants described the removal of negative work aspects as a subconscious act. Participants highlighted a potent desire to pursue employment that was perceived as different to what had been experienced in the past. The findings were similar to that of Hallier and Forbes (2004) who identified that prior employment sensemaking occurred whereby individuals attempted to construct plausible but not necessarily accurate interpretations of data.

Incorporated within the original contract of the participants was the notion of ideology which has emerged as a third focus of the psychological contract alongside the established transactional and relational elements. Rousseau (2001), and Thompson and Bunderson (2003) both identified that ideology could be an aspect of the psychological contract for certain occupations. Participants identified that ideology was recognised, but was considered of less importance than transactional and relational elements. Consideration of the ideological aspect of the initial psychological contract identified that it featured in schema once other parts of the work were considered and evaluated as satisfactory. Ideology was seen as a justification for employment change once the decision to move had already been made. The relative unimportance of ideology reported in this study differed from the conclusions of Wrzesniewski et al. (1997), and Bergin and Ronnestad (2005) who suggested that public sector employment was predominantly based on ideological values. That ideology was regarded as being of lesser significance than other work or individual wants perhaps explained the lack of knowledge of the changes in the management of higher education reported by participants. As ideology only derived importance once other wants were satisfied, participants appeared to be motivated to exit previous work rather than the pursuance of an ideological calling to work in academia.

The study identified that industry-based professionals had moved to the Business School to serve personal wants based on their perceived lack of satisfaction in other work environments. The notion of professional employees being self-fulfilling, self-focussed individuals had previously been identified

by a number of researchers. For example, both Maguire (2002), and Thompson and Bunderson (2003) suggested that professional employees were self-seeking and sought financial return above all else. However, the notion of maximisation of pecuniary reward was not a feature of the initial contract in this study. Participants placed economic remuneration below job satisfaction, security, and flexibility. However, many researchers (for example, Willmott, 1995; Deem, 2006) identified that 'new managerialism' had eroded the specific factors that the participants believed that the context would deliver. Nevertheless, the earnest desire to change career direction had made the notion of a balanced perspective redundant. Perhaps even if information relating to 'new managerialism' had been considered, it would have been irrelevant to individuals focussed on a particular decision and seemingly incapable of change.

One conclusion drawn from these findings was that pre-entry sensemaking was biased towards career change. The predilection towards career change resulted in an overtly positive and optimistic predisposition attached to information about the job. Participants subsequently developed a plausible rationale for change. Thus, pre-entry schema were influenced and impacted on by two features, the desire to secure the job, and the felt need to exit from a previous position. It would appear that these two features were interrelated and had a multiplicative effect. The greater the desire to leave previous employment and to take advantage of another opportunity, the less accurate and more imperfect the schema. Such a process did not support the findings of Rousseau (2001) who suggested that before entering an organisation data was gathered from a large number of divergent sources, and individuals examined all possible aspects of employment, including the job, the organisation, and its culture. However, it is possible to conceive how the process described by Rousseau (2001) would occur when individuals believed that moving job was not a necessity and a more objective and considered approach could be employed.

11.4 The Appropriateness and Relevance of the Initial Psychological Contract

Hindsight allowed participants to describe pre-entry sensemaking as naïve. The overriding desire to exit one job and secure another resulted in behaviour that was subsequently described as injudicious. Participants identified that perceptions were constructed without adequate investigation of the work. The data supported the findings of Anderson and Thomas (1996) who described the construction of naïve and imperfect schema.

However, the initial psychological contract was found to be relevant. Participants described their needs and wants as being the same after entry as before. The perceptions of broadly what the job would entail were both accurate and appropriate. The expanded knowledge of the workplace resulted in pre-entry factors becoming more detailed. Saks and Ashforth (1997) identified that sensemaking allowed new recruits in the workplace to develop psychological contracts that were more diverse and complex. However, the participants in this study did not describe greater complexity, rather an increase in the clarity associated with wants.

The minor adjustments required post-entry highlighted that psychological contracts in the Business School were both dynamic and flexible. The notion of psychological contracts being adaptable and changeable concurred with both Rousseau (1995, 2001) and De Vos et al. (2003). Both Saks and Ashforth (1997) and De Vos et al. (2003), identified that sensemaking was a fundamental part of the maturation of attitudes and behaviours that facilitated the effective functioning of new recruits in the workplace. However, the data from this study found that sensemaking was described by participants as a continuous and ongoing course of action. Sensemaking was relevant to new starts but was also applicable to employees with well developed knowledge and experience of the context. Thus, although Saks and Ashforth (1997) and De Vos et al. (2003), both focussed on new starts, it was evident that sensemaking continued throughout employment with interpretation and reinterpretation of events and circumstances.

The relevance of 'new managerialism' and the changing nature of the Business School environment continued to be ignored. Participants altered and refined contracts based on what they uncovered in the immediate work context. The minor nature of post-entry amendments was rationalised as a consequence of unpacking the complexity of the work which was similar to what they had expected. In addition, there was an element of post-hoc justification of the decision to change career. Participants justified and rationalised the decision based on a tacit acknowledgement that the pre-entry process had been deficient. The conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that the individuals who had a poor employment experience elsewhere were motivated to change and try something different. The enthusiasm to change subsequently swayed judgement and allowed for unfounded decisions to be made as a consequence of the felt necessity to attain greater work satisfaction. The attractiveness of

alternative employment was enhanced whereby participants were convinced from their skewed perspective that it would be a better job. Subsequently, the decision required to be justified.

Participants described the extent to which Business School employment had been relatively more fulfilling than previous industry experiences. Consequently, the relative satisfaction derived from the workplace supported the assertion that the psychological contract was appropriate. Thus, initial psychological contracts were evaluated using two criteria. The first was the relative satisfaction gained from current as opposed to previous work environments. The second was the post-hoc justification of the decision to enter the Business School even though research into the job had been both biased and inadequate.

11.5 Factors that Impacted on the Psychological Contract

Deem (2006) suggested that higher education now operated within an economic ideology which made the university like any other for-profit business entity (Deem, 2006). Cornuel (2005) also concluded that Business Schools should conduct themselves like organisations in the commercial world. The notion that higher education had become more business like would appear irrefutable. Research into the psychological contract within industrial settings has largely concluded that management decisions and behaviour disappointed employees. Management were perceived as having not lived up to their side of the contract and were consequently blamed for breach and violation (for example, Pate and Malone, 2000; Guest and Conway, 2002; Chrobot-Mason, 2003). However, explanations that identified management shortcomings as the predominant explanation for workplace unhappiness did not fully incorporate the complex nature of organisational operation.

Thompson and Bunderson (2003) identified the brittle nature of psychological contracts created by insecurity and change in the marketplace. Thus, when employees perceived that management had not adhered to their side of the bargain it may be that blame should be attributed elsewhere rather than to these internal decision-makers. The study conducted for this thesis revealed that management were invariably held responsible for situations that participants believed had a negative impact on their psychological contract. However, there was evidence of acceptance of some decisions. There was also a view that the Business School had been successful in the past and change was not required. The notion of independence rather than interdependence, a cornerstone of market economics, was

described. However, it has been suggested that the pace of change for business schools and universities will only become more frenetic (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004; Starkey et al., 2004). The desire for stability would seem at odds with the idea of security. Any increase in competition would reduce security of employment unless change is embraced. What was evident was a somewhat short-sighted, blinkered conceptualisation of the work environment whereby only internal management decisions were examined in relation to how they shaped the work context of the individual.

There was evidence of the need for blame attribution when the work environment of an individual was modified. The focus on internal decision-makers would appear to support the conclusion made by Trowler (1997) that the cause of most problematic issues in the higher education workplace was the 'management approach'. However, managers are put in place to make decisions. A Business School is an entity whereby its main assets are the human capital that resides within them. Management decisions will invariably alter the work context of individuals which may in turn have a deleterious impact on the School as a whole. However, it would clearly be illogical for management to intentionally disaffect the assets that it relies upon to generate competitive advantage in the marketplace. It would be illogical of decision-makers to disadvantage themselves in relation to competitors by implementing strategies that isolated the workforce and resulted in psychological contract breach or violation. The assumption being that management decisions are taken to benefit all stakeholders. However, in this study there was evidence of participants examining management decisions from a self-focussed perspective which ignored the perspective of other constituents. Participants appeared to continuously evaluate decisions by management in respect of the impact they made on the work context of the individual. If a mismatch was perceived between the old and new work context then the potential for breach or violation was created.

