Efficient and Effective Management in Higher Education: An Insider Action Research Perspective

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Thesis submitted to Cardiff Metropolitan University in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Supervisors: Professor Scott Fleming and Professor Sheldon Hanton
Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Date:

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This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged explicitly in the references.

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Date:

Statement 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis to be made available for consultation within the university library and for photocopying or inter-library loan and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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   Experience Circle.
   Four Themed Area Circles.
   Overall Implications.

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<td>Business Support Manager</td>
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<td>DLT</td>
<td>Director of Learning and Teaching</td>
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<td>FSG</td>
<td>Financial Sustainability Group</td>
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<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full-Time Equivalent</td>
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<td>HND</td>
<td>Higher National Diploma</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<td>MBA</td>
<td>Master of Business Administration</td>
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<td>MPT</td>
<td>Management and Planning Team</td>
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<td>NIAC</td>
<td>National Indoor Athletics Centre</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Personal Assistant</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Programme Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAF</td>
<td>Royal Air Force</td>
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<td>REF</td>
<td>Research Excellence Framework</td>
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<td>RES</td>
<td>Research and Enterprise Services</td>
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<td>SU</td>
<td>Student Union</td>
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<td>UWIC</td>
<td>University of Wales Institute, Cardiff</td>
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<td>VCB</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor’s Board</td>
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<td>VS</td>
<td>Voluntary Severance</td>
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Published peer-reviewed papers


Peer-reviewed conference communications


Seminars conducted

MA Sport Management and Leadership seminar: Reflective practice for research
Conducted by Dr A. Bryant, J. Barnett and H. Bowles (Cardiff, December 2011).

MA Sport Management and Leadership seminar: Researching in your own organisation.
Conducted by J. Barnett (Cardiff, January 2013).

MA Sport Management and Leadership seminar: Reflective practice for research
Conducted by Dr A. Bryant and J. Barnett (Cardiff, January 2013).

MA Sport Management and Leadership seminar: Reflective practice for research
Conducted by Dr A. Bryant, and J. Barnett (Cardiff, January 2014).

MA Sport Management and Leadership seminar: Researching in your own organisation.
Conducted by J. Barnett (Cardiff, February 2014).
Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the factors that underpin efficient and effective management of the administration services that support academic delivery in an academic school in higher education. It emanated from personal disquiet that my formal management education, with curricula delivered on a discipline basis, had not equipped me to deal with the complex and messy reality of the managerial role. There were six objectives associated with this project: (a) examine effective and efficient management through action research; (b) develop management effectiveness through action research; (c) analyse the factors that underpin, contribute to and affect the manager's efficient and effective delivery of support activities; (d) enhance and develop the researcher's managerial competencies and improve work systems; (e) examine how past managerial experiences affect current practice; and (f) examine the benefits of insider, first person, action research to support managerial activity in a university academic school. An autoethnographic approach, using reflective narratives, was adopted. The reflective narratives, which form the data for this research, were written over a two year period between spring 2010 and spring 2012, and encompassed the daily activities, both planned and unplanned, mundane and unique of my life as a manager. The findings indicated that effective self-management was a pre-requisite of the successful management of others. Self-management and the management of others requires skills based around four themed areas of emotional management, relationship management, presentation management and the management of roles and tasks. Experience, combined judiciously with formal management education and training (hard skills), ability in the four themed areas (soft skills), and sector and organisational knowledge are required to manage successfully within a university setting. Experiential learning, achieved by structured reflective practice, was found to be an important tool for the improvement of practice through continuing professional development. Action research and reflective practice were useful approaches in the improvement of managerial effectiveness. The manager must be able to apply their professional knowledge according to the situation; this was when tacit knowledge-in-action was required. The findings suggest, therefore, the need to educate managers in the acquisition of structured reflective practice. Formal management education should teach students about the need for and the development of the soft skills pertaining to the management of emotions, relationships, self-presentation and of roles and tasks in themselves and others. This thesis has important implications for management education and for the continuing professional and personal development of practising managers.
PREFACE
I awaken without the alarm and check the time, 06.18. I take five minutes to gather my thoughts before getting out of bed. Dressing gown on, I go downstairs, careful not to wake the rest of the family. I make packed lunches, drink tea, eat toast and put away last night’s dishes before going back upstairs. I get the children out of bed, put out their school uniform and then shower and dress for work while they eat breakfast. I check that school and work bags are packed and weekly spellings have been practised. We are in the car for 07.50 and I am at the childminder’s house for 08.00. After a quick natter with the childminder I am back in the car for the 15 minute drive to work. I mull over the things that I need to do today: draft a job description, review and update the School risk register and prepare for the School management team meeting that afternoon. With the car parked I walk toward the main campus building and bump into one of the PhD students who I need to talk with about her bursary. After gleaning the information I need from her I stick my head round the door of the administration office to find out how everyone’s weekend went. Once in my office I switch on the computer. The Director of Learning and Teaching notes my arrival and comes in to discuss some issues associated with the likely long term absence of a member of lecturing staff. Shortly afterwards one of the administration team asks if I have a minute; she is pregnant. After I have talked with her and made a note to send her the maternity leave policy I pop in to see the Dean about the risk register. I leave 30 minutes later with a list of actions, some of which need to be completed by lunchtime. Back in the office my email inbox is filling up and I have a missed call to return. My plans for the morning are already in disarray. I would not swap this messy, but typically, unpredictable life of a manager, it is better than routine work; the week is young and I have a lot to do and many people to contact.

**Structure of This Thesis**

This thesis, an autoethnographic investigation into efficient and effective management in higher education, comprises six chapters. The first chapter, ‘Taking the Plunge’, is a reflective prologue that examines the considerations that I, as a working mother, employed as the Business Support Manager (BSM) in the Cardiff School of Sport,
Cardiff Metropolitan University, formerly the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) faced prior to enrolling in part-time doctoral study. The second chapter is an introduction to this research project. In order to situate this PhD in terms of the physical and cultural environment, background and contextual information on Cardiff Metropolitan University, the work setting and my role within it are provided. With the focus of this research on managerial effectiveness the introductory chapter contains a definition and explanation of leadership and management in the context of this project and with reference to higher education management. It includes an overview of the literature on management education and learning, and my initial views on teaching and learning linked with my managerial practice.

The thesis methodology is presented in chapter three. The first section of this chapter includes an outline of my worldview and the reasons for this philosophical perspective. The methodological choices and approaches taken are described and evaluated with reference to the purpose of this enquiry and consideration given to how the data collection was undertaken. The ethical concerns of role conflict and truthfulness related to this research are also discussed.

Chapter four, ‘A Manager’s Tale’, is the autoethnographic account of my managerial practice in the University; the stories are drawn from my reflective narratives written over a two and a quarter-year period, between early spring 2010 and late spring 2012. Additionally, within this chapter extracts from the reflective journal that I kept throughout my candidature are used to illustrate the thoughts and effects that PhD registration and the research process had upon me. The main themes and learning outcomes drawn from this research are commented upon at various junctures to facilitate the subsequent discussion of the main themes. In keeping with the nature of
managerial life, the stories and the learning are neither neat nor straightforward (Hill, 2003).

Contained within chapter five are the research findings and a discussion on the theoretical issues and resultant practical implications that emanated from ‘A Manager’s Tale’. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the factors that constitute efficient and effective management within higher education and make suggestions for managerial practice and education. Consideration is given to the strengths and limitations of this research and suggestions for future areas of research are provided. The chapter ends with concluding remarks.

The final chapter, ‘Concluding Reflections’, is a reflective epilogue that provides links to, and closes the loop on some of the issues examined in ‘Taking the Plunge’. It also reveals the unforeseen challenges and personal and professional changes that I experienced as a result of undertaking this PhD. It complements the prologue and provides information on doctoral study from the perspective of a working mother.

Although this structure does not follow the orthodox format for a thesis it allows the subject matter to be explored in a manner appropriate to the aim and objectives.

**Considerations in the Presentation of This Thesis**

This thesis is presented in the following format: (a) American Psychological Association (6th Edition) format with English spelling; (b) figure numbering is continuous and embedded in the narrative; and (c) a reference list at the end of the thesis. The appendices follow chapter six, Concluding Reflections. Chapter One has been published, therefore, it was decided to present this section of the thesis in the manner in which it appears in the public domain but reformatted to APA (6th Edition).
CHAPTER ONE

Taking the plunge: Reflections on the decision to register for a doctorate
“Now that you’ve finished the postgraduate certificate when do you start a PhD?” my husband enquires. “You must be joking, I’m not sure that I have the time or the academic ability” I reply.

Will I Get Wet?

In this article I examine some of the motivating and potentially inhibiting factors that I, as a mother of young children working in a full-time, middle management role in higher education, considered prior to enrolling in part-time doctoral study. There is little research on the motivation to start a PhD (Brailsford, 2010; Leonard, Becker & Coate, 2005), or on the issues that affect those who study part-time (Greenfield, 2000). Through a discussion of these factors, I share my experiences and decision making process with others in a similar position and raise awareness of pre-registration concerns. It is widely recognised that the decision to enrol on a PhD programme, due to the level of commitment required and the number of years it will take, is not a quick one. Moreover, in making this decision, it is important to be honest about one’s motivation, insecurities, and strength and weaknesses (Wellington, Bathmaker, Hunt, McCullock, & Sikes, 2009). The studies conducted by Brailsford (2010) and Leonard et al. (2005) on the motivation to enrol and the benefits of successful completion were conducted using samples of doctoral alumni. Brailsford commented that, “Questions in the interviews were answered with the benefit of hindsight. What participants remembered about their motives, hopes, and aspirations might have been selective memories” (p. 24). Only a few of the many guidebooks on achieving a PhD, (e.g., Leonard, 2001; Phillips & Pugh, 2006), give detailed consideration to the dilemmas and issues that prospective students will face. Fewer still focus on the additional deliberations, including the social and emotional issues (Greenfield, 2000), that a part-time, mature student may have to make prior to embarking on this level of study.
Although, the funding councils’ view of doctoral students appears to conform to the notion of a young, full-time student who will become a researcher the experience of Leonard et al. (2005) was different. They found that doctoral research was increasing among mid-career professionals who were studying part-time. Wright and Cochrane (2000) suggested that due to the significant time and effort required these non-traditional groups now do at least as well, in terms of successful completions, as their more conventional counterparts. However, funding council statistics suggest that part-time students are less likely to complete than their full-time counterparts (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2005). As a mature, mid-career professional who would be studying part-time I needed to assess the risk and assure myself that I had a good chance of submitting a thesis, of the right quality, in a reasonable time-scale. All research students will approach PhD study with their own set of personal circumstances; however, due to the number of issues that I needed to consider, including the research subject and question, achieving and maintaining a work-life balance and the possibility of role conflict in both family and work spheres, my experience is likely to resonate with other prospective students.

This autoethnographic, reflective article, written contemporaneously, will complement the existing literature which is predominantly conducted and written in hindsight. It covers the ten-months from the suggestion, by a work colleague, that I undertake a PhD through to my enrolment and registration. I draw on a reflective narrative, written immediately after the first meeting with my supervisors in January 2010, in which I described my concerns, and motivation in relation to doctoral study. I also refer to extracts from a reflective journal kept during the pre-enrolment phase, from February to September 2010, when I undertook pilot studies and compiled my research proposal. Excerpts from the reflective narratives convey how I envisaged PhD study,
added to an already busy existence, would impact physically and emotionally on my work and domestic life. These excerpts have been inserted at relevant junctures throughout the sections that follow; their inclusion illustrates my thoughts and feelings. A brief overview is provided of the research methods that were used to record the narratives which fall into two main themes. The first considers the maintenance of a work-life balance and the second management of research issues pertaining to the conduct of research in my own organisation and being supervised by colleagues. Following a discussion of my deliberations recommendations are made for prospective doctoral students.

**How Do I Know If I Should Jump?**

I had been the Business Support Manager (BSM) in the Cardiff School of Sport at Cardiff Metropolitan University since 2006. After four years in post I needed a challenge. The need for academic stimulation and personal fulfilment had been a regular feature of my life; during 11 years as an RAF officer I had completed an MBA and numerous personal and professional development courses. When my children started school, wishing to update my professional knowledge, I enrolled on a postgraduate certificate in Leadership. A year-long course seemed a sensible level of commitment. However, once completed I sought another challenge. In a job I enjoyed and with workable and stable childcare arrangements in place, achieving the challenge through new employment was not the best solution. I needed something to prevent me from becoming complacent and to add a manageable level of pressure to help me continue to perform my role well. Despite suggestions from family members, it was only when a work colleague, with extensive supervisory experience, proposed doctoral study that I gave it serious thought. A review of the self-help books on PhD study revealed that there was little guidance for a mature student trying to balance part-time study with full-
time work and a family. The most informative accounts, for me, were the first-hand experience narratives of students undertaking PhD study presented by Greenfield (2000), Salmon (1992), and Vartuli (1982). Reading these helped me to rationalise and appreciate the normality of the thoughts and feelings that I was experiencing and realise the benefit to others of such personal stories. However, society and higher education have changed since the latter two accounts; the former is one of the few contemporary narratives, examining any aspect of the doctoral journey from which I or any other prospective student can seek affirmation that their dilemmas are normal and find encouragement to proceed.

I needed to be sure that PhD study was right for me; but how would I know that it was right? My initial reaction had been that I had neither the time nor the ability. My colleague’s suggestion encouraged me to think again. During our first formal meeting I was asked to write about my motivations for study; it was this narrative that set my decision making in motion. Following positive feedback about this work from my supervisors I maintained a journal describing my thoughts about the PhD project and my ability to cope academically while retaining some balance to my life. In the following paragraphs I describe briefly autoethnography and reflective practice which were the methods I used to gather, record, and reflect upon my actions and feelings that informed my decision to ‘jump’.

Autoethnography is a form of autobiographical personal narrative that explores the writer’s subjective experience of life and connects the personal to the cultural (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It has evolved to include a range of autobiographical forms including personal narrative (Rinehart, 2005) and provides an opportunity to embrace the extant literature (Boyle & Parry, 2007). Although autobiographical writing has been considered by some as self-indulgent (Mykhalovskiy, 1996), and questions have been
raised about its value as *proper* research (Sparkes, 2000), this naturalistic approach would enable me to draw comparison between my culturally and socially driven dilemmas and the relevant literature. Using an autoethnographic approach I was the subject and the object or focus of my research and my personal experiences and responses to events became the research data.

There is no precise definition for reflective practice with practitioners working within a number of frameworks, methods and techniques in order to understand and learn from experience (Hickson, 2011). Knowles, Gilbourne, Tomlinson and Anderson (2007) described reflective practice as, “An approach to practice that involves creating opportunities to access, make sense of and learn from tacit knowledge in action we use in our daily work” (p. 109). Perhaps most appropriate in this context is Black and Plowright’s (2010) definition that “reflection is the process of engaging with learning and/or professional practice that provides an opportunity to critically analyse and evaluate that learning or practice” (p. 246). Reflective practice, as *reflection-on-action*, involves taking time to consider, interpret and understand the experience which can subsequently improve a manager’s development and practice and plan future action focusing on the individual rather than organisational dynamics (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; McIntosh, 2010). I did not follow a structured approach when writing my reflections as this did not seem to allow for the non-linear nature of managerial and domestic existence. The combined methods would enable me to examine my background and how my values, thoughts and behaviours related to my domestic, workplace situation. They complemented one another in that a degree of reflection is required by a researcher engaged in autoethnographic writing when considering their story (Gilbourne, Jones, & Jordon, 2011). Reflection-on-practice also provides the link for the researcher focusing on their own practice through personal narratives and
autoethnographic writing (Herr & Anderson, 2005). The themes developed naturally from historical concerns about my intellect and academic ability to current worries about the resource of time. They recurred throughout the reflective narratives. Relevance of the themes was confirmed through informal discussions with peers in a similar position.

Learning to Swim Again

Returning to the pool.

I loved primary school and, with natural confidence, was one of the class leaders. At eleven I transferred to the local girls’ grammar school where, unfortunately, the pervasive culture of negative reinforcement did not bring out the best in me. Although, with eight ‘O’ levels and three reasonable ‘A’ levels, I had degree course offers, I chose to study for an HND in hotel and catering management. I wanted a practical rather than a theory based course and revealing a lack of confidence in my intellectual abilities, was reluctant to attend university because I wanted to be at the top rather than the bottom of the pile.

I was aware, as Bolig (1982) noted in respect of the women that she studied, that I had been an early reader, was bright and had an above average IQ. However, despite a master’s degree, a postgraduate certificate and a relatively successful managerial career, in diverse locations and situations, the lack of confidence in my academic ability with which I left secondary school remained with me. A 360 degree evaluation of my management skills was required as part of the postgraduate certificate, so I asked an academic colleague on the School’s Management and Planning Team (MPT) to undertake one of the reviews. During a related conversation my colleague, a professor, on recognising my drive for self-development and new challenges suggested that I consider a PhD Surprised that he was talking about me, a look of disbelief, I am told, appeared on my face. The idea of PhD raised its head twice more over the next few
months until in January 2010 I decided to dip a toe in the water and arranged a formal meeting with the professor.

Although it had been mentioned by my husband and mother, had doctoral study not been suggested by my colleague, I probably would not have pursued it. This situation is wholly congruent with that noted by Leonard (1997), “Girls and women tend to think that if they are good enough, someone will notice and encourage them to proceed” (p. 157). Even after our initial meeting, however, and the supervisory team’s positive comments about my first reflections, I still had doubts.

Although I have an MBA I worry that I will not have the intellectual ability to take it a stage further; will I be able to produce a suitable standard of academic writing and thought? Although some of the researchers in the School are undoubtedly more intellectual and intelligent than me, I think I have comparable ability to most.

My concerns were compatible with the self-effacing nature of many female students. Women tend to enter doctoral study cautiously (Bolig, 1982) and commonly question and worry about their ability. I continue to worry about my ability to pursue this course of study but I am more content now knowing that these feelings are normal.

Testing the water.
The challenge that I sought was not motivated by a desire to increase my earning capacity or for higher status but purely for self-fulfilment and mental stimulation. The desire to prove one’s-self capable of PhD study is a frequently cited motivational factor (e.g., Leonard et al. 2005; Russell, 2008; Wellington et al., 2009). The challenge of learning (Vartuli, 1982), personal development, intellectual growth (Leonard, 1997; Leonard et al., 2005) and self-satisfaction and stimulation (Bolig, 1982) were all reasons
to study at this level. My background, profile and motivations fit those described by Boucher and Smyth (2004) of their management research candidates.

I was nervous (in the first meeting with my supervisors) because although I knew I wanted to study, if asked what I wanted to research the answer would be rather vague. I enjoyed my master’s dissertation but I knew that research in food and hospitality was unrealistic (in terms of my current employment). I was not sure that my varied background would be conducive to this level and depth of study.

Contrary to the reasons suggested by Lawton (1998) I did not have a particular interest in the research process, I had not identified a question to address and, because the area of research for my MBA was food and hospitality management, it would not be realistic to develop my master’s research. I did, however, enjoy studying and my job, after three-years in post, was no longer as satisfying and demanding as it had been initially. I needed, as Wellington et al. (2009) described, the intellectual stimulation and challenge. As Leonard et al. (2005) proposed, I considered enrolling on a doctorate for multiple reasons. However, aware of high attrition rates, the personal demands upon me (Owler, 2010) and concerns over whether I had the academic ability (Phillips & Pugh, 1987) were dilemmas that haunted me as I debated whether to jump.

**Walking the plank (between researcher and manager).**

My supervisory team comprised two professors who were co-members of the School’s MPT and a lecturer who is my Director of Studies. At the first meeting with my supervisors they recognised that, with a busy full-time job and family commitments, it would be difficult for me to undertake fieldwork for data collection away from the workplace. Their grasp of my domestic situation and the extent of my work commitment, in tandem with consideration of their own expertise, were crucial in designing the research question and method. Initial discussions focused on an
ethnographic study within the School; however, due to ethical and role conflict concerns the focus changed. The emphasis of the study now focussed on my managerial practice, which would reduce (though not remove) the issues of role conflict. The working title for my study was agreed, ‘Efficient and Effective Management in Higher Education: An Insider, Action Research Perspective’. My supervisors’ advice followed that of Phillips and Pugh (2006) who recommended choosing a research problem related to the part-time student’s work both for reasons of time and the psychological strain of moving from the work to the research environment.

Given the nature of this project, my supervisors indicated some concern about the potential reaction of other staff in the School. I had been brought in to support its academic and research undertakings rather than becoming a researcher myself. These issues of role duality, when a manager adds a researcher position, can cause difficulties for them (Coghlan, 2001). This is especially true for managers undertaking insider action research who want to remain in their organisations when their research is finished (see Moore, 2007). Similarly, I was aware that despite turning the spotlight away from the academic school and onto my practice as a manager, I could upset the equilibrium at work. Gurbutt (2000) believed that some of her work colleagues were not particularly supportive of others’ PhD study. Indications, in my case, were that others would be supportive of a PhD but approval of the subject matter might be more problematic. Nevertheless, the appreciation that relationships might change and that there could be issues of role conflict, enabled me to prepare mentally.

Failure to complete or to perform to expectations could affect working relationships as well as my self-worth and others’ perceptions of me. Undertaking this study could also shift the balance in my working relations that have been developed over four years.
I entered the doctoral research process expecting there to be times when my roles would collide and when I would need to detach myself from my research. I prepared myself also for the possibility that at the end of the research when the fieldwork was completed and the thesis written, new employment could be necessary. It is likely that I will have changed, as will my beliefs and perspectives. I will feel different about the job and I will miss the additional dynamic and challenge provided by the research. The appreciation and understanding that things might be different has helped me to rationalise the probable changes to my life, relationships and roles prior to embarking on the research. I know that despite this mental preparedness it will not be easy; ethical difficulties will be encountered and the research will be inherently problematic (Coghlan, 2001).

The situation of colleague supervision is seen as a special case and one where role conflict between supervisors and supervisee may exist; the academic credibility of all parties is tested and failure may reflect on all involved (Denicolo, 2004). Although Denicolo discussed supervision of academic colleagues, similar considerations will exist between academics who supervise colleagues employed in support roles. Students supervised by colleagues often do well as they do not want to lose face.

I appreciate the dual nature of the relationships that I will have with people; fellow MPT members versus supervisors and BSM versus fellow students. Separation will at times be difficult and I will need to step back and question whether the decisions and actions that I am making are the same as the ones I would make if I did not have role duality. The web of relationships may become complex.

I was aware from the outset that my relationship with my supervisory team would be different from that experienced by many research students. I would primarily
have two relationships with each of them. The colleague relationship was already well-defined. However, the supervisory relationship, in addition to our school management roles, had the potential to induce tension. As Denicolo (2004) proposed, the appreciation of my novice status as a researcher aided the transition from my professional role to my student role. Furthermore, knowing where the two roles began and ended helped minimise any conflict. A coping strategy for managing my roles was the setting of personal boundaries between my working role and my student researcher role (Boucher & Smyth, 2004). The closeness of some supervisors to their research students which spills over into their social lives was not something that I sought or indeed could accommodate. Family responsibilities require that I leave work on time and it is a social life that has largely been sacrificed in my efforts to maintain a work-life balance. Therefore, the relationship with my supervisors is developed and maintained over a social coffee at work. Due to these various influences the relationship that I experience with my supervisors is one of colleague and equal. The ability to cope with my dual role was not a deciding factor in whether to enroll on a PhD but it was important in managing work in both roles and my day-today interactions with the team.

Generally, women supervisors are thought to be helpful to women students and female students tend to find it easier to talk about personal problems to a woman (Leonard, 1997; Phillips & Pugh, 2006). Having worked predominantly in male dominated environments I feel as comfortable in male company as in female company. Supervision by male academics works well for me as it does, in the majority of cases, for other women (Phillips & Pugh, 2006). However, more important to me than the sex of my supervisors was their experience, ability to supervise me, and most of all the level of trust that I could place in them.
I became conscious that through my reflections I would be baring my soul to them and revealing my weaknesses and insecurities and expressing views that may not be congruent with their own. Although there were others in the School who could have supervised me there were few with whom I would be as comfortable sharing my personal narratives while simultaneously maintaining a professional working relationship.

A realistic and workable research project was crucial to my ability to undertake a PhD. However, this brought with it its own issues in terms of ethics and role conflict. Capability and maturity to manage myself and dual workplace roles would be key to a successful outcome. A supervisory team with whom I felt comfortable was another important factor in maintaining my footing.

**Staying afloat.**

Naturally, I hope, embarking on a PhD gives rise to a number of concerns. First, finding sufficient time and ensuring that my study does not impinge on my family and marital life; the familiar work-life balance.

Work-life balance, and how to achieve it, was a thread that ran through my journal entries. It was also a concern for my supervisors. During a second meeting with them in February 2010 to discuss the doctoral proposal in more detail it was agreed that I would undertake a period of pilot work. This early research would enable me to develop my reflective practice and writing and gain an indication of whether I could balance research, work and a family life. I would then be able to make an informed decision on enrolment.

Work-life balance has been defined as, “The extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role” (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003, p. 513), and a balance that allows the successful
fulfilment of potential in both domains with minimal stress (Waumsley, 2005). Should such a balance not be achieved, conflict arises that can result in guilt and anxiety from one role spilling into other roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). When roles that are considered to take priority (e.g., employee, mother, wife, researcher) demand simultaneous attention this can lead to anxiety and other negative implications including decreased productivity, problems with parenting, and reduced life satisfaction (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980).

I feel weighed down by issues with one of my children who is reluctant to go to school. It has been difficult to balance work and home life and not be distracted by these family issues.

Parents tend to experience more work and family conflict than workers without children. Women in particular often experience time-based conflict and stress as a result of conflicting work and family schedules (Pleck et al., 1980).

It has been a busy week with lots of balls to juggle; I feel that I need to work hard to keep up with everything that needs my attention. I also feel that I have too much to do to be able to think properly about what I am doing. I have no time to consider what I am doing, why, when, if I have taken all appropriate actions.

Women frequently mention role conflict between career and home and raising children, time conflict between home and career, and guilt about not being a good wife or mother, especially if need arises to take work home (Linehan & Walsh, 2000). Tiredness resulting from paid work may spill over into a woman’s family life and make it more difficult for her to perform domestic tasks (Pleck et al., 1980). This situation remains true in the academic environment; Leonard (2001) and Phillips and Pugh
(2006) noted that women experience conflict between study, work and family and are expected to combine roles and juggle caring for children.

If I were to enrol on a PhD programme I had to consider whether my level of engagement at work would remain acceptable to my employer and commensurate with the organisation’s requirements of me. More importantly, I needed to think about my family; what was an acceptable level of balance to me between work, study and family time would not necessarily be acceptable to them.

I have had chance this month to organise thoughts and to consider how I will combine work and study. I know that I will need to make time for study; work until now has always come first and I feel guilty if I am not undertaking the work for which I am paid. However, I have the support of the Dean and know that it is reasonable to take some time for professional development.

My current thoughts are that on my return to work in September after my summer leave I will spend an hour each morning writing up the events of the previous day. This will ensure that they are still fresh in my mind and that the writing up is completed before I become engrossed in the events of the day. I need to stop feeling guilty about working at home. It will be challenging to combine work, family life, and study. It will be a careful balance.

As noted by Wellington et al. (2009) taking time during the evenings and at weekends to work on my PhD will impinge on my family in practical, physical and emotional ways. Should work and my research role require too much time it could affect my quality of life and lead to work-to-family stress and conflict. I want to ensure that I can be a successful academic (in terms of my research student role), as well as remain a good mother (Raddon, 2002) and a professional and effective manager.
I worry that my need and desire for self-fulfilment is at the expense of my family. I attend a cycling session with my husband and children on Saturday morning and then I rush round the house when we return doing the chores and longing for the time when I can sit down and write, desperately trying to find a couple of hours before I cook dinner and we sit down together and eat. The boys are too young to understand what their mum is reading and writing about. I try to study when they are playing with friends or are amusing themselves. I make time to read with them, go to the library, make cakes or just watch TV together.

Gurbutt (2000) suggested, however, that children can benefit from parents’ study realising that learning and literacy are desirable and natural. Enrichment can be gained by women from their family life to their work role but women are more likely to experience depletion from their work role to their family life; this may be because women ponder work events at home, become self-focused and less engaged with their family (Rothbard, 2001). This was an important consideration in relation to my work-related research and my ability to detach myself from it at home.

I have realised how much I enjoy writing and how beneficial I find it. I have always been fairly reflective in my approach but informally so; I have habitually mulled over what has happened and whether I could have done it better or differently or I judged it about right but I have never written my thoughts down or analysed my actions formally or in a more constructive manner. I have usually tended to dwell on issues where I perceive them to have gone badly or when I believe that I could or should have done things differently. I want to balance work and research with being a supportive wife and mother. I have so much whirring round in my head at the moment I know that I appear distracted and unhappy. Nothing could be further from the truth in respect of my happiness.

I was aware of the potential negative effects that undertaking a PhD could have on my work-life balance but there can be positive, enriching effects of having multiple roles
(Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Rothbard, 2001). Enrichment assumes that benefits of multiple roles outweigh the associated costs leading to positive outcomes rather than strain. Combining work and family roles can enhance a woman’s sense of independence, happiness and health and have a positive effect on her parenting role (Ezzedeen & Ritchey, 2009; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Linehan & Walsh, 2000). Furthermore, additional roles can provide an increased opportunity for women to feel good about themselves, which in turn can improve confidence and self-esteem, giving the role holder more, rather than less, energy (Rothbard, 2001; Ruderman et al., 2002). Possession of multiple roles can provide the holder with increased opportunity to develop social support. Greater perspective on life can be gained from taking part in commitments and activities outside work which can have the effect of improved personal objectivity. The benefit of support networks, mentoring and supervision in the successful combining of multiple roles to reduce stress and conflict is documented in the literature concerned with women executives and with sports psychologists (Ezzedeen & Ritchy, 2009; Waumsley et al., 2010).

The pilot work is having an effect on my work. I feel that I am thinking about what I am doing and why I am doing it far more. I believe the result is a positive one. It is making me think about the department and the organisation in which I work. I feel so much happier and fulfilled by actually undertaking this initial research.

In accordance with some of the coping strategies identified by Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) I am content to be ‘good enough at home’ and to prioritise and delegate some domestic responsibilities. Time is spent with family rather than ensuring that the house is always spotless and that there are no toy cars underfoot. Cooking and gardening remain enjoyable leisure activities rather than necessary domestic tasks.
Outsourcing aspects of childcare and household chores are two examples of strategies for helping achieve work-life balance (Ezzedeen & Ritchey, 2009). Getting childcare right is critical to a mother’s well-being (Fine-Davies et al., 2004). The support and understanding received from the boys’ child-minder and the help and assistance of relatives living nearby allow me to combine work and motherhood and give flexibility. When these people are on holiday I feel my anxiety levels rising as I have to manage the sometimes conflicting schedules of work and school drop-off and collection duties.

My plan to write up any events every morning did not work. I now find time to write during the day and a couple of evenings a week. Sometimes my husband takes the boys out at the weekend and I use the time to write and reflect.

As suggested by Greenfield (2000) effective organisation of my studies was a process of trial and error. Balance was also achieved through the use of time-crossing. This involves the psychological co-management (mental multi-tasking) of family needs, children and paid work task (Fine-Davies et al., 2004).

The week started rather stressfully; my children returned to school after the summer holidays. Despite my worries they settled back in well. I also needed to make birthday party plans, complete paperwork for the child-minder and various payments to the school. We also bought a new car; I arranged payment and insurance. I did not feel as productive at work as I could have been. Now that the car has been purchased and the children are settled into their routine of school and after school activities I feel much more clear-headed.

I grasped that the skills and abilities acquired and required in the workplace and at home would be equally applicable and advantageous in undertaking a doctorate. Female managers may have more personal resources handling different demands, which leave them feeling better able to cope. Parenting skills and skills acquired from
community roles can be transferred to the managerial role (Millar, 2009; Ruderman et al., 2002). The need to work to family-imposed deadlines can make working mothers more efficient and effective. I plan my day, organise thoroughly all areas of my life, prioritise my tasks and attempt to complete work ahead of schedule. Owler (2010) suggested that the PhD has needed to be hard-won to legitimise the transition to a professional role. She also commented that an aim of the PhD is to improve students’ resilience and self-management skills. I had held professional roles for many years prior to considering a doctorate and my hardiness and self-management had been tested and developed throughout my career. As for most part-time students (Leonard et al., 2005) time management was already a strength and a degree of autonomy in my primary role means that I am used to working on my own. Similarly, writing of her own experience, Gurbutt, (2000) a wife, mother and academic, described how good her time management skills were in relation to her own PhD balancing act.

Workplace policies and attitudes are critical aspects for parents managing work-life balance and this was another factor that would help be to stay afloat. A relatively relaxed culture, with a permissive attitude towards the problems of reconciling work and family can contribute to parents’ well-being (Fine-Davies et al., 2004). UWIC operates a ‘Family Friendly and Flexible Working Policy’, there is a generous annual leave and public holiday entitlement and leave of absence is granted for certain domestic situations. However, complementing the formal policies the ethos and culture in which I work is one of understanding that domestic issues can, on occasion, take precedence over work. The absence of these positive characteristics from the working environment is associated with work-family conflict (Pleck et al., 1980).

The period of pilot work taught me to appreciate that another skill that would enable me to cope was my ability to write well. Despite not particularly enjoying my
secondary schooling it did provide me with a classical grammar school education. I am relatively well-read and possess a reasonable vocabulary. Furthermore, a nine month distance learning course for RAF staff work taught me the principles of clear, concise and accurate expression. Therefore, I had justifiable confidence in my written work; which was ratified by one of my supervisors

Scott seemed particularly relieved to discover, on scanning my MBA dissertation, that I could ‘write’ and this seemed a positive turning point in the meeting.

The completion of a postgraduate certificate prior to considering doctoral study had helped me to learn the rules of being a student again (Phillips & Pugh, 2006). Moreover, as Holtham (2000) discovered with a postgraduate foundation course, it was also invaluable in easing me back into academic study.

Despite the difficulties associated with maintaining a work-life balance whilst reading for a PhD I believe that the potential benefits associated with personal and professional fulfilment will outweigh the problems. I also feel that my personal skills and attributes, including my ability to write well, work autonomously, negotiate (and re-negotiate) roles, and manage my time will stand me in good stead. An effective support network of family and friends, social support, family friendly HR policies and employment in an academic environment will help me to stay afloat.