Thompson and Heron (2005) concluded that management made a marked difference in the context of breach or violation of the psychological contract. They stated that organisations needed to ensure that the relationship between managers and individuals was of a high quality. There was evidence from this study that the quality of interpersonal relationships was an important variable in workplace satisfaction for participants. However, it was also apparent that management could not be aware of the spectrum of ramifications that resulted from the implementation of decisions. For example, participants described decisions that were perceived as increasing the financial viability of the Business School which

consequently lead to the view that job security had increased. However, some participants still perceived that a breach had occurred in respect of the decision based on their evaluation of the new work context.

The allocation of scarce resources requires decision-makers to make choices. Consequently, breach and violation would appear to be inevitable consequences of work contexts. Unquestionably, as Thompson and Heron (2005) identified, some of the effects of a decision can be anticipated and avoided using certain management techniques. However, even when managers display fairness, consistency transparency, representativeness and ethicality as suggested by Leventhal (1980), breach and violation can still occur. Certainly, breach and violation may be reduced or arise less frequently if these principles are followed. However, the method and approach to decision-making and the implementation of the decision may be irrelevant. If a decision produces a new work environment that is not what the employee covets then breach or violation will almost certainly take place.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that within the Business School participants described examples of good and bad management, as well as some excellent and also some very poor decisions. The advent of 'new managerialism' will not have made managers less able. The evidence of lecturers being happy in their jobs (Oshagbemi, 1997a, 1997b, 2000a, 2000b) testified to the view that the interpretation of the context created by managers was an important consideration. The findings from the study revealed that both inter-personal treatment by managers and the interpretation of the decisions by the participants were important features in the determination of a satisfied psychological contract.

11.5.1 Perceptions of Fairness

The nature of work relationships revealed a body of literature which suggested that the perceived fairness of management decisions was an important concept. Previous literature, for example Folger (1993) and Morrison and Robinson (1997), hypothesised that psychological contracts would be affected by both judgements about outcomes (i.e. magnitude and implications) and process (i.e. attributions and fairness). They both suggested that the strongest reactions to injustice occurred when an individual perceived both unfair outcomes and unfair procedures.

The study conducted for this thesis identified that justice was related to more than pecuniary reward and other areas such as interesting work, volume of activity, and the physical work environment were

important socio-emotional rewards. Participants described issues that related to procedural, distributive, and interactional justice. Some participants identified all three within the course of an academic career. Others described one, or a combination of types of injustice. The type of injustice was perceived as irrelevant. What was of greater significance was that injustice had occurred and the consequent impact on the individual work environment.

Perceived fairness of management decisions were again evaluated in terms of the impact of the decision on the match between the desired and the new work context. Cropanzano and Ambrose (2002) similarly concluded that outcomes themselves may serve to qualify the effects of procedures that were perceived as unfair. Participants were content to unquestioningly accept outcomes that impacted positively on their psychological contract. However, individuals described processes or procedures as unjust when decisions impacted negatively on their work environment. For example, when participants were the beneficiary of a promotion or had been allocated a preferential office space, then the fairness of the decision went largely unconsidered. There was also evidence to support Kickul (2001), and Thompson and Heron (2005), who both concluded that the embracing of economic and socio-emotional aspects of the psychological contract was required to broaden the understanding of the potential moderating role of justice perceptions.

Psychological contract violation was theorised by Morrison and Robinson (1997) as a complex cognitive process. The process originated with an appraisal of a perceived discrepancy between an employee's understanding of what was promised by the organisation and what was received. This study identified that the organisation could meet all the obligations and promises expected by an employee but workplace issues could still occur. For example, a change in the personal life of an employee may result in the individual coveting a more flexible working pattern. If such a desire was not facilitated by management then the employee may be disenfranchised to some extent, even if no specific promise existed beforehand to provide such a working environment. The employee may consider the fairness of such a decision – was home-working available to other employees? If so why treat one employee differently? Was the decision adequately explained from the perception of the employee? The example shows how participants altered what they were prepared to give to the organisation and were subsequently upset when the organisation did not deliver what the employee wanted. The notion of inherent self-focus within the psychological contract was apparent.

Thus, the study has shown that even when organisational decision-makers implement decisions that they believe would be beneficial to all stakeholders, the decision may still be viewed negatively by some employees. Individuals who will have their work context modified by the decision may subsequently perceive a breach or violation of their psychological contract.

11.6 Behavioural Reaction to Breach and Violation

Rousseau (2001) asserted that the psychological contract was based on an idiosyncratic belief whereby some elements may be widely shared, but others may be idiosyncratic and tied to a particular individual. The evidence from participants in this study suggested a desire to put in place idiosyncratic deals. The sample all sought to some extent to shape the employment context to their particular specifications. The behaviour of participants supported the conclusions of Cohen and March (1974) and Dearlove (1998) in that they attempted to undertake strategies that they perceived would result in satisfied psychological contracts. The extent to which such actions resulted in the achievement of the goals of the Business School was largely irrelevant to the participants. Thus, within the organisational structure continuum there was evidence to suggest that the Business School remained organic in nature with little degree of movement towards a more mechanistic environment. The findings of Smart et al. (1997) and Deem (2004) which identified that universities had become much more overtly managed and increasingly bureaucratic was not supported. The participants wanted their conceptualisation of the ideal work environment to be put in place. Trowler (1997) had advocated that academic staff were submissive and accepting of decisions made by managers. However, in this study participants were responsive to decisions that were seen to impact on their psychological contract.

Research into reaction to breach or violation found widespread evidence of negative attitude and behaviour (for example Rousseau, 1989; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Turnley and Feldman, 1999; Pate and Malone, 2000; Kickul, 2001; Sutton and Griffin, 2004; Lemire and Rouillard, 2005). However, this thesis has shown that such responses and reactions may not necessarily occur. The participants described situations whereby they believed that their psychological contract had not been complied with. The descriptions identified complex and manifold dynamics within the organisation. Participants described attempts to overcome workplace issues. Indeed, even when participants failed to resolve situations this did not always result in negative workplace activities.

There was evidence of toleration of issues whereby participants accepted decisions that impacted negatively upon their psychological contracts. The notion of tolerance helped explain why participants had chosen to accept breach and/or violation. Tolerance was a variable, dynamic feature influenced by a number of factors: age, perceived ability to manipulate the work context, the likelihood of securing alternative employment, knowledge, and experience of other work contexts, seriousness attributed to an issue, the perceived duration of an issue, and the match between desired and actual work context. When an issue could not be resolved the study identified that a degree of tolerance existed to some extent for all participants. Tolerance was a dynamic concept that ebbed and flowed as the work context changed.

Positive tolerance described behaviour that continued to embrace the goals of the Business School and motivation in respect of work contribution was maintained. However, negative tolerance identified individuals who also remained within the organisation but developed a self-oriented perspective. A psychological contract with an increased self-orientation was constructed, which was similar to the finding of Rousseau and McLean Parks (1993), Hall and Moss (1998), and Maguire (2002). The self-reliance psychological contract was directed by the needs and values of the individual, with success being independent of the Business School.

Participants described how they had responded at different points during their employment with the Business School. Therefore, response type was not necessarily a fixed position. For example, the decision to exit could be reversed as a consequence of change within the context. Previous studies have identified reactions to breach and violation at a given point in the employment of the individual. However, the evidence from this study revealed that participants could pursue different responses over time and determined response as a consequence of the interpretation of the work context.

The participants assessed all decisions that had a direct or indirect bearing on their work environment. Passivity was not the situation that was evident in this context as individuals attempted to manipulate those around them to alter their work context to facilitate a satisfied psychological contract. This agreed with Meckler et al. (2003) who suggested that the leverage an individual had to construct his or her own idiosyncratic deal was based on predisposition (i.e. willingness to negotiate), credentials, occupation,

status, and marketability. What was also evident in this thesis was that associated with the predisposition element identified by Meckler et al. (2003), was the likelihood of success, past performance in the negotiation process, and the relationship with the identified negotiator.

11.7 Summary and Conclusions

Managers are required to make decisions which make the best use of the assets available to them. Within the Business School examined in this study, management decisions impacted on participants from an economic and socio-economic perspective. Participants described how individual work contexts were altered by management decisions. However, the capacity to manipulate managers and influence decisions to counteract context change was also evident. The ability to thwart changes to work context varied between individuals and over time.

Reaction to decisions depended on individual circumstances at any given juncture based on the influences from multiple contexts both internal and external to the workplace. As Shore et al. (2004) suggested, context was not homogenous and wide-ranging individual differences were apparent. These contexts played a part in defining to what extent changed work environments would be accepted or not.

There was evidence that the psychological contract was unilaterally changed and altered by participants whenever they chose, rather than a negotiated change to a binding agreement. The crucial features of Rousseau's (1989) construct were perceived promises, obligations, and mutuality. However, the results from this study indicated that participants changed their psychological contract based on what they wanted from the job, with alteration intrinsically a private determination and often not communicated.

Management decisions were appraised as to their impact on the psychological contract and possible responses were considered. The notion that a managerial agenda had resulted in the erosion of individualism in this Business School context was not supported. In addition, the concept of academic staff being passive and accepting of management decisions (Trowler, 1997) was also not apparent. It was evident that participants examined the impact of decisions on their psychological contract and possible responses were considered which allowed appropriate work contexts to be constructed. Oshagbemi (2000a) and (2000b) identified the prevalence of satisfied staff in higher education and this study has identified how work environments could be modified to achieve satisfaction.

This study has identified how participants were able to create and shape their own work environment to satisfy their needs and wants during their careers. The notion that the management of employment was characterised as a relationship of subordination under conditions of interest conflict (Willmott, 1995), was not supported. The participants described how they were able to influence some decisions and not others and reacted according to their perception of the degree to which their work environment was comparable to that of individuals both within the Business School and in some instances other employment contexts. Participants were continuously active and involved in the evaluation of the multiple contexts that were relevant to them. The personal, subjective judgements resulted in the manoeuvring and manipulation of management and sometimes colleagues. The goal of the participant was to create the idiosyncratic deal, the specific individually tailored work environment that would deliver the satisfaction required from Business School employment. The psychological contracts were self-focussed and self-oriented but this did not necessarily mean that the participants were not also actively involved in assisting the Business School to achieve its ambitions.

The implication for management is that decisions will always cause some dissatisfaction. The extent of the unhappiness caused can be managed through the use of decision implementation techniques, however it is envisaged that breach and violation to some extent will occur as a consequence of most, if not all decisions. The participants appeared to be constantly appraising management decisions, in order to maximise their return from the workplace. The perception that management did not meet their obligations and violation occurred as a consequence, would appear to be true in some situations. However, the participants described how they sometimes chose not to deliver their side of the bargain, but such a decision was more likely to be implemented covertly rather than explicitly. Thus, participants were active and energetic in an often clandestine pursuit of their idiosyncratic responses to their work environment. Attainment of the work context required in order to meet the needs and wants of the psychological contract would appear to be a never ending process of evaluation and rationalisation, balancing personal requirements with how management decisions shaped the work environment.

The conclusions that have been drawn from this study were based on data that was gathered using a methodological approach that had a number of limitations. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with caution and an understanding of the nature of the issues that were identified when the

dependability and trustworthiness of the research was explored. The findings and limitations of the study which have been discussed in this Chapter identified a number of areas for future research which will now be examined.

11.8 Future Research

The research conducted for this thesis has resulted in the identification of a number of interrelated themes that could form the basis for research in the future. The themes identified have been set within the context of appropriate extant literature.

11.8.1 Ideology and the Psychological Contract

The notion that ideology has become a third factor alongside transactional and relational elements of the psychological contract (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003) requires further research. The idea that professional employees have developed a focus away from organisations onto occupations based on the enhanced ideological reward available was not supported in the research undertaken for the thesis. However, where and when ideology is relevant is uncertain and under researched. Thompson and Bunderson (2003) concluded that ideology was a powerful element in the psychological contract. However, in this thesis, ideology was used as a post hoc justification rather than as the basis for decisions. Thus, in the Business School context under analysis the participants did not value ideology as more important than transactional or relational elements. It would seem that the relevance and importance of ideology requires further examination.

The findings from the study suggested that future research on ideology infused contracts should also consider how the ideological aspect interacts with the economic and socio-emotional dimensions in shaping the employment experience. Although researchers (for example, Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Turnley and Feldman, 2000) have recognised that psychological contracts involved the concurrent trade of economic and socio-emotional features, the interdependencies between these features are not well understood. It would also be interesting to consider the extent to which ideological differences may vary between contexts. Interesting comparisons between pre-92 and post-92 Business Schools, as well as between subject disciplines and other public sector occupations such as nurses, doctors, and school teachers could be undertaken.

Turnley et al. (2003) identified that more research was needed to examine how the psychological contract was formed. For example, employees may perceive that the promises made by supervisors are more binding than those made by recruiters (Turnley and Feldman, 1996). Thus, individuals may respond more negatively when breaches arise regarding commitments made by their supervisor than they do when breaches occur regarding commitments made by recruiters. In addition, future investigations need to focus on how individual dispositional characteristics influence employees' perceptions of, and responses to, psychological contract breach. The findings reported in this thesis suggested that there was a link between formation and subsequent issues. The notion that recruiters were responsible for workplace problems was not supported. However, formation included the development of an ideological perspective that was not apparent in the positions that were being left behind. It would seem that research into formation requires consideration of the relevance of ideology at the earliest stage and perhaps a longitudinal approach is required to consider the extent to which ideology is malleable within the psychological contract. It would again be interesting to compare the constancy of ideology within different professions where an ideological element has been identified such as doctors and school teachers.

The inclusion of ideology into the theoretical psychological contract equation makes the understanding of the interaction between these features even more important. For example, reactions to ideological breach may be restrained as a consequence of relational or transactional obligations being satisfied. Investigation of the interactions between the different dimensions of the psychological contract would provide important insights and an increased depth of understanding in respect of the employment relationship.

11.8.2 The Idiosyncratic Deal and the Psychological Contract

Rousseau (2001) suggested that professional employees participated in workplace decisions and described the notion of the idiosyncratic deal. The findings reported in this thesis suggested that the idiosyncratic nature of the psychological contract required further consideration. The participants identified a desire to put in place deals that would deliver specific personal wants. The construction of deals required negotiation. Employees negotiate with agents of the organisation. The research for this thesis identified that multiple contexts existed for each participant, thus a number of different agents

will exist for each employee. The effect of different agents on discussions and the deals that are reached requires further investigation. It would be intriguing to identify the characteristics of agents that result in situations that are beneficial to either or both parties. Shore et al. (2004) also identified that the concept of multiple agents had not been researched to date and that close inspection of relationships within contexts was required to harness the impact of particular agents. Why were some agents more influential? What were the characteristics of agents that made them more or less difficult to negotiate with in order to deliver the idiosyncratic deal? A limitation of this thesis was that it focussed on only one party to the psychological contract. A multiple agent approach has the potential to overcome this weakness and produce more dependable and trustworthy findings.

The notion of multiple agents also suggested that future research might focus on the role of social networks and how these influence employees. The social network structure influences the employee's perception of his or her psychological contract in relation to other's psychological contract. Research into the social network could also incorporate further work in the areas of fairness and justice. For example, would a close knit community of workers have the same contract compared to a more loosely connected group? In this thesis some cognate areas described a close working relationship with immediate colleagues, but no real knowledge of the working practices of others in the Business School. Further analysis might consider the impact on the organisation of such differences in the psychological contract. Through the investigation of both the psychological and the sociological perspective, the network approach could be a powerful analytical tool for capturing the effect of the network on the nature of psychological contracts and employment relationships for different employees.