I Can Swim: Concluding Thoughts

The motivation that I outlined in my first reflective journal on PhD study proved to be normal. Leonard et al. (2005) and Brailsford (2010), whose research involved post-doctoral candidates with a similar profile to my own, proposed that enrolment was often for multiple reasons including personal development, general intellectual interest and to prove one’s ability. Despite personal doubts about my academic ability there were
indications throughout my life that I was sufficiently capable intellectually and would have the determination and working ethos to complete a PhD. As a mother, mature student and experienced manager I was already resilient and well organised; initially I sought a challenge but soon found the process to be personally rewarding too (Owler, 2010). Linked to the findings of Brailsford (2010) I took encouragement to proceed from family and academic colleagues. The University provided a supportive environment in which to study. Contrary to the experience of some of the contributors to Greenfield (2000) who mentioned loneliness and isolation, in various guises, as a negative aspect of studying part-time this was not something that I experienced. In my academic school registering for a PhD is commonplace and I received support from colleagues, both staff and fellow students. My concerns associated with taking on an additional role and long-term commitment echoed those described by Greenfield. Although my work environment supported academic study I needed to assure myself that I could balance work and research with home life. The University’s work-life balance policies, and particularly the pervasive culture of the School that appreciated staff’s domestic lives and responsibilities, was important to me. These working practices and policies enabled me to balance my commitments and, as observed by Riad (2007), the boundary between work and home was to some extent discretionary. Rather than worry about the number of roles that I had, I started to appreciate that as competent manager I was likely to be drawn to a life with multiple roles (Ruderman et al., 2002). It is not uncommon for women, in addition to paid employment and motherhood, to take up additional, often voluntary roles (Millar, 2009); embracing the challenge and making the most of this opportunity seemed sensible. Crucially, a childcare support network, and an income that permitted the payment of some aspects of childcare, would allow me to work full-time and study part-time. Without this level of support neither would be
possible. Although I have cited the experiences of women the balancing act and worries are not restricted to mothers who are research students. Gurbutt (2000) outlined his actions to accommodate a PhD with family life. Similarly, Holtham (2000) described the self-doubt that hounded him prior to enrolment on a master’s programme.

Despite the potential disadvantages of being supervised by colleagues, for me, the benefits in terms of mutual trust and understanding outweighed any drawbacks. Their guidance in respect of designing a research question around my commitments was one of the most crucial factors in the decision to proceed. The subject of the thesis (efficient and effective management) demonstrated their appreciation that I was a professional in my own right (Denicolo, 2004). Furthermore, because the suggestion had been my supervisor’s, rather than me approaching him, the worries I had about my ability were lessened. This was bolstered by the pilot work, undertaken prior to enrolment, which allowed me to test my academic ability and how to combine roles. A further and unexpected positive result of testing the water was a growing confidence and a sense of fulfilment. Sometimes I feel that I am struggling to keep my head above water. I become tired and grumpy. There is spill-over from one role to another and not always in a positive way. At times I focus too much on work or research and not sufficiently on family and home life. I anticipate however that overall my increased confidence and happiness will have a positive effect on family life and my parenting.

Through the use of reflective practice, particularly on my researcher role, by means of a reflective journal, I am better able to identify the issues, consider the impact on others and address the imbalance. The ability to write well reflectively and my enjoyment of doing so are important in maintaining my interest and enthusiasm. Reflective autoethnographic writing, combined, at a later stage, with a theoretical understanding, has helped me to appreciate the normality of my feelings and
considerations and has ultimately enhanced my confidence in my ability to study at this level.

**Final Reflections From The Pool: Recommendations for Practice**

Registering for a PhD is a personal decision which will necessitate the consideration of many factors and will ultimately depend on individual circumstance. The exploration of one’s personal history from early childhood including an examination of education, employment, qualifications, personality and character will provide information on the ability to complete a doctorate; the clues to the ability to cope academically and have the motivation, enthusiasm and commitment required to complete the research will be present. Investigate your roles, reflecting on the degree of flexibility that is achievable and sustainable between them. Draw upon the encouragement of family and friends backed up by the practical and emotional support that they are able to provide. The possession of multiple roles need not be a deterrent; the addition of a student researcher role should and can be an enriching experience. Find a supervisory team who will work with you in designing a research question that can be worked around your work and family commitments as well as your interests and above all in whom you can place your trust. In accordance with the advice given by research students in Leonard et al. (2005) “Get a good / the right supervisor and choose an area in which you are really interested” (p. 144). Keep a reflective diary. It will help you to make sense of your worries and concerns and provides an invaluable reminder of how you felt at different stages of your decision making into doctoral study. Be prepared to be flexible, to compromise and to negotiate and renegotiate roles and routines.

In order to reach this point I have drawn upon my previous experience and been guided by the experience and expertise of my supervisory team. I have taken strength from the trust that I have in them and from growing confidence in my ability to cope
academically and to find time for such an undertaking. Reflection upon all these aspects has informed my decision to take the plunge.
CHAPTER TWO

Introduction
Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual and background information for this programme of research and to describe the research aim. The contextual information falls principally into two areas. First, an overview of the literature in relation to some of the definitions and perspectives on management is provided; this is complemented by a discussion on management education and learning. Second, background details pertaining to the higher education landscape, the University, the Academic School in which this research was undertaken and my management role at the time of data collection are explained.

Literature Discussion

The following section provides the reader with a number of definitions of management, particularly those pertinent to this research, and outlines how the terms ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ will be used within this thesis. In order to situate this thesis in the literature the main purpose of the section is to provide an evaluative synopsis of the history and current literature on management education and learning, including continuing professional development, for practising managers.

Definitions of management.

A number of contemporary definitions of management are available, for example, Mullins and Christy (2010) provide what is perhaps a traditional view in that management is “the process through which efforts of members of the organisation are co-ordinated, directed and guided towards the achievement of organisational goals” (p. 827). A similar definition is given by Cunliffe (2009) who describes management as “getting things done and achieving organizational goals through people” (p. 2). For Watson (2001) management is “running an organisation so that the variety of people who want something out of it will go on supporting it in such a way that it is able to continue its existence into the future” (p. 215). The definition provided by Drucker,
Maciariello, and Collins (2009) focused entirely on the management of people, “to make human resources productive” (p. xxxiv). The focus of all these contemporary definitions is on the need for managers to encourage and motivate other people to do things within an organisation for mutual benefit.

Management and leadership.

Within the literature, and indeed within business, the terms ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ are contested and much discussed concepts (Carmichael, Collins, Emsell, & Haydon, 2011). Definitions of leadership have long been the source of controversy, with many emphasising a leader’s ability to influence the commitment to and acceptance of organisational or group goals (Rost, 2008). Much has been written about leadership and what makes a leader, however, in this chapter and the thesis as a whole there is neither the scope nor the need to discuss these terms further other than to set out my stall in respect of these words. The two words, management and leadership, are often applied synonymously; Mintzberg (2004) and Western (2008) suggested that the words leadership and management can be used interchangeably on the basis that leaders have to manage and vice versa. I believe there to be a distinction between the two words ‘leader’ and ‘manager’ in that what they mean and what they convey are different. In agreement with Katz (1974) and Mintzberg (2004), some people are natural leaders who, naturally or innately, possess greater aptitude in certain skills including those associated with leadership. These skills can be enhanced through training and practice in those who already possess them or be developed in those in whom they are lacking. An effective manager may therefore have to spend time developing their leadership skills and abilities. A manager is likely to have some leadership skills and a leader some management skills (Western, 2008). I was selected for Initial Officer Training in the RAF on the basis that I possessed some leadership skills and abilities; these skills were
then developed through training. Although in possession of both, I consider my management skills to be stronger than my leadership ability. The distinctions provided by Collins et al. (2011) largely correspond with my beliefs:

- Leadership is strategic, focused on vision, and involves a strong element of building trust and emotional engagement with ‘followers’.
- Management is operational, focused on goal achievement, and more directive of those managed. (p. 2)

This thesis is about efficient and effective management but will encompass aspects of effective leadership. The term leadership is included in this thesis when it is used as part of a discussion in which the meaning of the author who is cited is linked closely to my understanding of management.

**Management education and learning.**

**Background to Management Education.** Theories of management have changed over the last 150 years. At the end of the 19th century Taylor (1911) introduced his scientific theory of management to improve the efficiency of factory workers. He believed that there was ‘a best way’ to undertake a task and advocated standardisation and a prescribed system of working. This approach, concentrating on organisational structure and mechanics, remained until after the Second World War when the focus turned towards human behaviour in the workplace (Davies & Ryan, 2006). Business education, as a bachelor’s degree, is also thought to date back to the late 19th century (Mintzberg, 2004). Harvard and some of the other American business schools were established around the turn of the 20th century and with them the first MBA degrees. In response to changes recommended in the business education curriculum the MBA appeared in the UK in the 1960s (Porter & McKibbin, 1988). In the latter part of the 20th century consideration began to be given to social and human relations; this gave rise to
organisational studies involving individuals and groups, leadership, communication and motivation (Cunliffe, 2009). Business schools, however, despite this increased knowledge and interest in social and human relations in the workplace, continued to use abstract, circumscribed, science modelled teaching (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005). As a result of these deficiencies in management education The Robbins Report (Committee on Higher Education, 1963) was commissioned.

**Contemporary Management Education.** Over 50 years after the Robbins Report was published, criticism and debate, by both academics and managers, on the relevancy of MBA programmes remains (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2008; Hill, 2003; Laud & Johnson, 2012). This criticism, and the surrounding evidence, tends to highlight the disparity between what is taught in management schools and the skills that are needed to succeed in business (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Business schools are disposed to emphasise functional expertise and quantitative analysis (Hill, 2003; Mintzberg, 2004) at the expense of leadership, communication, soft and interpersonal skills that are needed to deal with the complexities of running a modern organisation and the day-to-day realities of the managerial role (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2008; Laud & Johnson, 2012; Porter & McKibbin, 1988). Further, general management education works on the assumption that management work is uniform, one dimensional and that life is easy (Cunliffe, 2009).

The disciplinary approach to MBA education adopted by many universities, for example human resources (HR), finance, marketing and strategy taught as discrete modules, results in learning from a relatively compartmentalised perspective. Such delivery makes little attempt to establish connections between theory and the experience of the students on the programme (Currie & Knights, 2003). Instead, Bennis and O’Toole (2005) recommend a multi-disciplinary approach that includes mathematics,
economics, psychology, philosophy and sociology but note that such an approach is often ignored as it requires subjectivity, judgement and experience over objective facts.

Despite gaps between what is required to undertake managerial work and what is required to obtain a master’s degree, Rubin and Dierdorff (2008) suggested that MBA programmes do deliver content relevant to general managers. Analysis of the comments made by the practising managers in the study by Hay and Hodgkinson (2008) suggested a “modest but salient” role for management education (p. 27). The MBA allowed the managers to learn about themselves and others, instilled confidence by enabling them to describe and define their knowledge and their practice using managerial language. The master’s education was described as a transformative experience rather than one through which they acquired technical knowledge and skills. An MBA, Hay and Hodgkinson proposed, enhanced practice by broadening understanding and had symbolic value in the workplace conveying managerial identity and credibility, but on its own was insufficient to make a manager or provide the skills on how to manage.

Similarly, many of the managers in Watson’s (2001) research recognised the value of formal management training but mainly for the ancillary factors rather than for imparting skills and knowledge. For example, improving confidence, networking, meeting others who were facing similar issues and preventing insularity. Hay and Hodgkinson (2008) questioned whether there could ever be a simple and direct relationship between managerial performance and MBA education and suggested that the MBA was promoted beyond what it could reasonably achieve.

In consideration of the strengths and limitations of management education outlined above this seems to be a sensible conclusion. Most managerial work is subjective in nature, however, MBA education generally focusses on that which is objective and easy to teach and examine, and achieves the requisite academic standards.
Management is largely taught, perhaps due to the subject knowledge and expertise of tutors, as discrete topics rather than on an interdisciplinary basis that draws upon other areas such as psychology and sociology. The MBA does, though, provide students and employers with a sense of their capabilities and credibility in the workplace.

**Continuing Professional Development.** Reynes, Brown and Colbert (2002) revealed that less than one per cent of HR managers read academic literature regularly. The decline of academic influence in the world of policy and practice was also raised as a point of concern by Reynes, Giluk and Brown (2007) who noted the absence of academic research from practitioner journals. Although there are many journal articles and texts on how managerial talent should be developed few are based on empirical research. Furthermore, the literature tends to treat management development as the need to acquire skills and competencies and build relationships. Similarly, Rousseau (2006) noted the research-practice gap where managers, including those with MBAs, relied on personal experience rather than a scientific understanding of human behaviour. Rousseau advocated evidence-based management in which practising managers developed into experts who made decisions informed by social science and organisational research. In agreement with Bennis and O’Toole (2005), such scientific research is not a suitable means through which to discover the complex and messy social and human problems that managers must tackle. Cohen (2007) suggested that practitioners turn to those with PhDs, book authors or successful executives to communicate knowledge to them about organisational problems. It is my experience that most managers, rather than turn to journal articles, book authors or PhDs, for advice on difficult managerial problems, seek the advice of a trusted colleague.

**Research Gap.** Much of the literature on leadership and management in higher education is written about manager-academics, academic staff who have taken up roles...
as leaders and managers in universities (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007). As Laud and Johnson (2012) suggested, because information on management tends to flow from practitioners to academics there is a need for research that maintains academic rigour and that is relevant, useful and appealing to practitioners. It was also noted by Deem, et al. (2007) that the little social science research that had been conducted on UK university administrators tended to look at the growth and future of administration in higher education or on how administrators were regarded by service users. Cunliffe (2009) observed that even within texts that drew on practical management issues, much of the literature on management was theoretical and deductive. There is very little that is told from or incorporates a practising manager’s perspective on their work and managerial life. As a manager with over 20 years’ experience I concur with Watson (2011) that much of that which is contained in management textbooks is unrealistic and could hinder rather than help someone to learn what management is about. Textbooks, Watson proposes, are not wrong but provide less relevant, less truthful and poorer information than that which can be found in ethnographic studies. Research that has the potential to add to that understanding and knowledge of managerial practice and what contributes to its efficiency and effectiveness could thus prove beneficial to practising managers, management researchers and those involved in management education and training. Due to the incongruence between formal management education and practice, and academic journals and practice there, was a distinct need for research that focused on what managers really do and what skills are required of them. Moreover, an autoethnographic approach would help address the request for more ethnographic studies on management.
Aim of This Thesis
The aim of this research was to provide, through insider action research, an in-depth investigation of efficient and effective management of services that support academic delivery in an academic school in the higher education sector. There were a number of objectives associated with this aim: (a) examine effective and efficient management through action research; (b) develop management effectiveness through action research; (c) analyse the factors that underpin, contribute to and affect the manager's efficient and effective delivery of support activities; (d) enhance and develop the researcher's managerial competencies and improve work systems; (e) examine how my past managerial experiences affect my current practice; and (f) examine the benefits of insider, first person, action research to support managerial activity in a university academic school.

Contextual Information
In order to put this research into context the purpose of the following section is to provide background details on Cardiff Metropolitan University, the Cardiff School of Sport and the role of the BSM. This section starts with an overview of the higher education landscape, particularly in Wales.

Higher education landscape and management.
In the 1960s and early 1970s higher education was state funded and expanding but remained elite; in 1970 8.4% of school leavers went to university (Dearing Report, 1997). Undergraduates were eligible for a means tested maintenance grant; there were no tuition fees. The Conservative Government which came to power in 1979 was concerned with cutting public expenditure in higher education which resulted in the restriction of units of funding per student and reduced capital expenditure. Such modernising ventures by government and university funding bodies required a cultural
change and the introduction of performance and quality indicators for teaching and research (Deem et al., 2007). During the 1990s the higher education sector began to expand and in 1998, as a result of the Dearing Report (1997), undergraduate students became liable for tuition fees, and means tested grants were replaced by low interest loans. The 1990s, in response to a changing global political and economic climate, also witnessed the emergence of ‘managerialism’. Managerialism or new public management was centred on the belief that management, through cost cutting, regulation, re-engineering and evidenced based management, would provide an answer to many social and economic problems. Higher education, along with the public sector in general, was increasingly required to justify its use of public money and demonstrate value for money (Cunliffe, 2009; Deem, 1998). Academic leaders had to raise standards and become more efficient with a smaller resource base. Universities became overtly managed in a manner similar to a business rather an educational institution and money was reported to have taken over from academic factors as the driving factor in decision making (Deem et al., 2007). Vice-Chancellors had senior management teams consisting of manager-academics and senior administrators to assist with the requirements of accountability and financial pressure and the need for business-led, strategic activity.

The organisational structure at Appendix A shows that the management of the University followed this pattern. In December 2010, at the start of the data collection period for this research, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, in response to a review requested by the Welsh Government, recommended a reconfiguration of the sector. The proposal for fewer institutions, that reflected regional needs, necessitated a number of strategic relationships and mergers among the universities in Wales (University of Wales, 2013). Cuts of 40% to the higher education budget over four years had also been announced in the government spending review in October 2010. In
academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13 the teaching grant was cut, although this was partially offset by income from raised tuition fees. The teaching-related capital funding for universities was also reduced in 2011-12. In September 2012 the full cost of tuition was passed to new students with fees increased to around £9,000 per annum; however, students in Wales had their fees capped at around £3,300 with the balance of the fees paid by the Welsh government (BBC News, 2011).

This research therefore, was undertaken against a backdrop of possible merger, financial and cultural change at a time when the number of students attending university was increasing. Universities, including Cardiff Metropolitan University, in response to these changes, needed to be well managed.

The University.

Cardiff Metropolitan University had its origins in the South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education. The Institute was formed in 1976 by the amalgamation of four colleges including the Cardiff College of Education. In 1992 the Institute became a Higher Education Corporation and was an Associated Institution of the University of Wales. It gained Teaching Degree Awarding Powers the following year and was admitted to the University of Wales in April 1996 when its title was changed to University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC). UWIC became a Constituent Institution of the University of Wales in 2003. Research Degree Awarding Powers were granted to UWIC by the Privy Council in 2009. In 2011 UWIC, in response to changes in policy for higher education in Wales, withdrew from the University of Wales and invoked its own degree and research degree awarding powers and formally adopted the name Cardiff Metropolitan University (Cardiff Metropolitan University, 2014).

At the start of this programme of research the University operated across four campuses. During the period of data collection with the closure of the Colchester
Avenue Campus, and the move of the Cardiff School of Management to the Llandaff
Campus, that reduced to three campuses. The Cardiff School of Sport is one of two
academic schools on the Cyncoed Campus; the other school being the Cardiff School of
Education. Some teaching space on campus was shared, other specialist space,
including laboratories, sport facilities, drama and music rooms, was designated to one of
the two Schools. The campus was also home to a learning centre, the Student Union
(SU) offices, Conference Services, Student Services and halls of residence. There were
three catering outlets on campus, K1 student refectory, The Bench coffee shop, and Bar
Centro, the SU bar and catering facility. The School offices were situated near the main
Cyncoed Reception. The Dean, Director of Learning and Teaching (DLT) and I, had
individual offices here. Four administrative support staff were accommodated in an
open plan office within the School offices. The staff pigeon holes for mail were situated
in the School offices and this resulted in a thoroughfare for staff. The majority of
academic staff had single person offices in the Queenswood block; other academic and
support staff occupied single and shared offices around the campus, particularly near the
laboratories and in the National Indoor Athletics Centre (NIAC). The sports facilities on
the campus were used for teaching purposes, by the Athletic Union sport teams and for
student recreation, and by the general public, particularly for children’s sporting
activities. The Llandaff Campus was home to the Cardiff School of Health Sciences and
to the University’s central service units. The Cardiff School of Art and Design was
based predominantly on the Howard Gardens site in Cardiff city centre.

**Cardiff School of Sport.**

At the start of this research project the School had been in existence for 60 years. The
number of staff and students had grown steadily; 20 years previously there had been 15
staff and 200 students compared with the 75 academic staff, 15 support staff and 1,500
students in 2010. The administration team was all female with the exception of one male administrator employed during part of the data collection phase. Turnover of academic staff was low and most had a deep seated loyalty to the School. The working ethos of the School was output-driven; there was an understanding and expectation that staff would work hard and meet deadlines but how that was achieved was at individual discretion. This ‘work-hard, play-hard’ approach appeared to serve the School well. The culture and ethos were transmitted by the working practices and managerial style of the Dean. For example, unless he was in a meeting the Dean operated an open door policy and he instigated various social events during the year.

**School Management.** The School was managed by a Management and Planning Team (MPT) the membership of which comprised the Dean, the DLT, Director of Research, Director of Enterprise, Research Excellence Framework (REF) Coordinator, Deputy Director of Cardiff Met Sport, BSM and two elected members drawn from the School’s academic staff. The MPT met fortnightly, on a Friday morning, during term time. The next tier of academic leadership was provided by an undergraduate programmes coordinator and a postgraduate programmes coordinator. At the start of this research there was a discipline director coordinator; however, this post was later disestablished. Programme directors and discipline directors provide the next level of management assisted by year tutors and module leaders respectively. A detailed organisation chart of the School can be found at Appendix B.

**Business Support Manager.** I was appointed to the post of BSM in March 2006 and was the first incumbent of this new role. As part of the University restructure, eight of the academic schools were merged to form four schools; the Cardiff School of Sport was left on its own but given a remit to increase its student numbers. One BSM was established in each of the five new academic schools. In keeping with Deem et al.
(2007) who found that only a minority of administrators had been in academia for many years, four of the BSMs were new to higher education. University staff appeared divided on the need for, and benefit of, a BSM. To some people we appeared to be the panacea for all administrative support-related problems and for others another step towards the spread of managerialism. Despite any local concerns I was made to feel welcome although, as with any new role, it took a while for me and others to appreciate its nature and scope. I assumed strategic and operational responsibility for the efficient and effective running of the business, academic administration and resourcing of the School. At the start of academic year 2006-2007, and in conjunction with the BSM appointments, budgetary responsibility was devolved from central control to the Schools. The departments with which I worked included HR, Finance, Estates, Facilities, Marketing and other support service units. I attended numerous central committees and working groups including Health and Safety, Risk Management, Equality and Diversity, Information Governance and Communications. I line managed the School’s administrators and laboratory technicians.

**Administration Support Team.** The administration team formed part of the School ‘support’ staff. Collinson (2007) suggested this to be a pejorative term with such staff being on the periphery, rather than at the core, of academia. The administration team in the Cardiff School of Sport seemed to be a respected and important part of the School, although sometimes there were undercurrents that processes were put in place to make life difficult for example, monitoring the attendance of international students, maintaining a risk register, and requesting details of staff absence from work including attendance at conferences. In agreement with Collinson, the administration team, did form ‘an underclass’ within the School and across the University in terms of pay, conditions and flexibility of working hours. The BSMs were also less well paid than
their academic colleagues on the School MPTs. Discussions with colleagues and a review by the Director of Operations confirmed that the administration structure in the Cardiff School of Sport was lean, certainly in comparison with that in the other four academic schools. The administration staff undertook a variety of functions within the scope of their posts including undergraduate and postgraduate student administration, finance, enterprise and staff administration.

Summary

This thesis presents a detailed examination of what is required to be an efficient and effective manager in a support role in higher education. The rationale for undertaking this research is based upon the apparent disparity between management education and what is required for successful management practice. It is also based on the need, in a changing higher education, management and business environment, to understand if there are certain skills, attributes and competencies that can be learnt, developed and applied to enhance practice. There are relatively few published ethnographic or autoethnographic studies of managerial work; this research project helps to redress that gap. To my knowledge this is the first thesis devoted to an investigation of efficient and effective management in higher education.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology
You must learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually to examine and interpret it. In this sense craftsmanship [sic] is the centre of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product upon which you may work. To say that you can ‘have experience’ means, for one thing, that your past plays into and affects your present, and that it defines your capacity for future experience (Mills, 1959, p. 216).

Introduction

In this chapter I hope to demonstrate what Mills advocated so elegantly. I discuss how my experience as a practising manager, both past and current, was examined and interpreted in this research with the aim of investigating efficient and effective management and how this will be used to guide my on-going practice.

This chapter comprises two main areas of discussion. First, I outline how my managerial career and previous academic studies influenced my world view, the paradigm in which I work and how this relates to the research methods. Consideration is given to why other interpretive paradigms do not fit my philosophical perspective or the purpose of this inquiry. This section includes a discussion on the ethical concerns associated with the research, and issues connected with role conflict and role duality. Second, action research, reflective practice and autoethnography are discussed in association with the paradigm and their suitability for answering the research question. An overview is given of each of these approaches, their use in the generation, interpretation and analysis of data and for addressing the aims of this project. Truthfulness is considered alongside each approach. A description of how the field work was undertaken and the resultant reflections developed into an autoethnographic narrative is provided. An introduction and summary at the start and conclusion of main areas of discussion is given to help guide the reader.
Methodological Choices and Ethics

In this section I discuss how my managerial career and prior academic education influenced this research and my philosophical stance. Definitions and an overview of the terminology used in the process of discussing and describing my world view are provided. After an outline of the ethical concerns associated with action research and autoethnography there follows a section on how the ethical issues and risks were managed; the related themes of role conflict and role duality are discussed.

During the time between receiving comments on the first draft of this chapter from my supervisors and submitting the second draft I was involved with making a conference presentation with five fellow research students on the dilemmas faced by postgraduate researchers when engaging with the complexities and idiosyncrasies of qualitative research. The process that we went through and the discussions that emanated from putting together the presentation allowed us all to explore various issues, including some of those that had been raised by my supervisors. These conversations helped me consider more fully my philosophical position, truth, subjectivity, and whether in qualitative research, such as this, reliability and validity of the data is important. The presentation was beneficial to my learning and exemplified the value of critical friends when reading for a PhD.

Paradigms.

Kuhn (1975), the first to use the term, described a paradigm as, “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community” (p. 175). Although the term has since been appropriated and misused to include anything that describes an approach or a way of doing things, when true to the original meaning, a paradigm assumes a unity of underlying assumptions rather than unity of thought (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). As a basic set of beliefs a paradigm guides the
researcher’s actions and feelings about the world, their place in it and relationship with it, as well as how the world should be studied and understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Paradigms are important to research activity as they describe the researcher’s ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Schultz & Hatch, 1996). Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) elevated the importance of ontology and epistemology over method as determinants of good social science. As human constructions paradigms provide different lenses for seeing and making sense of the world. Each indicates a particular view of the social world and provides the researcher with a frame of reference through which, in different ways, the world will be viewed, investigated and reported “All researchers make assumptions of some kind or other in relation to issues of ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology and that these assumptions tend to cluster together and are given coherence within the frameworks of particular paradigms” (Sparkes, 1992, p. 14).

Burrell and Morgan (1979) proposed that all social theorists are located within one of four paradigms: radical humanist, radical structuralist (both strands within the critical paradigm), interpretive and functionalist. Similarly, Sparkes (1992) and McNiff (2000) suggested that three paradigms (empirical or positivist, interpretive, and critical theory) cover the dominant views of research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) described four paradigms, adding the post-positivist perspective to the above list. Once determined, a researcher works within their stated paradigm taking their paradigmatic beliefs on faith and accepting that their truthfulness is impossible to establish (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, in order to work within a particular paradigm the researcher should understand their philosophical assumptions about what is known as this will impact on the form research takes, how it is conducted and the criteria against which it is evaluated (Cassell & Johnson, 2006). In action research projects, such as the one presented here, it
is important, Gilbourne (1999) suggested, for the researcher to make clear their epistemological and ontological positions to avoid misunderstanding about whether or not action research has occurred. Consideration is given to action research later in this chapter.

**Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology Defined.** A world view is a set of fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality and how it is known, which are made evident through the interrelated questions of the researcher’s ontological and epistemological stance (Reason, 1998). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggested that the logical sequence for questions that define inquiry paradigms is ontology, followed by epistemology and then methodology. Heron and Reason (1997) extended this to include questions of axiology. Ontology considers the way in which we view ourselves in the world and the nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Trede & Higgs, 2009). Ontological assumptions concern the essence of the phenomena under investigation and whether the reality being investigated is external to the individual or the product of individual consciousness (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Similarly, Sparkes (1992) commented that “ontological assumptions revolve around questions regarding the nature of existence, that is, the very nature of the subject matter of the research – in our case, the social world” (p. 12). Examples of ontological questions are:

- What is the nature of the management role?
- What are the lived experiences of being a manager?
- What is it like to be a manager?

(Adapted from Trede & Higgs, 2009)

Epistemological positions are linked and associated with ontological issues. Epistemology considers how the world is understood and communicated to others. A researcher’s epistemological stance will convey how knowledge is believed to be
comprehended, what forms of knowledge can be obtained and the truthfulness of knowledge. For example, how can something be known? How do we know we know? (Trede & Higgs, 2009). Epistemological assumptions will determine whether knowledge is acquired or has to be experienced (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and considers the “relationship between the inquirer and the known” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 183). Examples of epistemological questions are:

- How do managers make sense of their actions and decisions?
- What does it mean to be a manager?

(adapted from Trede & Higgs, 2009)

Together, questions of ontology, epistemology and methodology are about truth; what is truthfully there, the nature of truthful knowledge of what is there, and how truth can be reached (Reason, 1998). Axiology, a fundamental element of an inquiry paradigm (Heron & Reason, 1997), is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with ethics, aesthetics and religion (spirituality) and considers that which is intrinsically worthwhile and valuable.

- Which managerial skills are of greatest importance?
- How should managers relate to the staff they line manage?

My World View.

Parental, early career and academic influences. An early influence was my mother who engendered in me affection for the written word and, perhaps more importantly, an appreciation, through her interest in social history and socialist principles, of situational factors. During 20 years employed in various management roles I have valued personal and lived experience over abstract academic theory. One
reason that I chose an HND rather than a degree programme was because I wanted to
gain practical, in preference to theoretical, knowledge. The academic theories proposed
during my MBA and postgraduate certificate in leadership, did not seem to account
adequately for, or acknowledge the difficult and complex task of managing staff and
other resources in diverse situations. This position was noted by Dispenza (2000) who
ascertained, in the course of teaching on an MBA programme, that most managers
wished to explore the ‘softer’ skills associated with the uncertainties and ambiguities of
managing people. Much of my formal management education was informed by models
and standard processes which seemingly required transposition directly from the
textbook and classroom, to the workplace. Although this was in keeping with
conventional professional education whereby practitioners are taught theory to be
applied to practice (McNiff, 2000), I struggled with the concept, the process and the
outcome. The theories rarely appeared to fit my working environment. An extract from
one of my reflections described my thoughts on academic management theory:

**March 2011.** This reflection has also demonstrated my dissatisfaction with the
compartmentalised nature of much of my previous management learning. During my MBA and postgraduate certificate I took modules that included
human resource management, managing organisations, financial management
and management of change. They were discrete modules with neat and tidy
theories. However, I often felt a failure on returning to work and finding
implementation difficult. I also did not want to be seen to be promoting
‘textbook’ theories in the real world of work. Learning in the classroom did not
seem to account for the messiness and complexity of day to day management.

Although unaware of the philosophical underpinnings, I was disenchanted with
traditional, positivist, management education. An analysis of four studies into
managerial competencies (Perry & Zuber-Skerrit, 1992) reported that traditional
research was indeed of limited relevance and use to management practice. McNiff (2002) commented upon the tension between abstract theorists about practice and practitioners who produce personal theory. This dichotomy between formal theory and practice has been noted across various areas of professional practice. In the area of sport psychology for example, Anderson, Knowles and Gilbourne (2004), recognised that, due to situational factors, there could be no neat and effective application of theory to practice. A similar situation has been described by teachers who feel that knowledge about teaching generated by academics, rather than practitioners, does not show an understanding of the personal, contextual, subjective, temporal, historical nature of the setting (Herr & Anderson, 2005). In health care, practitioners have also sought more reflexive methods for studying and changing practice in preference to abstract theories and concepts (Morton-Cooper 2000). Schön (1983) called professional knowledge that is comprised of theories and concepts resulting in general principles to be applied to practice as ‘technical rationality’; he criticised this positivist epistemology of practice arguing that:

If problems of practice do not present themselves in a way which allows the direct application of theory, then clearly theory cannot readily be mapped onto practice. If we don’t know what the problem is exactly then theory will hardly help us solve it. (p. 203)

Management theorists have remained inclined to develop prescriptive solutions to organisation and management problems (Dispenza, 2000) believing in technical and rigid management processes where “managers are seen as rational technicians, dealing with technical issues which are resolvable through the application of superior knowledge” (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p. 56). This position disregards the complexities and problems that managers face in their daily practice (Dispenza, 2000)
and does not help managers to deal with changing issues and influences (McNiff, 2000). Furthermore, management education continues to be taught as abstract models and concepts, case histories, flow diagrams and generalisations without context (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006). Gosling and Mintzberg proposed that management education should be interwoven with management practice so that education could be used to enhance and elaborate upon what was learnt in the workplace:

Theories are like maps of the world; cases are like travellers’ tales. Both are best appreciated – as are their limitations – by people who already know the territory. This learning becomes most powerful when it connects these to the experiences of the learners, when managers can assess the theories in their own contexts and apply the messages of cases to their own experiences. (p. 421)

While disillusioned with the style of my previous management education, especially the implied need to transpose models from classroom to workplace I had benefitted from the theoretical learning that accompanied my MBA dissertation and from other more interpretivist areas of the syllabus. However, the dominant influence on my 20 years of practice was experiential knowledge and learning. When a problem was encountered I sought advice or drew on previous experience; if I dealt with an unusual issue I reflected upon it in order to guide future action. My reaction was never to reach for a textbook or journal article. Similarly to Gosling and Mintzberg’s position described above, my aim for this research project was not to dismiss theory but to combine and supplement it with a practice-based research approach. Commenting upon Schön’s critique of research based theory and technical rationality compared with the need to resolve everyday practice-related problems, John (2009) proposed that it was not necessary to choose to between these two apparently conflicting positions. He
suggested that it was essential for the effective practitioner to embrace both so that relevant theory and research could be assimilated appropriately into practice.

Management theory therefore, is not discounted but it has to be applicable to the complex and individual situations in which I practise. For example, one general theory that I have used in every management and leadership situation in which I have worked is Adair’s (1979) *Action-Centred Leadership*; according to this theory the effectiveness of the leader is dependent on meeting the needs of the task, the individual and for team maintenance. Canonical knowledge, in the form of integral concepts can aid the critical interpretation of personal experience (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006). However, I know of managers who have tried to implement theoretical concepts seemingly without considering their prior experience, their staff or situational factors. Important for me is to involve and work with staff rather than foist theoretical views upon them. It seems arrogant to always impose my will and never consider my staff’s often extensive knowledge and experience. A guiding principle of mine is that the first year in a job is for learning the role and the second and subsequent years are for correcting mistakes and making improvements. In my early career I rarely stayed in a job longer than two years. Similarly, in the RAF I was posted to a new role usually every two years. In this way I was able to apply prior knowledge, skills and experience and adapt them to the situation and seek the counsel of trusted others who may have been in post some time. Although these interventions in my real life work situations could not be described as action research (Gilbourne, 2000) they demonstrated a certain basic philosophy of wanting to act, reflect and improve. Similarly, it was my intention that on withdrawal from this action research project to have left my work setting in an improved state.