Researchers who have examined the psychological contract of workers in the same work unit have found little evidence of within-unit agreement (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004). The data from the interviews for this thesis indicated that psychological contracts were similar at commencement but variance increased over time. However, notwithstanding that differences were noted the psychological contracts remained relatively similar. Further research from different contexts, such as different parts of the same university, or a Business School in another university would provide an interesting comparison. Also of interest would be the functional effect of contract differences for the firm and for individual employees. Shore et al. (2004) called for greater examination of within-group heterogeneity

to explore the dynamics of differences within work contexts. Such approaches can help answer the question of how the psychological contract differs and the impact of the difference.

The passive academic (Trowler, 1997) was not evident in the analysis chapters of this thesis. Participants were described as manipulative and continually active in attempts to shape their work environment. However, some participants perceived that such manipulation would be fruitless. Further work requires to be undertaken in respect of the relationship between employee power and location within the structure. For example, Dabos and Rousseau (2004) indicated that workers with informally powerful positions have more munificent psychological contracts than their less powerful counterparts. There would appear to be a rich vein of research that could explore the reasons why certain individuals can secure idiosyncratic deals. Employees with lowly positions in the hierarchy were able to influence decision-makers and colleagues to facilitate the construction of an appropriate work environment. What are the personal and contextual features that facilitate negotiation success, and how is power attained outside of the established hierarchy? There would appear to be an array of research areas that require to be considered in this area.

11.8.3 The Changing Nature of the Psychological Contract over Time

One of the critical dimensions of the psychological contract is the dynamic nature of the contract over time. By its very nature the relationship between an individual and the agents of the organisation is not fixed and static. Further research is required to uncover more about the evolving stages of such relationships and especially the endogenous and exogenous causes of those changes. Such research would require to focus on attempting to capture multiple factors simultaneously impacting on the psychological contract. Despite the difficulties that such a process entails, it would certainly be desirable to conduct longitudinal research on psychological contract content evolution and violation in order to evaluate changing contexts and circumstances. Guest (2004) supported the notion of examination of change over time and also suggested that research needed to explore how the psychological contracts in the workplace develop and to what extent they are shared, standardised, or idiosyncratic.

An interesting facet of the sample in the thesis was that they were all experiencing higher education employment for the first time. It would be interesting to consider the psychological contracts of a

matched sample of contemporaries within the public and private sectors. A number of questions could be posed. For example - why do some move to higher education and some not? To what extent was the notion of ideological reward and social responsibility prevalent? To what extent was ideology a factor in higher education recruitment? To what extent are individuals forced out from one occupation rather than attracted towards another? Why do some individuals succeed in certain environments and not others? The notion of exploring the psychological contract over time would allow for examination of these questions and potentially generate data that would facilitate a much greater understanding of individual behaviour in the workplace.

11.8.4 Breach, Violation, and the Decision to Exit

An avenue that was not explored in this thesis was why individuals chose to exit from the institution as a consequence of perceived breaches or violations to their psychological contract. In essence the fourth research question explored the response to breach and/or violation of individuals that remained within the Business School. However, such analysis did not incorporate why exit had been the chosen and enacted response. Explanations and rationalisations of the decision to exit could have been ascertained through data collected from interviewing former staff.

The academic staff who had left the institution may have been able to provide further understanding in relation to the reaction and response of individuals to issues that impacted on their psychological contracts. This would have proved interesting in respect of whether former staff had pursued the same or similar (or perhaps completely different) strategies identified by the incumbent staff prior to leaving. For example, to what extent had previous staff attempted to resolve issues that had faced them? Had they attempted to negotiate resolution and failed, or had they chosen not to enter the process at all and instead created and executed a successful exit strategy? In essence, why had some individuals decided to exit from the Business School whilst others, who possibly could also have departed, chose to remain?

The analysis of former staff would also have provided data in respect of the extent to which those who had left the institution exhibited a different profile in comparison to the academic staff that remained. For instance, were disparities apparent in terms of age, gender, or subject specialism? Analysis of the departed staff could also have ascertained whether this group had a greater interest in research activity

and the extent to which a track record in this facet of higher education work had assisted exit to another academic institution. The behaviour of former staff in establishing the appropriate environment whilst they were employed in the Business School in order to facilitate the construction of the research output, would also have been of interest.

Another area that could have been explored was whether the individuals who had left displayed a greater propensity to change employers in their careers to date in contrast to incumbents. Indeed, perhaps moving to new employment was part of a longer-term strategy that had been carefully planned and was not related to breach or violation of the psychological contract? Similarly, had leaving been forced upon them by a spouse or partner moving location because of their job? Another area of interest would have been the destination of previous employees, for example, had they moved to other higher education institutions, returned to industry, self-employment, or perhaps something else? Clearly, all of the questions posed in this section are only a selection of the data that could have been ascertained by broadening the sample to include former employees of the Business School.

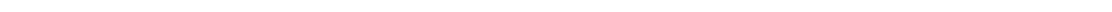
11.8.5 The Impact and Influence of Context and the Psychological Contract

The thesis highlighted the complexity of the psychological contract as an informal, interpretative, and dynamic organisational phenomenon. Consequently, it is suggested that organisational context be brought to the forefront as a means of increasing our knowledge of the complex and manifold systems expressed by the psychological contract within public sector organisations. For example how do the results from the study conducted here compare with a pre-92 higher education establishment? The assumption may be that an institution established as a university possibly over a century ago may interpret the importance of some facets differently. For example, the importance of research may influence the approach to management activity. A further example might relate to the pre-92 policy of appointing senior academic staff to management positions for a fixed period of time. There would be an expectation that someone else would assume leadership within a known timeframe rather than in a post-92 institution whereby lifetime management positions are the norm. The impact on the psychological contract of a known, as opposed to an unknown, leadership change would be interesting.

The perception that breach or violation of the psychological contract always resulted to some extent in negative behaviour was not supported in this thesis. There is a need for further in-depth analysis of

what triggers negative behaviour and the duration of such behaviour. Similarly, what can be the catalyst for positive behaviour to return? Why do individuals remain with organisations when they report violation? A longitudinal in-depth analysis across a variety of organisations which could evaluate exit and non-exit would provide valuable further information in respect of why exit is rejected or accepted.

Lemire and Rouillard (2005) argued that organisational context be brought to the forefront as a means of increasing our knowledge of the psychological contract within public organisations. The conclusion reached by Lemire and Rouillard (2005) is supported based on the findings from the research in this thesis. Lemire and Rouillard (2005) also highlighted the multifarious and intricate nature of the psychological contract especially in relation to public sector employees. The ongoing debate between supporters of the traditional management approach to higher education and proponents of 'new managerialism' justifies further research into the psychological contract to consider why some individuals within the 'new managerialism' debate consider the higher education work environment to be capable of producing a good work experience.



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Appendices

Unit Four Assessment

Doctor of Education - University of Stirling

Bob Gammie

Introduction

Less than a generation ago academic institutions thrived in an environment of predictable funding and student enrolment with little overt competition among institutions (Cohen and March, 1974; Keller, 1983; Willmott, 1995; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). During the last 20 years, Government macroeconomic education policy concerned with the implementation of the 'managerial ethos', has had a significant impact on the operation of institutions. The magnitude of this requires a consideration of the effects of change on the interpretative schemes of organisation members (Ranson et al., 1980; Bartunek, 1984). This will be done through the framework of psychological contracts. Their appeal is that they appear to have the potential to explain behaviour at work. Psychological contracts describe the expectations, attitudes and perceptions held by people in relation to their work and their personal and professional development (Sparrow, 1996a).

The examination of academic response to change in higher education needs to be considered from the perspective of the individual actor. University lecturers have been subjected to a vast amount of transformation in their working lives. This will have necessitated a review of the psychological contract that each will possess with their organisation, discipline, and with higher education. Some will have prospered in the new environment. Others, probably the majority, will have found some difficulty in adjusting. There are a profusion of factors that can influence the academic in formulating their own relational contract. The very nature of universities can facilitate many responses from the individual depending on the nature and extent of the impact, be it a positive or negative reaction. The psychological contract of the academic is very much an individualistic notion, with lecturers being able to react to changes and alter their position within the complex setting they find themselves.