*Current research.* The subject matter and research method for the present study emanated from discussions with my supervisory team. The discussions focussed largely
upon what would be realistic taking into account my work, domestic and family commitments (see ‘Taking the Plunge’). Initial deliberations considered my willingness and ability to reflect upon my work as a manager and this developed into an action research study. These suggestions were entirely commensurate with my beliefs about the subjective nature of management practice; a more positivist stance would have been difficult to countenance. Management is a professional practice which is equated with efficient performance and the capacity to achieve and do things on time. At a practical level it involves the capacity to work with others and to manage processes effectively (McNiff, 2000). Although this may be a rather simplistic description of managerial work it encompasses its central themes. An aim of this research was to establish the factors that contribute to the efficient and effective management of support services in an academic school. I required, for the reasons described earlier, a method that would allow me to investigate efficiency and effectiveness from a subjective stance and tolerate contextual variability. I also sought research that could be focussed on improvement of practice rather than just understanding practice. Reflection on the composition and formulation of my management knowledge informed the paradigm within which this research was situated.

Participatory world view. Due to its different purpose, relationships and ways of conceiving knowledge, action research, Reason and Bradbury (2008) suggested, is based in a different paradigm from conventional academic research. This research project was situated within the participatory paradigm as defined by Heron and Reason (1997). The participative world view accepts that there is a primordial reality with which the human presence actively participates (Reason, 1998); humans are “embodied, acting beings who participate with each other and with a wider ecology of beings in life on earth” (Reason, 2006, p. 189). This contrasts with the claim of the positivist world
view where everything is independent of human thought and with the relativist world view in which everything is a construction of the human mind. Heron and Reason’s world view is based on participation and participative realities and the promotion of practical knowledge. Participation, as described by Wicks, Reason, and Bradbury (2008) is fundamental to the nature of our being, or an ‘ontological given’. Although the purpose of inquiry within the participatory paradigm is more closely aligned to critical theory than to interpretivism, its methodology, extended from Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) constructivist paradigm, advocates the primacy of the practical and the use of language grounded in the shared experiential context (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Within this paradigm Heron and Reason proposed a subject-objective ontological reality, called into being and shaped by the participation of the knower in what is known. The shaping brings about a subjectively articulated world, whose objectivity is relative to the perspective of the knower (Reason, 1998).

The participatory world view has an extended epistemology of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowledge. It is described as ‘extended’ because it reaches beyond the primarily theoretical knowledge of academia (Heron, 1996). Experiential knowledge acknowledges the fundamental grounding of knowing gained through participation and engagement with people, places and objects. Presentational knowing conveys experiential knowing in a variety of visual and written formats. Knowing about something provides the basis of propositional knowing encompassing concepts, laws and theories about people, places, processes and objects that are stated through the spoken and written word. Practical knowledge is concerned with knowing how to do something and in so doing brings together the other three forms of knowledge (Heron & Reason, 1997). The axiology of the participatory
paradigm promotes human flourishing as an “enabling balance within and between people of hierarchy, co-operation and autonomy” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 287).

Action research and other paradigms. Different forms of action research can be justified by different philosophical commitments, epistemological and ontological stances (Cassell & Johnson, 2006; Dick, Stringer & Huxham, 2009; McNiff, 2002). In undertaking this project I sought an approach and research methods that were compatible with my views on management and that would allow me to reflect upon, understand and interpret my practice and to improve upon it too. The perspective of the positivist paradigm, and traditional social science research, that action contaminates the research process and results and undermines objectivity, is not congruent with the requirement of action research for intervention (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Action research “rejects positivist notions of rationality, objectivity and truth in favour of a dialectical view of rationality” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 179). Consequently, many action research practitioners and theorists (for example, Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; McNiff, 2000; Morton-Cooper, 2000) perceive action research to be situated in the critical paradigm. However, Heron and Reason (1997) argue that in neither the critical theory nor the interpretivist paradigm does the researcher’s practical, experiential, knowledge play a significant and intrinsic part. Moreover, interpretive approaches do not prescribe action either (Carr & Kemmis, 2006) but serve only to inform practitioners about the nature, consequences and context of past actions. Similarly, McNiff (2002) proposed that because practice occurs in different contexts, learning from the stories and experiences of others requires personal reflection and judgement, thus limiting the value of interpretive research in situations when change is required. A passive view of practice is therefore unsuitable for action research. Although autoethnographic narratives sit in the interpretive paradigm (Smith & Sparkes,
2009) as does reflective practice (McIntosh, 2010) the scope of the present research project went beyond the need to just understand constructed realities and generate emotional and cognitive responses in the reader. Furthermore, working in the interpretive paradigm could have resulted in the tendency to ignore the power relationships and the social, political and economic conditions that define and influence organisations and the people who work in them (Sparkes, 1992).

Despite being sympathetic to the interpretivist paradigm, the critical theory and participatory paradigms were more akin to my personal beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). These paradigms take a step beyond interpretation and understanding towards action as an outcome of research. However, it was the participatory paradigm with its acknowledgement of the primacy of practical knowing that was most congruent with my personal beliefs as a researcher and a manager. As stated by Heron and Reason (1997):

> The participatory world view, with its emphasis on the person as an embodied experiencing subject among other subjects: its assertion of the living creative cosmos we co-inhabit; and its emphasis on the integration of action with knowing is more satisfying. (pp. 291–292)

**Ethical issues and their management.**

In this section the issues surrounding ethics, risk and role conflict that were evident from the outset of my research, are discussed. The ethical concerns associated with this research weighed heavily on my mind as shown in an extract from my reflective journal.

**Week Commencing Monday 6th December 2010.** The ethical issues are the ones that at present cause me the greatest concern. I have returned to some of my reflections to try to make them anonymous and consider the language used especially where the comments made could be considered less than positive.
Within empirical research paradigms, where subjects are used to provide data, ethics usually refers to gaining informed consent, not doing harm, not breaching confidentiality and not distorting the data (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). In naturalistic research, such as this project, where the situations are not repeatable or controllable, it may not be possible to adhere completely to these idealised requirements (McFee, 2010).

In the case of insider action research there is a need to consider the effect of the research on the researcher, on actors in the project and, because the researcher is working in their own organisation, the on-going relationship between the researcher, the participants and other stakeholders. If the effect of the research on the organisation and its stakeholders is not a positive one the image of all research and researchers can be tarnished. Despite the benefits for changing practice and generating knowledge, action research can, due to the element of exposure, be politically and ethically problematic for researchers working in their own organisations and participants (Williamson & Prosser, 2002).

In autoethnographic work the researcher is writing about him or herself in their workplace making identification of other actors described in the narratives relatively straightforward; this can result in issues associated with confidentiality and anonymity (Blenkinsopp, 2007). It will be known which personnel in the organisation (in this case the academic school and the University) were actors in the research and it could be difficult to disguise their identities in the finished theses. Due to these areas of concern, care was needed to ensure that participants / actors could not be identified in instances where informed content had not been given (Morton-Cooper, 2000). There was a requirement for:
• Voluntary (as opposed to coerced) participation
• Participants to have given informed consent
• Preventing participants and others who may be indirectly involved from becoming psychologically or physically harmed by the research
• Individuals to retain the right to withdraw from the study and/or retract consent
• Anonymity and confidentiality
• Accurate recording and safe management of data produced by the study
• Observation of professional and employer codes of conduct
• Adequate feedback and reporting of the study’s progress.

(Morton-Cooper, 2000, pp. 41–42)

Provision of anonymity and confidentiality is difficult to guarantee (McFee, 2010). Although there were four BSMs in the University it was known which school I worked in; deducing the identity of key actors particularly those on the School management team and the administration staff would be relatively straightforward. Withdrawal from the study could also have been problematic for staff especially because of my role within the School.

Research participants do not always know to what they are consenting and they may not be adequately informed. It is the researcher who decides what information is provided and this may either not be understood fully or may lack detail (McFee, 2010). Along similar lines, Herr and Anderson (2005) and Williamson and Prosser (2002) observed that in the case of action research the participants/actors do not know exactly to what they are consenting because at the time consent is given neither they nor the researcher will know where the process will take them. The actors cannot know fully to what they are agreeing because the risks to the participants are not known before the research starts. Similarly, in autoethnographic research there are instances when
informed consent is neither desirable nor possible. In autoethnographic research the central participant is the researcher; hence, it is unclear from whom informed consent should be sought, especially as it may not be known at the time of an encounter that the interaction will be important for the research (Mellick & Fleming, 2010). It is impractical for researchers carrying out action research and autoethnographic work to seek informed consent from everyone they meet in case it proves to be important later. In summary, there are instances when informed consent is neither desirable nor possible and even if it were it is unclear from whom it should be sought. When consent was given in advance participants would not know to what they were consenting.

Another concern, which is particularly relevant when the researcher is an insider in a position of power in the organisation, is coercion or influence of participants (Herr & Anderson, 2005). A relevant example of administrators and their employees is given where the researcher’s managerial status, and the authority that conveys, has the potential to impact upon the voluntary nature of consent. Dandelion (1997) observed that when the researcher occupies a position of influence, active participation or the lack of it can alter the situation being researched. These were situations of which I was aware and to which I remained sensitive throughout the course of this research.

Ethical considerations were prominent in the preliminary discussions about the design of this research and in the preparation of the research proposal. The concerns continued even when ethical approval had been granted through the Cardiff School of Sport Research Ethics Committee. Ethical approval proved to be only the beginning of an on-going assessment that considered the interests of others.

Risk and Risk Management. Conducting first person action research can result in the researcher experiencing feelings of personal exposure and vulnerability (Marshall & Mead, 2005) it also involves making personal choices that are inherently problematic
(Moore, 2007). The risks to me as the researcher included professional harm (I would need to balance the priorities of the paid employment role with the imperatives associated with effective research), personal harm and social harm. Due to the focus of this study being on me and an indepth analysis of my practice, there were personal risks to me. The risk of disturbing the equilibrium at work and home and the beneficial and detrimental effects of scrutinising my perceptions and behaviours were described by Moore (2007) and noted by Boyle and Parry (2007). I considered fully the personal risks and issues surrounding role duality. Having assessed the level of my emotional maturity, 'life experience' and self-awareness I gauged that I had adequate personal attributes to undertake research of this nature. I decided that prior exposure to a wide variety of situations would enable me to put into perspective any negative feelings or emotions that might arise during the research. My relative successes as a manager would help to bolster any dips in confidence in my ability. Motherhood would keep me grounded and help me to remember what was important in life. Brackenridge (1999) suggested different ways of managing the researcher role when conducting work into sensitive issues; accordingly, research rules and protocols were developed for data handling and ethical boundaries in this research project. Brackenridge also described the benefits of a network of allies and so, on occasion, I met with other research students in the School who were using similar methodologies to me to discuss good practice, avoid potentially bad practice and for mutual support.

Compromising ecological validity was a real and potential risk. Should provision of information to would-be actors / participants provoke a modification in their behaviour the truthfulness of the project could be damaged. As the researcher, I could be unaware of this and any compromise to the integrity of the data. There was also the possibility that colleagues would alter their behaviour towards and around me if
they thought that our conversations or their actions were being observed and were forming part of my reflections (McFee, 2010). Whether my colleagues’ perception of me and dealings with me would change once informed about my project was a concern:

**Sunday 13th March 2011**

I will send out the Information leaflet about my research to all Cardiff School of Sport staff this week. I have been putting off doing so but now I am feeling uncomfortable about not telling staff. The work has been going well and I am worried that others may change in the way that they interact with me when they know the nature of my research. I am hoping that any changes will be short lived and my research activities will be soon forgotten. Some staff in the School know that I am undertaking a PhD but even they have not asked about what I am doing. One person assumed that I was doing it through the School of Management. The Dean and DLT have given voluntary informed consent as named and identifiable actors in my writing. It is good that I have their support and that others are aware of that. I have spoken with one member of my staff in detail to gauge his thoughts on what and how I tell the other administration staff. We have an administration team meeting tomorrow at which I will outline the study, their part in the work and how I will disguise their identities.

I knew, working in an academic environment, that staff would have knowledge of the research methods that I was using and that this could have beneficial and negative effects. I was likely to receive support from some staff (which was apparent in the email responses referred to in the extract below) and others were likely either to misunderstand the nature of this autoethnographic research and or view it with suspicion or resistance (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

**Friday 18th March 2011.** Today I sent out the Information Sheet to all school staff in relation to my research project. I have had a few replies which have been positive and one phone call, about a separate matter when the caller jokingly checked that the call was not being recorded.
I did not notice any significant modification in colleagues’ behaviour towards me and if there was any I suspect that it was relatively short-lived. It was, of course, impossible for me know if perceptions and actions did change when they were told about my research (Fleming, 2013b) and whether there was a temporal nature to their behavioural modification, that is, did colleagues ‘forget’ about my research project.

There were potential risks to the University. It would have been possible to cause harm to the University’s reputation if no evidence of efficient and effective management in relation to my practice was found. The impact of this risk was considered to be low as without good practice on which to comment there would be no thesis and hence the University’s external reputation would not be damaged. Linked to this point was one of the potential competitive value of commercially sensitive information being made known. It was hoped that good practice would be reported and reflected upon in the thesis; therefore, the benefits of the research would outweigh the risk of harm caused by the commercial sensitivity and/or competitive advantage contained within the thesis.

Consent. As discussed earlier, informed consent is usually secured for empirical projects from participants in writing prior to the start of a study. In this instance, because of the conceptual and operational difficulty of identifying who ‘participants’ actually were or would be (Fleming, 2013a) an alternative approach was adopted. First, all co-workers in the Cardiff School of Sport were made aware of the project (see Management Research Information Sheet – Appendix C). Second, identifiable co-workers were asked to provide written consent for descriptive anecdotal evidence to be included as part of the basis for my reflective critiques (Voluntary Informed Consent Form – Appendix D). Consent from them was sought on an annual basis. Third, following established good practice for other kinds of research where informed consent
is not secured a briefing session on the findings of the study, as recommended by Morton-Cooper (2002) would be presented to co-workers.

The other group of persons who were likely to be implicated in my autoethnographic account by association, and whose anonymity I would not be able to protect, was my direct family (husband, two children and my mother). Although it is technically possible to disentangle professional and domestic roles, in most autoethnographic work it is neither desirable nor expedient to do so. I was aware from early on in my research that events at home could affect my work life, and vice versa, and this would be reflected in my narratives. Particular arrangements for dealing with the well-being of these family members were put in place. The arrangements involve the practical extension of McFee’s (2006) argument (in principle) about treating one’s research participants as one would treat one’s friends, that is to say, show participants the same respect and concern for well-being as one would to those to whom there is a strong emotional attachment. In this instance the imperative to ensure no harm to those affected by research was an even stronger ‘driver’, since it was shaped by parental responsibility and a legal ‘duty of care’. Hence, informed consent was sought from my husband for the work to make reference to him and our children and from my mother to make reference to her.

McFee (2010) suggested that when voluntary informed consent is not possible or desirable that the burden of responsibility should be placed on the researcher to accept a number of constraints. The research should not cause any physical (or psychological) damage, debrief the subjects “after the fact” (p. 156), present the data fairly and not cause exposé, and to give the subjects the other rights of persons. The third point is linked to the issue of truthfulness in that a sensationalised report is less likely to evoke a response in other readers or be a scenario recognised by other managers. In relation to
all the issues discussed above there was the need for balance “if harm is to be avoided, and anonymity and privacy are to be protected, the autobiographical process and product may be compromised” (Mellick & Fleming, 2010, p. 301). Although matters of ethical concern were ever present the aim was to ensure that they did not compromise the research project. When it became apparent that there would be some ‘participants’ who could be identified in the narratives but who were unlikely, because of the subject matter, to provide written consent the principle of ‘McFee’s friends’ was used as guidance to negotiate the complexities of my research (Fleming, 2013a). When it was decided that these stories were essential to the thesis, and to omit them would give a false picture of managerial life, in order to protect the ‘participants’, a fictional narrative was constructed (Sparkes, 2002).

**Role Duality and Role Conflict.** Issues of role conflict affect many researchers who are engaged in qualitative work (Fleming, 1997). In particular, difficulties can arise for managers who research in their own organisations (Coghlan, 2007) when the normal role in the organisation is supplemented by the researcher one. Trying to maintain both roles can result in role conflict (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). This situation of conflict and role duality was experienced by Moore (2007) when he undertook insider action research while working as a senior manager in his organisation. He told, in a compelling and thought provoking manner, of the personal risk and subsequent toll that turning the spotlight onto his own assumptions and prejudices took, and then how these factors impinged upon his thinking, relationships, identity and work and home life.

During the period of this research I was a member of the School MPT and line manager to approximately 12 administrative and technical support staff. Two of my supervisors were co-members of the MPT; my Director of Studies was a lecturer. I was line managed by the Dean, and the Director of Learning and Teaching was a close work
colleague. There was, therefore, the potential for role conflict and duality as I tried to delineate and (re)negotiate my researcher, manager and colleague / friend roles. An example of role conflict and duality was described in the following extract from my reflective journal:

**Friday 10th December.** We had a long and difficult meeting in respect of the School’s finances. I found this the most difficult event to date in terms of role duality. I have reflected and commented on numerous events and conversations in respect of the School’s finances. My starting position on the subject felt different from that of some of the others in the room. Had I not been a researcher, although I would still have had the conversations throughout the year with the Dean and others, many of these discussions would have become blurred by time and would not have been reflected upon. Two of my supervisors are members of MPT; I have battled in my head as to what to write in my reflections. My thoughts on the financial crisis would previously have stayed with me, unknown to others but now I am writing them down. They may not be what they, as MPT members, want to read. They may consider me as not being a team player or being negative. My Director of Studies is a lecturer; should I let him read my reflections on finance without speaking with him first? Should I withhold that particular reflection until the Dean has spoken to all staff? Is it fair to burden him with the detail of some of my conversations with the Dean? I have no problem with him reading it but the knowledge could potentially put him in some difficult situations. I trust my supervisors’ professionalism completely and believe that they can separate the researcher from the manager but it is still difficult for me to rationalise.

There was also the potential for role conflict between my researcher role and my domestic ones of wife and mother. The source of conflict in this case emanated from trying to maintain an acceptable work-life (or work, research, life) balance for all parties concerned (my line manager, supervisors and family members). An awareness of the potential areas for conflict helped me to manage them. The management of my work,
home and research life balance was discussed in ‘Taking the Plunge’. Issues of role duality and conflict between my researcher and managerial role, interwoven with ethical issues, occurred throughout the research.

**Summary of ethical concerns.**

Throughout the study I tried to keep my research role operationally subordinate to my paid work-related role of manager. This stance helped, but did not eliminate issues of role conflict. I had a clear operational strategy for managing the issues of confidentiality and anonymity. There was a risk of harm to the University and the School if individuals could be identified; therefore, in the reflective narratives deliberately vague descriptors were used where possible (e.g., a lecturer, a professor, a member of administration staff). Where the identities of individuals needed to be revealed in order for the data to be understood fully (e.g., my line manager), the disclosure only occurred with the written informed consent of the person(s) involved. This research posed ethical issues some of which are applicable to other forms of research and other issues that are particular to action research and autoethnography. Confidentiality, anonymity and the need to do no harm in relation to actors in the research, encompassing both work colleagues and family members, were of specific concern. Furthermore, over and above not wanting to do harm I wanted my research to result in improvements to my practice and that would benefit others.

**Research Methods and Data Collection**

This section presents the suitability of the three qualitative research methods employed in this project for answering the research question. Each of the methods is considered in turn; definitions are provided together with an overview of the theories, relevant processes and relationship of the methods to one another. Truthfulness, validity and how the data should be judged are discussed. The use of the methods in relation to
management research is referenced. In order to illustrate the way in which reflective practice was used in the generation of data this particular section is written as a reflective narrative. The focus then turns to how the data were gathered and recorded in the form of layered reflections and subsequently developed into a chronological autoethnographic narrative from which the discussion developed. The use and benefits of keeping a reflective journal are also discussed. Finally, the ground rules that I set for conducting the research are outlined.

Research methods.
The term ‘research methods’ describes the range of approaches, techniques and procedures drawn on to gather data to be used as a basis for inference, interpretation, explanation and prediction (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The action research nature of this study fulfils the conditions for critical reflection and theory development, as well as the more personal requirements of improving practice and as an academic pursuit (Morton-Cooper, 2000). Reflective practice and autoethnography were used to inform the action element of the research. My initial reflections were predominantly autoethnographic; in terms of the chronology of the work autoethnography and reflective practice preceded action research. However, it is through action research that I intended to improve my managerial practice and it was the umbrella method under which, in this project, reflective practice and ethnography sat. Therefore, action research is considered first. Reflective practice is reviewed next before the focus turns to autoethnography. The reflections and narratives that were written during the study differed in their focus. Some, for example, ‘Appearance, Apparel, Attitude and Acceptance’ are highly personal and autoethnographic, concentrating almost solely on me as researcher and actor; others, such as ‘Looking after the Pennies’ and ‘Different Priorities’, involved other actors and my interactions with them.
**Qualitative Research.** A variety of definitions of qualitative management research exist between management researchers, practitioners and academic “disseminators (sic)” (Johnson, Cassell, Buehring, Symon, & Bishop, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) definition of qualitative research “multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (p. 2) is appropriate for this research. Essentially, “qualitative research focuses on people’s experiences and the meanings they place on the events, processes and structures of their normal social setting” (Skinner, Tagg & Holloway, 2000, p. 165). This study includes the use of personal experience, life story and observation to study and investigate every-day and problematic moments, and critical incidents.

**Truth and validity.**

The traditional criteria used for assessing validity are difficult to apply to qualitative research such as this current project and its use of action research, reflective practice and autoethnography (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Herr & Anderson, 2005; McNiff, 2000). Reason (2006) suggested:

> The movement in qualitative research has been away from validity criteria that mimic or parallel those of empiricist research toward a greater variety of validity considerations that include the practical, the political, and the moral; and away from validity as policing and legitimation toward a concern for validity as asking questions, stimulating dialogue, making us think about just what our research practices are grounded in, and thus what are the significant claims concerning quality we wish to make. (p. 191)

Analysis of this research must show that the narratives and the discussion are truth seeking but not that there is one valid truth. McFee (2010) suggested “that the data should not be the invention of the researcher and that it should reflect features of the situations – so that ‘wishing does not make it so’” (p. 73). Validity can be judged on
whether a trustworthy and believable narrative is provided in which other practitioners
can recognise the problems and views expressed as similar to their own (Morton-
Cooper, 2000). The explicit connection of my judgements to discussion in the current
literature will also be important (Reason, 2006). Truth in this instance will always be
context and occasion sensitive and written from my perspective; knowledge generation
should be viewed similarly. Crucially, the detailed account of the research design and
implementation that has been provided will allow the reader to assess and evaluate the
work. It should also provide adequate detail for a researcher with comparable skills and
interests to undertake a similar study.

Action research.

Action research has developed since the 1940s with the work of Kurt Lewin frequently
cited as the basis on which the tradition began (Chandler & Torbert, 2003; Eden &
Huxham, 1996; Elliott, 1991; McIntosh, 2010; Morton-Cooper, 2000). The use of the
term action research now includes many techniques, research practices and traditions
(Cassell & Johnson, 2006; Dickens & Watkins, 1999; Eden & Huxham, 1996; French,
2009). Essentially it is a practical form of research whereby practitioners investigate
their practice in action (McNiff, 2000) and through which living knowledge is generated
from personal, everyday experience (Coghlan, 2007; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). As a
form of knowing it is embodied in the knower and their practice rather than being
conceptual, abstract and separate from real life (McNiff, 2000). It is an on-going and
evolving process. Although there are different forms of action research the difference,
French (2009) suggested, lies in the assumptions of the participants rather than the
methods employed. From an academic perspective it is important to clarify the
definition of action research chosen, and the decision making process, as this
determines the epistemological, ethical and political decisions the researcher makes (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

**Action Research Defined.** Carr and Kemmis (1986) described action research as “a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which these practices are carried out” (p. 162). Reason and Bradbury (2001) gave a more detailed and comprehensive definition of action research as:

A participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (p. 4)

Although more commonly used in education and health care, action research has also been conducted in organisation and administration studies and management (Coghlan, 2007; Eden & Huxham, 1996; McNiff, 2000; Morton-Cooper, 2000). It can be a powerful tool for instigating change, improving systems at a local level, development of organisational learning and theory, and it is attractive to both researchers and practitioners (Coghlan, 2007; Cohen, et al., 2007). Perry and Zuber-Skeerrit (1992) suggested that it was also suitable for researching and developing the soft systems of managerial practice and competency. Action research is context centred and focuses on solving real life problems involving people, tasks and procedures, in specific locations and integrating theory and praxis. Elliott (1991) believes that the aim of action
research is to improve practice rather than produce knowledge whereas Herr and Anderson (2005) suggested that action research can generate knowledge.

An advantage of action research over more traditional science approaches is that it can offer solutions to problems. As a practising manager, frustrated by much of my former management education, action research was attractive because it crossed the boundaries between academia and society and ignored the disciplinary borders that restrict effective understanding and action (Greenwood & Levin, 2003). An action research dissertation was suitable for me, an organisational insider, wishing to enhance my professional development and to solve problems through reflection on my practice (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Furthermore, it is not grounded in the formal propositions with which I had difficulty but draws on different forms of knowing (Coghlan, 2007). The utility of action research to enhance the effectiveness of my performance, increase knowledge, solve problems and facilitate change (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Marshall, 2011) were in keeping with the aim of this research.

Action research has been criticised, perhaps unfairly, for its lack of repeatability because each intervention is different from the previous one (Eden & Huxham, 1996). It is possible to try out theories over time but the context will always differ slightly. The challenge for action research, because it is difficult to create generalisations, is in communicating results that include local, contextual knowledge and analyses in a way that enables others to create their own course of action (Greenwood & Levin, 2003). When using action research it is necessary to look at which processes can be generalised and applied to other contexts so that they can be tested in action again. The key to utilising context-bound knowledge in a different setting is to understand the conditions under which the knowledge was created, understand the new setting, and the differences between the two. The application of knowledge to a new context can be achieved
through reflection (Greenwood & Levin, 2003). Despite the suggestion by Aram and Salipante (2003) that action research endorses contextualisation at the expense of generality and does not improve the utility of management knowledge, it is my belief that context-specific knowledge is preferable to knowledge that cannot be utilised.

Theory generated from action research must be judged differently to that of positivist science. It would be possible for other management researchers to conduct research into their practice using the same methods that were used in this project; the results may be similar (but not identical) but they would still be truthful if they met the criteria outlined above.

**Action Research Process.** There have been a number of influential theorists and models on the subject of action research. Lewin’s (1946) theory of action research involved a spiral of cycles consisting of a general idea, reconnaissance, planning, developing and implementing the first action step, evaluation and revision. This came to be understood as a model involving cycles of spirals of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. These four step spirals (plan, act, observe, reflect) are widely accepted to form the basis of action research (French, 2009; Perry & Zuber-Skerritt, 1992).

Coghlan and Brannick (2005) presented an action research cycle comprising a pre-step to set the context and the purpose, followed by four steps – diagnosing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action. However, for Stringer (1999) action research was a simpler three phase cycle of ‘look, think, act’. The four step process, which requires the researcher and practitioner to look forward and backwards at the different stages of the process, is fundamental to action research.
Elliott (1991), while agreeing with the basis of Lewin’s action reflection spiral, suggested that rather than having a research idea that is fixed in advance it should be allowed to move; analysis should recur consistently throughout the reconnaissance phase and evaluation should be conducted only when the extent of the implementation has been ascertained. McNiff (2000) did not perceive the process of action research as sequential because it was possible to start in one place and come to an end somewhere unexpected. She suggested that sometimes a more flexible, creative, approach was required for action research:

While action research, as a systematic totality, may be seen as a unified pattern, episodes may fly off at an unexpected tangent and develop into enquiries which, while related to the wider whole, appear to exist as free-standing enquiries. They never are, though, because action research is embodied in the researchers, the integrating focus of the enquiry. (p. 205)

Her diagram, shown below, illustrates this point with the spirals of action reflection unfolding and folding, suggesting that it is possible to address multiple issues while maintaining a focus on one.
Reason (2006) agreed “the cycles are always more messy than the neat diagrams in the action research texts would suggest” (p. 197). McNiff’s diagram fits with my experience of undertaking action research. It was not a neat and tidy process; the spirals of action and reflection went off at tangents while the central focus, in this instance exploring efficient and effective management in higher education, was maintained.

McNiff (2000) recommended that the process begins with asking “how do I improve my work?” (p. 228). It then involves learning in and through action and reflection; the researcher observes and monitors their actions and reflects upon them. This new learning is used to inform future action. Quality in action research rests on whether sufficient good evidence is produced through the cycles of action and reflection (Reason, 2006). Action research differs from everyday management practice because it is a systematic and deliberate process; it is vital that the four steps (plan, act, observe, and reflect) are undertaken with more logical care and rigour than would be evident in normal day-to-day business thinking (French, 2009). The key elements of action research are:
• As the researcher I am central to the process of investigating efficient and effective management in higher education
• I am learning first about myself in order to change, if necessary, my work situation
• I am not aiming for closure but for ongoing development of my managerial practice
• I will participate in the process
• I will learn and be informed by the process.

(Adapted from McNiff, 2000, p. 203)

Herr and Anderson (2005) proposed five goals for action research: the generation of new knowledge; the achievement of action-orientated outcomes; the education of both researcher and participants; results that are relevant to the local setting; a sound and appropriate research methodology. These goals are accepted but with the proviso that sometimes no new knowledge will be generated and that the action research process may serve to confirm that the action taken was appropriate and change or improvement action was not required. It may also instil a level of confidence or reassurance in management activities.

First Person Action Research. Action research can be positioned on a continuum depending on who is conducting the research and their relationship to the organisation being studied. This positioning ranges from first person, insider action research to third person, outsider action research. This present project involved the former position. First person insider action research is interventionist in nature and geared towards change (Coghlan, 2007). It involves the researcher adopting an inquiring approach to their assumptions, perspectives, desires, intentions and behaviours in-action in order that they develop their practice and act differently in the future (Chandler & Torbert, 2003; Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Marshall, 2011). Reason and Bradbury (2008) gave a detailed definition:
First-person action research / practice skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act choicefully and with awareness, and to assess effects in the outside world while acting. First-person research practice brings inquiry into more and more of our moments of action – not as outside researchers but in the whole range of everyday activities. (p. 6)

First person action research provided the framework for me to fulfil the stated aim of achieving more effective performance at work (Torbert, 2001). It was appropriate to this project because as Perry and Zuber-Skerrit (1992) emphasised, candidates enrolled on a management action research PhD must be full-time managers and part-time students; action research cannot be undertaken by full-time students who are not employed in managerial positions. There were advantages for me in undertaking research in my organisation. Due to my pre-understanding, and lived-experience (tacit knowledge) of the organisation I knew its working, its language and could observe or participate freely in its activities (Coghlan, 2007). In conducting insider action research I needed to build on my familiarity with the School and University while also taking time to stand back and evaluate the situation critically. Although my insider status meant that I was already accepted and integrated into the setting, my self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) and showing that I could be trusted (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005) was equally significant to the success or otherwise of this research.

There were also potential disadvantages associated with my insider status. I needed to be comfortable with any outcomes that the reflective process may have exposed about my practice (McIntosh, 2010). Additionally, because I held dual roles of researcher and organisational member I needed to manage role ambiguities and conflicts. As an insider I had to consider organisational politics and be aware of the
requirement to balance my present and future career ambitions with my research role. This included intended and unintended changes and consequences that resulted from action taken and due to the changes in my performance and general outlook on life and work. My manager and researcher roles required attention and renegotiation.

There was the potential for epistemological issues as a result of my insider status; tacit knowledge can, and almost inevitably will, be prejudiced, biased and include unexamined assumptions and impressions (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Researcher bias and subjectivity are explicit, natural and accepted features of action research; these elements should not be controlled out but be allowed to grow and develop organically (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Morton-Cooper, 2000). Moore (2007), discussing his own insider research, realised that it was impossible to see without bias and impartiality and that he was prejudiced. Bias was managed by acknowledging my presence in the study and through self-reflection and critical examination of my views (Herr & Anderson, 2005). I was aware of the importance of considering the taken for granted assumptions that were part of my practice. In keeping with the advice given by Morton-Cooper (2000) it was important for me to account for personal bias and describe what happened in the study, who did what and why, my motivations and how my actions could be perceived. My supervisors, familiar with the research setting, were ideally placed to be devil’s advocates or critical friends through their suggestion of alternative explanations for the research data and were so able to assist in the process of reflective inquiry and action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Marshall & Mead, 2005). My research data were biased but acknowledging and describing it allowed for the prejudices to be examined.

This action research project may be judged on how trustworthy and believable the narrative is and whether other practitioners can recognise the problems and views
that I have expressed as similar to their own (Morton-Cooper, 2000). The achievement of rigorous reflection on a good story and the formulation of knowledge provide further criteria against which my work may be judged (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). The generation, exploration and evaluation of data and how the events have been questioned and interpreted though multiple action research cycles is also important. As Coghlan (2007) suggested, the quality of this action research may rest on my ability to learn about learning as a result of reflection on reflection. The risk of personal exposure and harming my self-image by undertaking first person action research may also be regarded as an indication of its quality (Marshall & Mead, 2005); I would not present for scrutiny details of my actions and emotions if they were not necessary for this research project. Further criteria for assessing the quality of my work are an appropriate combination of writing from experience and discussing the inquiry (Marshall & Mead, 2005). Truthfulness also rested on the results of the study being true to my beliefs, values and aspirations (Morton-Cooper, 2000).

Reflective practice.

**Reflective Practice Defined.** Although Dewey (1933), Habermas (1973), Kolb (1984) and Mezirow (1981) are reported as having influenced reflection, the most widely quoted and prominent theorist of reflective practice is Schön (1983). There is no precise definition for reflection and reflective practice and practitioners work within a number of frameworks, methods and techniques (Hickson, 2011), however, the following two definitions are appropriate to this research.

Raelin (2002):

The practice of periodically stepping back to ponder the meaning of what has recently transpired to ourselves and to others in our immediate environment. It illuminates what the self and others have experienced, providing a basis for
future action. In particular, it privileges the process of inquiry, leading to an understanding of experiences that may have been overlooked in practice. (p. 66)

Black and Plowright (2010):

Reflection is the process of engaging with learning and/or professional practice that provides an opportunity to critically analyse and evaluate that learning or practice. The purpose is to develop professional knowledge, understanding and practice that incorporates a deeper form of learning which is transformational in nature and is empowering, enlightening and ultimately emancipatory. (p. 246)

Essentially, reflective practice can be considered as a way of understanding and learning from experiences (Hickson, 2011). Bolton (2005) extended this to suggest that it is more than an examination of personal experience and that reflective practice should be located in the social and political as well as the private and the personal. Knowles, Gilbourne, Tomlinson, and Anderson (2007) incorporated the concept of learning from tacit knowledge in action that includes the values, prejudices, experiences, knowledge and social norms that are integral to practice. Mezirow (1991) described three types of critical reflection. Reflection on content involves thinking about the issue and what is happening; process reflection is centred on thinking about strategy, procedures and processes; the questioning of assumptions and perspectives is involved in premise reflection.

Schön (1983), rejecting the idea of technical rationality described earlier, advocates reflection in action which is “central to the ‘art’ by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict” (p. 50). Art and artistry refer to intuition. Knowing in action is tacit and opens up outcomes that fall into the boundaries of what has been learnt to treat as normal. Reflection in action occurs when a person is in the middle of an action and questions
their actions. The outcome is immediate and it can lead to, if required, on the spot adjustment action or affirmation that the course of action is appropriate (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). Reflection on action entails a review of the event after it happened including the accompanying actions, feelings and thoughts (Schön, 1983). Reflective practice, as reflection on action, involves taking time to consider and interpret the experience and to subsequently improve practice and plan future action (Coghlan, 2007; McIntosh, 2010). Reflection of this type is important in the generation of theory. It is possible to be reflective without undertaking action research but without reflection there can be no action. The main difference between action research and reflective practice is that action research is more research-based than reflective practice (Bolton, 2005).

Reflective practice usually focuses on the individual and generally does not consider organisational dynamics or outcome related to the individual’s action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005).

Reflexivity Defined. Researchers use the term reflexivity in different ways. Broadly, as Johnson and Duberley (2000) described, there are two forms of reflexivity, epistemic and methodological. The former is the process for challenging and analysing meta-theoretical assumptions while the latter is associated with how the researcher’s behaviour impacts on the research setting. In traditional research, Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong, (2003) noted the tendency to view the social science observer as a potential research contaminant whose presence and potential effect should be separated out, neutralised, standardised, and controlled. In naturalistic research, such as the current research project, it was appreciated that the research and the researcher were interdependent in the research process (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993). Reflexivity, therefore “refers to the way in which all accounts of social settings – descriptions, analyses, criticisms, etc. – and the social settings occasioning them are mutually
Reflexivity acknowledges the on-going affect of the researcher on the research, and vice versa, how the researcher’s attitudes are revealed and recognised and how the research activity shapes the inquiry (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) also noted how the researcher’s biography, social processes and personal characteristics affect the research and the findings. As Gergen and Gergen (2008) clarified:

Here investigators seek ways of demonstrating to their audiences their historical and geographical situatedness, their personal investments in the research, various biases they bring to the work, their surprises and ‘undoings’ in the process of the research endeavour, the ways in which their choice of literary tropes lend rhetorical force to the research report, and/or ways in which they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view. (p. 579)

Thus, reflexivity acknowledges that the orientation of the researcher is shaped by his or her socio-cultural position, including the values and interests that this position confers upon them. Skilful reflection requires reflexivity and bringing past feelings, sensations and thoughts into consciousness with current issues (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006). As the ‘research instrument’ in the present project it was essential for me to be reflexive and be aware of the ways in which my selectivity, perception, background and inductive processes and paradigms would shape my research (Cohen et al., 2007).

A Seminar on Reflective Practice. In order to illustrate both the format and style of many of my reflections and to bring to life the issues surrounding reflective practice in an engaging manner, this section is written as a reflective, autoethnographic, narrative. The seminar and my interactions with the staff involved were real events and are described as they actually happened. Inspiration to use this format was taken from Ellis (2004).
It is the last week of the autumn term and I am sitting in my office trying to write some of the methodology chapter. I had hoped to complete it by the end of term but the breadth and scope of the chapter combined with the volume of work in my primary role are conspiring against me. Most of it has been drafted but the section on autoethnography is yet to be finished and the reflective practice one is still to be written. I have been putting this section off as my Director of Studies suggested that I try a different angle from the ‘typical’ one based on Schön. The phone rings “Hi Jane it’s Alison”; Alison is one of the lecturing staff. We exchange pleasantries before she says “Can I ask a favour?” I would be a rich woman if I had a pound for every conversation that started like that. She explains that it is the teaching block for the MA Sport Management and Leadership students this week. “We’re doing reflective practice with the students” she says. I suddenly take note; I can see where this conversation is going. Could I come and give a talk on my experience of using reflective practice along with Will, another PhD student, and Helen, a lecturing colleague. I draw breath. My mind whirrs. My supervisory team and I have only recently agreed the order in which I should write about my research methods and the relationship between them and I continue to feel confused and overwhelmed by the subject matter. Alison explains that the students will have had a lecture on reflective practice in the morning and will have done some reading on the subject. I agree to help but at the back of my mind is the feeling that although I have been a reflective practitioner for almost two years the students will probably know more than I do. I feel very unsure of the theory behind it. I have previously talked to a different cohort of the master’s programme about insider research and I felt quite comfortable but I feel out of my depth with reflective practice. Alison thanks me profusely and says she will email me the details. I receive an email later the day from Will suggesting that we meet for coffee to discuss the presentations. What we
say and how we come across to these master’s students is important to both of us; it’s that self-presentation\(^1\) thing again. I agree readily.

Will and I meet in one of the coffee bars on campus next day. We agree that we will talk from notes about what we are doing rather than using powerpoint. We chat about our work in general. Will is using ethnography for his research and combining it with reflective practice. We talk about ‘the when’, ‘the where’, and ‘the what’ of reflective practice. We concur that the process of writing our reflections is a form of self-reflective practice (Marshall & Mead, 2005). Both of us are researching inductively; reflecting and writing first and then considering the literature at a later date. I am a management researcher whereas Will’s area is team sport; it shows the versatility of the methods. I reflect later that despite our differing ages and backgrounds we have similar thoughts on the nature of reflective practice and how we use it. It has been good to talk.

The presentation to the master’s students is on Friday afternoon. The three of us are sitting at the front of the room, the six students are sitting behind tables placed in a U shape and the two lecturers are at either end of the U. It feels like Dragons’ Den but I am not sure which role I am performing. Alison makes the two-way introductions. Helen goes first and explains her background and how she used reflective practice in her work. Next is Will. I am last to speak. I give a résumé of my career background and my research. I tell the group how I am combining action research, reflective practice and autoethnography to examine my managerial practice. These methods are linked and the lines between them blurred. Reflection is an integral part of action research and some of my reflections are more autoethnographic than others. Reflective practice is the vehicle

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\(^1\) Writing the reflective narratives commenced before I started to write the methodology. I had begun to recognise how important self-presentation was to me.
driving my desire to learn about, understand and change, where necessary, my managerial and leadership behaviours with the aim of enhancing my professional and personal effectiveness (Quinn et al., 2000; Taylor, Rudolph, & Foldy, 2008). I like the fact that reflective practice breaks down the often separate entities of theory and practice, raising the status of practical knowledge and allowing me to use my experience to form knowledge (Edwards, 1999).

I suggest that although reflective practice is well established in some professions like teaching, nursing and social work (Hickson, 2011) and there is burgeoning use in others such as sport psychology (see Knowles et al., 2007) in my experience it seemed less well used in business and management. This could be because as managers we are socialised into taking immediate action rather than taking time to think or reflect (Edwards, 1999; Raelin, 2002). I propose that in management events rarely happen in neat timeframes making reflection less straightforward than, for example, teachers reflecting on a particular session. For this reason I have written layered reflections. I explain that I have benefited from stepping back to think about events and their meaning. I am then better able to understand the experience and this provides me with a basis for future action. I have found this to be better than my previous ‘trial and error’ experience and private reflection; I now analyse my assumptions, prejudices, behaviours and biases by reviewing my interpretations and evaluations of my actions and plans, a process similar to that adopted by Raelin (2002). Reflective practice has helped give me confidence in my abilities as a manager. Through the reflections I am able to track and monitor my actions and what has guided them. They remind me of my actions and provide evidence of my role in achieving a successful outcome or resolution.

When we finish our individual talks there’s time for questions. Alison said “Jane I know the answer to this from a previous conversation but can you explain why you
don’t use a formal, structured model for your reflections”. I pause briefly. A difficult question and something I could be asked to justify in my viva. I explain that my first reflective piece was at the request of my supervisors. I had written honestly and openly, reflecting on my thoughts and feelings on doctoral study (see ‘Taking the Plunge’). It was well received and seemed to work well. There then followed pilot study work. In these reflections I tried a more structured approach, advocated by some practitioners (e.g., Russell, 2005), which at first seemed to suit my needs. I still needed to adapt the format to fit the scenario on which I was reflecting. The models that I had looked at (Gibbs, 1984; Schön, 1983) did not really seem to accommodate the messiness of managerial life. I tried in all my reflections to write about my actions, my thoughts and ideas, and my feelings as well as considering the role, thoughts and feelings of others (Bolton, 2005). Gradually, my reflections became less structured, I continued to include the background to and the description of the incident but my emotions and actions were integrated throughout my writing thereby making my reflections more engaging and fluent. I needed and wanted to achieve reflective learning rather than just reflective practice.

“Is it better to reflect after the event has happened so that it’s not quite so raw” a student enquires. “Raw is good” I reply. I explain that emotions are part of the reflective process (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005) and it is important to recognise and acknowledge the role that feelings play in one’s judgement and actions. I tell the group that I like to reflect as soon as possible after the incident and then again later so that I record the initial emotion (hurried outbursts of word, written in a focussed but uncensored way (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001) as well as the more considered perspective. In this way my notes of the event and reflections upon it can be considered, reviewed and studied at
a later date thereby undertaking a dual-staged analysis (Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie, & Nevill, 2001)

“How do you record your reflections, do you use a dictaphone?” One of the students asks. Will and I both state that neither of us were comfortable using a dictaphone. I tell them that I was not very good at verbalising what had happened, preferring to write it down. Will explains that he uses his mobile phone to make notes so that those who he is observing do not realise what he is doing. I reply that a pen and paper, the ability to touch type and a job that allows me to take half an hour to type up what has happened, and my thoughts surrounding it are my methods. I explain that sometimes I just need to write and that gut feeling about when and what to write about should not be ignored. Although for me reflecting in order to write was invariably a positive experience it had occasionally been exhausting as my reflective thought processes would sometimes keep me awake at night.

One of the lecturers asks if we reflect using conversations as well as written reflections and whether our reflections were spontaneous or planned (Anderson et al., 2004). I said that I had only used written reflections.

“What about the accusation of self-indulgence in relation to autoethnography” one student asks. Wow, she’s done her homework, I think. Although not a question I had been expected to be asked today it was one that I was able to answer. I think that by making the reflective narrative engaging, and evoking recognition of common issues, it can be of use to other managers thereby reducing any accusations of indulgence. I tell her about how often self-presentation and image have cropped up in my work and suggest that most people have considered how they are perceived by others.

The session over it is almost time to go home. Will and I walk along the corridor together. I am pleased with how it went. Being asked questions about my reflective
practice and the need to formulate a coherent response by drawing upon both my reflective practice and my theoretical knowledge has been invaluable. It has also made me appreciate the benefit of having a colleague to talk to who is using comparable research methods and who is at a similar place in his research to me. Will and I return to our respective offices agreeing that we must meet again in the new year for coffee with some of the other ethnographers. Back in my office my two lecturing colleagues pop in to see me. They thank me and say how useful it was for their students to hear from others the widespread utility of the method and how it is used in practice.

**Autoethnography.**

*Autoethnography Defined.* The term autoethnography was developed by Hayano (1979) and was used to refer to an anthropologist studying their own people (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Van Maanen, 1988). Broken into its constituent parts ‘ethno’ means culture, ‘graphy’ refers to writing or describing and ‘auto’ to the self (Ellis, 2004). Autoethnography, part of interpretive or narrative ethnography, has evolved to become a blurred genre and now includes a range of approaches and methods. Generally it consists of autobiographical writing and research that “displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). In autoethnography the researcher is the subject and the object or focus of the research where personal experiences and responses to events become the research data. The writing is concurrently analytical and textual (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Autoethnographers focus outward on the social and cultural aspects of their personal experience and then inwards, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by, and may move through and resist, cultural interpretations. Autoethnography can include, as was the case in this project, journals and fragmented and layered writing. A degree of
reflection is required by an author engaged in autoethnographic writing when considering their life story (Gilbourne, Jones, & Jordon, 2011).

The Autoethnographic Narrative. Ellis (2004) suggested that autoethnographic texts show concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality and self-consciousness, which are revealed dialectically through actions, feelings, thoughts and language.

The interpretive, narrative, autoethnographic project has the following distinguishing features; the author usually writes in the first person, making herself or himself the object of research. The narrative text focuses on generalization within a single case extended over time. The text is presented as a story replete with a narrator, characterization, and plot line, akin to forms of writing associated with the novel or biography. The story often discloses hidden details of private life and highlights emotional experience. The ebb and flow of relationship experience is depicted in episodic form that dramatizes the motion of connected lives across the curve of time. A reflexive connection exists between the lives of participants and researchers that must be explored. And the relationship between writers and readers of the texts is one of involvement and participation. (Ellis, 2004, p. 30)

Researchers have offered varying ideas about the construction and format of ethnographic narratives. For example, Van Maanen (1988) questioned whether ethnography should be considered to be a science with standard techniques and reporting formats or an art form with craft-like standards and style. Although Ellis (2004) suggested that there was no right way to write and to ‘follow your gut’, Bochner (2002) believed that autoethnographic writing should follow the conventions of storytelling; it should contain people depicted as characters, an event incorporating dramatic tension for which a resolution or explanation is provided, temporal ordering, and a point or moral offering an explanation and meaning to the event. Smith and Sparkes (2009)
offered a similar format suggesting that a narrative of self should include a reason and purpose, characters which were introduced and developed and an ending which provided an explanation or consequences. Gilbourne et al. (2011) suggested that “an autoethnographic narrative emerges from a challenging personal exercise in which events, and understandings of them, are scrutinised in a systematic manner and through a critical lens” (p. 82). It was my experience that writing autoethnographically was more art than a science but that all the other elements described above were present.

Boyle and Parry (2007) proposed that the autoethnographic approach may be more suitable for younger researchers who may be more familiar with creating public and reflexive selves through social media. In general, I do not agree with this assertion believing that a certain level of maturity and life experience is required to understand fully the issues associated with this style of writing. My understanding of the use of social media is that users tend to create a positive, superficial presentation of themselves for public consumption. Good autoethnographic writing requires the opening up of the private, vulnerable self with a good deal of introspection. The two formats, to me, inhabit different spaces, for different outcomes. Life experience tends to bring astuteness, perception and perspective which is of benefit to the autoethnographic process because the author is likely to be more confident in revealing their emotions and feelings to others. This is less likely to be true of younger, less experienced researchers.

The value and contribution that autoethnographic work can make to the study of organisations and culture lies in its initial empathetic and emotive, and subsequent cognitive, impact upon the reader (Boyle & Parry, 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). When cycles of reflection on an autoethnographic narrative include appreciation of self-in-society the text has the potential to be a catalyst for change (Gilbourne et al., 2011). The ability of autoethnography to evoke a sense of recognition (Blenkinsopp, 2007), to
resonate and engage with others, and to be coherent and plausible (Ellis, 2004) are further ways in which it can judged. Humanising the research process, including confessional tales, has been a way in which authenticity has been assumed (Coffey, 1999). The researcher is able to test validity, and potentially reduce the risk of self-indulgence (see Coffey, 1999; Mykhalovskiy, 1996; Sparkes, 2002) by presenting the description of a complex situation for others to consider. The truthfulness of autoethnographic work lies in the honesty of the researcher’s perceived account and analysis of what happened (Blenkinsopp, 2007). Sparkes (2002) warned against finding universal criteria for judging autoethnographic work and instead suggested that each piece should be judged according to type and context in an open manner. Similar criteria were proposed by Ellis (2004) who suggested that validity rested on whether the autoethnography took into account the whole person, helped readers to communicate with others, offered a way to improve lives and was useful.

Autoethnography in Management and Organisational Research. Although well established in some areas, autoethnography has only recently gained the attention of management researchers (Murphy, 2008). Autoethnographic work can enhance the study of organisations and culture. Wagstaff, Fletcher and Hanton (2012), for example, used an ethnographic approach to investigate the functioning of a national sporting organisation; this illustrated the growing appeal, acceptability, suitability and usage of this research method for addressing certain research questions. An organisational autoethnography focuses on how the individual interacts with and shapes the social and cultural context of the organisation back to the research to enable them to consider their individual, vulnerable and potentially resistant self (Boyle & Parry, 2007). Through autoethnography the researcher can connect the personal to the cultural and present rich readings and personal accounts of organisational life (Blenkinsopp, 2007; Boyle &
Parry, 2007; Murphy, 2008). Promoting the utility of autoethnography in organisational studies, Boyle and Parry (2007) suggested that “an effective piece of autoethnographic writing will always engage the reader to the point where organisational processes such as emotional ambivalence, organisational deadlocks and roadblocks, and the variable and vicarious nature of organisational relationships are brought into stark relief” (p. 186). Autoethnographic stories can provide a basis for further reflection, discussion and theorisation in applied training situations and enhance “our social sensibilities, and our deeper knowledge of the complexity of others” (Gilbourne et al., 2011).

Commenting upon C. Wright Mills’s distinction between personal troubles and public issues Blenkinsopp (2007) proposed that autoethnographic research was of interest when a researcher’s troubles were related to wider issues. Troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others; issues have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his inner life (Mills, 1959). The usefulness of the autoethnography presented in this thesis will be judged through the assessment of my workplace troubles and their similarity to the issues experienced and recognised, albeit in different settings and contexts, by managers in higher education and other such environments. Despite accusations of self-indulgence and narcissism the strength and value of autoethnography lie in its ability to inform and awaken the reader and to evoke a response, which may result in reflection and change in them (Sparkes, 2002).

Summary of research methods.

The lines between action research, reflective practice and autoethnography can blur and consequently the methods are complementary. There is an enduring and essential relationship between reflection, its relevance to theory and relationship to action. Elliott (1991) viewed reflection on process and practice, or reflective practice, to actually be
action research and Marshall (2011) offered action research as “a companion language from which to articulate and develop notions of practice in relation to reflection” (p. 244). As a specific dimension of action research, reflection on content, process and premise is critical to learning and integrates action and research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). It is this interweaving of reflection and practice that gives form to action research (Marshall, 2011) with reflective practice encouraging action (Bolton, 2005). Action research and reflection can be used to improve personal or organisational function and understanding (McIntosh, 2010) which made them appropriate methods for this research project. Reflection on practice also provides the link for a researcher focusing on his or her practice through personal narratives and autoethnographic writing (Herr & Anderson, 2005). In turn, the examination of practice through these reflective and reflexive narratives is at the core of action research (Gilbourne, 2000).

**Writing style.**

In keeping with the norm for autoethnographic texts all my reflections were written in the first person (cf. Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Although the reflections were written in this manner one dilemma I faced was in which person the thesis should be written. This was apparent from a reflection about Chapter One ‘Taking the Plunge’:

**March 2011.** I have been worrying about the first chapter. Which person should I write it in? How much should I use the first person? It seems appropriate that as the method is autoethnography then I should use the first person to some extent. I cannot really write about why I decided to enrol in PhD study without writing at least some of the chapter in the first person.

Coghlan and Brannick (2005), recognising this issue, suggested that first person narrative adds strength to a finished report that includes extensive reflection on the
researcher’s personal learning. Furthermore, there is an increasing use and acceptance of the first person in narratives and writing in management research (Boyle & Parry, 2007). The use of the words ‘the researcher’ and ‘the author’ seemed inappropriate and distant in comparison with the more personal ‘I’. Conversely, Coghlan and Brannick (2005) believed that use of third person narrative provided a sense of objectivity. Accordingly, I felt pressure to conform to the traditional and accepted style of academic writing and to write in the third person. This, however, did not always seem to be the most appropriate or best approach. Mills (1959) provided valuable guidance on the matter. He advocated the presentation of academic work, with consideration for the audience to which it will be presented, in clear, simple and intelligible language, so that the meaning will be understood by others. He also warned against using an impersonal style without a voice in preference for one where:

It is also clear what sort of a man (sic) he is: whether confident or neurotic, direct or involuted, he is a centre of experience and reasoning; now he has found out something, and he is telling us about it, and how he found it out. This is the voice behind the best expositions available in the English Language. (p. 242)

Heeding this advice my choice was guided by what had the most impact according to the discussion and the likely audience rather than academic convention. With utility an aim of this project, an engaging, personal style, where my voice as the researcher and the research subject was important. Therefore, I wrote predominantly in the first person.

**Fieldwork and data collection.**

Written reflections, this project’s field notes, describe the events and situations in which I was involved, and were central to this research. They provided the foundation and
means for developing the themes, theoretical connections and understanding between them (Emerson et al., 2001). My reflections described places, scenes, people, conversations and events and recorded my emotions, reactions and personal experiences (Coffey, 1999; Emerson et al., 2001). They provided structure and purpose to my experiences in the field which this insider research was conducted. The adequate recording, in terms of both depth and breadth, of events and my actions and reactions, was vital to the success or otherwise of the project (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). It was neither possible, nor desirable, to write about everything that happened to me or in which I had some involvement in the workplace. I needed to develop a feeling for what was likely to be important and significant to address the research question, and to decide not to recount events that appeared less noteworthy (Emerson et al., 2001).

As described earlier, I began my fieldwork writing in a fairly formatted style reporting the incident and then my feelings in distinct sections and with defined headings. This did not work particularly well but as I became more confident and gained experience my work gradually became more fluid with my thoughts, feelings and emotions intertwined with the description of the event. Some of the work was more autoethnographic than others. The two pieces that exemplify the genre are ‘A Winter’s Tale’ and ‘Knock Out’. In both these I displayed my vulnerable self (Ellis, 2004) and used two very personal stories to illustrate a range of themes and cultural issues.

**Reflective Narratives.** The pilot work started shortly after the first meeting with my supervisory team in early 2010. These comprised reflections which, from my perspective, had positive and ‘negative’ elements and outcomes. With practice and confidence the reflections incorporated my thoughts and feelings at every stage of the process, which were linked to my actions. Each reflection was adapted and written to best capture the nature of the incident. The reflections recorded and described
interactions with other staff on the Cyncoed Campus, home to the Cardiff School of Sport, at the University’s Llandaff campus and during field trips and work related social occasions. Reflections were not limited to my work life but also encompassed my domestic, family and social life. They incorporated the context and the situation, the setting and environment, words spoken to and by me, my actions, feelings and emotions and, where possible, the outcome of the event. The influence of previous experience and how earlier reflections affected and guided my current thoughts and actions featured in my writing.

The reflections were in all instances layered, written in episodes, which became fieldwork tales (Emerson et al., 2001). They were written over a period time, in some instances, for over a year. The individual events or episodes that comprised the whole reflection were typed contemporaneously or as soon after the events, experiences and interactions as possible (Emerson et al., 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). They were recorded in this way in preference to describing the incident with hindsight, to ensure that the details of the occurrence and the thoughts and emotions were captured as accurately as possible and the memory of the event or the accompanying emotion was not distorted or forgotten through time. Another reason why it was important to write soon after the event was the potential fluidity of the situation and the knowledge or sense that subsequent events and the outcome could change and progress quickly. This set of circumstances was witnessed during the recruitment of a new member of staff when I wrote frequently over a three day period as described below:

**Wednesday 2\(^{nd}\) March.** I am tired and drained. Interviewing is hard work. Listening carefully to the answers given by eight candidates, making notes and then grading their responses is mentally exhausting. Then there is the need to provide reasoned arguments to colleagues regarding the candidates and their strengths and weaknesses. I know that I should write about the day’s events while
my emotions are still high. A night’s sleep and I may feel different in the morning.

I subsequently wrote again at 08.00, 09.30, midday, Thursday afternoon and Friday recording how an emotive recruitment and selection process unfurled. Due to the relatively autonomous nature of my role I was able to write immediately after the event or as it unfolded thereby capturing each episode as it happened. Time was made during the working day, in the evenings after work and at the weekend to write up and reflect upon events. Within a short period of time the reflective process was just about continuous with conversations, incidents being considered almost subconsciously.

The entries were recorded chronologically (Emerson et al., 2001). Typing the reflections was the usual means of recording experiences. Paper was used when there was no access to a computer. The reflections were written as separate subjects. They encompassed financial management, human resource and personnel management issues, estates, PhD enrolment, self-presentation, meetings with colleagues and the influence of prior experience on my management and leadership style and outlook. After a period of data collection links and crossovers between the reflections on separate subjects were noted. At regular intervals and when each layered reflective narrative had drawn to an actual or natural conclusion I reflected on my actions and role and provided a summary.

At the conclusion of each reflection learning points and an advice for others section were provided. This advice section was predicated on the scenario of providing guidance to a colleague in a similar situation. The completed reflections were reviewed and re-read at a later date; comments were added to reflect any developments or issues that had arisen since the perceived end of the incident. In this research I used my experiences of working in the organisation to highlight the cultural influences and to look deeply at interactions between myself and others. The reflective narratives
included a range of ethnographic standpoints; I researched my biography, my working life, in which the attention centred on my actions rather than those of colleagues, and wrote confessional tales which focused on my endeavours in undertaking the project (Ellis, 2004). With my dual identity of researcher/academic and manager (personal self) I wrote autobiographically about aspects of my daily experiences of work and personal life (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Reflections were written about positive as well as potentially more negative or difficult ‘critical’ incidents and events. Writing about the more positive, normal and regular aspects of my work did not come naturally. I needed to be reminded by my supervisory team to write about things that had gone well and the reasons for the positive outcome. Mundane and routine tasks comprised the majority of my working day making them as important to reflect upon as the critical and extraordinary incidents. Bolton (2005) described the tendency to forget about these non-critical events and the importance of reflecting upon them:

These areas might not sock us in the face as ‘critical’; they are probably ones which have been allowed to pass unnoticed because focussing upon them is more problematic, often unexamined for personal or professional reasons. … The events we ‘forget’ most need reflection, and give rise to the deepest reflexivity. (p. 3)

I found it easier to write on the negative, challenging and emotive events that required my attention. This is a different situation from that described by Herr and Anderson (2005) who considered that insiders, as believers in their particular practices, were more likely to put a positive spin on their data. Perhaps unusually all my reflections, and my reflective journal, were shared with my supervisory team (see Coffey, 1999). This was highly beneficial as the team were able to provoke thought by
suggesting the inclusion in my writing of, amongst other things, issues of domestic concern, image and self-presentation and consideration of the use of language.

I enjoyed the process of writing. I was surprised by my ability to write, as commented upon by my supervisors, in a style that was engaging and fluent. I began to write not just for my PhD research but also for me. As Moore (2007) had discovered, writing about my experiences was cathartic. It became a means by which I could express anger or frustration associated with something that had happened at work and explore my feelings and emotions.

**Constructing the Autoethnography.** Over time, the scope of field notes narrowed and numerous themes emerged as the research progressed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). At times some of the themes were difficult to appreciate and a metaphorical step away from them became necessary. As suggested by Emerson et al. (2001) the field notes were written in an open ended manner; this allowed for changes in direction and acknowledged my deepening knowledge, sensitivities, substantive concerns and theoretical insights. This also corresponded with the advice given by McNiff (2000) in the action research section of this chapter and the need for a flexible approach to accommodate episodes that go off at tangents. The story entitled ‘Turf War’, for example, started as a short piece on a positive event that initially formed part of the longer narrative on ‘Reflecting on the Positive’. It later became a stand-alone reflection charting the complexities of changing the use and ownership of a teaching room.

The reflections accumulated without logic or underlying principle, just with a feeling that the event might be of importance. I knew that not all the material that had been written would be incorporated into the finished work (Emerson et al., 2001). The open ended approach resulted in some of the narratives having no recognisable
conclusion. One piece was concerned with the school’s finances. It would have been possible to continue writing about this subject for the duration of the my PhD registration as it was something that occupied a considerable amount of my time; however, after around two years the layered reflections on finance drew quite naturally to a close as there was little new material about which to write and reflect upon. All the reflections were collected between January 2010 and April 2012. This corresponded, pro-rata, to the advice given by Perry and Zuber-Skerrit (1992) who suggested that for research on a three year doctoral programme the cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting on practices should be for no more than a year. In addition to the ethnography derived from the raw reflective data a small number of fictional narratives were written. This form of representation enabled me to protect the identity of actors, where it was desirable to do so, while maintaining the “rawness of real happenings” (Clough, 2002, p. 8). I based the narratives on an amalgamation of real people, and real events that I had experienced but changed the setting, altered departmental details and split and combined actors as necessary to tell the story (Sparkes, 2002; Watson, 2000). The fictional narratives were inserted into the ethnography at a suitable juncture to maintain the flow of the story but also to provide an additional layer of protection to the participants through alteration of the chronology of the actual event that was being represented.

Starting from the initial discussions about undertaking a PhD and throughout the data collection period the exact format of the thesis was undecided although themed chapters were generally thought to be the most likely means by which to present the data. Themed chapters, however, may have potentially excluded important and relevant subject areas from discussion. I had also decided not to write up the data in disciplinary ‘stove pipes’; one chapter on managing finance, another on managing staff and so on.
would not capture the complexities, the linkages and general need for a manager to multi-task and be multi-skilled. I wished to discuss the soft skills of management and some of the neglected aspects of management practice. The most effective way to present the data was through a chronological narrative, bringing together elements of all the reflections from which a discussion on the data could emanate. Such a chronological autoethnographic account would allow me to convey the nature and demands of management practice to the reader.

**Reflective Journal.** This form of diary, also referred to as a confessional tale or ethnographic memoirs (Ellis, 2004), developed from ethnographers’ personal diaries and their stories of undertaking the research. It is usual for a researcher to keep descriptive field notes as well as a personal diary or journal and there are benefits of so doing both to record personal feelings and as a means for developing reflective skills (Coffey, 1999; Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Mills (1959) proposed a journal as an effective way of guiding the process of reflection:

In such a file as I am going to describe, there is joined personal experience and professional activities, studies under way and studies planned. In this file, you, as an intellectual craftsman [sic], will try to get together what you are doing intellectually, and what you are experiencing as a person. Here you will not be afraid to use your experience and relate it directly to various work in process. By serving as a check on repetitious work, your file enables you to conserve your energy. It also encourages you to capture ‘fringe thoughts’: various ideas which may be by-products of everyday life, snatches of conversation overheard on the street, or, for that matter, dreams. Once noted these may lead to more systematic thinking, as well as lend intellectual relevance to more directed experience. (pp. 216-217)

Entries were added when I felt that the research was impacting upon my work as a manager or upon my life in general in either a positive or negative way. I wrote about
the research process, how it affected my relationships, the difficulties I incurred, how it influenced my managerial work and about the highs and lows of the PhD experience. I reflected on my reflections, my perceptions, my emotions and feelings that were a by-product of the fieldwork but not those directly attributable to the events which were recorded in the reflections. There was no initial aim of the journal but it became an important way for me to document multiple aspects of my doctoral experience. I used the journal as means by which to trace my personal progress and as a private record of my journey and experiences (Coffey, 1999). Although Coghlan and Brannick (2005) suggested frameworks for journal keeping this more formal approach did not work well for me for the same reasons that it was not the best approach for the reflections. A typical journal entry is shown below:

**Week Commencing Monday 7th March.** After a year of reflecting on my managerial practice the research is producing results. I am able to draw on previous work to inform current actions. I can make more sense of events and thoughts. There are recurrent themes so for the thesis I can see developments and progress. My managerial role is reaping the benefit. I am more aware and sensitive to issues such as moral dilemmas, self-presentation and role conflict. I feel that my opinions are more considered. My counsel is increasingly sought. I have noticed that a suggestion made or discussion had with one MPT member being repeated at a different time and place to me by another, seemingly coming full circle. This would suggest that the advice and guidance that I give is being heeded and thought of as sensible.

The comment has been made that I could not be undertaking my PhD at a better time. This is true for two reasons. First, the research data, and the subsequent thesis, are being undertaken in changing times. By the time I have completed my study the higher education landscape will be very different, as will be the knock on effects to the School. Second, the research will directly affect my managerial competence and subsequently may affect other members of the MPT.
The reflective journal was also used as a coping mechanism for exploring and articulating difficult ethical issues (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005); such issues, illustrated through excerpts from my journal are explored in the next section.

**Summary of writing style and data collection.**

Reflective practice is the glue that binds the action research and autoethnographic methods within this research project. The reflections, derived from the personal narratives, guided and informed action. The reflections and the reflective journal encompassed confessional tales and tales of the self (Coffey, 1999). Some of the reflections were deeply personal and revealing about me, others were more about my management persona. It was important for me to write about and reflect upon my various roles as they impinged upon and affected one another; decisions which affected one or more areas of my life were not made in isolation. I was aware of and came to appreciate my reflexivity and the way in which I could affect the research. In order to engage and maximise the impact upon the reader the autoethnographic writing and self-reflective action research was written in the first person, where appropriate the narrative included humour and a story-telling style to make it as engaging as possible (Boyle & Parry, 2007; Herr & Anderson, 2005). The data were collected over a two year period. The event specific reflections were then written up into a chronological autoethnography, supplemented by fictional narratives, detailing my managerial life and the influences upon it.

**Ground rules.**

In a similar way to that described by Brackenridge (1999), I decided that it would be advisable and necessary to set some ground rules for my research. These were recorded in my reflective journal (February 2011) and were aimed at dealing with issues of role duality and conflict, honesty and the truthfulness of the data.
I have set my own rules for dealing with potential role conflict and role duality between my supervisors and me at work. I would only discuss research during the formal PhD meetings or pre-planned discussions or if asked by one of them how my research was going. Work meetings should remain for this purpose only and coffee in one of the campus cafes should be for social purposes only.

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I also decided, despite the complexities of the relationships, that I should be honest in my writing. If I could not be entirely honest then the research would not be as truthful or worthwhile. I have been able to be honest due to the high level of trust between us. I value this more than anything else. It is at the root of my work. The trust is more important than the gender or the age of my supervisors.

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Once written I would not change anything. I would allow myself to amend grammatical or remove typographical errors but the sentiment, feeling and meaning would remain unaltered.

***
My primary role as BSM and my parental / spouse role would take precedence over my research role.

***
A guiding principle of my research is to not cause any harm and if possible to do some good, leaving the situation in an improved state.