The aim of the research is try and develop greater understanding of how academics respond to changing policy and circumstances. To do this an in-depth understanding of how factors interact in particular contexts needs to be developed. The research will look very closely at actors within their 'small and different' worlds (Clark, 1993). The outcome of this will not just be a better description of how university lecturers interpret different aspects of policy, but will facilitate a consideration of the implications of policy change and implementation, on the academic life of the university lecturers under analysis.

This paper sets out the policy context, followed by an explanation of what is meant by psychological contracts in a general sense, before examining the concept within a university environment. A section is then dedicated to the university lecturer and his/her psychological contract. Following this 'scene setting' the population to be examined is identified and a rationale provided as to the validity for this choice. The Research Questions to be explored are then stated and subsequently a consideration of the Research Methods that have been deemed appropriate to answer the questions posed is undertaken. Some of the potential issues and ethical considerations involved in undertaking the research project outlined are then debated. A time frame for each phase of the research has also been drawn up and the paper concludes by discussing the output that will be generated from this research.

The Policy Context – Setting the Problem

Successive governments have followed an agenda for the radical overhaul of the ideals by which higher education has operated in hitherto. Intent on overturning the collegial ethos, and replacing the notion of a self-justifying and self-regulating academic community, the quality debate has been used to impose upon universities a culture of compliance with norms of its choosing. Government policy has also facilitated a move from an elitist system to the situation

that is referred to as 'massification'. This involved drastically increasing the number of students involved in obtaining degrees, whilst at the same time reducing the unit of resource. Implicit in achieving accountability and quality was the implementation of external control mechanisms defined by government. This has had a dual effect; firstly it assisted in reassuring the electorate that when the elite system was transformed into a mass system, 'standards' would not fall along with the unit of resource. Secondly, the government was able to use the 'weapon' of quality in order to bring about fundamental changes in the character of British higher education, replacing an elitist view (internalised accountability, knowledge for its own sake) with one oriented towards serving a mass system (Willmott, 1995; Nixon, 1996; Nixon, 1997; Gumpert, 2000). It would appear that academic knowledge in the UK higher education sector has been reorganised along a utilitarian trajectory such that, at the macro level, the dominant legitimating idea of public higher education has changed from that of a social institution to that of an industry. While the prevailing image of knowledge change in higher education has tended to be either inertia or expansion, those who have made their professional lives within higher education settings during the recent past also know otherwise. They understand the threat, if not the reality, of selective consolidation and program elimination, particularly for those academic areas that are deemed of insufficient centrality, quality or cost-effectiveness (Gumpert, 1993, 2000).

University operation is now seen to operate under, and be governed by, the rules of the market. In many instances higher education did not lend itself expressly to market conditions. This resulted in the imposition of 'false' conditions to create pseudo-competition, for example, by tying the allocation of funds to performance measures deemed to gauge the quality and value of research and teaching activity. While this development falls substantially short of the full commodification of academic labour, performance measures provide an approximation of market discipline by making departments and institutions compete with each other for rankings that are linked to the provision of valued material and symbolic resources (Willmott, 1995; Zlotkowski, 1997). The obvious difficulty in treating all labour, especially academics in this way is that, unlike machinery, the output and response of individuals to change (that may appear unappealing) cannot be accurately foreseen. The academic, almost by his very nature is seen to be a creative, adaptive and self-disciplining individual.

Three interrelated mechanisms have converged to advance this process. The first is the rise of academic management in colleges and universities, drawing upon discourse from management science and organisational research for its professional ideology and position descriptions. Secondly, there has been an increase in the notion of academic consumerism, through massification and elevating as paramount economic-consumer interests. Finally, the re-stratification of academic subjects and academic personnel based upon the increased use-value and exchange-value of particular knowledge in the wider society. One consequence of these converging forces is that the management of public higher education institutions faces formidable legitimacy challenges, where reconciling competing institutional logics is difficult. Assumptions relating to this suggest the existence of a consensus that the locus of academic reform, if not control, extends to a range of factors beyond local institutional settings. There are formidable expectations to improve access, enhance quality, and cut costs, even as universities are expected to embrace new information and communications technologies that are in themselves costly and unproven (Watson, 2000).

Bocock and Watson (1994) suggested a move towards examining the values and attitudes of academic staff. The rationale for this was the implication that within the aforementioned change process, academics are passive victims who may however bring about unforeseen and unwanted (by managers) outcomes. They found that passivity and the inability to participate in the managerial process had resulted in many academics feeling dispirited, undervalued, and diminished in their autonomy. The resultant outcome of this is an increasing lack of empathy for the goals of the institution (Bocock, 1994; Trowler, 1997). Further negative reactions to change have been reported by a number of authors who subsequently argue that the fragmentation of the academic workplace is transforming university teachers into a new proletariat whose relative class and status advantages are being significantly eroded (Wilson, 1991; Halsey, 1992; Nixon, 1996; Randle and Brady, 1997). This is perhaps not an unsurprising set of results as change in university strategies as a result of new government policies, is almost certainly bound to result in a change in the relationship between the employer and the employee, largely irrespective of the nature of the change. The evidence here suggests that the reaction is negative, certainly in the short-run,

but this not need necessarily be the case as the university lecturer readjusts to a new relationship with their employing university.

The Psychological Contract

A psychological contract refers to

“An individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that person and another party.”
(Rousseau, 1989)

As such, the psychological contract is a particular type of promissory contract (Rousseau and Parks, 1993), and because psychological contracts involve beliefs, they exist “in the eye of the beholder”. What is important is that the individual believes an agreement exists (even if implicit), that some sort of promise (even if implicit) has been made, and that considerations have been offered in exchange. Thus, in the mind of the contract holder, both parties are bound to a set of reciprocal obligations. Individuals hold beliefs about what they are obligated to provide, what the other party is obligated to provide, and how well the other party fulfils its obligation.

Psychological contract theory is not explicitly limited to employment situations, but much of this discussion is framed around employment relationships because this perspective has been most fully developed in that domain. The promises that are a major component of contracts may be explicitly communicated (for example, communicated directly by the organisation). They may also be implicit, based on past actions, as when past provision of training by the organisation creates a perception that the organisation is obliged to provide training in the future (Rousseau, 1990).

Because social norms of reciprocity tend to be pervasive, employees tend to expect, look for, and create the psychological contract as a shorthand way of representing the employment relationship (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Such contracts have several possible functions: to reduce individual uncertainty by establishing agreed upon conditions of employment; to direct employee behaviour without necessarily requiring ‘surveillance’, since employees are monitoring their own behaviour; and to give employees the feeling that they are able to influence their destiny.

There is also variation in the type of contract created. Contracts between employee and employer may fall into a range or continuum: from transactional ones based on specific, close-ended, easily definable and primarily economic transactions on the one hand to relational contracts that are more developmental, open-ended, pervasive, socio-emotional, and value-laden in nature. The latter are embedded in a broader network of social concerns such as interpersonal relationships, reputation, and justice (Rousseau and Parks, 1993; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Robinson, Kraatz and Rosseau, 1994; Rousseau, 1990, 1995). It is said to be more akin to a working ‘partnership’ between employer and employee and can engender feelings of affective involvement or attachment in the employee. It can also commit the employer to providing more than purely remunerative support to the individual with investments like training, personal and career development (Rousseau, 1995). The two constructs - transactional and relational - can be equated respectively to the notions of economic and social exchange (Blau, 1985), terms which describe the more economic than social flavour of the contemporary UK workplace climate. The psychological contract describes a framework for analysing the relationship of exchange, the *perceived terms* of which can be captured using the relational and transactional distinction.

Psychological contracts develop from the interaction of the individual with his or her organisational environment (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Thus, contracts tend to be unique to each individual since they are based in part on their particular goals, needs, and personality. Although psychological contracts were first discussed by organisational scholars in the 1960s (e.g. Argyris, 1960; Schein, 1965), only recently have these unwritten work agreements attracted widespread attention. Much of this attention has been generated by the perception that the employment relationship is undergoing a period of dramatic change and that psychological contract violations are becoming more commonplace (e.g. Kissler, 1994; Parks

and Kidder, 1994; Rousseau, 1996). However, while psychological contract violations have been frequently discussed in theoretical terms in recent years, empirical research on the topic has only just begun.