Blenkinsopp (2007) noted that although editing is permissible and may be necessary, because autoethnography is a record of the researcher’s experience it needs to capture both the complexities and subtleties of the situation and the researcher’s perceptions that may change with the passage of time. I wanted to preserve the flavour and content of my original field notes; this would better capture the immediacy and meaning recorded at the time and there would be no danger of changing the information to fit any theoretical connections made (Emerson et al. 2001).
Conclusion

Writing this chapter was a nine month undertaking during which time I experienced a changing relationship with the work. The learning curve was steep. It became apparent that my world view had been present, lurking in the background, throughout my managerial and previous academic work, I just did not know it. I realised quite early on in my studies that my views were at odds with positivism. It was the positivist perspective with its abstractions and generalisations and neglect of the subjective nature of human experience and social constructions with which I had struggled during my postgraduate studies. It was a relief to find that the prescriptive, technical models that had caused me to doubt my managerial abilities had been subject to scrutiny and question. I knew that my sympathies lay elsewhere and it was only when I read an article by Heron and Reason (1997) outlining their participatory world view that I knew that was the best fit with my philosophical stance. Its subjective / objective ontology, focus on experiential knowledge, the need for change, and the balance between hierarchy and autonomy echoed my own beliefs, values and perspectives. I knew that I wanted to make a difference and make things better; merely undertaking the research was not sufficient.

As discussed in ‘Taking the Plunge’ not only was it important to choose a research problem that was related to my work, the selection of research methodology was equally important. It was vital for sustaining interest and motivation, for its congruence with my beliefs and values. The methods, action research, reflective practice and autoethnography, were suitable for addressing the research subject and for investigating managerial work. Action research embraced the reflective practice and autoethnographic narratives elements. The research methods fed into one another to the point where it was difficult to say which should or did come first.
There were themes that ran through the methodology. Experience and reflection on practice as a form of learning and to explore the research question permeated the first two sections. Writing about my troubles, doing so in an engaging manner, and integrating these narratives with the academic theory with the purpose of improving my practice and highlighting these issues of potential common concern were dominant. Truthfulness can be assessed through the ability of the narratives to evoke a response. Ethics and role duality were also of concern but were not at the expense of either the research product or the process.

In keeping with the action research nature of this project it was appropriate to provide advice to prospective management researchers who might not be familiar with the research terminology, methods and ethical issues. It is likely that by reviewing one’s career and formal academic education clues will be evident to indicate a philosophical standpoint and help to guide the choice of paradigm in which the work can be framed. Reading and re-reading will gradually shed light on the theoretical ideas. Taking notes on unfamiliar terms and definitions provides a useful reference document. The proposed method(s) of data collection should be right not just for answering the research question but also for the researcher. They must suit the researcher’s persona, character and skill set. For example, not everyone will have the personal qualities or the desire to undertaken ethnographic or autoethnographic work. Consideration should be given to the issues associated with insider research and role duality; writing about oneself carries risks as does researching one’s own organisation albeit focussing on one’s own practice. Ethical and role conflict issues are as interesting as they are tricky to negotiate; they can be viewed as an interesting challenge and dynamic of the research rather than something to be viewed with suspicion and dread. Embrace all aspects of being a postgraduate
researcher; colleagues can act as critical friends and provide opportunities to enhance your learning.

In this chapter I have demonstrated how autoethnography and reflective practice were used to record and interpret my experiences in my previous and current roles. The subsequent narratives were used as a medium through which to explore efficient and effective management in higher education. Subsequently, action research and academic pursuits informed, guided and influenced my continuing managerial work.
CHAPTER FOUR

A Manager’s Tale
Introduction
In this chapter I tell the story of my working life over two years as the BSM in the Cardiff School of Sport. This autoethnographic account of my managerial role and the day-to-day happenings at work are complemented by stories from my domestic life which have affected my practice in various ways. I also describe the effect of undertaking this research on my home and work life. My managerial role is a multifaceted one. Despite forward planning, and cognisance of the rhythm of the academic cycle, my days are not divided neatly into time for managing finance, dealing with personnel issues or for liaising with the estates or marketing departments. As illustrated in the narrative that follows, at times I am proactive, at others entirely reactive; one email, phone call or meeting can alter the course of my day. My role is impacted by staff and staffing issues, political, ‘Political’ and personal agendas at all levels, as well as by domestic and personal concerns and occurrences. I try to capture and evidence the complexities of management practice in higher education and show that decisions and actions are rarely taken in isolation or without reference to previous or other occurrences or experiences. The narrative encompasses the positive as well as the complicated and thorny situations with which I have dealt alongside the mundane, routine tasks which take up much of my day. The autoethnography is written without academic reference to allow the reader to interpret what is happening.

An important factor in the presentation of this work was deciding how best to capture the reality of managerial practice. A priority was to convey the diversity and the multi-tasking requirement of the role rather than potentially to simplify reality and present this thesis in themes by trying to assign my practice accordingly. Most of the ethnographic stories are taken directly from my raw reflective data; however, in some instances, in order to protect the identity of the actors involved, fictional representations
were constructed. Where necessary, to help protect their identity, people’s names have been changed.

My daily work falls into three broad categories. The first is my line management of the administration staff, a role which is fundamental to the smooth running of the administrative support services and the School. Second, I make decisions and provide advice to other members of the School’s Management and Planning Team (MPT) and more generally to staff within the School. Third, I liaise with colleagues in the University’s central administrative units and sit on University level committees and working groups. These aspects of my role are performed concurrently and therefore provide a suitable framework around which to base the story of my working life. The account of my BSM role is therefore told as a story on three levels. There is a fourth layer to my story which is primarily a personal one. I learnt during this research that it is almost impossible to achieve separation between what happens outside and inside work; adding my researcher role to the equation heightened my awareness of the interaction between my roles and brought about changes in my thinking, approach and understanding. This layer of the story documents how certain events in my personal life have affected my managerial position. It also describes the impact of this research upon me as a manager, and the tensions between my researcher role and my personal relationships and work roles. Each of the four layers of the story is told in chronological order; however, the events within each layer are described sequentially. The two years are divided into five sections which follow the academic year of autumn term, spring and summer term. It is presented in this way to take the reader along the path that I trod as closely as possible to the sequence in which it was experienced. An overview of the emerging themes and learning points is presented at the end of each of the five sections.
The account that follows is drawn directly from the reflective narratives that were collected during this period.

First, I provide an overview of my life prior to the commencement of this research project. The managerial decisions that I make now and my reactions to events are affected by prior experience and personal biography; my perspective, actions and how I make sense of and resolve problems are shaped by parental, educational, domestic, travel and employment influences. The overview encompasses major events that have occurred during my managerial career and the dominant influences upon it. In outlining my career history prior to commencing the research I also provide an indication of my character and personal qualities, for these too have a bearing on my managerial practice.

**My Family, Education and Other Employments**

I was born and raised in Kent. When my brother and I were in primary school our mother, who had until then stayed at home to look after us, enrolled at college to train to be a teacher; our father was a self-employed electrician. Outside school I enjoyed ballet, in which I took a number of exams, took swimming lessons, attended the local church, and became a Brownie, then a Girl Guide and later a Venture Scout. I started my working life making pizzas at home and selling them in the public house that my father frequented. Between the ages of 16 and 18 I worked during the holidays in a small café near the construction site for the Thames Barrier and as a chambermaid in a local hotel. On completion of ‘A’ levels, I moved to Bournemouth to study for an HND in catering management. I chose catering due to an enjoyment of food and cooking, for the diversity of future employment prospects and because in that industry no two days would be the same. Throughout the three year sandwich programme I undertook various catering-related jobs; I served breakfast before attending lectures and worked evening.
weekend and holiday shifts in various hotels or in the town’s conference centre. I also gained work experience at the Waldorf Hotel, London and in a hotel in Switzerland. In addition to obtaining first-hand experience of the catering industry, which would later stand me in good stead in the employment market, I was able to support myself financially through college. These latter college years began to teach me to balance school work, paid work and extra-curricular activities. In June 1987, just after I completed my studies my father died, introducing me to the harsh realities of life at a time when I was moving from the relatively safe world of education into employment and independent life. At the end of summer 1987 I moved to Paris to work as an au pair. Bored with the tedious and solitary nature of this role, after five months I returned home and found new employment as a bar steward on a cruise ship sailing around the Caribbean, Alaska and Mexico. I loved the lifestyle and found interest in the international diversity of work colleagues and passengers. These two diverse periods of work-related travel taught me about what type of person I was; I liked to be busy and have company even if the work, in relation to being a bar stewardess, was relatively routine.

After completing two six-month contracts I sought managerial level work in the UK. While looking for a suitable position I undertook casual work; this included making sandwiches, working night shifts in a bakery, delivering leaflets, analysing tachographs, and cooking in an old people’s home. This provided another insight into my character; the easy path would have been to sign-on for benefits but I preferred to work and was content to go to different locations a do a variety of sometimes mundane and unchallenging jobs. Permanent employment as Duty Catering Manager at Luton Airport followed; if anything happened, for example flight delays and staffing issues, that impacted upon the catering operation it was my responsibility to resolve it. I learnt
a great deal at the airport about managing staff and how to cope with difficult and stressful situations. After a year at the Airport I resigned in order to travel again; away for 14 months I worked regularly to fund my onwards journey. In New Zealand I washed dishes and in Australia I picked grapes and worked on a cattle station. In this latter role I was hired as the housekeeper but I loved helping with the cattle. I was sufficiently organised and capable of fulfilling both roles so at every opportunity I went with David, the owner, and the stockmen to work as a jillaroo (female, junior station hand) and assist with mustering, branding and general animal husbandry. An ability to juggle roles was once again apparent as was the desire to learn, to be challenged, to do something different and be part of a team. On my return to the UK I received a letter from David asking if I wanted to return as manager. Although flattered, I decided not to take up his offer and returned to Bournemouth to work as a catering manager at the local authority run conference centre. I learnt much from my boss. His mantra was ‘bring me solutions, not problems’; although rather clichéd this established the practice of looking for answers, finding different ways of doing things and thinking laterally. Every morning we walked around the catering areas to talk with the staff and catch up with issues and business of the day. I met with the head chef routinely to plan dinner menus, discuss options for special dietary requirements and produce a detailed plan for each catering function. The development of a close working relationship was essential and beneficial. We each knew how the other worked and when problems arose we were able to resolve them quickly. When meeting clients about their catering requirements, in the days before email and mobile phone, the personal touch worked well. The habits that I developed during this role established my customer focus approach, ‘can do’ attitude and ability to work with teams and build relationships with peers, colleagues and customers.
After two and a half years at the conference centre, with little opportunity for promotion and needing a challenge, I joined the RAF. I was commissioned as a catering officer but changed branch after five years to become an administrative secretarial officer; both these roles supported the operational activities of the bases on which I served. As a catering officer I had up to 100 staff under my command. In the administrative role, in addition to routine personnel management work, I dealt with issues involving alleged bullying and harassment, drugs, extra-marital affairs, suicide and suicidal attempts, alcohol, violence, mental and physical illness and other civil and military disciplinary issues. Contact with these emotionally and ethically difficult situations served as a reality check and gave perspective to my managerial practice. Military service honed my ability to find solutions for a range of problems and deal with challenging situations. I had been at one RAF Station only a few weeks when an emergency incident late one Friday afternoon required the immediate set up of a field kitchen to support the personnel involved. Despite my limited knowledge I organised the initial transport of equipment, food and staff from North Yorkshire to Cumbria and the subsequent restocking and staff rotas. On three occasions I undertook the role of Assisting Officer to RAF families who had suffered bereavement; in this role I provided support and a link between them and the Service and made funeral arrangements. This role was emotionally draining. My self-presentation was of paramount importance. How I conducted myself with the families, as well as with funeral directors, the padre and other military and civilian officials had to be appropriate to the discussions. These incidents affected how I manage and lead staff and how I have subsequently dealt with other situations and people. The degree of organisation, self-awareness and awareness of others, communication skills, sympathy and empathy required were immense; there
was no margin for error, anything that went wrong could never be put right and timescales were dictated by others.

In addition to my primary role, as is customary in the Armed Forces, I volunteered for a number of secondary duties, that is, roles important to the smooth running of the base that encompassed the extra-curricular activities of service personnel and their families. These roles enabled me to broaden my knowledge and experience base and undertake a diversity of roles that would be unlikely to be achieved in civilian life. Although I enjoyed my commissioned service, and the opportunities for personal and professional development, I felt like an oval peg in a round hole. I never quite seemed to fit in, never truly felt that I belonged or that I was what the RAF wanted me to be. My late entry to the RAF, at the age of 29, could have been a reason. My lack of service knowledge and a career before I joined meant that on entry I had to learn what was required of me culturally and socially and to adapt some of my management practices. Furthermore, I did not fit the general controlled extrovert model of an Armed Forces officer. I lacked, as stated by senior officers in my appraisals, self-promotion and overt self-presentation. Comments in my annual appraisal reports included: natural modesty bordering on shyness; does not project herself forcefully enough; needs to raise her profile; quiet achiever; calm, quiet collaborative style; hides her light under a bushel. During ten years’ productive service my ability to fulfil my primary and secondary duties was never questioned; I was described as determined, focussed, strong willed, tenacious, intelligent, articulate, confident, competent and conscientious with strong managerial and leadership skills. I enjoyed my military service and benefited from the opportunities and the challenges with which I was presented but my general confidence, and my ability as a manager and a leader was shaken.
I married in 2002 and in September the following year my twin boys were born. After a complicated pregnancy they were delivered by emergency caesarean section 10 weeks prematurely and spent time in neonatal intensive care before being discharged just before Christmas. This was an emotionally challenging period of my life that taught me to take each day as it came and to deal with each problem in the same way. In 2006, in order to maintain a work-life balance and provide geographical stability for the boys, I resigned my commission after eleven years’ service. The managerial posts for which I applied were in the public sector including health care, local government and education. My skill set, experience, working ethos of wanting to make a difference, and subsequent likelihood of job satisfaction, were more suited to the public rather than the private sector. I joined UWIC and the Cardiff School of Sport in March 2006. The cultural norms, team work ethos and the ‘work hard, play hard’ mentality were comparable to that which I experienced in the RAF, allowing for an easy transition. Within a short space of time I felt accepted and a valued member of the School staff.

**Summary**

My parents instilled in me the value of hard work, prudent financial management and independence. From the age of 16, a variety of part-time employments initiated my work ethic. Experience as a worker during these formative years was invaluable and informed my approach when later performing in managerial roles. For example, that people work for different reasons, some want or need a job with little responsibility while others want to be developed and to take on more challenging roles. A number of my waitress colleagues led a hand to mouth existence. Some jobs are mundane and boring, factors which need to be considered when managing staff. The job cannot be done without them and staff’s flexibility and willingness should be appreciated. Working abroad, in Europe and Australasia and particularly on the cruise ship,
developed my tolerance and awareness of different cultures and working practices. There was a gendered nature to certain roles, some jobs were valued and rated more highly than others and how pay was spent provided examples of the national and cultural differences that I witnessed. This appreciation of difference broadened my knowledge and understanding of issues involving people. Certain events shaped how I deal emotionally, practically and behaviourally with issues at work. The death of close relatives and work colleagues, and assisting families who had been bereaved, affected my emotional development and helped me to put similar and disparate occurrences into perspective. The hospitality industry, where almost everything has to be managed within predefined timelines instilled in me a sense of urgency and timeliness. I endeavour to complete a task as soon as possible even if no deadline has been given; in the more relaxed environment of higher education it is a method of working that continues. Being asked to manage a cattle station, assuming catering, personnel and financial management roles in civilian life and the RAF, complemented by diverse secondary duties demonstrated that management and leadership skills are transferable and with application and experiential learning it is possible to perform well in a variety of managerial roles within related fields. This is also attributable to awareness of my managerial strengths; on leaving the RAF I sought employment that would match my skills, abilities and working ethos. I enjoy a challenge, demonstrated by a range of employment types and overseas travel, and am willing to move away from that which is familiar to do something different. I tolerate the more routine elements of most jobs if there is something to stimulate my brain and maintain my interest. Although comfortable with my own company, with an independent streak, I enjoy and prefer to work with others. The comments written about me on my RAF annual appraisal reports were largely accurate although I do not believe that being quiet is necessarily the
negative trait that it was perceived to be by many in the RAF. I align myself more with the motto of the Grammar School that I attended, ‘In quietness and confidence shall be your strength’.

Having provided a synopsis of my work and home life, ethos and outlook, prior to the commencement of this research project the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the results as a series of reflective and fictional narratives.

**Spring and Summer 2010**

**Administration team.**

_**Working Together.**_ On the last Monday of each month we assembled for our formal administration team meeting. The administration staff did not all work in the main School offices so getting everyone together was useful. Before the meeting started we chatted about our weekend activities. Then it was down to business. Using notes from the previous MPT meeting I updated everyone on School and University issues. After my news the team members told me about their planning and preparation for the month ahead; exam boards were looming and the last of the ‘Applicant Days’ for prospective new students was the following week. Individually, the team identified any help they needed. We finished within the hour. No formal minutes were taken but everyone made notes of actions. The next time we were due to meet was for coffee and cake for one of the team’s birthday. I thought back to when I was a catering officer in the RAF. ‘Top Cats’ (senior catering team) meetings were a recognised and required part of a catering officer’s role. In this hierarchical organisation they were essential for the flow of information up and down the chain of command. They were also necessary as the catering staff were located across a sprawling military base. Supplementing these formal meetings were lunches and other social events. I implemented similar methods of formal and informal communication in the Cardiff School of Sport.
The programme administrators receive most of their work directly from the academic staff including the DLT and the undergraduate and postgraduate programme coordinators. I was rarely involved in the allocation or day to day detail of their work. Meetings provided me with an overview of what the team was doing, allowed me to review workloads and responsibilities and helped ensure that work was completed and duplication or omission avoided. The team members had the same accurate information rather than gleaning it from the ‘jungle drums’ or making assumptions. Without meetings it was easy to forget to forward information and even little things like a staff office move could affect the smooth running of the office. Managing staff with different skills, abilities and ambitions, whilst ensuring parity of workload, was a challenge. I had learnt from previous employment that meeting formally and discussing work helped to develop team ethos and cohesion. It made it easier for everyone to appreciate how individual efforts achieved the end goal and provided a degree of transparency on what tasks were on-going. The development of an understanding of each other’s roles was beneficial. The team ethos fostered through these regular team meetings and social events helped me to develop and maintain an administrative support service to the School. It enabled the work-hard, play-hard culture and an understanding that efforts would be acknowledged and rewarded to be transmitted. Getting to know my staff helped me to balance their individual staff needs against those of the team as a whole and consider personal and team dynamics. By discussing tasks in relation to planned absences I was able to check that more than one person could do each job.

**School.**

*Parting of the Ways.* Due to growing financial pressures, which led to a reduction in funding in the higher education sector in Wales, in early 2010 UWIC ran a voluntary severance (VS) programme; a number of lecturing staff in the Cardiff School
of Sport applied to the programme. Following submission of the applications to the HR
department, the Dean, DLT and I met with the members of the University’s Financial
Sustainability Group (FSG) to discuss the applications and agree those that would be
put forward to the Vice-Chancellor’s Board (VCB) for approval.

During the first week of March 2010 a member of lecturing staff popped his
head round my office door to ask how he was likely to be affected by the VS scheme.
The question took me by surprise as he had not applied for VS and all that had been
required so far was expressions of interest from lecturing staff who wished to be
considered for severance. He clarified that he wanted to know because a member of
staff in his discipline\(^2\) had accepted VS and if another member of the team, who had
also applied, accepted too his workload could be affected. The discussion made me
realise the knock-on effect of change on some staff. About a week later, while chatting
with another lecturer, the VS scheme arose in conversation again, this time linked with
the forthcoming long-term absence of another member of staff from the discipline
group. As a result of these conversations I met with the DLT. We looked at the number
of teaching hours that might be covered by other members from the discipline team and
agreed that we should speak with the Dean. The VS scheme was discussed at the MPT
meeting at the end of the week.

A member of staff asked me how he should request attendance at a conference
that he wished to attend in September; he intended to draw on funds from an Extended
Research Leave grant. I asked him to complete a staff development form and to indicate
the funding stream. He also wanted to use some of the grant to pay someone to help

\(^2\) The academic subject areas within the School were expressed as discipline groups and
included physiology, biomechanics, psychology, sport performance, coaching science, socio-
cultural studies, performance analysis, sport management and development, and strength and
conditioning and massage.
write-up his research in the next financial year. I advised that I was not permitted to carry over money. He replied that, due to VS, staffing in the discipline would be one-third down next year. I suggested that it was likely that the use of hourly paid lecturing staff would be authorised. He remarked that it appeared that money could be flexed sometimes but not others. Feeling aggravated, I explained again that grant money had to be spent in year. I wondered why my knowledge was questioned as I would not dream of questioning a lecturer’s discipline-related knowledge or teaching ability. Comments continued about VS and the likely reduction in staff in this particular discipline. The final line of an email to me about estates maintenance issues suggested that perhaps the maintenance work would compensate for a lack of staff. However, these worries proved to be premature. It became likely that two members of staff who had expressed an interest in VS would withdraw their requests. The discipline director discussed the changing situation with me. I spoke with a colleague in the HR department who confirmed that one lecturer intended to remain in post and the other had another week to decide. This put the discipline director in a better position to plan lecturing commitments for the next academic year.

Another area of the School was also likely to be affected by the VS programme. Until earlier in the academic year two full-time and two part-time lecturers contributed to the one of the School’s degree programmes. Then one of the part-time lecturers resigned and one of the full-time lecturers decided to leave on VS. The latter had worked in the School for a number of years, designed and developed the degree, assumed much of the managerial responsibility associated with the programme and had been the team’s driving force. Due to her departure on VS, approval to replace her had

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3 A discipline director leads a teaching and learning subject area e.g., physiology, biomechanics, and co-ordinates the modules within it including taught content and teaching patterns.
to be gained from the FSG. This was forthcoming so I drafted a job description and
person specification and arranged to meet the other team members to discuss these
documents and the recruitment process.

The programme director\(^4\) (PD), the lecturer who was leaving on VS and I were
in the office waiting for a third member of the team. The PD intimated that in leaving
the lecturer was letting the team down; the lecturer replied that she was doing what was
best for her. I sensed the PD’s unease about the future. We discussed the job
description, where the post would be advertised, the composition of the interview panel
and the interview process. The discussion was led primarily by the departing member of
staff. Her experience, ability to make decisions, take responsibility and lead the team
would be missed. Comments were made about how the reduction by 0.5 Full-Time
Equivalent (FTE) would impinge upon their activities. I suggested that their working
practices be reviewed, more use made of the administrative support available to them,
and specific consultation times be advertised for student tutorials and meetings. I left
the meeting with the information needed but concerned about how the team would
function following the lecturer’s departure. I voiced my worries to the DLT so that
adequate guidance and support could be provided and an appropriate replacement
selected.

**First Impressions.** At the end of 2009 the strategic decision was taken to
appoint a professor to one of the discipline areas. Due to start work in June 2010 the
professor, Ted, arranged to visit the School for two days in March. I asked the lecturer
co-ordinating his visit to schedule a meeting between Ted and me; a discussion about
his equipment needs now would help ensure that everything was in place on his arrival.

\(^4\) A programme director (PD) was the lead academic for the programme. The PD was the point
of contact for staff and students on programme-related queries and worked in conjunction with
the DLT and the DDs.
On the first day of his visit Ted introduced himself. We arranged to meet in The Bench coffee shop the following day. He took up my offer to arrange a staff ID card and IT access for use prior to his formal arrival.

Next day, when I arrived Ted was already in The Bench chatting with one of the physiology lecturers. The lecturer bought me a coffee and then left us to our meeting. I gave Ted a fleece, polo shirt and a memory stick with the School logo on. When I started work in the School being presented with similar items felt very welcoming. I also handed him the HR information that he had requested. I wanted to make a good impression and was careful with my conversation. I was the face of administrative support services and I would be judged and compared with others he had met in similar roles. We moved from the easy chairs to one of the tables, a subtle indication of the start of our more formal business. His specialist equipment needs, the IT hardware and software to support this equipment as well as the costs of the annual service contract formed the basis of our discussion. We also talked about IT for his office. I requested a copy of his CV for the website and details of his planned conference attendance for the year. I felt relaxed and confident. Ted asked about pension information, a car pass, office space and the recruitment of a research assistant. He enquired about financial support for a lecture series. We talked about the financial climate in higher education and the likely effect of the VS scheme on the Discipline; this lead to a discussion about the use of hourly paid lecturing staff and the potential support for PhD studentships. I was careful what I said. Although I managed the School budget some of the discussions needed to include other members of the MPT. Our half hour meeting was positive, productive and beneficial. Although there was no great hurry, immediately after the meeting I sought advice on the purchase of the hardware and software licences. It was fresh in my mind and I knew that if there were any technical queries I would have time
to seek clarification from Ted. By the end of the day I had emailed Ted details of how to access his new IT account, sent him a staff development proforma, and contacted HR about his request for pension details. In that relatively short space of time we established the start of a working relationship. The meeting allowed us to do more than discuss physical requirements, we were also able to gauge each other’s working ethos and approachability. I made some quick assessments about Ted and realised that he would have done the same about me. I remembered the negativity that I had experienced in the RAF over my self-presentation. I had the perfect opportunity to make a good impression and was determined not to waste it. My aim was to strike a balance between being professional but also approachable and collaborative.

**Looking After the Pennies.** In February 2010 the Dean, DLT and I received details from the University’s Strategy Office of the School’s predicted financial sustainability over the next few years. The figures and graphs depicted the School’s income in relation to expenditure with a focus on salary costs which formed the greatest proportion of the School’s outgoings. The figures excluded the salary costs of those staff who had applied for VS. The School’s financial position appeared reasonable in the immediate future but predicted a shortfall of income over expenditure in academic year 2011/12. In April, following receipt of the School’s budgetary allocation from the VCB I advised the Dean that I had reviewed the School’s finances for the next two academic years. I predicted a deficit of around £200,000 at the end of 2010/11. If the in-year surplus was carried forward a break-even position was possible at the end of 2010/11. However, with any surplus accounted for, a deficit of £500,000 was predicted for 2011/12. The Dean’s response was that the potential problem was a year away and that we should worry about the projected deficit closer to the time. Although I expected this response I was unhappy. The final decision, as budget holder, was his; my role
primarily was to advise and guide him and to manage the finances. However, this did not make my position easier. It was my role to liaise with the finance staff and attend the monthly finance meetings. One of the reasons BSMs were appointed was to manage the devolved budgets. If the School’s finances were not controlled I would perceive it as a personal failure to fulfil my role and I would question my ability regardless of the influence of others. By June the number of staff wishing to take VS had reduced significantly to only three. Moreover, the plan was for one of these members of staff to be partially replaced and another in full, although both at lower salary grades. I believed this replacement to be financially unsustainable. The Director of Finance stipulated that any surplus from the current year (2009/10) not be used to balance the books during the next financial year on the basis that 2010/11 would be even more difficult and we had to operate within our means.

Towards the end of June I met with the one of the managers in the sports facilities department and Deputy Director of UWIC Sport to discuss their department’s likely end of year financial position. We discussed finances regularly during the year as there was financial crossover between the sports facilities department and the School. The meeting was productive and we agreed on the probable financial outturn as at the end of July. Our positive relationship resulted in benefits and cost savings through sharing resources and planning purchases; there was, for instance, no point in buying a different set of footballs each for the students for practical sessions, for UWIC team training and for the children’s sport academy.

At year end everything seemed to revolve round the budget. A PD asked for payment of an invoice in respect of re-sit fees for an externally accredited examination; I questioned whether the School (rather than the students) should be paying for re-sits. Another PD sent me his capital equipment requirements for the next financial year.
which totalled £40,000. I was frustrated. First, because it arrived after my closing date for requests, and secondly because he had not noted a recent email from the Dean about minimal spends on equipment. I advised the PD that in these difficult financial times we would not be able to support most of his requests. I received a request from one of the Academy Directors about a contribution by the School to a collaborative project involving two external organisations and UWIC to upgrade the some specialist equipment in NIAC. Unsure of the details of this project, including ownership of the equipment and responsibility for its maintenance, I set up a meeting between the Academy Director, the Dean and sports facilities staff. Although there would be a cost to the School I felt that the Dean did not want to reject the opportunity. Despite my affordability concerns I wanted to ensure that this large purchase, involving three organisations, went smoothly and that purchasing regulations were met.

I went through the final budget forecast with the Dean and advised him that I thought the planned replacement of a member of staff was financially unsustainable. I understood the Dean’s perspective; recruitment of high quality candidates was important and he was planning for the future. The proposed appointment would be beneficial from every perspective except a financial one. My aim was to balance the budget but I remained concerned that my competence to manage the finances would be questioned if the end of year position showed the budgetary allocation to be overspent as prudent financial management was crucial. These values mirrored those for my personal finances, an attitude instilled in me through my upbringing. My view was that it was better not to employ additional or replacement staff than to be in a position in a year’s time where compulsory redundancies were required. We could not make the required savings by just cutting back on running costs or hourly paid lecturing staff; this level of saving could only be achieved through addressing our permanent staff base.
Furthermore, the more staff that the School employed the greater the costs of supporting them.

**An office – More Than Just a Desk Space.** Office accommodation for academic and support staff was a recurring theme throughout the summer term. Due to building work on campus eight school staff were housed in temporary buildings. These staff had to be moved on completion of new offices in the sports hall block in the summer. One member of staff, accommodated temporarily in the Research House\(^5\), required an office in the main staff block. We also wanted to bring some members of discipline teams, whose offices were dispersed across campus, closer together. When the new professor and his research assistant arrived there was no office space near the laboratory available for them. The professor was content to ‘hot desk’ temporarily but needed permanent and appropriate office accommodation.

It was likely that, due to VS, some offices would become vacant. Planning the allocation of offices was an on-going task because issues outside my control resulted in their continued revision. Some staff, especially those in the temporary buildings, naturally wanted to know when and to where they were moving. I was reluctant to tell them too soon in case plans changed. The Cyncoed ‘grapevine’ did result in staff ‘hearing’ about possible room moves. I became concerned that staff thought I was keeping information from them but my aim was to give them a definitive answer and not a series of changing information. Furthermore, there were discussions with staff to be had. Advising staff that they were moving office was something I preferred to do in person. It was definitely inappropriate by email. I also wanted to discuss with the staff who were to be moved out of the temporary buildings their preferred location and

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\(^5\) A detached house in which the School’s PhD / MPhil students and the graduate studies coordinator were accommodated. There was an open-plan office with 20 desks and a separate office on the first floor. The ground floor was occupied by the Cardiff School of Education.
whether they wished to continue sharing. In a previous job I had experienced the
difficult situation of two staff who did not get on with one another sharing an office. As
more time is often spent with work colleagues than spouses or partners the aim was to
create a harmonious office relationship. After much deliberation I believed that I had a
workable solution for the office moves. I discussed and agreed the plan with the Dean. I
needed to advise various staff that they needed to move office. The first meeting did not
go well. I discussed with one lecturer a move to the larger office next door to him and
sharing with a new lecturer. He listed a number of reasons for his unwillingness to
move offices and to share, albeit with a new colleague. Frustrated, I become conscious
it was not worth continuing the discussion. A second proposed office share became
rather contentious; the existing incumbent did not want the proposed person to share
with him as he wanted to keep the desk space for members of his discipline group.
Although it was rather inappropriate to have a member of staff dictating who could
share an office it was not worth the battle if alternative, suitable accommodation could
be found. On a more positive note I arranged for the lecturer who had

Then there was another issue. The Cardiff School of Sport had been due to have
three of the five new offices in the sports hall block. I was annoyed that two offices had
been taken by the Cardiff School of Education; the School had a block of refurbished
and reconfigured offices and I was not sure why they needed two further offices. The
issue was discussed between the two Deans of School and estates department staff.
Perhaps I should have been more forceful and was too nice but I did not want to be in a
dispute that I was unlikely to win about the offices. Although I wished to work with the
Cardiff School of Education it constantly felt as if there was a turf war over teaching
and office space. Due to the acquisition of these two offices by the Cardiff School of 
Education I had to revise my plans. A solution was found but it took more time, further 
consultation and some lateral thought.

Twenty-six staff moved offices over the summer period; taking into 
consideration the issues over which I had no control (for example, completion dates for 
the new offices, number of offices available, cost of redecoration and the time of year) it 
went well. Everyone who moved seemed content with their new location and with 
whom they were sharing. Most were proactive and took responsibility for their move; 
although others were reluctant to start moving or unaware of the knock-on effects of 
their apparent procrastination, despite the move being either at their request or for their 
benefit. In some instances making a decision about the office layout took days; this 
made a straight forward move more difficult and protracted than necessary. The delayed 
decision making on wave desks versus straight desks and shelves versus bookcases 
drove me to distraction. Other demands suggested that staff were unaware of the cost of 
their requests; for example sound proofing and matching furniture were requested.

Office space was an emotive subject and viewed by staff as their own private 
and personal space. It elicited all manner of reactions and revealed tensions between 
staff, office politics and perceptions about hierarchy. It was fraught with problems, real 
and perceived, a careful balancing act was required when discussing office space and 
with whom staff shared. Communication, diplomacy, dialogue and sensitivity were 
paramount. Achieving a workable and satisfactory solution was helped by a hands-on, 
proactive approach. The desire for private space was interesting. Some staff want their 
own office for reasons of confidentiality in relation to meeting students, or conducting 
research. It was often difficult to find somewhere on campus to have a private 
conversation or meeting; however, teaching patterns and off campus commitments
meant that a dedicated office was often not well used. In the school offices, although the
Dean, DLT and I had our own offices, in our absence they were frequently used by
other staff as ‘hot desks’ and for meetings. We had no difficulty with this informal
arrangement. In 2008 a research house was built on the Cyncoed Campus. The first
floor was used by Cardiff School of Sport research students. At the design phase I
requested small offices, each with desk space for approximately three students. This
layout was rejected because of the University policy for open plan offices. Instead the
first floor accommodated 16 students in four groups of four desks; I thought this would
not be conducive to effective study. However, it proved to be a well-used space. The
alternative, had it progressed, might have worked equally well but the version that was
built was light, airy and spacious and gained the approval of the research students.

Summary of School Issues.

There were links and knock-on effects between centrally agreed decisions and School
activities. Appreciation of this domino effect was important. The difficult financial
position across the University resulted in a VS scheme to which some staff in the
Cardiff School of Sport applied; this in turn affected financial decisions and the advice I
provided to the Dean and the School’s MPT. Voluntary Severance highlighted tensions
and worries about future staffing, workload, and roles and responsibilities especially
among those staff indirectly affected by the Scheme. I was surprised by the level of
parochial self-concern. Management of the School’s finances called for a delicate
balance between the stance of the Dean, the requirements of the Director of Finance and
my thoughts on how to manage the budget. Being approachable, honest, talking with
School staff and those in central departments aided the continued smooth running of the
School. Despite the VS scheme there was the strategic appointment of a professor. His
visit to the School was invaluable and allowed me to lay the foundations of a positive
working relationship. It reinforced the adage that you do not have a second chance to make a good first impression. Indeed, the management and development of working relationships and teamwork permeated much of what I achieved during this period including help and advice from the management accountant, information from HR, guidance on procurement and a prompt response to requests for services from other departments. A visible presence, in terms of physical location and availability, meant that staff found it easy to approach me on a range of subjects; this allowed me to keep abreast of issues and maintain awareness of much that was going on in the School.

Location was important too in the office moves; many staff had an opinion on where they wanted to be and with whom (if anyone). Agreeing a plan required diplomacy, communication, sensitivity and the ability to choose which battles to fight. I sensed a subtle shift in the emphasis of my role and how I was perceived; I was not just the manager of administrative support but someone who would guide, inform and assist the academic staff. Although mine appeared to be a positive presence because staff sometimes sought me out, rather than the Dean or DLT, I became unsure as to where the boundaries of my role and responsibility lay. This caused me some unease; I would have preferred greater definition of my role. Self-presentation had become a theme in my reflective writing.

Personal.

Family Issues. At the end of January 2010 Nick (my husband), a member of the Armed Forces, started a six month overseas tour of duty leaving me, with local family support, to look after our six year old boys. I felt weighed down by the reluctance of one of my children to go school. He was struggling with reading and writing and I was sure the two issues were connected. It was difficult not to let these family worries intrude upon my work-life. I gave the school issues a month or so to
address the issue but my concerns (I suspected dyslexia) remained. I found it more
difficult to study because the question made me tired and emotional. After many
unfruitful meetings with the primary school’s teaching staff, the results of the
screening, that I had arranged, suggested that both my children had a specific
learning difficulty on the dyslexic spectrum. As a consequence of this, and the
perceived laissez faire approach of the teaching staff, I decided to change schools. I
wrote to the head teacher explaining my concerns about the apparent inability to
recognise or acknowledge my children’s learning issues. Their class teacher replied,
defending her actions, but I heard nothing from the head teacher; I felt that this
inaction and lack of support for the teacher or my children was indefensible. I felt
upset and drained by the whole process. The issue affected my child’s well-being and
in turn my ability to function effectively at work, I needed to take action. I had a
clear strategy to resolve the issue and took decisive steps to achieve a resolution
acceptable to me. It made me appreciate how easy it was to become distracted by
domestic issues, the adverse effect they can have on productivity and the importance
of dealing with such problems and allowing others to do the same.

Work, Research and Play. The first discussion between my supervisory team
and me about doctoral study took place in January. Further meetings and the
commencement of pilot work followed during the following months. Work was
hectic with lots of different balls to juggle and it was a strain to keep up with
everything that needed my attention. I had too much to do to be able to think clearly.
There had been little time to consider what I was doing, why, when, and if I had
taken all appropriate actions and communications. I disliked keeping people waiting
and tried to answer emails and other queries as soon as possible. I did not want my
inaction to hold-up another process or someone else’s ability to complete a task. I
worked quickly and that formed part of my desire to be organised and seen as efficient and effective at my job.

Despite these work issues I felt that the PhD was progressing well; reflecting on my work activities made me think more about my actions. As I considered my role in the School more fully I developed a greater awareness of my work and the extent and level of support that staff required; I wondered how people viewed me and the job that I did, and what they required of me. With all this buzzing round my head I found a lunchtime gym session a useful escape from the office and opportunity to organise my thoughts. Although not yet enrolled and registered for a PhD I had been undertaking pilot work for almost six months. I had also learnt a great deal already especially about the research methods and the research process. My confidence had grown too. I enjoyed writing the reflections and found the process surprisingly cathartic. I was not good at verbally expressing my emotions but the process of thinking about, describing and evaluating events in my working life, past and present, was interest and enlightening.

**Emerging Themes and Learning Points.**

Emerging from these narratives were the following key themes that related to efficiency and effectiveness in my role.

- The ability to draw on prior experience to guide action was important in the management of other people. This required reflection on what had worked well previously and the ability to apply learning to the current context and situation.
- Prior experience informed decisions and actions (for example in scheduling team meetings or social events) and interaction at these events helped build relationships with and between staff.
• Relationships facilitated social support and enabled staff to gain help from their colleagues, which in turn had the potential to reduce anxiety caused by work overload through improved task and role management.

• The need to control emotions was apparent. There was a requirement to deal with personal anxiety that resulted from dealing with multiple tasks and difficult situations including ‘difficult’ people.

• Appropriate self-presentation, manifesting in the desire to be thought of as competent, knowledgeable, helpful, approachable and available, was evident.

• Maintaining mental and physical well-being through exercise, time away from work, having time to deal with domestic issues and time to think, and the ability to balance roles and tasks were important.

Autumn Term 2010

Administration Team.

WillSheStayorWillSheGo? Clare was an administrator in the School. During her two years in post she had been quick to learn and was able to transfer skills from her previous employment. She gained the confidence of the academic staff and became the first person to whom most of them turned when travel arrangements had to be made or administrative work completed. She required little supervision, took the lead on many aspects of programme administration and instigated procedural changes. She guided the casual administrator and advised the other permanent programme administrator if required. During her performance reviews Clare and I discussed her desire for more responsibility, of which she was more than capable, and a higher salary. The problem I faced was re-grading the post. Human Resource staff advised that the role could be reassessed. If it were agreed that she was working at a higher grade then there were two
options. Clare could just be placed at that grade or there might be a requirement for all
the similarly graded administration staff in the School to be given the opportunity to
apply for the position. The difficulty with both scenarios was the potential to generate
bad feeling and a less than harmonious working environment. Clare had already applied
for two higher grade administration posts in the University but been unsuccessful. My
thoughts on these applications were torn. I understood and supported Clare’s desire for
career development. However, from a work perspective, due to the depth and breadth of
knowledge that she had accumulated, I did not want her to leave. I knew that Clare’s
personal needs were incompatible with the best solution for the School.

On my first day back to work in September after annual leave Clare stood
nervously at my office door and told me that she was leaving; she did not have a job to
go to but hoped to work on a voluntary basis in various organisations in Cardiff in the
hope that she might be offered a permanent, remunerated position. I did not try to
dissuade her; Clare had thought about her future and discussed it with family members.
At Clare’s age I was the duty catering manager at Luton Airport. It was reasonably well
paid, with future prospects within the company; however, I was unsure of my future
career aspirations. After a year in post I resigned and travelled for 14 months
undertaking a variety of low paid jobs that helped shape my life, beliefs and values and
informed future career choices. Early in my career, to gain experience, I rarely stayed in
one job for more than two years therefore I was not really in a position to question
Clare’s decision.

The Dean then suggested to Clare that she work in the School three days a week
and seek work experience on the other two days. Clare accepted this proposal. One of
the casual administrators was willing to work the two days that Clare was on work
experience. Although this solution had positive short-term benefits for the School it was
unlikely to be sustainable as either the casual administrator or Clare would probably find permanent work elsewhere and we were merely delaying the inevitable. In the same week one of the other administrators, who had worked in the School for many years, advised me that she had an interview for a grade four post in one of the other academic schools. I was pleased for her as her role no longer presented her with a challenge. A few days later, showing discretion, Clare emailed me to advise that she too had an interview for the same position as her colleague. Clare was successful at interview. I contemplated if I could have done more to stop her leaving. Perhaps I was being sensitive but I thought that academic colleagues viewed her departure as a failure on my part.

I started the recruitment process for a replacement. The choice of candidate was going to be a balancing act. Experience had shown that the younger candidates although quick to learn, keen to make a good impression and full of new ideas, were likely to stay for only a relatively short period of time before looking for more money and more responsibility. More mature candidates were likely to stay longer and approach the role with stability in mind rather than as a stepping stone. Clare’s resignation provided me with the opportunity to revisit the administration support structure with less risk of the potential upset that I had worried about. I still did not know if I would be permitted to revise the grade of the post. Moreover, establishing a higher grade post would not necessarily encourage the post holder to stay longer. The recruitment process would be time consuming. It was exciting but scary. We had the opportunity to recruit a really effective, go-ahead member of staff with new ideas. It was important for the selected candidate to be ‘right’ for the organisation, to fit in culturally and socially, manage an administration team of diverse ability and character and get the job done. Using the same approach as the one for office sharing, employees spend more time with work
colleagues than close family so the job and the environment had to ones in which they could work eight hours a day, five days a week.

In consultation with the DLT and undergraduate programmes coordinator I drafted a new job description and person specification. Discussing the replacement with colleagues helped me to consider the role and the needs of the School. The job description reflected the role accurately and would help attract candidates of the quality and with the skill set required. The title was to be Lead Administrator; the post-holder would undertake administrative tasks and co-ordinate and oversee the work of the other administrators. I was aware of potential difficulties with the existing staff by putting in an administrator to supervise their work but saw this as a positive change. This was another reason why selection of the right person was important as they would need to be sensitive to the feelings of the staff in post, gain their respect but be prepared to make changes and help everyone to work together. The selection process was discussed with the other panel members. The formal interview would be the most important aspect of the process. The most senior administrator would conduct an informal campus tour to allow the candidates to ask questions and chat in a more relaxed manner.

I held a departure interview with Clare. I thought about what I should discuss with her, how to start the meeting and how to conclude. I wondered if I had the courage to ask what I could do better, if there was an underlying reason why she wanted to change jobs, and what were the good and the bad aspects about working in the Cardiff School of Sport. I had to be prepared to receive negative feedback. I met Clare in the DLT’s office; he was away from campus and it was relatively ‘neutral territory’, conducive to an open discussion. Clare had a list of items for discussion that we went through in turn. She made some useful proposals for improvements to processes. She suggested which members of the administration team would be best placed to undertake
the tasks on which she had been working. It felt odd asking Clare about processes and procedures in the administration department but my role required me to understand the big picture rather than the detail. This strengthened my belief that an office manager was needed to oversee the day to day work. I asked Clare if there was anything that would have kept her in the Cardiff School of Sport or if it was just that the time was right for her to change job. Clare explained that she felt that there were differences in working ethos between her and another member of staff. We chatted about the situation without it becoming personal and without divulging confidences. Clare suggested that, although a younger member of staff might not stay long, she believed they had more to offer and that the positive aspects of an early career administrator outweighed the negative. Her sentiments echoed my own. It was issue with which I had wrestled during each interview and selection process and on staff resignation. I always wondered what would have made them stay longer, if I could have done more, what was best for the School, any bias towards a particular type of person, and whether I was considering the needs of those of the staff with whom they most closely worked. I advised Clare of my intention to change the specification of the job to that more of an office manager who would be able to monitor workloads and delegate tasks. I felt rather guilty about doing this as it was the role that Clare had sought and had found elsewhere. The meeting proved to be an hour well spent.

At the start of November, following their initial consideration of the application to re-grade the post, I was invited to the next meeting of the FSG to outline my case for a revised administration support structure in the School. Financial Sustainability Group approval was required due to the additional financial outlay required and the University-wide need to cut staffing costs. I had been informed that a compelling case would be required for the change to be agreed as there were thought to be too many
administrators in the University. The relatively small increase in cost would be justified by the improvement in administrative support services, the support to lecturers and the likely positive effect on the student experience. The change had not been requested without good reason. Before the meeting I was nervous because there was much at stake. Once in the meeting I described the School’s position and my arguments for restructuring the administrative support in the School. Agreement was forthcoming that the new job description could be graded by HR staff.

**Summary of Administration Team Issues.**

The recruitment and retention of staff was fraught with problems. At times it was difficult to balance the needs of the administrative staff, the academic staff and the School. My career history affected my thoughts on an appropriate and acceptable length of tenure in post. I wanted to do the best for my staff and to help them to develop; however, this was not always possible within the School structure. I worried about the difficulties that staff turnover caused to those whom the administrative staff supported and whose workload was increased each time a new administrator had to be inducted. However, the arrival of each new administrator brought a new set of skills and ideas. The importance of a working ethos compatible with that of the rest of the team and the organisation was once again evident.

**School.**

*While the Dean is Away.* The Dean, due to knee surgery, had six weeks sick leave during the autumn term. In his absence the DLT acted as Dean. In the normal course of business I attended certain meetings either with or on behalf of the Dean; I would now accompany the DLT. Two weeks into the Dean’s absence, my role had not changed. With the exception of attending one more meeting I had not taken on any additional work but I was working more closely with the DLT on a variety of issues. I
viewed the lack of change to my role positively; it demonstrated that, in terms of range and depth of tasks, I was carrying it out appropriately. A substantial increase might have indicated that the Dean had been doing business support work. After a month, his absence still had not affected me. There were some decisions that I had made without referring to him (the Dean was now in email contact), for example in relation to the school finances, but I had been happy and confident enough to do so. The additional meeting that I attended and a paper that I had drafted had been a worthwhile addition to my role and my involvement had benefited the outcome. When the Dean returned to work we had surprisingly little information to exchange; although he kept abreast of email communication during his absence I felt that this was also due to the support that I provided to the School, the Dean and the DLT. The Dean’s absence ratified the capability of the School Directors and managers; the Dean’s non-interventionist style of leadership endured during this absence and enabled the School to continue to function.

**Financial Trouble Ahead.** Before the autumn term, the Cardiff School of Management moved from the Colchester Avenue Campus to a new building on the Llandaff Campus to enable the closure of the former site. Over the summer I visited the Colchester Avenue Campus with various members of staff to identify surplus furniture that could be used to refurbish various classrooms, laboratories and offices at no cost. As part of a refurbishment programme I received a quotation for new window blinds for one of the laboratories. I suggested to the laboratory director that the cost might be split between the School’s general budget and the laboratory budget. He deemed the blinds to be unaffordable from the laboratory budget but reasoned that because he had sourced some shelves for his office from Colchester Avenue that had saved the school money which would help finance the blinds. His actions did not have a bearing on the ability to
purchase new blinds. I felt that some staff still did not appreciate how little money was available. The need for financial prudence did not seem to apply to them.

In early September the interim report for the end of the financial year (31st July) showed a surplus of £134,000. This was in line with my forecast and was the maximum that could be carried over into the next financial year. The capital loan taken out two years previously with repayment spread initially over four years, had been repaid, as had the small deficit accrued over the previous financial three years. I felt quite pleased with myself. I could not have put the School in a better position at the end of financial year. No comment was made by members of the MPT about this encouraging position but the knowledge that I had done a good job was sufficient. Although one of my perceived failings in the RAF was a lack of self-publicity, this was still not my style.

In preparation for the monthly finance meetings with the Dean and Director of Finance, the management accountant and I usually worked out our communication strategy. After the meeting, I would recap with the Dean the discussion and decisions. We had different attitudes towards the budget. I liked to have some ‘rainy day’ money dispersed across the cost centres. The Dean was more of a spender. I was fairly certain that the Dean trusted me to manage the budget and keep him informed on a need to know basis. At September’s meeting the Director of Finance, despite the previous year’s surplus, was unhappy with the projected in-year deficit of £180,000. He requested that it be reduced to around £100,000. I reviewed the forecast and through savings in running costs I was able to reduce the projected deficit by £30,000. A further £50,000 equated to one member of staff. Unless the School lost, and did not replace staff, reducing the deficit further would be almost impossible to achieve. I felt I had run out of options without affecting core business. A larger staff base was more expensive not just in terms of salary but also costs associated with conference attendance, office
An improved student to staff ratio and reduced teaching loads gave staff more time to undertake research and enterprise activities. I believed that we should look after the staff that we had. It was not that we had too many staff but that we had more staff than we could afford. The Dean had spent his working life in the Cardiff School of Sport, was incredibly loyal to his staff and sought to employ staff who would make a positive contribution to the team. Therein lay the strength of the School. But I worried about the budget. I was not sure that the other members of the MPT were as concerned as I was; perhaps they thought that it was all under control and everything would be ok. Maybe it was my understated and calm style that resulted in the serious of the situation not being conveyed adequately. If we were unable to manage this year we would not be able to do so next. Although I had voiced these concerns to the Dean I felt that the detailed information should be presented to the MPT to enable a strategic decision to be made about staffing. In October we were advised of additional in-year income allocated against the extra students that had been recruited above our target numbers. Furthermore, the School’s return from its enterprise activities was greater than expected and a member of lecturing staff had been granted an unpaid career break. These factors had a positive effect on the budget and, although there were additional costs associated with the increased student numbers, and part-time lecturing hours were required to cover the lecturer’s absence, I projected that the requested deficit of £100,000 was now achievable. During November the DLT, in the Dean’s absence, presented a briefing paper prepared by the Dean to the MPT on the School finances. Subsequently, it was agreed to dedicate the MPT meeting at the start of December to ‘unpicking’ the School’s finances and formulating a strategy to maintain the School’s financial viability. I was pleased that the detailed discussion on finances that I wanted would now
happen. In preparation for the meeting I analysed the School’s finances. Utilising data from the two previous financial years I plotted expenditure against the various cost centres and then compared it with the in-year forecast and produced a projection for the next financial year. The School’s finances were stable with little variation against the cost centres during the three years. What did concern me was the increase in staff salaries in relation to income over two years. I worked through various options and decided that I needed to discuss what I had done with someone else before the meeting. I asked an MPT colleague whose judgement I trusted if we could meet. The meeting proved useful and showed my logic and ideas to be sound. I was well prepared for the MPT finance meeting.

At the end of the day long MPT finance meeting ‘I told you so’ sprang to mind. The morning session set the scene but little progress was made with a strategy. The DLT led a discussion on staff contact hours and a reduction in the use of hourly paid and visiting lecturers. After lunch one of the staff from the strategy office gave an overview of UWIC finances. As suspected, grant and fee income into the University from Higher Education Funding Council for Wales was to be reduced and there would be no money available for capital works. Conditions (mergers and collaborations) would be applied to obtaining higher rates of fee income. There would be a second round of VS (for staff who applied but were turned down in the first round) followed by a targeted redundancy programme. He recommended that we be proactive and produce a school strategy to present to VCB and the FSG. Whereas School discussions had centred on minor savings and trying to perform our way out of the crisis, the strategy officer stated clearly the need to make significant cuts. The best case scenario was a requirement for the School to make £250,000 of savings.
After he left we discussed who in the School could be considered for compulsory redundancy or who might accept a reduction to their contract. It was a relatively short discussion in comparison with some of our earlier ones. We turned our attention to enterprise activities and income generation. Doubling the enterprise return was considered to be realistic. I commented that unless the increased income was realised quickly, just a promise of more money would not stop VCB from telling the School MPT to make staff cuts. An attempt to increase income and perform our way out of the crisis was the right thing morally but it was not going to provide a complete solution. Perhaps everyone else knew that to be the case but it was just too difficult to come to terms with. It was decided that in the new year the Dean would meet individually with all academic staff to outline the School’s financial position and identify those able to contribute to enterprise activities. It was agreed that most staff were unaware of the severity of the cuts and the associated implications. I offered my support to the Dean in terms of any report writing or analysis. He replied that he had spent many years building up the School and how hard it was now to have some of it knocked down. The DLT commented to me on how ‘tortuous’ Friday’s meeting had been. He said that although he knew the outlook was not good the discussion had brought home the reality. He felt that he was in firing line as there were implications for learning and teaching. We discussed the mechanics of redundancy and the at risk areas. It was apparent that the Dean and the DLT were sensitive to the issues.

I thought that we should have seen this situation coming and that I could have done more to make others aware. I said little in the meeting, first because I felt unwell and second because I was surprised that others appeared to be less aware of the implications. I had presented the projected figures in the morning and I thought it obvious that we could not reduce next year’s deficit by trimming running costs; nor
would income generation be the sole solution. Perhaps it was better that I was not the bearer of the bad news; sometimes it was preferable to hear it from someone outside the School. Any action required could then be communicated on the basis that the School had been instructed to make cuts with University management portrayed as the ‘bad guys’. Moreover, because the internal message to the School had traditionally been upbeat, to hear the reality of the financial situation from a member of central management staffs would be more impactful.

At times I felt frustrated because other managers did not appear to take the School’s delicate financial position as seriously as I did. I took pride in running the budget well and on target. I kept abreast of the School’s financial position and liaised closely with finance staff and the support staff in the School who had purchasing authority. We were recognised as the best school for keeping finances under control and I was keen to maintain this reputation. I felt that the budget was viewed as my problem and the pervading attitude was that no action would be taken against the School if the finances were not controlled. This was possibly attributable to a lack of understanding about the School’s financial position exacerbated by the ‘business as usual approach’ that the Dean took in the face of adversity.

The actual management of the School’s finances was not difficult. It was the inter-personal interactions required that caused problems. There was a need to manage expectation, emotions and change. I needed to communicate effectively and appropriately with the finance staff, the Dean, MPT, lecturing staff, technicians and administrators, especially the latter two groups who had procurement responsibility. Shortly after arriving in post I put in place processes to help me better manage the budget. For example, the School was spending £15,000 a year on magazine advertising. Through the introduction of a survey administered to all new students we established
that very few of them learnt about the School through this form of advertising and as a result magazine advertising was stopped in favour of targeted, less expensive, promotion. Similarly, the School was spending over £50,000 a year on conference attendance. This was unsustainable. An academic colleague and I designed a robust process for application and award of funding. Staff, who were used to walking into the Dean’s office and asking to go to a conference, were now required to justify their attendance. A further example of managing staff members’ expectations came when the finance administrator made me aware of a claim for seven meals in a restaurant for school staff entertaining an external examiner. We clarified the regulations and confirmed that the number of meals claimed and their value had been exceeded. I was annoyed because we were trying to save money. I raised the matter with the Dean. I suggested that at a time when the School and University finances were stretched, such claims would send the wrong message to staff (both those who ate and those who processed the payments). Furthermore, the School was soon to be subject to an external financial audit. On the same day I ordered 12 buffet lunches for a re-accreditation visit for one of the postgraduate programmes and 20 lunches for a meeting to be attended by school and external staff. I questioned whether I had double standards. The claim for the external examiner dinner was excessive for six staff whereas the buffet lunches requested were for £5.00 a head. The buffet lunches were an appropriate expense; a relatively low cost lunch, for an informal gathering would aid cohesion between school staff and the external visitors.

**Escape to the Country.** All first year undergraduate students in the School stayed in an outdoor activity centre near the Brecon Beacons as part of the compulsory personal development module. The Brecon residentials, as they were commonly known, were an important part of the School calendar. The 12 residentials, each of two nights,
ran back-to-back throughout October with approximately 40 students and four school staff, in a tutoring capacity, on each. The logistics and planning was time-consuming but anecdotal and formal evidence provided by students demonstrated wide-ranging, positive benefits. After 11 years in the RAF I was an advocate of this type of initiative and realised that my RAF experience would enable me to take on a tutor role. October 2010 was the fourth year that I had tutored on the Brecon residentials. I was nervous before my first residential of the year but looking forward to being away from the office for a couple of days. I enjoyed the challenge and doing something different from my usual day job but I was out of my comfort zone. My kit was ready and I had a list of team-building games for the first afternoon. At around 13.00 the minibuses, staff and students arrived back from the previous residential. Minibuses were allocated and keys handed over amid banter between in-coming and out-going staff. With the students sorted into their groups they boarded the minibuses. I had seven students, five boys and two girls. On completion of the paperwork we departed. Fifty minutes later on arrival at the outdoor activity centre the students were briefed, shown their accommodation and given kit. I was not looking forward to the first session; the students would spend two hours with me undertaking a variety of ice-breaker, trust, communication and team-building games. It was the uncertainty of how the students would react and engage with the activities and with me that worried me. Towards the end of the two hours keeping the students interested and motivated was usually a challenge. I started the introductions and the games. Two students seemed confident and outgoing, another was quieter but had knowledge of a number of the team games and seemed to be leader of the team and three were middle of the road, active and willing team members; one of the girls was very quiet and took a ‘back seat’ in the activities. They participated well, preferred the more physical outdoor activities, and began to relax and enjoy themselves. Despite their
enthusiasm dinner time came with a sense of relief for me. When I arrived in the dining room, to the delight of the kitchen staff, my team were preparing the tables, even though it was not their duty. During the meal I chatted with colleagues.

Next morning, despite having been on breakfast clear-up duty, my group was ready for the 07.15 departure. They worked well on all the team-building exercises throughout the day and learnt from each task, motivating one another and developing team spirit. After dinner the tutors had time to chat. We discussed which two staff were going to be ‘spies’ for the next morning’s exercise and who would sleep outside overnight with the students. The students camped in the woods next to the Centre and, for safety, a member of staff stayed out too. I was fairly ambivalent as to what I did; however, three of the tutors were not keen on sleeping out. I noted a degree of tension in the discussion and one was quite vociferous in his thoughts on what was being asked of staff. One of the outdoor centre staff agreed to sleep out. I volunteered to rise early to be a ‘spy’. I decided to talk to the module leader on my return about the perceptions of the demands being placed on staff. One of the male students from my group was the overall leader for the final exercise. The planning went better than the execution and the students failed to find where I was hiding; my RAF training paid off! We returned to the Centre for bacon rolls and a group debrief. I spent an hour with my group helping them to reflect on their own performance and that of their peers. With my increased knowledge and appreciation of reflection I felt confident about the task and tried to convey the benefits of this skill. Despite the students’ tiredness I kept them ‘on task’. The students’ self-assessments were accurate and astute. Feeling encouraged by their responses to my questions I asked what they had learnt or what they would do differently if they came again. The consensus was that they would become more involved and try to learn more skills (for example, knot making and map reading) to
enable them to make a better contribution to the team. I wrapped up the session, thanked them for their company and congratulated them on their team-work. Their thanks to me were genuine and I knew it had been worthwhile.

Later that month I was put on the roster to tutor on a second Brecon residential. After taking my children to school I drove to the Llandaff Campus for a health and safety committee meeting. I sat in the meeting hoping that it would last no more than an hour otherwise I would have no time in the office prior to leaving for Brecon. The meeting dragged on. At 10.50, with the meeting still running, I made my apologies and left. On my arrival at work a lecturer, a technician and finally the DLT came to see me. I then ran, literally, to see a colleague who I had arranged to meet for coffee. We discussed a recent situation in which it appeared that I had not been informed of the full facts relating to a conference booking. The issue had caused distress to a lecturer who was worried that his reputation had been damaged. I was concerned about the standard of administrative support and that the reputation of my department, in a desire to save money, was not being considered adequately. We chatted briefly and I left for Brecon.

I had put my kit in the minibus, completed the paperwork, said hello to my eight students and was ready to leave when one of the administrative staff knocked on the driver’s window and asked to speak with me. She had run to catch me before I left; I stepped out of the bus and closed the door. She had found out that one of the administrators had booked herself onto a two day leadership and management course the following week without my knowledge, which, in her opinion, was not role appropriate. The informant asked me whether she was right to tell me; I assured her that she was. I climbed back into the minibus. I could not deal with the matter then as my priority was the residential. I drove out of campus with my head spinning. I had a busy morning and felt that I had not given anyone or anything my full attention. Was I
spreading myself too thinly? Should I have volunteered to go to Brecon? What was I going to do about the administrator who had apparently not considered the implications of booking flights at substantially above the average cost for that destination and who had booked herself onto a course without my knowledge? At least I had time to consider the situation and decide on a course of action.

I arrived at the outdoor activity centre and started the ice-breaker games; my mind was not focussed on the students. I forgot three students’ names and had to make a conscious effort to stop thinking about work and staff issues that I could do nothing about. The students in the group seemed quite different from those in the first. Everyone appeared evenly matched with no noticeable leader. They became more relaxed with me as the day progressed and completed their tasks successfully. I realised that despite being quite self-assured in some ways they lacked confidence in others, looking to me for reassurance that tasks were being performed ‘correctly’. During the final debrief the students were tired but said that they had enjoyed their time away. I was happy because I had helped them to have a positive experience that they could reflect upon.

I went to Brecon because I like to be involved in the School’s activities and contribute to a valuable student experience and because working with academic colleagues and students was interesting. The students, just one month into their first year at university, did not know one another. Group interaction, individual development, leadership, team dynamics and levels of motivation varied. I tried to create an environment in which they could learn about themselves, their colleagues and team working. The challenge was to strike the right balance; I tried not to help them too much but to support, encourage and help them to make decisions. Some teams worked well together while others performed relatively poorly. Sometimes this seemed due to the negative effect of one or two students on the rest of the group. Others in the group
probably wanted to make the most of their Brecon experience but were unable to because of their colleagues’ actions. There were parallels between these teams and my administration team. One of the administrators, despite stating that she was bored and needed a challenge, tended to do the minimum amount of work, did not seek more responsibility or grasp opportunities or help her colleagues when they were busy. In contrast another administrator made the most of her time in the School, developed her role, put in new processes and procedures and as a result had been selected, at interview, for a higher grade position. The students on the periphery of the team were not assessed as highly by their colleagues as those who became more involved; neither did they seem to enjoy themselves as much. It seemed that the greater the involvement in activities the greater the personal return and satisfaction. My understanding of team working and group dynamics grew. The residentialss provided other benefits too. I was able to work and spend time with academic colleagues in an informal and less time-pressured environment than during the normal working day. Although at one stage I thought that I was spreading myself too thinly and trying to do too much, leaving the office and doing something different was a welcome break from routine. I had time to think. It would have been easy not to make time to go. Tutoring the students took me out of my comfort zone. Learning first-hand about staff dynamics and areas of tension helped me in my role as support manager and also put me in a stronger position to suggest improvements to the organisation of the residentialss. As BSM I managed the budget for the residentialss and also provided advice on health and safety management in the School. The module leader, because of my primary role and experience as a tutor, sought my views on health and safety and first aid training for staff. I needed to balance cost of training and additional controls against the risk of an accident. One pertinent safety issue was how much sleep staff had especially in relation to driving a minibus. In the RAF we were not
allowed to drive on the same day as finishing a major exercise. Ensuring that staff had a reasonable night’s sleep was an important consideration. I was able to draw upon previous experience and knowledge from one situation and apply it to another.

It was my choice to go to Brecon; my managerial performance was enhanced by the first-hand experience that it gave me. In particular it widened my knowledge and appreciation of a variety issues that were important to the smooth running of this module. Other members of staff, including the Dean, perceived my involvement positively. I was able to spend time with work colleagues and students. The change of scene was welcome and doing something different gave me an insight and perspective which benefited my primary role. This influenced my encouragement for administrative and technical support staff to tutor on the module. It provided them with a break from routine, supported their own personal and professional development, enabled them to become involved with the wider life of the School, to meet with students and enhance their relationship with academic colleagues. Responsibility, well-managed, was good for self-confidence.

**Summary of School Issues.**

The Dean’s absence highlighted the benefits of his light touch management style. I continued in my role and made decisions; although content to assume responsibility my only concern remained its extent. Taking responsibility was a theme in relation to the Brecon residentialis. Despite being out of my comfort zone I was happy be responsible for the students’ learning and safety. I believed it to be important for others, regardless of their designation and grade (technician, administrator or lecturer) to be able to do the same. Taking responsibility for the School’s finances and financial position was a major element of my role but the level to which others were prepared to take any fiscal responsibility varied. It was likely that the stance of others was attributable to my style
of management; there was an assumption that I had everything under control. Budgetary management was straightforward it was the human interface that was problematic, it was not just about the money. There were many other skills required to manage the School’s finances. The culture was such that the finance administrator felt that she could tell me about the overspend on subsistence and action was taken to resolve the issue.

Who was the bearer of bad news, in relation to the need to reduce staffing, and how this was done helped convey the seriousness of the School’s and University’s financial position. Sensitivity was required in relation to VS including how the other members of the MPT and those directly and indirectly affected might feel. Making time to tutor on the Brecon residential had many benefits; I gained different experiences by doing something outside my normal role, time spent with academic staff aided cohesion in the workplace and my involvement was viewed positively.

University.

_Whose Agenda?_ In October the Dean forwarded to me and other MPT members an email from the FSG which requested information to justify a review of the central support units. The request was discussed at the next MPT meeting. It was agreed that a fairly general line should be taken as most evidence was anecdotal and nothing was to be gained by accusing the support units of failing to provide a service. We decided that it was appropriate to highlight efficient service and to make recommendations for future action. I met with an MPT colleague after the meeting and we drafted the School’s response. I would have to play a political game on two fronts. We needed to recognise the strategies put in place by the FSG and their recognition that further restructure was likely but also be honest about the level of service that was received. With the Dean on sick leave, and aware of his views on the changes needed to improve support services, the paper required careful crafting. His ideas had to be balanced with those of the
members of the MPT who were at the meeting. I worked on the response over the weekend and completed it on Monday morning. I sent the draft to the MPT members and subsequently wove their comments into the final document. I felt valued because I had been asked to take a lead with writing the School’s paper. I enjoyed writing it and was able to combine experience with management theory. I was trusted to write a balanced and informed report that encompassed the views of the MPT. I would have been upset and disheartened if my input had not been sought and reflected.

During October’s monthly meeting the Director of Finance reported that FSG was disappointed with the all the academic schools’ responses as little concrete evidence had been provided on the duplication or inefficiencies within the support units. I summarised the rationale behind the paper submitted on behalf of the Cardiff School of Sport; a very short timescale had been given for the return, and we did not wish to upset relationships with the central units and individuals within them with whom we needed to work. As a result of the papers a member of the University senior management team called a meeting with the academic registrar and the BSMs to discuss the interface between the academic registry and the Schools. Prior to the meeting with the senior manager, the BSMs met. We had had varying involvement in our respective school’s submissions. However, we formed a primary link between the Schools and the support units and our input in respect of improvements was vital. At this useful pre-meeting we discussed issues to be raised with the academic registrar. After an hour together we reassembled in the senior manager’s office. The office was uncomfortably warm. I attended a monthly meeting about energy saving; I wondered if we should start with the management block. It was explained that the papers submitted by the Schools on the standard of service provided by the support units had provided little information on specific areas for improvement. I explained that the Cardiff School of Sport did not
wish to start a witch hunt and be openly critical as that would have been inappropriate and potentially counterproductive. The manager reiterated that unless problems in the service provision were defined nothing could be done to facilitate change. I thought that all systems should be reviewed, with a focus on outward facing, student-centred services. There was little to be gained by looking at specific examples; of greater value was the investigation of the wider strategic issues. I was unhappy with the way the meeting was progressing. When I wrote the paper this was not how I had envisaged the outcome. I become frustrated that we were trying to deal with the detail and symptoms but not the causes. We discussed academic registry issues including the need for school level ‘wash-up’ meetings about graduation, examination board procedures and subsequent communication to students. There was little understanding of the reasons why administration staff in the Schools attended examination boards. I suggested that, rather than trying to resolve this major issue at this meeting, a dedicated meeting was required to share good practice. I commented that the new student IT system needed to be fit for purpose to enable one common process and effective communication to students. I became equally frustrated during a discussion on admissions and enrolment process for postgraduate research students. I explained that from discussions with school staff including some Directors of Studies, and from personal experience as a postgraduate student, the process was confusing and poorly understood. I was disappointed and infuriated with the reply that the student admission process was not part of the enrolment process. Technically the processes and departments were separate but not from students’ perspective.