While several theoretical perspectives have been used to understand both how psychological contracts develop and why employees perceive psychological contract violations, most of these theories, in one way or another, focus on the construct of discrepancy of expectations. In particular, socialisation theory, social information processing theory, social exchange theory, control theory, and cognitive dissonance theory all help inform our understanding of how psychological contracts develop and why perceived psychological contract violations occur. As Turnley and Feldman (1998) suggest, a framework for understanding situational constraints on employee's responses indicate that different responses to psychological contract violations may be more likely to occur in different types of situations. For instance, when employees have a great deal of latitude and freedom in how they behave, they may be more likely to leave the aversive situation altogether (Lee and Mitchell, 1994). This is of particular interest to the higher education sector.

The University Lecturer and the Psychological Contract

It is evident that a number of influences will shape the work environment of the academic, and it is important that these be taken into consideration in assessing reaction to policy change, and that the complexities of interactions between a myriad of related and interacting factors be appreciated. For example, to claim that academics are largely driven by the epistemological characteristics of their discipline may indeed be correct for some (Becher, 1989; Becher and Kogan, 1992). However, to group an entire profession under a single umbrella of disciplinary characteristics is both simplistic and unrealistic. Individuals bring sets of values, attitudes and expectations with them when they enter higher education and, while these can shift during their time in the situation, they continue to have an important influence in responses to change. Many individuals do take up strongly held consistent positions which have important consequences for their view of the nature of higher education, their discipline and their responses to and behaviour towards change (Trowler, 1997).

The contract develops from the interaction of the lecturer with his or her organisational environment, and consequently is unique to each individual since they are based on their particular goals, needs, and personality. Some of these views will be set in stone, whilst others may be more pliable and flexible (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). The relational aspect of the contract is particularly prevalent within the higher education environment. For example, an academic will possess a set of values that pertain to his/her motives for choosing this particular occupation, the role of higher education, the overriding feature of the nature of the work of an academic, ideas of collegiality, professional autonomy, lecturers as founts of expertise, the trust principle, accountability to peers, concern for academic standards, resource deployment on the basis of educational need, and quality of provision assessed on the basis of input. These are a selection of issues that have been challenged and effectively redrafted using a managerial-ethos to replace the professional-based traditional paradigm. Each academic will have a view of some sort on all of the points raised above and if that position is now redundant the psychological contract is violated. Response to violations, particularly in relational contracts, are often found to be severe with results showing lower employee contribution and investment (performance, attendance, retention, citizenship behaviours; Rousseau and Parks, 1993; Robinson, 1996) and changes in employee attitude (reduced satisfaction and commitment; Robinson et al., 1994; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Robinson and Morrison, 1995). Interestingly, research into violation has found that once violated, relational contracts tend to become transactional and self-interested (Rousseau and Parks, 1993), which is a feature of later debate in this paper. The situation that has developed in higher education for those who have straddled the past and present systems, is that the nature of the relational contract they have constructed will have been challenged, and to some extent, violated. However, it is erroneous to suggest that the entire university lecturing group have suffered as a result of the changes, and that those who have reacted negatively will have found the changes equally unpleasant and disturbing.

What is clear is that individuals will react in different ways to the changes that have taken place. If change results in a strongly held view being reconstituted in, what is to them, an

unacceptable form, then a number of options are available. The complexity of the institutional setting facilitates a number of responses, be they deemed to be positive and embracing, or otherwise. The new hierarchical setting allows engagement by individuals at a number of levels. Those who find that they cannot engage with the managerially driven higher education regime can seek refuge. It has become apparent that university lecturers, who entered academia pre-managerialism, are operating in a world that is markedly different than the one that formed the basis for the creation of their individual psychological contract. If for example a lecturer entered higher education with the conception that they were to be a teacher, and this was to be regarded as something equal to those involved in research, or research and teaching, then the evidence would point towards some shifting of this position, with the teacher-only academic slipping down the overall hierarchy. Does this then move the academic away from an individually constructed view of him/her as being a professional to now being something less than that – perhaps adopting a semi-professional status? The question then relates to the psyche of the individual in terms of their perceived role and status within the institution and society. If they wish to retain their potential for career advancement, can this be achieved by continuing along the same path – if the answer to this is negative, they are then challenged to develop themselves further as individuals to retain or enhance professional standing. However, there may be those who are satisfied with where they have found themselves post-managerialism. Although this may be lower down the professional ladder than they had previously placed themselves, the differential is not sufficient to entice further professional development. A niche within the hierarchy has been found that provides sufficient status and reward. This is not to say that opting to retain their current position is an acceptance of satisfaction with the new level that individual academics may find themselves in. It is not difficult to construct a scenario where dissatisfaction does exist with the new order but, for whatever reason, the desire of an individual to change is not strong enough to result in positive action. This may result in cynicism and some of the behaviour cited above in relation to the violation of the psychological contract.

It is not possible to identify and evaluate the entire spectrum of possible outcomes in this paper. It is clear however that the surfeit of change that has occurred will have impacted upon all academics to some degree. The understanding of the nature and extent of impact is an issue that is complex and inherently individualistic. There are a plethora of factors that need to be taken into consideration in an examination of response, and possible response, to policy. These include the different forms of educational ideologies which take new shapes as issues change in different contexts, the nature of the cultural traffic which flows into and through higher education institutions at different times, as well as participants' material interests which determine for them the 'profitability' of any situation. An appreciation of how these structures are themselves socially constructed and apprehended by actors both individually and in groups is also required in order to achieve greater sophistication in our understanding of change (Trowler, 1997).

Research Questions

The aim of the research is to examine the psychological contract of university lecturers. The study will focus on the individual actor and attempt to develop a greater understanding of academics' behaviour.

The research questions have been formulated as follows:-

- To what extent have the psychological contracts of individual lecturers been violated?
- What are the patterns in academics' attitudes to change in higher education?
- What part do organisational, academic and other ideological and cultural manifestations play in shaping these patterns and strategies?
- To what extent do university lecturers have the skills and self-reliance to operate within the education environment in which they find themselves?

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- How, if at all, have university lecturers reformulated their psychological contracts?

Research Methods

Rittel and Webber (1973) identify in the following quotation the difficulty that is faced in undertaking social research and how messy, ambiguous and incomplete such an activity will always be. They state:-

‘The search for scientific bases for confronting problems of social policy is bound to fail, because of the nature of those problems. They are ‘wicked’ problems, whereas science has developed to deal with ‘tame’ problems. Policy problems cannot be definitively descriptive. Moreover, in a pluralistic society there is nothing like the indisputable public good; there is no objective definition of equity; policies that respond to social problems cannot be meaningfully correct or false; and it makes no sense to talk about ‘optimal solutions to social problems’ unless severe qualifications are imposed first. Even worse there are no ‘solutions’ in the sense of definitive and objective answers.’

(Rittel and Webber, 1973, p155)

The nature of the research being proposed here and the research questions as posed identify a scenario that is described in the quote above. Consequently, analysis of research methodologies suggests that an ethnographic approach is perhaps the most appropriate in this instance as it is an analysis of human consciousness that is proposed. The intention is to highlight each individual interpretation of reality in their particular context within higher education. The task is to explicate and unpack their interpretations of the real world: their constructs, typifications, language and meanings. The emphasis is firmly placed on lecturers’ search for meanings to explain their experiences and strategies.

The research questions are arguably issues that are relevant for the entire university sector in the UK. However, the approach to be taken here is based on a situated view of the world. It is evident that problems are always contextualised, with the individual as the centre of the social world, thus there is no logical or consensual solution that can be imposed or discovered. Small-scale, contextualized and richly detailed studies are critical to the initial development of descriptive and analytical frameworks (Skinner, 1985; Zuboff, 1988). The main approach is to try and develop explanations of lecturers’ experiences inductively from the data that emerges. The aim is to understand the personal and living subjectivities attached to work as a university lecturer.

The questions are essentially exploratory in nature and concern the values and beliefs of individuals, both of which indicate the utility of a qualitative approach (Silverman, 1985; Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The objective is as Lofland (1971) summarises,

‘...to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. Its object is to find out what kinds of things are happening rather than to determine the frequency of predetermined kinds of things that the researcher already believes can happen.’

(Lofland, 1971, p76)

Therefore, it is the intention to use semi-structured interviewing as the method of collecting data for this research. It is proposed that there be a three-stage interviewing process. The study will commence with ‘pilot interviews’, to gather basic information about the field using a very broad topic guide with as few direct questions as possible. The piloting will be conducted on individuals outwith the target research group (which is outlined later in this paper), but they will be higher education lecturers.

The second-stage will consist of one-to-one interviews. The intention is to have as little structure to the interviews as possible, with the framing being determined by the pilot process outlined above. Thus, although the term semi-structured is perhaps appropriate the intention is to keep the framing of the interviews to a minimum. The purpose of the interviews in this

research is to collect data within a particular context; consequently the focus and frame are likely to be relatively flexible. The framework that will be used will be an initial series of basic core biographical questions to initiate dialogue and identification by each informant of the breakdown and structure of their academic work and about their career to date. The aim will then be to encourage individuals to raise and explore issues critical to them. Interviewees will be encouraged to express their own versions of what has occurred and assign their own emphasis. The intention is to encourage the informants to use their own terminology and to steer the interview towards issues and concepts that they feel best represent their own experiences. The interviews will allow the informants to engage in a stream of consciousness and to provide “thick” descriptive data. This will then be followed by the third-stage which will consist of a more structured round of interviews that will focus more directly upon relevant issues as determined by the exploratory analysis. This will assist in the tracking of participants’ experiences as they unfolded; the checking of earlier accounts to avoid unusual events being taken for typical; and the provision of data and concepts that could be followed up and to develop understanding of these experiences (Hallier, 2000).

Frameworks and Methods of Analysis

During data gathering several rules of interviewing and data handling will be observed (Spradley, 1979; Yin, 1984; Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988). All interviews will be taped and transcribed verbatim. Each informant will be interviewed on two occasions so that the researcher can affirm or revise interpretations, seek clarifications and explanations, and ask follow-up questions. Preliminary analyses will be undertaken in accordance with the “24 hour” rule to capitalise on the immediacy of the data. Ultimately, the interview transcripts and notes will serve as the database for the study.

Before embarking on the analysis the researcher will become thoroughly familiar with the data. This will involve numerous readings of all interview texts, and the audiotapes of the interviews will be scrutinised in order to take account of nuances of speech, tones of voice and other paralinguistic features. The aim of data analysis in this study is to build theory inductively from data gathered in the semi-structured interviews in a manner informed by Glaser and Strauss’s concept of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

The data will be subjected to a categorical analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984), which is an iterative process that will facilitate the identification of numerous terms and concepts. The intention is to assemble these concepts into categories that define similar ideas, issues or relationships that have relevance for the informants. Further to this a form of constant comparison will be employed to triangulate comparative data from different informants to discern shared categories. Comprehensive cross-reference lists will be developed to keep track of category commonality, relationships between major concepts, and the emerging themes. The next step will be to further explore the data with the intention being to focus on convergent concepts, quotes, decisions, actions, and their relations to the evolving categories and themes that emerged from the first stage of the analysis. This step in the analysis may result in the merging of some overlapping categories to allow for the assignment of theoretical labels to the emergent themes. This should enable capture of informant categories at a higher level of abstraction.

The Study Group

The study will take a single-site approach and is an ethnographic account of activity at a Business School in a post-92 University. The site has been chosen as it has the scope to represent the complexity and diversity that is prevalent in the higher education establishments of today. It is important to state that there will be no attempt made to use findings from this research to facilitate generalisation in relation to the University as a whole, or any other Business School.

The School has 5 Academic Divisions (Accounting; Economics and Finance; Human Resource Management; Operations and Logistics; Marketing and Strategy). Individual members of staff fulfil a multiplicity of administrative roles as well as a myriad of teaching responsibilities, usually, but not always, involving delivery at both postgraduate and

undergraduate level. This can be divided into a number of sub-sets for analysis. A number of salient factors are: gender; age; full-time/part-time; subject specialisms; research active/inactive; position within the hierarchy.

The question that is most relevant here is that, if a selection of individuals is to be chosen for interview, what are the criteria to be employed in deciding who to incorporate? Obviously a random selection is not appropriate, thus an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the staff in terms of the salient categories identified above will determine the selection of an appropriate sample. Previous research has indicated that perhaps the most notable feature to use as the key separating factor is the number of years that an individual has been a higher education lecturer (Trowler, 1997). As is evidenced above the policy changes that have been implemented in the last decade or so, have seen a significant change in the university environment. A logical delineation for this population would be those lecturers who have been employed in the sector pre-1992, and have thus experienced academic life and the changes therein from working within both an Institute of Technology and a University. The next grouping would be those that have been academics post-1992 and have more than 3 years' experience. The significance of this is that they would have been employed only as University lecturers and will have joined the sector after a great many of the dramatic changes had taken place. The final group will be those members of staff that have joined the Business School in the last 3 years. This particular time period has been selected as academics joining in this time frame have accepted different contracts of employment than their colleagues. This may have no significance to them as individuals, but it is a facet of the managerialism that is now evident within the sector.

Within each of these groups it is also important that those selected will include all of the sub-sets identified above and facilitate an examination of their influence, and others, in the shaping, reshaping and possible violation of each academics' psychological contract. Thus, within each of the groups targeted, a representative selection will be selected to ensure that an appropriate proportion of individuals that fall into identified categories are included, thus ensuring that the entire spectrum will have a voice.

Timescale

The timetable for each phase of activity is detailed in the Table below. A number of points need to be made in relation to the dates and activities as identified. The nature of interviewing as a methodological approach is that it can only take place when individuals are available. Consequently the dates below are largely indicative in nature and some slippage and flexibility will be employed as and when required, and this has been built in to the schedule below. Examination of relevant literature has not been specified, but will be part of an ongoing process throughout the research activity.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Activity</i>
June – August 2000	Refine and complete research proposal Prepare and undertake Pilot Interviews
September 2001	Analyse pilot interviews and refine and modify interview framework as required
October 2001 – August 2002	Conduct first round of interviews Undertake analysis as per the framework outlined above
September 2002 – June 2003	Complete writing up of the research

Ethical Considerations

Hermeneutic/interpretative researchers argue that data collection is a social activity, with the researcher in the field confronted by a series of methodological dilemmas, the solutions to which determine the data that are collected. These dilemmas involve researchers in making decisions about how they should conduct themselves and are therefore concerned with the rights and responsibilities of both researcher and researched (Scott and Usher, 1996). Within the context of this piece of research, there would appear to be two ethical approaches that are open to use in this particular setting. The first – open democratic research – stresses the rights of participants to control which data are collected and included in the research. The second – open autocratic research – argues the case against allowing the respondents these rights of veto and therefore obligates the researcher to protect the interests of those who have agreed to take part in the research.

In this situation it is evident that issues being discussed are sensitive and that assurance of anonymity is absolutely paramount to the success of the work being proposed here. It is fundamental to the individual informant that they cannot be identified, since they may make statements that potentially could be interpreted by others in a negative way. It is important to develop a consensual relationship with participants, as they are not compelled to provide data. If a rich source of information is to be generated, those selected for interview should believe that they are free to make statement and comment that will not be attributed directly to them, and that there is no possibility of it being used in a negative way in the future.

Thus, it is proposed that the latter technique be implemented here. The thinking behind this is that if informants provide data, and that they cannot be identified then it is then the duty of the researcher to use the data in a responsible manner. This will be explained to each interviewee prior to the commencement of any discussion to ensure that they are in agreement with this and that they wish to contribute to the research.

Potential Issues

A key issue in undertaking this work is the assumption that informants will divulge their psychological contract with the researcher. Initial preliminary investigation however suggests that the methods of analysis highlighted above and the rules of anonymity identified should encourage this.

Another factor relates to a problem faced with all research using the approach proposed here, is that all individuals, as reflexive and intentional actors, are engaged in interpretative activity throughout their lives. Consequently, the presence of a researcher, and the researcher's desire to investigate social reality by focusing on the perceptions and behaviours of social actors requires a further level of interpretation. Researchers will interpret through their own conceptual and perpetual lens the interpretations made by those being studied, which renders problematic the validity of data collected in this way if this is not fully considered and reflected upon. However, without taking account of the way actors interpret and thus understand their worlds, sociological interpretation is kept empty and devoid of meaning (Scott and Usher, 1999).