During the hour long meeting I became incredibly irritated. The Chair did not seem to be impartial in the discussions. I also felt that the focus was too much on specifics rather than investigating inter-departmental interfaces with the aim of better
supporting the needs of staff and students. The Cardiff School of Sport’s suggestions of process reviews, service level agreements, departmental restructure, a more campus- or school-centred approach and appropriate decentralisation to improve the student experience seemed to have been ignored in favour of dealing with individual problems. It seemed that we were not ready for a detailed analysis of systems, for leaner processes or for being more efficient. I did not know whether to be angry, frustrated or just to let the whole situation wash over me and concentrate on local, school issues.

I informed the Dean and DLT about the meeting. I needed to let off steam as I was wound up by the conversations. I received another meeting request from the senior manager inviting the BSMs and heads of units to discuss various specific issues. During the first meeting I had described differences in processes between the Schools. This was to highlight that because academic registry systems did not meet the needs of the students and the School processes had been adapted. One of the other BSMs warned me against this strategy and felt that the senior manager might use our comments to further their own agenda. Late in the afternoon the DLT forwarded an email from the senior manager to the head of one of the central service units and copied to other senior managers. The email was about our recent meeting and stated that although the purpose of the meeting had been to discuss the interface between the Schools and the academic registry the BSMs were only interested in talking about issues associated with another unit. I was livid. I replied to the DLT that this was precisely why as a school we had given general recommendations in our paper rather than specifics. I was unhappy that we had been summoned, drawn into a conversation about this unit and then portrayed as the ‘bad guys’ as our views and comments had been misrepresented. I was furious that this had been emailed to others without our knowledge and by the statement that we
only wanted to talk about this particular unit when it had taken no more than 10 to 15 minutes of our time.

When I wrote the paper I had not expected what happened next. Although I guessed why the meeting was called to discuss the School / registry interface neither the conduct of the meeting or the outcome was anticipated. Perhaps I was unrealistic in my hope for an honest and open discussion with no fear of comeback and naïve in not considering the internal politics. In future meetings I needed to be more politically aware and tread more carefully. I needed to revise my expectations. I would continue to stand up for what I believed and would raise my head above the parapet as required.

Summary University Issues.

Some meetings that I attended had positive outcomes, whereas what happened as a result of others could not be foreseen. Sometimes working together achieved mutually beneficial solutions but on other occasions personal and political agendas prevented identification of the cause of the problem. Chatting through these more problematic meetings with a colleague helped regain a sense of perspective. I recognised that meetings were not always going to go well or achieve the desired outcome. Dealing with these negative feelings was necessary for me to move forward and understand that despite my best intentions and efforts things would not always go as I wanted. Trying to improve the service to customers, whoever they were, was the right thing to do even if attempts to do so failed. Being asked to gather information and prepare a paper helped me to feel valued. Attendance at high level meetings had a positive effect on my self-esteem; I was working on a project and achieving workable solutions which would benefit the School and its activities.
**Personal.**

*Appearance, Apparel, Attitude and Acceptance.* I was booked on the University’s mandatory postgraduate researcher induction day. A week before the event an email reminder was sent to those attending. I scanned the distribution list; there were a good number of students from the Cardiff School of Sport all of whom I knew. Work had been busy so I was looking forward to a day out of the office and being ‘just’ a research student for a day; the opportunity to wear jeans, boots and a top rather than having to ‘dress’ for work was appealing. Standard working dress for me was smart trousers and a shirt complemented with earrings and a little makeup if I had time. I added a jacket for more important meetings or changed the shirt to polo shirt with the school logo when more casual attire was suitable. This was appropriate for the Cardiff School of Sport and my role within it. How I looked was important but it was not my overriding concern.

Despite having been enrolled on the research degree for almost six months my only contact with those who started at about the same time had been almost exclusively related to my primary role. Most of the research students knew about my enrolment but some seemed wary when talking with me. They tended to be apologetic if they stopped me in the corridor or in one of the coffee areas and nervous about asking a favour. Until that point I had not had chance to chat and share stories about the day to day reality of being a research student. I wanted to enjoy the induction day but to do this I needed to be in the right frame of mind. I realised that I did not wanted to dress like a student *per se* just to dress differently from my day to day attire to enable me to feel different. A different look would also signal to others that on that day I was a researcher and not the BSM. I wondered if the others attending would think that they needed to dress more formally because they were on a training day. I realised that I did not actually know
what to wear. To complicate matters further I remembered that I knew two of the
speakers. What would they expect of me? Would they expect me to be a researcher or
the School’s BSM who happened to be researching? Suddenly, attending a course had
become complicated. I was considerably older than most of the other research students
and therefore likely to stand out. Whatever I wore I was not really going to be part of
that group. I was still the BSM in the Cardiff School of Sport, a member of the MPT
with the ear of the Dean and the School Directors. I could be a researcher for the day
but it would be on different terms.

On the morning of the induction day I was still unsure that I had judged my
attire appropriately. On arrival at the training room I realised that I had judged it about
right. I sat next to a female researcher from one of the other academic schools who I
discovered was also the mother of young boys. We chatted between sessions. It was
what I needed. We chewed over how to put the children to bed at a reasonable time and
then find the time and energy to research. Our conversations helped to normalise my
position. In the School I was the only working mother undertaking a PhD; it was
reassuring to know that the thoughts and feelings that I experienced were not unique. I
wanted to dress according to my role for the day and to feel that I fitted in. The best way
to do this was through what I wore; it was not about my choice of clothing but what it
signalled to others. It was a visible way to differentiate my roles.

_Just a Rigorous Process?_ In August I drafted my research proposal and sent it
to my supervisory team. As usual I was nervous about sending it. Although my
reflective work had been well received this was the first referenced piece of academic
work. I need not have worried. The feedback was positive, which provided a confidence
boost and motivated me to start. The admissions paperwork was completed in
September. I met with the School’s graduate studies coordinator and contacted a
colleague in student admissions for an explanation on the application and enrolment process; this appeared to involve several university departments and the School. Following these conversations I was completely perplexed. The process seemed convoluted, confusing and did not appear to be documented. Shortly after I had completed my forms a lecturer came to see me about a research student who was due to enrol. I took the opportunity to ask what she thought of the enrolment process; she pulled a face and said that she and her student were confused by all the forms and that no-one had been able to shed much light on the process. I wondered how many others had struggled with it.

My proposal was reviewed formally and independently by an academic member of staff in the School prior to its presentation at the School Research Committee. My proposal, I was told, was discussed at length by the committee members, including a debate on whether I had sufficient time to undertake the research. The proposal sat on my desk while I summoned the enthusiasm to revisit it and make the requested amendments to the objectives. I gave thought to the discussion on my ability, in terms of time, to complete a doctorate, which had been the subject of much discussion with my supervisory team. I hoped that my decision to read for a PhD was not being viewed differently to that of academic members of staff. I resolved not to dwell on this, nor to discover who had raised the concerns, deciding that the points had been raised constructively. I made the required revisions to the proposal. The next hurdle was ethical approval. It was likely that my request would be a test case for similar ethnographic studies which were likely to emanate from the School. In November my application was approved by the Ethics Committee although a comment was made about my role duality and the potential adverse effects of the research on me. Again, after much consideration and the completion of pilot work, I felt aware of the issues. I
began to feel like I was waiting for a train to come along and hit me and that the reality of undertaking a PhD, especially of an autoethnographic nature, had yet to strike.

My Director of Studies suggested that I reflect on the ‘most rigorous enrolment process that my supervisory team had known’. He gave me some prompts for consideration including who my supervisors were, what others were thinking and why it had taken so long. My thoughts pertaining to my supervisors had not changed during the enrolment process. I had worked with Sheldon since my appointment in post and it was his knowledge of me that lead him to suggest a doctorate. My relationship with Scott had developed; although we were both members of the MPT we had not previously worked together and he did not know my background, interests or capabilities. Brendan had commenced employment at the University just as I started discussions about doctoral study and our working relationship was in its infancy. I trusted my supervisors completely. This was fundamental to my reflective practice as I needed to feel entirely comfortable expressing my opinions and feelings, in depth, to others. In respect of my research the only thing that concerned me about others was that this would not change our working relationship. I wanted to be seen as hard-working and competent in my primary role; what others thought of me as a researcher did not bother me.

As this was my first experience of the enrolment and registration process I did not know how long the process would take or how frequently students were required to make amendments or provide additional information. The formal processes had progressed steadily and had not stopped me writing and reflecting. There had been some important considerations in relation to my registration and enrolment. The methodology raised ethical issues. Furthermore, I was an administrative, not a member of academic staff, who was a member of the School’s MPT and being supervised by two other members of the MPT. The Dean, DLT, Director of Enterprise, Director of Research,
REF coordinator and one of the MPT elected members had all played a role in my enrolment and registration. The process and forms needed to be transparent and beyond reproach. The comments made at the School Research Committee about the time available for me to complete a PhD were well intentioned (although there may not have been as much scrutiny if I had been an academic member of staff). The concern about the risk to me in undertaking the research was appropriate. Although pleased that the enrolment process had been completed it had not been an overriding or consuming concern. Perhaps it was because in my work and domestic life I had bigger issues to deal with. I was a mother and a manager first and a researcher second. I maintained all my roles while the enrolment progressed in the background. Furthermore, paperwork and processes, compared with managing staff, were relatively easy to manage and deal with. I had not expected any part of achieving a doctorate to be easy and reputations and regulations had to be upheld. Although not the easiest process to understand with issues over ownership that was all it was a process and one that needed to be rigorous.

Managing Multiple Roles. I had decided that I could combine work, family and study but that I would need to be disciplined in making time to study. I felt guilty if I was not undertaking the work for which I was paid. I did have the support of the Dean and I knew that it was reasonable to undertake professional development. I also needed to stop feeling guilty about occasionally working at home, rather than in the office. In order to accommodate my studies I changed some routines. I cycled to work twice a week; having exercised I worked at lunch-time on my research without feeling the need to go to the gym. Furthermore, cycling gave me thinking time. I responded to emails at home in the evenings and at the weekends so that I had more time at work to write and to reflect. Twice a week I took my children to dyslexia tuition; while they were in class,
and with no distractions, I wrote up and reflected on the events of the week. I also put aside a couple of evenings a week for this purpose.

By November the research had become part of my life and occupied much of my thinking. I felt happy and fulfilled by it. I was sure that the reflection and changing thought processes on options and outcomes were affecting my decision making. I gave greater consideration to what I was doing and why I was doing it. Consideration of my choice of words and my image in different situations had become part of my reflective process. I had grown accustomed to operating on different levels – Jane the manager and Jane the researcher. I liked to describe what had happened during my working day and beyond and explore my thoughts and feelings via the written word. There had been a change in my approach and how I viewed myself in the workplace. I felt more confident, although at times I still doubted myself and my abilities both as a manager and a researcher. I had always had an unstructured, informally reflective approach when pondering events at work; I would mull over what had happened and consider whether I could have done anything better or differently but not in a constructive manner. I realised how much I had learnt already. My vocabulary had increased as had my interest in research and the methods I was using. The process of thinking about, describing, evaluating and reflecting upon events in my working life, past and present, was an interesting and enlightening process. The more journal articles I read the more they stimulated thought and enabled me to relate the subject matter to experiences in my life. I became disciplined in making sure that I found time to write soon after the event.

Becoming an Academic Associate opened up a different perspective on the School. When, sometime previously, a dedicated area for the School’s research student community had been proposed, I had not appreciated the benefits of the provision of a

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6 The University title for a research degree student.
mutually supportive environment. I was now better able to empathise with the other researchers and help them wade through the paperwork for registration and enrolment. Also, I was reading for a PhD at the same time as other researchers using similar research methods and the prospect was both exciting and scary. The other students with whom I had been put in contact were very bright and highly rated by the lecturing staff. The stimulus of differing perspectives and backgrounds was likely to benefit our studies and one of the PhD supervisors suggested that we meet once a month to share journals articles, research issues and experiences. My role in the School made integration into the research community difficult. I appreciated that I might not acquire from these meetings what I needed. It would have been good to share the difficulties and the ethics of writing autoethnographically but this methodology had inherent difficulties; the combined factors of my age, perceived power and authority and research method were unlikely to be compatible with the achievement of peer support. I realised that I was about to start a new phase in my life; new people had entered with whom I would have a relationship as fellow student and researcher. It also brought home the duality of the new relationships; fellow MPT members versus supervisors and BSM versus fellow students. Separation was likely to be difficult and at times thought would be required as to my actions and which role was guiding them. A complex set of relationships was becoming apparent.

At home Nick was a sounding board for practical, work-related advice in terms of what to do in certain situations; however, he viewed his style of leadership and management to be at odds with the academic one. His argument was that in his line of work when faced with difficult situations there was little time to think, only act. I appreciated this approach but believed that the reason effective leaders acted with little thought was due to experience of previous similar situations which, with the application
of effective intelligence, could be drawn upon to inform and guide action. Furthermore, learning from experiences creates knowledge-in-action. Leadership ability and style were developed through training as was the leader’s ability to cope under physical and mental pressure. I was more comfortable than he with marrying practical application with appropriate theory and trying to understand practice.

In relation to family life the autumn term had started rather stressfully. Despite my worries the boys settled back into school after the long summer holidays. However, I had a growing list of jobs to do. I needed to arrange their birthday party, complete contracts for the childminder, pay the school for extra-curricular activities, arrange payment and insurance for our new car and complete the accompanying paperwork. I did not feel as productive at work as normal. However, once it was all done I felt much more clear-headed. I wanted to balance work and research with being a good and supportive wife and mother. At times, I had so much whirling round in my head that I knew that I appeared distracted and unhappy. Nothing was further from the truth in respect of my happiness although I worried that my need and desire for self-fulfilment were at the expense of my family.

Summary of Personal Issues.

The ability to manage, combine and differentiate my various roles was the dominant personal theme this term. A change in apparel helped me convey my role as an overt signal during the doctoral student induction day. It also allowed me to feel that I fitted in and was accepted by the other attendees. Apparel expresses meaning and is important to individuals and groups. Attendance at the course gave me the opportunity to explore my researcher role and chat with another research student with a similar personal profile, revealing common concerns and issues; it allowed me to feel normal. Separation of the various aspects of my life was impossible and my effectiveness at home and in
work was affected by various factors. I reconsidered and found balance between my four major roles of BSM, researcher, wife and mother. By the end of November I was combining home, work and research quite well and I was coming to terms with the accompanying guilt. A flexible approach was key to my ability to cope. Tackling domestic issues task by task helped me to organise and manage my home life. It also gave me much needed ‘head space’. Maintaining some social life, especially in terms of taking exercise helped me to cope with the demands upon me. I appreciated the differences in perspective between Nick’s and my approach to work, experience and academic studies. A difference in perspective was also true of my experience and the views of my supervisors in relation to the PhD enrolment and registration process.

**A Winter’s Tale**

In early December the MPT held an all-day meeting to discuss the School’s financial position and to formulate a financial strategy for the School. I had sinusitis and felt rough. When we broke for lunch I decided to walk round campus; my stomach ached and I felt unwell. As I reached my car I experienced dreadful cramping stomach pains. When the pain subsided I went to the ladies to freshen up and then returned to the meeting. By the end of the meeting I felt a little better. Over the weekend my stomach muscles cramped periodically. I felt generally under the weather but well enough to go to work on Monday. The next night, after I had gone to bed, I woke up and was physically sick. I dragged myself out of bed in the morning, made breakfast and dressed the boys for school and took them to the child-minder. I then headed back home to bed. The sickness stopped mid-afternoon. Thursday I felt well enough to go to work. I put my sickness and stomach cramps down to some type of gastric ‘bug’. On Friday it snowed heavily and I worked at home. In the afternoon I walked the five-mile round trip to collect the boys from school. My stomach was sore and I still did not want to eat.
Over the weekend I did not feel any better although not ill enough to call the out of hours doctor. Monday I called my GP; the receptionist asked if it was an emergency. “Not really” I thought but I told her that I had not eaten for a week and was in no state to look after my children. She booked me in for a five-minute appointment. It was snowing heavily, adding to the seven or eight inches that had fallen since Friday. At the surgery I described my symptoms to the doctor who said that they sound very much like one of the strains of gastroenteritis that were doing the rounds. She then examined my bloated stomach and listened to it through a stethoscope. My small intestine had ‘gone to sleep’ and I needed to go straight to hospital.

A work colleague phoned and advised that, due to the heavy snow fall, the Dean had cancelled staff Christmas drinks and the campus was to close. I was relieved that my absence would go unnoticed. I was driven to within half a mile of the hospital but with the snow making driving dangerous I walked the rest of the way. I handed in the letter from the GP at Accident and Emergency reception and was called through to triage. After my observations had been taken I was directed to the surgical assessment unit. I wondered why the surgical unit. Over the next few hours I had an x-ray, a CT scan and was seen by a junior doctor who noted how I had felt over the previous week. She seemed perplexed. Sometime later the consultant came to see me. He explained that I appeared to have a blockage and potentially a perforated intestine that required surgery. I was on the emergency list and due to be operated on around 18.00. Consent forms were signed, medical history taken, surgical stockings put on and a drip inserted in my arm. The surgeon visited me to explain the operation. He told me where the incision would be made, that he might need to remove some intestine and in the worst case scenario I would have a stoma. The nursing staff catheterised me and inserted a naso-gastric tube. I dozed in bed and waited. The operation time was put back; around
01.30 I was taken to theatre. The anaesthetist assistant chatted to me as I was prepared. On hearing that I worked at the Cardiff School of Sport she told me that she had received a sports massage there. I explained that the massage clinic now operated five days a week and that a reduced price second massage was available. I glanced at the clock. What was I doing, it was almost 02.00, I had tubes coming out of me and wires attached and I was doing a marketing pitch for the massage clinic. I came round in the recovery room about an hour later. I felt my stomach; no stoma! Back on the ward I slept.

My children were delivered by emergency caesarean section. I needed little morphine on that occasion and so was fairly sure that the same would be true for this operation. I had a self-administer morphine pump but did not feel that I needed it. I felt sore and uncomfortable but not in pain. In the morning I was visited by the surgeon. An adhesion from the caesarean section had become wrapped round the bowel; he had lifted it away and there had been no need to remove any intestine. I was relieved. The cause of the obstruction was because of the earlier emergency operation and not because of any inadequacies in my diet or lifestyle. The acute pain manager visited mid-morning. She looked at the unused morphine pump and at me sitting up in bed reading the newspaper and commented that was not what she expected. The physiotherapist came to move me out of bed and into a chair. To her surprise I swung my legs out of bed and stood up. “Do you want to go for a walk down the corridor?” she asked, to which I readily agreed. My work colleague phoned late morning. I confessed that I was in hospital. She told me that the campus remained closed; further relief that I would not be missed. She offered to visit me and I asked her to collect an envelope from my intray containing application forms for a PhD scholarship as I needed to contact the applicants to advise them of the interview details. Nick phoned to ask if I wanted
anything. I gave him a list: mobile phone charger, laptop, journal articles, book to read, toiletries. I laughed. The list and its order were very telling. I felt cut off from the world and bored. I realised how fast-paced and busy my life was. Slowing to hospital pace was difficult and immensely frustrating. I was unable to forget about work and things that I needed to do. My body was tired and sore but my mind was active. I remembered conversation with my Director of Studies about self-image in various situations. Image was important to me now.

On Wednesday afternoon the doctors came to see me. I asked when I could go home. They suggested maybe Friday (Christmas Eve). I told them that I was bored and the hospital food was rubbish. Nick and the boys visited in the afternoon. I gave Nick the food shopping list for Christmas that he had asked me to write. The boys became bored and appeared uncomfortable with seeing me in hospital. The Dean phoned me early that evening, unaware that I was in hospital. He asked if I had seen the email about the icy condition of the campus. I explained that I had been off with the boys and had not read my emails. We agreed to advise staff to work from home. I still had not been missed. On Thursday morning I asked again to go home; “Maybe tomorrow” I was told. My stomach was still bloated and I had eaten little. With the catheter removed I showered and put on jeans and t-shirt in place of the hospital gown. I looked in the mirror. I appeared tired and drawn but felt more normal in my own clothes. The physiotherapist came round again to make sure that I could walk up and down stairs. She instructed me not to do any housework or lift anything heavier than a cup of tea for six weeks. She was obviously deluded. I decided that if they did not discharge me on Christmas Eve, I would discharge myself. There was no way that I would not be home for Christmas Day. The doctor visited me at 08.00 on Friday morning. I was examined, discharged and back home by 10.00. I sorted the washing and then checked my emails.
Next target was to return to work on 4\textsuperscript{th} January. This gave me 10 days to recuperate. I was exhausted on Christmas Day and could not eat much. That was the worst day and after that I became a little better each day. New Year’s Day I had a heated discussion with Nick about going back to work. I said that I felt physically well enough to do half days and that no one had considered my mental state. The ability to cope with problems head-on had enabled me to deal with difficult situations in the RAF, the premature birth of my children and to manage on my own for six months while Nick was working overseas. I could not just change my approach and stay at home with my feet up. Although family and friends did not think that I was being sensible, perhaps even foolhardy or reckless, I was doing what was right for me. I did not think that I was indispensible or superwoman, I just needed to return to work for normality and routine. I could have worked from home but I worked better in the office, with colleagues. I needed to balance an active mind with giving my body time to recuperate. Earlier than anyone would have advised, I returned to work on 4\textsuperscript{th} January. The Dean and DLT were surprised about my hospitalisation; they asked if I should be in work but they agreed that half days were appropriate. I told who I chose to tell about my hospital stay. I felt in control. Within a week I felt stronger and was sure that being physically fit and in good health aided my recovery.

I did not want anyone to know that I had been in hospital, certainly not until I chose to tell them. I did not want sympathy or people visiting me. I kept going for a week with an obstructed bowel because I thought that I would get better and because I did not think that I was particularly ill. Going to work and being a mother was more important to me. I wanted to be seen as strong (mentally and physically), hard-working and diligent. I had only had two sick days during my working life; being off sick was not my style. I did not mind the one close colleague seeing me in hospital hooked up to
a drip, with a tube up my nose. However, it did not seem very managerial and it was not
the image that I wanted others to see. I did not feel that I could maintain respect when I
had been seen at my lowest and weakest. The Dean and DLT had both had time off
work following operations and I knew that they would understand and be sympathetic
but I did not want them to know until I was better. I was fortunate that the timing of my
hospitalisation and the wintry weather allowed me to exercise that level of control.
Hospital was a competition. I walked to the Accident and Emergency Department. I
surprised the junior doctor who examined me by being ‘too well for an obstructed
bowel’. Morphine, post-surgery, was not for me and I was pleased at the reaction from
the acute pain manager. I did not want to be the average patient. I was spurred on by
being able to get out of bed and walk down the corridor with the physiotherapist. I
strove for a speedy discharge. I wanted hospital staff to see my strength and
determination. I was probably rather selfish during this episode. I was told it had been
frightening for others but I had not seen it like that. I just dealt with it. My mother
understood my need and desire to return to work. Her attitude too was that she did not
have time to be ill. Despite not having anything to prove I pushed myself too much
during the first few weeks back in work and became tired and grumpy. I had chosen to
go back to work and not tell anyone so I accepted that no allowances had been made for
me. I questioned why I had not gone to the doctor sooner. Prior to diagnosis I tried to
support everyone else and did not stop to consider how ill I was. Post-operation I
ignored advice and the two inch scar and tried again to carry on as normal and did not
accept the emotional and physical effects that the episode had on me.

The obstructed bowel and my inability and unwillingness to rest or accept my
temporary state affected all areas of my life: wife, mother, manager and researcher. It
showed how important self-image was to me (from regaining my pre-operative shape to
controlling my managerial persona) and how others saw me (mum not hospital patient). The episode highlighted some of my characteristics, including my need to remain in control, a desire to deal with problems and for routine and normality. I might have been foolish on a number of fronts but my working ethos and behaviours stayed constant. The personal qualities that might have been considered to be a strength in some circumstances became a weakness when I was unwell.

**Emerging Themes and Learning Points.**

There were new and developing themes and learning points during this period:

- Once again there was a requirement to achieve ‘balance’ both from a self-management perspective and in the management of others. This was noted in the desire to balance my roles of wife, mother, researcher and employee and in the need at work to consider what was best for the School and the individual.

- The emotional context of management was evident. This included managing one’s own emotions and being aware of and taking into consideration the emotions of others. Examples included Clare’s nervousness, the Dean and DLT’s disquiet at possible implications of the financial situation, the students’ needs for reassurance, my nervousness about tutoring the students and my irritation and disappointment in meetings with the senior manager.

- The need to support others and to utilise and accept the support of others was apparent. Trusted friends to whom to turn was important for the provision of reassurance and guidance in decision making. Emotional support was helpful in appreciating that one’s feelings and reactions were normal. Interpersonal relationships in the workplace that can provide social support and help someone to function effectively are invaluable.
• Experience affected my approach and decision making across a variety of events. Experience from the RAF gave me the impetus to tutor at Brecon; I was able to learning from this experience and to help the students to learn too.

• The relevance of self-presentation arose many times; this included how I wished to be the perceived by others and how I appeared to staff and students. I began to consider what impacted upon my self-presentation including my apparel, ethos, ability to balance roles and my resilience.

• Effective self-management and the need for physical and mental well-being emerged in ‘Managing Multiple Roles’. Taking exercise and the need for time to think were noted. Poor self-management in ‘A Winter’s Tale’ led to a failure to address my physical well-being and had consequences across my roles.

• Managing roles, dealing with role conflict and role duality were dominant themes. Making a decision and completing tasks, regardless of their nature, were successful coping strategies.

Spring and Summer 2011

In the following section, in diary format, I outline a sample day including the domestic, work and social tasks that I undertook. Its inclusion is designed to complement the narrative sections and exemplify ‘A Manager’s Tale’.

A Day in My Life.
06.00  Made packed lunches
       Had breakfast
06.30  Checked emails
07.00  Made boys’ breakfast, sorted out their uniform
       Fed cats, fed fish,
07.30  Practised spellings with boys
Loaded car with bikes, cycling kit, school bags, work bag

07.50 Left house
Dropped boys at child-minder; had a quick chat

08.15 Took son’s bike to cycle shop for a service

08.45 Arrived at work
Checked and answered emails

09.00 Met DLT in my office
Discussed staffing issues including potential long term sick and stress absence
Workload model for next year
Joining packs / student system / module selection issues

09.45 Met PhD student in physiology laboratory to provide advice on insurance cover and certificates

10.00 Quick chat with Director of Enterprise about capital equipment purchases and proposed patient records system

10.05 Wrote to primary school asking for son to leave early on Friday to travel to a race

10.15 Met with sports facility manager and audio visual manager about performing rights music licences.

11.00 Looked at draft campus map with campus service manager and sports facility managers. Made suggestions for improvement

11.30 Spoke with a programme director about module choice information for HND to degree top-up students

12.00 Met with energy consultant regarding consumption of utilities against targets.

12.15 Discussed insurance cover for high risk research participants with prof.

12.30 Phoned finance department about an insurance question.

12.35 Dean advised that we would take an additional 30 students in September.
Estimated the increased income. Emailed staff who need to know about the additional numbers.

13.00 Spoke with estates project manager about plan for A0.36 and requested a pdf.
Took printed plan to physiology laboratory. Asked technicians to discuss storage and sink requirements.

13.30 Reviewed and edited joining pack information for new students

14.00 Outdoor pursuits module leader saw me about staffing for Brecon residential
and payment of non-core staff to act as tutors
14.30 Director of Research phoned to clarify staff review list
15.00 Went to gym with work colleague
15.45 Returned to office
16.30 Director of Research phoned about PhD bench fees for overseas student
16.55 Had discussion with Lead Administrator about offices
17.05 Left work. Collected boys from child-minder
17.45 Arrived at cycle track. Helped with sign-on for track race. Sold refreshments
    Supported boys in their races
20.00 Left cycle track for home
20.15 Supper, story and bed for boys. Food for me
21.00 Checked work emails and watched TV
22.00 Bed

The record of my day illustrated the breadth of the job, the variety of interactions that I had with staff across the School and University and the mental gymnastics and juggling required to fulfil the roles. It was not a ‘typical day’; the number of meetings attended, the tasks undertaken and the conversations held varied daily. It was a good day. I felt useful and valued. I used my knowledge of insurance and estates issues effectively.

When I did not know an answer I knew who to approach and my contacts responded promptly. I tried to deal with things as they happened so that they were not forgotten and because if someone had asked me about something it was important to them.

Sometimes there were knock-on effects, for example the additional student numbers would affect the Brecon residentialis including the number of tutors required and the hire of sufficient minibuses. There seemed to be little order to my day, my actions were predominantly reactive. Although I was effective I wondered if I was as efficient as possible. My door was always open and staff did just drop in to see me about diverse issues with which they needed help or information. Although this sometimes distracted me midway through a task I did not want to change how I worked and it was a good way to catch up. I decided not to worry on such days when all I seemed to do was
answer emails, the phone and queries. That type of support helped build trust with School staff. I was able to work with others to achieve things. Prior knowledge and experience guided my decision making. For example, from my catering background I knew that in a commercial kitchen there was a need for separate hand-wash and utility sinks; I suspected this to be likely in the laboratory too. The two overriding lessons were that it was sometimes the small, seemingly inconsequential tasks that were important as was the ability to deal with diverse requests at a moment’s notice.

Administration Team.

A Difficult Decision. Following agreement from the FSG the new post of Lead Administrator was reviewed by HR and assessed as a grade four. Disappointingly, these HR processes were not finalised until early January and the administrator filling the role temporarily was about to leave to go travelling. With four weeks ‘lost’ in the recruitment process I needed to find a temporary administrator. I had a possible solution. In November one of the mature postgraduate students, Ian, had sought my advice for a job interview with the academic registry. Ian was unsuccessful for that job being placed second at interview. His name now sprang to mind. Due to potential conflicts of interest I did not normally employ students but Ian had almost completed his studies. Furthermore, he had worked for sports facilities, lectured part-time, was well thought of as a student and knew many of the staff as well as the School systems and programme structures. Ian jumped at the chance of two months’ work. On his arrival he got on well and seemed accepted by the administration team and academic staff alike. There was a good atmosphere in the office, calm and productive. With a mixture of intuition and good luck I had stumbled on a combination of administrative staff that appeared to work.
The Lead Administrator post went to advert in mid-January with a closing date in early February. I anticipated a strong field of applicants. The day after the closing date I phoned HR staff; I was relieved to hear that there were only 35 applicants. I was dreading the shortlist process and the interviews. I sensed the complexity of the decisions to be made. I needed to consider how well the individual would fit in with the rest of the administration team. From prior experience I knew that shared office space was highly emotive. I wanted someone who could learn quickly and have ‘get up and go’; this was more important to me than someone who sought long-term job stability.

Getting the right person that the academic staff could work with and who was right for the School was my priority. The team was too small to make a mistake. The existing permanent administrator had applied as had Ian. There were applications from staff working in central units at Llandaff and from external applicants. It was going to be difficult to put my prior knowledge about certain staff to one side and short-list on the basis of the application form alone. Having recently attended the ‘Proactively Managing Diversity’ course I considered my thoughts on employing a male administrator. I should recruit the best person for the job but I wondered if there were times when a gender balance in the working environment was better.

I started the shortlist process at home in the evening and finished it early the next morning. I formed three piles, a ‘no’ pile, a probably ‘yes’ pile, and a ‘not sure need to read in more detail’ pile. In work I met with the DLT and the undergraduate programmes coordinator. We discussed the applications from my yes pile and those who we needed to discuss due to ‘insider knowledge’. These were the hardest. It was impossible to remain completely objective. Ian’s application was on the borderline. We discussed his application and the DLT gave reasons for not short-listing Ian; although he lacked administration experience he was quick to learn and, more importantly for
me, he would be able to manage the workload and the team without upsetting them. He had an unusual combination of skills and knowledge that could benefit the School. Furthermore, because he was about to enrol on a PhD his part-time registration meant that if appointed he was likely to remain in post for four or five years providing stability to the team. I recollected how much I had reflected upon this appointment, the type of person I sought and their personal qualities and being overruled over the last administrative appointment. Ian was put on the shortlist. We discussed the format for the interview day. The DLT wanted a practical test. I believed that we needed to differentiate between hard skills and soft skills and address which could be taught and learnt quickly and which were more instinctive. Managing people without upsetting them would be more difficult to teach than would, for example, how to write a set of minutes. After two hours we had our shortlist and agreed a format for the interviews.

The whole process was full of dilemmas. The School supported its staff and students and nurtured talent. It would almost have been against School ethos to appoint someone from outside the University unless no one internally was suitable. On this basis there really were only three candidates. I kept trying to justify my support for Ian. He had worked hard to progress in his academic career and his people skills resulted in him being easy to work with and down to earth. When I started my career two managers took a chance on me. I had certainly not been the most experienced candidate but I must have had some personal qualities that they believed right for the roles. There were parallels between this and Ian’s situation. The other likely candidate was an experienced administrator who would be a safe pair of hands. She would do the job well but I was unsure of the level of authority that she would command.

The interviews were held at the start of March. I was nervous, excited and scared. On the day of the interviews I woke early and thought through the last-minute
preparations that I needed to undertake before the candidates arrived. At 09.00 I met the candidates and ran through the format for the day and housekeeping arrangements. The candidates undertook a team building task, followed by a report writing one before going for coffee with a senior administrator. Two lecturers met the candidates for informal discussions; the lecturers had been briefed to consider who they could work with and who was likely to fulfil the role requirements. At the conclusion of the process we met to discuss the candidates; we agreed that only the three internal candidates were appointable. After an initial discussion the decision came down to Ian and one other. It was a decision between people management skills and administration skills. My colleagues’ preferred candidate differed from mine. We agreed to leave our decision until the next day. I was grateful for the time to reflect. I felt bombarded with information and not in a position to make a clear and rational decision. I asked one of the senior administrators her opinion on the two candidates. She thought that either would be a good appointment each bringing different skills. I had so many thoughts whirling round in my head. Ian had done an excellent job over the last month and proven himself quick to learn, motivated and a real people person but in comparison was lacking in experience and knowledge. Ian needed a permanent job for financial and personal reasons. Appointing Ian would be heart over head, attributable to instinct and gut feeling. I valued his strong work ethic. There was a greater element of risk involved in employing him. The other candidate would be a good appointment, accepted by academic and administration colleagues alike; a safe and relatively risk free appointment and able to provide the stability and knowledge that my colleagues desired. The interview process had left me tired and drained.