The ability of the researcher to take these factors into consideration when undertaking the research will be important in constructing data and results that are accurate in their description and reflect the understanding of reality as reported by the participants. This is a feature of social research that the researcher constantly needs to be aware of in order to avoid the pitfall of re-interpretation of informant comment. The researcher in this context is a member of staff in the part of the organisation under analysis. Thus, an awareness of the need to leave behind common-sense knowledge and suspend its use, for the purpose of this piece of work is required. The intention is to discover the 'common-sense' thinking - 'thinking-as-usual' - of the group under consideration and to suspend temporarily the knowledge that the researcher has, and his own interpretations and understandings.

The location of the interview needs to be carefully thought through. The interviews will be conducted in a neutral environment.

Outputs

The output of this research will take different forms and the format of the material that will be produced will depend on the target audience. The first goal is to produce the thesis as required for the completion of the doctoral programme. Subsequently, it is intended to submit a number of articles to refereed journals to give the findings a wider audience.

It is also intended that an internal policy paper for circulation within the University and the Business School be produced. The aim here is to facilitate discussion on the management and operation of the school so that violation of university lecturers' psychological contracts can be avoided in the future. Thus, the Business School can potentially create a situation that will result in a balance between the wishes and desires of academic staff, and that of management.

The planned dissemination will require construction of documents that meet the specifications of each group. A timescale for the latter two audiences has not been included in the Table above, but it is hoped that this can be achieved in late 2003, early 2004.

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Questions for Pilot Interviews

<u>Questions for Participants</u>	<u>Subsidiary Questions</u>	<u>Research Question</u>
How old are you?		1
How long have you been in higher education?		1
Why did you join higher education?		1
Length of time in industry i.e. working outside higher education?		1
What is the nature of your contract?		1
Can you outline in broad terms exactly what you consider your job to be?		1
Who determines what you do?	Is there a significant dialogue undertaken to arrive at this situation?	1
Has the balance of activities always been the same?	If not, why not?	2
Are you satisfied with the balance?	Have you attempted to alter it? Do you believe that you could if you wanted a change?	2
What do you consider to be areas where you have autonomy/academic freedom? Has this changed?	Research direction? Teaching methodologies? Topics for teaching?	2
What, if anything, do you believe could make you a more productive academic?		2
What do you believe to be the main purpose (mission) of the University?	Is this consistent with your educational ideology?	2
Do you enjoy your job?	Is your morale high? Is it increasing/decreasing/static? Why?	2
What rewards do you consider to be important? Do you consider yourself to have been appropriately rewarded?	Money? Promotion? Peer Acknowledgement? Status? Esteem? Recognition?	3
Do you consider yourself to have been treated fairly as an academic?		3
Who examines your performance?	In terms of teaching performance/output/workload.	3
What value do you add to the University?		3

What, if anything, do you believe could make you a more productive academic?		3
How do you as an individual view the future of higher education?	Do you think that there is more significant change around the corner? If so, what? Or do you think that we are about to enter a period of status quo?	3
Do you believe your job is secure?	If yes, why? If no, why not?	3
Did you achieve your goals for the past twelve months?		3
What are your goals for the next twelve months?		3
Do you work more hours than you are contracted to do?	If so, why? What work do you undertake?	4
Do you believe that your teaching has improved/got worse/stayed the same?	Why?	4
How long do you spend developing teaching resources and preparing to teach?	How is this length of time determined?	4
Are you aware of any changes your relationship with students?	If so, is the change driven by you or the students?	4
Has your research output increased/decreased/ stayed the same?	Why?	4
Does your research feed back into teaching?		4
What significant developments/innovations have you been involved with in the past/are currently involved in?	What were your reasons for becoming involved? Have you any plans to become involved in any developments? If yes, why? If no, why not?	4
How are you placed to operate within this environment and in the environment of the future as you perceive it?		4
If you were to leave your current position, how much difficulty would you have finding a job that was just as good?		4

Revised Interview Template

<p>Research Question One</p> <p>How were the initial psychological contracts of Business School lecturers formed?</p>
<p>Pre-prepared questions that related to Research Question One were as follows: -</p>
<p><i>(i) Can I start by asking you where you worked and what you did, before you came to work here?</i> Factual question to ‘break the ice’ and allow participant to enter into the interview with ease on a subject matter that was specific to them, but was simple to articulate.</p> <p><i>(ii) Why did you choose to come to work here?</i> Examination of the psychological contract pre-commencement of employment. Also facilitated investigation of the psychological contract of the individual in their previous employment position and to what extent it was violated. Also some probe questions in relation to previous employment and what happened there.</p> <p><i>(iii) What did you expect the job to be before you got here?</i> Facilitated examination of the perceptions and perspectives of individuals entering into this setting and the psychological contract that they had constructed prior to joining the Business School.</p>
<p>Research Question Two</p> <p>To what extent was the initial psychological contract an appropriate and relevant construct?</p>
<p>Pre-prepared questions that related to Research Question Two were as follows: -</p>
<p><i>(i) Is working here what you expected it to be like?</i> Depending on the interviewee response to this question determined the issues that he/she talked about and questions that were used to try and unpack perceptions further.</p> <p><i>(ii) What is your role within the Business School and the University?</i> This allowed individuals to highlight what they saw as being the main constituent parts of their job and allowed for comparison in respect of their pre-commencement perspective.</p>
<p>Research Question Three</p> <p>What were the factors that impacted upon the psychological contract of participants in this context?</p>
<p>Pre-prepared questions that related to Research Question Three were as follows: -</p>
<p><i>(i) Has working here changed significantly since you joined the Business School?</i> The assumption in asking this question was that there had been change of some sort for all academics, the dimension of which would be individually determined. Consequently issues may have occurred as a consequence of this. The question was intended to allow for the unpacking of issues that the academic identified.</p> <p><i>(ii) Have you encountered any problems or issues since during your time at the Business School?</i> Depending on the interviewee response to this question determined the issues that he/she talked about and questions that were used to try and unpack perceptions further.</p> <p><i>(iii) Why do you think these problems arose?</i> This allowed participants to describe what they perceived as being the main reasons why problems or issues occurred in the workplace.</p>

Research Question Four

How did participants respond to perceived breaches and violations in their psychological contracts?

Pre-prepared questions that related to Research Question Three were as follows: -

The questions used to initiate discussion in this area were constructed within the interview and were unique to each event. The scenario that had caused an issue was identified and subsequently explored and unpacked.

For example once an issue had been identified by the participant, a questions such as – what did you do about this? – was used to engage the academic in an examination of their behavioural response. On a number of occasions this would be followed up by - and then what did you do? – or – did you do anything else? Why did you do this? What else do you think you could have done?

**Research to be Undertaken as part of the Doctor of Education
University of Stirling
Bob Gammie**

The aim of the research is to examine the psychological contract of Business School lecturers as part of the Doctor of Education that I am undertaking at the University of Stirling. The study will focus on attempting to develop a greater understanding of the psychological contract of Business School staff. A definition of the psychological contract is provided below. This is followed by a description of the research and the ground rules that will be followed.

Definition of the Psychological Contract

A psychological contract refers to,

‘An individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that person and another party.’

(Rousseau, 1989)

As such, the psychological contract is a particular type of promissory contract (Rousseau and Parks, 1993), and because psychological contracts involve beliefs, they exist “in the eye of the beholder”.

The Ground Rules

All participants will be chosen at random.

The Head of School has agreed to the research being undertaken.

However, it is your decision if you want to participate or not. You can say no.

Semi-structured interviews will be used as the method of collecting data for this research.

The interviews will start with some biographical questions followed by questions about your career to date.

No preparation is needed in advance of the interview

Anonymity will be protected at all times.

Participants can withdraw at any time.

Individuals will be able to read what has been written about them at any time.

Participants can ask for any piece of text to be altered or deleted.

Copies of the analysis will be made available to participants as it becomes available.