The next morning I had coffee with a trusted colleague. I told him who I thought would be successful. He commented that an important consideration was which panel
members would work with the appointed candidate most and who was the most qualified to make a judgement on a person’s ability to fulfil the role. This should not be about the power of individual panel members. At midday the other panel members and I met. I realised that there was an element of doubt in their minds as to who should be appointed. One colleague stated her preference and then I mine. The DLT seemed uncomfortable having the deciding vote. I reiterated that their concerns were in relation to skills that could be readily learnt. They agreed. My colleagues raised the human issue of Ian not having a job. I sensed an adjustment in their thought processes. We agreed to consult with the Dean on his return from a meeting that afternoon. On my return from lunch I saw the DLT; following a discussion with an MPT colleague he was leaning towards appointing Ian. I realised that was the time for one last pitch. Aiming to show the strength of my conviction I stated my preference and my reasons and that despite others’ reservations I was responsible, as the line manager of the person appointed. I met with the Dean immediately upon on his return. He thought we should appoint Ian on the basis of his people management skills. I phoned the other panel member and told her the Dean’s thoughts; she agreed with this outcome. The DLT informed Ian that he was successful. I was delighted with the outcome. In the afternoon I phoned the unsuccessful candidates. They were incredibly pleasant. The process had been complex but I believed we had made a good appointment.

Within a couple of months Ian had settled in well. His balance of skills and experience proved beneficial. His main difficulty was in delegation. He was reluctant to pass work to others preferring to do it himself to ensure that it is completed. He thrived on being busy, but needed to learn to supervise effectively. I felt responsible for his management learning. He had the ability to do well; he just needed nurturing. As a
future lecturer and researcher if he became a competent and capable manager he had the potential to do well in higher education.

**Summary of Administration Team Issues.**

My decision making process about the appointment was influenced by similarities in ethos of hard work derived from my working class upbringing. I noted Ian’s work ethic and his need and desire for paid, regular employment probably not just for financial necessity but, I believed, for self-esteem, normality and being in a work environment. Another factor in my decision making was how well the person appointed would fit in with the administration team. The decision came down to someone who was a safe pair of hands with administration experience or to give someone with less experience a chance on the basis of their personal qualities and transferable skills. During the discussions initially I was influenced by the four to one majority against me; however, because of the delay in the decision making process I had time to reflect and realised that on issues relating to management I was likely to be the lead authority. Furthermore, because this issue was my job and my research, my level of understanding and reflection could be greater than that of my colleagues. It was suggested that Ian might not be able to manage his coaching, family and study commitments as well as a full-time administrator role. I knew, from personal experience, that although role conflict and overload were possible, multiple roles could be managed and result in positive benefits. Partiality and prejudice about the type of person that I wanted was a concern. I questioned whether I was biased towards appointing a male to the team. I was more comfortable working with men and functioned better in male-dominated environments. Image and self-presentation were again important to me; I wanted to make a good impression on the candidates throughout the interview day. I was pleased that six internal candidates applied for the job and with their positive comments about the
School. In order to have the new administrator in place I had to persuade the FSG of the School’s need for a higher grade administrator, manage change and expectation in relation to the existing team of administrators and convince colleagues that Ian would be a good appointment.

Decisions and actions can be based on prior experience, personal preference and biography. Professional and emotive factors affect decision making. Presentation and image are important in a variety of situations.

**School.**

*Variety is the Spice of Life.* The tasks that I undertook and the roles that I performed covered the spectrum of support activities. The brief selection of the events recounted below show the diversity of the role and the skills needed to carry them out effectively.

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A new manager was appointed, on internal promotion, in the estates department. He introduced himself at one of the monthly campus liaison meetings. He was easy to work with and had a customer focused approach. We agreed that, once he had settled into his new role, it would be useful to meet regularly to discuss maintenance issues affecting the School and sports facilities. We walked around the campus discussing my ‘wish list’ and the financial constraints that affected both our departments. After an hour and a half walking and talking we had a better understanding of each other’s issues and priorities and had established a two-way dialogue.

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I returned to my office after an MPT meeting to a message from one of the HR staff asking me to phone her. On returning her call she asked if I would undertake an investigation. I had undertaken five previous investigations on behalf of HR and the
Student Services Department so I was aware of what would be required. I ran through in my head what I had on; write a journal article, develop the workload model, help manage a potential severance situation and market the postgraduate programmes, to name but a few tasks. On the basis that the investigation was likely to involve about six interviews I agreed to make time in my diary. Although time-consuming, the previous investigations had informed my practice as a manager and updated my knowledge of employment law. The interviewing practice was never wasted. One of my investigations led to a change in HR policy. During the initial meeting to discuss the case the HR advisor with who I would be working said that I should not do such a good job and then I would not be asked again. I was a safe pair of hands, able to conduct the interviews in a professional manner and write a reasoned and logical report of a standard that could be sent to a Pro Vice-Chancellor for adjudication.

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I received an email from one the dance lecturers about fire access. She was working with a disabled group and prior to their arrival a risk assessment of the dance studio had been conducted. This revealed the difficulty that a wheelchair user would have in the event of a fire. I arranged to meet with the health and safety officer. We looked at the access points and at immediate and longer term actions in relation to fire safety. The resolution involved the estates department, campus services, sports facilities department and dance staff. Through a prompt and proactive approach I facilitated a workable solution which reassured the dance lecturer.

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The lecturer in charge of the Zambia Project\(^7\) spoke with me about updating the associated web pages. I arranged with the web development officer from Llandaff to meet with me, the lecturer and the four students going to Zambia to discuss what was required. Two weeks later one of the students came to see me about using the School’s pull-up banners and some posters. They had been allocated a ‘bag packing’ slot at a local supermarket and wanted something formal to take with them. I suggested that if they gave me some text and photos I would organise leaflets to inform shoppers why the money was being raised. A colleague in creative services prioritised the job for the following day and the Print Studio reproduced the leaflets. The students collected over £600 and the shoppers had the opportunity to read about the cause while their bags were packed. It was a small task that did not take long but made a difference to the students and their fundraising. The successful completion of these tasks entailed the management of relationships, organisation of tasks, time management, juggling roles and providing support to others.

**Financial Decisions Great and Small.** The School’s finances continued to take centre stage in the new year. The MPT met to discuss the workload model; following our pre-Christmas strategy meeting, data from the model were used to inform decisions on which individuals and disciplines might assume additional teaching or enterprise activities. At the start of term, at a meeting attended by all Cardiff School of Sport staff, the Dean outlined the School’s financial position. No one was left in any doubt as to the seriousness of the situation. It was now a team effort. The Dean wrote a paper on the School’s initial actions to deal with the financial crisis; I provided the financial data and we discussed the content and how and when it should be presented to the members of

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\(^7\) A collaborative project between six UK universities who send students and lecturing staff to Zambia to take part in the IDEALS project which educates young people through sport.
the FSG. I read through his draft paper and suggested amendments; it highlighted savings already made through resignation, retirement and secondment and requested that, if these were insufficient, there be a school-wide VS followed by targeted severance. It was good to be consulted and involved at each stage and to be able to advise, guide and support the Dean and the MPT especially during a period when finance was likely to dominate the School’s activities.

At our January meeting the Director of Finance informed us of an in-year cut in the Schools’ budgets. This resulted in a reduced allocation to the Cardiff School of Sport, thereby increasing our predicted deficit. The Dean, DLT and I met to explore how the £250,000 of salary savings required by the strategy office and VCB would be made. The Dean appeared to favour a discipline group based approach to investigating potential savings. I thought that we should explore other options including the viability of certain modules and staff performance in role. I suggested that clear criteria were required. We studied data relating to the number of students enrolled on modules over the last three years. The pending Welsh medium lecturing appointments were also discussed. The Dean seemed reluctant to talk about staff losses and I became concerned that decisions might be made with insufficient dialogue at School level. Later that day I initiated two further related conversations with MPT colleagues. I felt rather uncomfortable about these discussions, not wanting to be disloyal or manipulative, however, the seriousness of the situation, and the best interests of the School, warranted these talks. The decision making process needed to be a team effort but I sensed that the Dean felt guilty about the situation and took responsibility for it. The discussions were undoubtedly going to be difficult but the long term good and potential survival of the

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8 Following the award of Welsh medium PhD scholarships the Cardiff School of Sport was under remit to establish a number of Welsh medium lecturing positions which would be fully or partially funded by the School.
School was at stake and we needed a workable strategy that enabled the core business to be undertaken and the needs of its personnel taken into account. I felt that by apprising colleagues of the situation a more considered discussion could be had at the forthcoming MPT meeting. During a two week period I had closed door conversations with every member of the MPT. I wanted to ensure that my views were heard as previously I had not been sufficiently vocal in voicing my concerns over the School’s financial position and the effect of staffing and likely funding cuts. I knew that the strategy for communicating the position to the School staff needed to be clear, timely and effective. Staff would want to know how the scheme(s) would affect them and how their discipline would cope if someone from within it left. The need for school-level savings was not raised by the Dean until the end of the MPT meeting. The initial paper sent to the FSG elicited some discussion and agreement, when the time was right, of the need for dialogue. I suggested that we should be careful not to double count any potential savings as this would not be in the School’s long term interests. I understood the Dean’s desire to safeguard as many lecturing jobs as possible but was wary that some factors such as potential Welsh medium appointments might prove problematic (it would be difficult to make appointments to new posts, albeit under remit to do so when other staff where being made redundant). What was needed was a longer term strategy for the School. I hoped that my comments were not perceived negatively. We needed to make realistic assessments and plan for projected future funding levels. Trying to run the School on a shoestring was not sensible; at some stage capital replacement and renewal would be required. This would be especially true when the full cost of tuition was transferred to students (and their parents) as they became more discerning and demanding customers. Dabbling around the edges of a plan and future strategy, making tweaks here and there was not the answer. The funding for higher education was about
to change considerably necessitating a longer term view and the requirement to become more business-like and to do things differently.

Early the following week the Dean called me into his office. VCB had agreed the School’s VS plan. I sensed his relief. We discussed timeframes, communication and university wide initiatives. At the beginning of March the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Finance sent emails to all UWIC staff about the need for and the reasons why staffing cuts were required. The Deans sent school-specific emails detailing the savings needed and the methods for achieving them. I advised the administration team that at present there was no requirement to lose administration posts. One lunch time as I was leaving the gym I bumped into one of the technical staff. We talked about the game of squash he had just played and about his academic studies. What he was really keen to talk about, however, was the potential job loss in his discipline area. He commented that there were a few worried colleagues and that he was glad that he had always been involved in the discipline and done all that had been asked of him and more. As line manager of the technical staff I said that at present there was no suggestion of losses at this level.

It was not just the strategic decisions in which I was involved; I also needed to make those of an operational nature. I received a request to fund the publication payment for a journal article that a research assistant had written. I forwarded the request for consideration to the Director of Research and the REF coordinator. We had previously funded such items but this cost was greater than usual and I felt that deliberation was required as a point of principle. It was likely to be the first of many such publications from the department that would require funding. Funding was agreed and provision for these costs included in the departmental budget allocation for future years. The discussions might have seemed a little excessive in proportion to the value
but there was a principle to be established. We needed to be seen to scrutinise all payments during those difficult times. I was also cautious because of the complexity of the relationships between those involved in the decision making process (MPT members, three professors, researcher / supervisor); none of us wanted to favour research in preference to learning and teaching or other demands on the School’s budget.

A collaborative bid, submitted with one of the other academic schools to Research and Enterprise Services (RES), was partially granted with a significant proportion allocated for the purchase of a piece of equipment requested by the other school. The remaining balance would only partially fund the building works requested to convert a ground floor classroom to laboratory space. I had discussions with the Dean, the Director of Enterprise, who had written the bid, and the professor who was the lead researcher. The news about the partial funding arrived shortly after the Director of Finance had told us that if a deficit of less than £200,000 was predicted we could spend the difference. I reviewed the School’s financial position. Realistically we had approximately £70,000 to spend. That would allow us to undertake the building work and leave the School with around £30,000 for refurbishment and IT replacement in the performance analysis laboratory and equipment for the sports facilities department. I met with the Director of Enterprise and the professor leading the project. We agreed to proceed with the acquisition of the classroom but to negotiate with the estates department for a less expensive conversion plan than the one submitted with the original bid. This would then allow the project to proceed as originally intended. We still needed agreement from the Dean. I hoped that he would not think that I had overstepped the mark in virtually agreeing with my colleagues how we should spend some of the School’s money. Strategically, the project would move forward the School’s research,
albeit with an initial costly financial outlay, and help it emerge from the financial crisis in a stronger position. The Dean was content with the suggestion and it was later ratified by the MPT.

I assumed that the Dean was content with the level of responsibility that I was taking for purchasing, capital replacement, new works and budgetary matters. It had been a difficult time for the Dean dealing with VS matters, so relieving him of some of the other decisions seemed appropriate especially those within my remit. Although content to do so, at times I felt to be at the limit of level of decisions that I should make and was concerned how others might view this in relation to my role. I continued to feel bound to the hierarchical structures that I had become used to in the RAF and in which I worked and moved comfortably knowing the limits of my power and jurisdiction.

By the end of May the MPT understood that five staff in the School would accept VS equating to around £300,000 of salary savings in future years; the cost of the severance packages to these would be accounted for over two or three years. The likely end of year deficit, taking into consideration the building works and capital spends, would be between £100,000 and £130,000. Therefore, the financial projection I made in December 2010 had been fairly accurate as had been my theory that our staffing base was too expensive. The resignation of two staff, a retirement and departure of five staff on VS had put the School in a more financially sustainable position. Our research and enterprise activities had moved forward and we had used a better than expected enterprise return to buy capital items. Research Excellence Framework returnable staff had been lost, however, and this would need to be considered in future staffing discussions.

In May I received the budgetary allocation for the next financial year. I updated my spreadsheets with the new income data. By the next day’s monthly finance meeting
I had a good idea of our likely year-end financial position. We were in good shape and I believed that we would probably be able to pay back most the VS loan. There was also scope to make minor adjustments to our staffing base and purchase additional capital items. After the meeting the Dean patted me on the shoulder and said ‘well done’. He seemed pleased and relieved. It had been a difficult year for all in the School, especially the Dean. Voluntary Severance had been the right thing to do as it gave us breathing space. Fortunately, there had been no compulsory redundancies. We now had the money to look strategically at our staffing and to upgrade our facilities to the standard that parents and students would expect when the £9,000 tuition fees for undergraduate programmes were introduced. The effect of the new fee structure on student recruitment had yet to be seen but I foresaw a drop in applications for the September 2012 entry. Graduate earning power might be greater than that of non-graduates and the repayment schedule not burdensome but I believed that many students and their parents would consider their options. In a time of change there was little opportunity to consolidate our position; we needed to start thinking about student numbers and the subsequent financial issues for the 2012/13 academic year.

**Finance Audit.** In April a major financial audit was conducted by the University’s external auditors. Prior to their visit I met with the School’s finance administrator, the enterprise administrator, one of the programme managers and the technicians, all of whom had purchasing responsibility. The technicians were also responsible for the asset registers for their respective areas. Before our meeting I sought advice from the finance staffs and a colleague in another school which had been the subject of an external audit the previous year. With this information I was able to brief my team on what the auditors would be looking for. Procedures were reviewed including those for petty cash and the security code procedures for the safe. Records on
sharepoint\textsuperscript{9} were updated, including the inventories and duplicate information removed. I briefed the Dean. I was content that our financial procedures would stand up to scrutiny but also aware that the auditors would find areas for development.

On the first day of the visit the Dean and I met the auditors together; I answered their initial scoping questions. A ground floor classroom near the school offices had been provided for them from which they could work for the week. I supplied details of the risk register, how often I updated it and the dates at which it had been discussed at School MPT meetings. They asked to see the asset register of equipment valued over £500 from the biomechanics laboratory and equipment under £500 from the physiology laboratory. The technicians located all the items that the auditor asked to see. It was the auditors’ recommendation that more detailed information be provided on the register to enable a non-expert to identify individual items; the use of stickers with unique asset numbers was suggested. They advised that low cost items need not be listed on the register. It had been useful for someone else to look at the register and suggest improvements as it was sometimes easy to overlook the obvious. It did hurt my personal pride that we were not as good as we could have been.

On the second day of their visit the senior auditor commented that there were no issues concerning our management of risk. I was pleased. When I raised it as an agenda item at MPT meetings it was not anyone’s favourite topic for discussion. It was an important operational requirement and therefore I ensured that once a term it remained a focus for discussion. Next I was asked about the monthly meetings with the Director of Finance and how finance issues were raised and discussed at School MPT meetings. The apparent infrequency of detailed discussion at MPT meetings belied how much finance was an everyday consideration for the School Directors and me and embedded

\textsuperscript{9} The University electronic document repository.
within our thinking. I provided details of the finance meeting convened before Christmas and of the school meeting held in January at which finance was the focus.

I wanted to present myself to the auditors as knowledgeable, efficient and effective, in possession of a good grasp of financial processes and procedures. From our initial meeting how they viewed me was important. Prior to the audit I wanted to provide support to the finance administrators and technicians and give them clear guidance. The Dean was ultimately responsible for finance in the School but he invested day-to-day responsibility in me; I wished to demonstrate that I fulfilled this role and that the level of trust bestowed on me was appropriate. Overall, the auditors assessed our processes as being ‘very good’. It was reassuring for an experienced professional auditor to look at procedures. In addition to the asset register, there were some aspects of housekeeping which needed to be improved, including the transfer of authority for lower level expenses and orders to the finance administrator from the Dean or me, and more frequent banking of cash and cheques. Generally, it went well. I had known that they would find things that could be improved upon but I was still a little disappointed. I should have looked upon it as a learning opportunity and chance to enhance our processes and become more efficient. I gave the finance administrator a bottle of wine as a thank you for her hard work. Without her attention to detail the outcome could have been different. I sent an email to the other Aresso (finance system) users, copied to their line managers, thanking them for their preparation prior to the audit and assistance during it.

**Stress and Conflict.** The committee meeting had just finished. A self-inflicted busman’s holiday was the way I liked to think of it. In a moment of weakness, in addition to work, research, home and my children, I had agreed to take a voluntary position on a youth sport club committee. I enjoyed it really; the other committee
members were from a similar background all trying to balance busy lives, while supporting youth sport and one another.

“Jane”, I look over to the man, John, who has spoken. Most of the others committee members are putting their papers, pens and mobile phones back in their bags, chatting or hurrying out of the door. “You do HR stuff don’t you?” He enquires.

“Yes,” I reply hesitantly. “Do you have to dash off or could I ask your advice on something?” I glance at my watch; 8 o’clock. “Of course, no problem” I move round to where he’s sitting and we wait for the others to leave the room.

“It’s an issue at work with a couple of the chefs.” he says.

“Oh god, chefs, mmm, there’s a subject that I know something about.” I reply.

“Oh course, you used to work in catering didn’t you.”

I remember from a previous conversation that John is a restaurant manager.

“Yeah, I did, a while ago now, but etched on my memory! What’s the problem?”

“Well, there’re only two female chefs in the whole kitchen. Last week one of them, Sonia, told the second chef that she’d been signed off work for two weeks by her GP. She then spent the next half-hour crying in his office.”

“What’s she signed off work with?” I enquired.

“Stress, caused, she told him, by the other female chef. Any advice, I could just do with a second opinion” he confides.

“These things rarely resolve themselves. It’s unlikely that a couple of weeks at home will result in any change in your chef’s outlook or thinking. Have you spoken with the other chef, what’s her name?” I ask.

“Tracey, and no I haven’t and I don’t think the head chef has either.”

“Chances are she’ll know why her colleague’s off work and be feeling a bit uneasy about it all.”
“Yes, I’d heard that from one of the waiters who was chatting with Tracey in the staff room. I’ll suggest to the head chef that he meets her.”

“Is it all down to Tracey or d’you think there’s more to it?”

“Well, Sonia’s had a difficult few months. A couple of months ago she was signed off work for three weeks when she was knocked off her scooter on the way to work. Nothing broken she just had concussion.”

“Three weeks off.” I remark. “Sorry I’ve interrupted.’

“And she’s just bought a flat and there’s the staffing review with the potential for redundancies at her grade.”

“Money worries always make things difficult, especially if you’ve a mortgage too.” I comment in agreement.

“She doesn’t socialise much either. You know, the rest of us go out for a beer after work occasionally. She keeps herself to herself really.”

“What about Tracey?” I enquire.

“Despite family commitments she’ll join us when she can.”

“You say they’re both the same grade?”

“Yeah, but Tracey’s been with us a bit longer. She was after a bit more responsibility so she’s been helping the head chef by looking at quality control issues. I want to sort this out for the good of the whole team but that I’m not Sonia or Tracey’s line manager and I don’t want to stick my nose in where it’s not wanted or required.”

“I know what you mean, sometimes keeping a watching brief can be a bit tricky.”

John pauses. I let him gather his thoughts.

“You know, I think Sonia’s been a bit wobbly for a while, probably since she came off her scooter. She also told the second chef that she wasn’t very happy at work.”
“Why’s she not happy?”

“Well, it could be to do with the new head chef. He’s trying to improve standards in the kitchen and his management style’s a bit different. I don’t think Sonia’s taken to it well.”

“Can someone keep in contact with Sonia while she’s at home, just so she knows that she hasn’t been forgotten? And then if the head chef talks to Tracey. That’s probably about as much as you can do until Sonia’s back.”

“Thanks, Jane. It’s just been useful to clear my head a bit.”

“No, problem. See you at the next meeting.”

At the end of the next committee meeting I take the opportunity to speak with John. “How’re things at work now?” I ask

“That’s a coincidence”, he says. “I saw Tracey today. Still not great.”

“Why what’s happened?”

“Tracey came to find me in my office. She was really upset. She thinks she’s being used as the reason for Sonia’s stress but she thinks there’s more to it. Tracey’s turned to me because she feels she needs someone to look after her interests.

“So what happened? Is Sonia back in work now then?”

“Yeah, she was off initially for two weeks but then signed off for a further week as she didn’t feel ready to come back. She’s been back two or three days now I think.”

“So how’re things between them?”

“Well, Tracey just wants to clear the air between them but Sonia’s having none of it. The atmosphere in the kitchen isn’t great. Tracey reckons that Sonia’s curt and abrupt with her and it’s the most Sonia can do to say hello.”

“Just what you need in a small team!”

“I understand Tracey’s desire to sort it out and move on.”
“Mmm, know what you mean.”

“The other reason Tracey came to see me is she’s not sure that Sonia was ready to return to work. Evidently, she burst into tears when one of the waiters asked her how she was.

“Have you spoken to Sonia at all?”

“No, but I made some enquiries. She told the second chef how tired she felt and that she wasn’t ready to chat to Tracey just yet. She’s agreed to go to the team meeting the next week as long as the second chef’s there.”

“I think that as far as possible you should give Sonia a bit of space but make sure that the stress isn’t shifted to Tracey.”

“You know, I’ve learnt so much from this.”

“I find that too. Every staff situation that I’ve dealt with has to be treated individually even if it’s labelled similarly.”

“I think what I’ve taken away from it is the person who’s been implicated has feelings and worries too. I found it really difficult not to be biased or to take sides. I know Tracey and Sonia quite well but definitely identified with Tracey more.”

“I agree. Some staff find change difficult no matter what its type and pace, made worse, of course, if there are domestic or other factors at play.”

“Yeah, I think you’re right. You know what’s hardest about this?”

“Go on.”

“Well, last year I decided to start a master’s. I’m doing my dissertation right now and I’m basing my research on the workplace. This incident has really put me in a difficult position.”

“Why’s that?”
“Well, everyone knows about my research and I just have the feeling that they may not have wanted this issue to be part of it. I just think my research has compromised my position. I’ve felt at a bit on the periphery of this whereas previously I’d have been more involved. It’s been frustrating taking a back seat and leaving others to resolve it. Does that make sense?”

“Perfect sense.”

I spoke with John about six months later. He told me that the situation never really resolved itself but became workable when Sonia changed her shift pattern which reduced the need for and her and Tracey to communicate closely.

**Different Priorities.** I arranged to meet with the postgraduate PDs to discuss how to market their programmes. Prior to the meeting I obtained data from the student services department on ‘first destinations’, the student admissions unit supplied information on the university in which our postgraduate students completed their first degree, the market research officer provided details on student demographics and the web support team forwarded details on web page views over a 24 month period. I prepared a generic overview of the student profile for our postgraduate programmes with links to the source documents for the PDs so that they could look at the specific details. I was really annoyed when only three PDs attended the meeting; apologies were received from the others but their absence suggested that student recruitment was not a priority. Conversely, I had helped one of the postgraduate PDs put together information for an open evening to promote her course. We produced an advertising poster, a flyer and an information booklet. The PD was pleased with the number of students who attended which boded well for future enrolments. I met with two of the other postgraduate programme directors on an individual basis at a later date.
Due to the need to increase postgraduate student numbers, and following a meeting with two staff from the University’s marketing department and the postgraduate programmes coordinator we agreed that we would hold a Cardiff School of Sport postgraduate open afternoon. We set a date for the event at the start of May. The open afternoon was to be held in Bar Centro, a relaxed and welcoming environment at which refreshments would be available. We agreed that the Director of Research should be present too should any student be interested in a research degree. I worked with the PDs and creative services to produce marketing materials and advertise the event. The open afternoon was attended by just over 30 prospective students and judged to be a success. I organised a wash-up meeting with the communications, marketing and admissions staff who helped to run the event and sought thoughts and ideas for improvement from the PDs. We agreed that next year the same venue be used and set a date for around the same time of year. The meeting was positive and allowed us to build upon lessons learnt. Recruitment of students was a core task and despite my frustrations about the variable level of engagement among the PDs it needed to be promoted. I put aside my annoyance and worked with the communications and marketing team on pre-event publicity and then to capture and record what could be done to make the event better for future years.

_A Busy Couple of Weeks._ The DLT and I discussed the staff workload allocation model. I was to prioritise the production of a spreadsheet detailing staff’s academic management roles and input the hours worked on research and enterprise activities and on PhD supervision. Then the postgraduate joining instructions were dumped on me 48 hours before they needed to be submitted. Two months previously I had offered to prepare them on behalf of the postgraduate PDs but was told that my services were not required. I had even reminded the person who was meant to be
updating them that they were due. I was exasperated. I had so many other tasks to
complete including those for the workload model, that I did not have time for the long
and tedious (but very important) task of the joining information. Ian was busy with
exam boards and the other administrators were equally well occupied. It was just bad
planning. I spoke with the postgraduate coordinator and voiced my displeasure. It would
make me appear disorganised with the PDs who would have little time to check the
details and subsequently with the admissions staff who had given us plenty of time to
prepare the information. I felt that my goodwill and efficiency were being exploited. I
could not work efficiently unless I was given information and asked to do things in a
timely manner. The lack of understanding about the workload of others and the knock-
on effect annoyed me most. The lecturer who had been assigned the joining instructions
did not apologise for his failure and seemed unaware or ambivalent regarding the effects
of his inaction. Apart from the light relief of minibus driver training the rest of the week
was hectic. I felt frazzled.

I met one of the administration team for coffee. We discussed her forthcoming
unpaid leave and she asked if she might be able to take another two months off in order
to go travelling. Having travelled I understood the benefits and felt that her request
could be accommodated. She mentioned too that she was concerned about one of the
other administrators who had recently returned from four months travelling, had lost a
lot of weight and continued to have a negative attitude towards food since her return. I
lost a stone in weight during my travels and it took me some time to settle down to
‘normal’ life. I said that I would keep an eye on her and appreciated that this could be a
difficult time for her. The need to chat, to make time to see staff and to support them
was important. My personal experiences were useful in being able to empathise,
rationalise and advise.
Summary of School Issues.
The VS situation once again demonstrated staff’s parochial interest about their area of work and their need to know how they would be affected by the changes. Voluntary Severance also affected some of the School’s senior managers who found the situation difficult and themselves required advice and support. It was messy, difficult and emotional for those managing it, those remaining in post and for those leaving. There were similarities and differences between the two rounds of VS; it was important to learn from each but be sensitive to the individual situations. I remained unsure of my remit and the limits of my responsibility and decision making. I realised that lack of role clarity could have affected effectiveness as it caused hesitation and uncertainty. The positive relationship with Ted that was initiated during our first meeting helped us achieve the desired outcome for the new laboratory. My concern over how I appeared to others was evident during the financial audit and in terms of my concern over the appropriateness of my decision making. My annoyance over the lack of engagement in marketing the postgraduate programmes showed that it is important to develop an emotional means to deal with such situations and to move on. More and more I realised that others had different priorities and concerns and their method of and ability to cope with difficult situations varied.

University.

*Hey Mate - Email Etiquette.* Scott and I were tasked by the MPT with reviewing communication between staff and students. Although the University had an electronic communications policy we agreed that a short, succinct guide on email etiquette, to complement the policy document, was needed. I agreed to produce two guides, one for staff and one for students. An item was put into the MPT minutes in respect of this action. We sought comments from several younger and more junior
members of staff some of whom had received inappropriate emails from students; their observations were incorporated into the guide. The draft document was sent to the Dean of Students for approval. Creative Services then produced a pdf, engaging to students, to be used on the website and as a flyer. The finished policy was included in the plenary sessions for new and returning students during their induction week. Improving email communication would make a difference to staff. It was good to know that what was a minor task for me had the potential to make a difference for a large number of staff and good practice could be instilled into the students which would stand them in good stead for future employment.

Not long after our email etiquette had been agreed I was asked to attend a meeting on ‘New forms of communication’. I was the only BSM and the only school representative to be invited; the other attendees were the Director of Marketing, Director of Operations, Dean of Students, Head of Library and Information Services, Head of UWIC Foundation, SU General Manager and SU President. Due to inappropriate use of social media by students, and subsequent disciplinary action taken, the need for relevant guidance had been recognised. The meeting had been promoted when VCB members read the Cardiff School of Sport minute on our production of a guide to email etiquette and hence why I had been invited to the meeting. I explained the background to our actions and that we intended to launch it to students during September’s induction week. We discussed the concepts of private and public points of view and expressing these on social media. I sent the Head of Library and Information Services our guides. At the follow-up meeting it was agreed that the Cardiff School of Sport etiquette for students would be adopted across the university.

_Turf War._ There were other considerations, in addition to the financial ones, related to the acquisition of a classroom to be converted into additional laboratory
space. The need for the ground floor laboratory emanated from an attempt to improve disabled access to the first floor physiology laboratories. The lift to the first floor was some distance from the laboratories and anyone in a wheelchair had to take a convoluted journey to reach them. I had raised the issue with the disability officer and with the estates department directly and through the Health and Safety Committee and the Equality and Diversity Committee. Retro-fitting a lift closer to the laboratory was not viable financially; the best solution from a fire safety or other evacuation emergency perspective was the provision of a ‘refuge’. This did not though address routine access and egress for staff and students with mobility problems. The arrival of the professor in the School, whose research interests included work with spinally injured patients, exacerbated the issue. The alternative solution was a laboratory on the ground floor, directly underneath the current provision. This room was currently a classroom used for a small number for specialist art lectures and as general teaching space for students from both Schools on campus. This issue and solution were recorded in the MPT minutes, which were read by the VCB. Within a few weeks it was being investigated.

Early in the new year I met with physiology staff to clarify their requirements and then personnel from the estates department. The plans produced gave a better solution than we had imagined possible. I was so happy. We seemed a stage further towards gaining a ground floor laboratory. In early April RES announced the partial funding of the collaborative research project. This was allocated fully against the purchase of equipment but the balance was insufficient to fund the conversion of the classroom into a laboratory. Due to the greater than expected enterprise return we were able to fund the required works albeit to a lower specification. I then received an email from the Cardiff School of Education detailing the reasons why the room could not be relinquished. This issue was not going to be easily resolved. I met with a member of the
Cardiff School of Education management team to discuss the matter. We outlined our respective Schools’ positions. I wondered if we should have had the discussion earlier. The timetable manager had relocated all but three art lectures each week. I was frustrated. On the basis of earlier correspondence equipment for the new laboratory had been purchased. Furthermore, little recognition had been given to the increased student numbers in the School and the subsequent need for additional space. Our fallback position was to exchange the ground floor classroom for one of our specialist rooms but I knew that this was not what the Dean wanted. My approach was more conciliatory than his and I wanted, after all my efforts, to acquire the ground floor room. I was annoyed that the Cardiff School of Education had only engaged with the issue three weeks before the builders were due to start work. I had not felt so annoyed about a work issue for a long time. I was unable to achieve a resolution on my own and I became frustrated when I tried to be proactive and others were not. After the Dean asked the VCB to mediate the classroom was transferred to the Cardiff School of Sport. I still refused to believe it until the builders were in. Then, due to the wording of an email the reallocation of the room stalled again; the Cardiff School of Education questioned the word ‘exchange’. It was clarified to mean the room moving to the Cardiff School of Sport rather than a swap of resources. The builders finally started the conversion at the end of August and the work took about five weeks. The physiology team were pleased with the finished laboratory. It had been a long and painful process.

Although worth it in the end, it had been a saga. I alternated between feeling very happy to being utterly frustrated. It took up much of my time and that of the estates department and timetable unit. Initially all that was required of me was an ability to make a case and work with a central department; however, as the transfer went on I had to deal with power, influence and parochial concern with each school fighting its corner.
The episode temporarily affected relations between the two academic schools on the Cyncoed Campus. Inter-school communication was poor and earlier discussions may have lead to a quicker resolution rather than a protracted disagreement. Although the Cardiff School of Education lost the use of a classroom the additional space aided our research aims and provided an accessible laboratory. It indicated different strategies and the absence of a clear strategy, in terms of the Schools’ or University’s aims, research or learning and teaching, dedicated space or general space. Rather than being pleased with the outcome, I was just tired. The ‘fighting’ and the inability to achieve a local resolution took the shine off the result

*The Office.* I cycle up the drive to our house. My Mum, who is helping look after the boys while Nick is away, sees me through the sitting room window and opens the door. I wheel my bike into the kitchen and take off my helmet, gloves and shoes.

“Good day?” she enquires.

“I’ve had better,” I reply. “Where’re the boys?”

“Round at Joe’s house.”

“Tea?” Mum asks.

“Love one, thanks.”

“So, what was the problem then?”

“It’s an investigation that HR asked me to do, things are never quite as they first appear are they?”

“Not in my experience. Remind me of the issue.”

“Let’s sit down first. It’ll be useful to talk it through”

Mum hands me my mug of tea and we walk through to the sitting room. I place the mug on the coffee table and flop onto the sofa. The cat jumps up hoping for attention. I scratch behind her ear while thinking.
“Right, where to start,” I pause briefly. “I was asked to investigate because I don’t know any of the staff involved. I read the paperwork that HR sent me. It appeared there’d been issues with the administrator’s performance for a while.”

“Like what?” Mum asks.

“Always being on the internet, timekeeping, personal phone calls, that type of thing.”

“Ah, remember the days before mobile phones and the internet. I feel old!” Mum sighs. “What was her work like?”

“Generally good it appears. I interviewed her line manager last week and she said that there’re no problems with what she does, it’s just getting her to do it. That just made it harder to understand.” I reach over and pick up my mug.

“What’s the line manager’s take on it?” asks Mum, as I take a mouthful of tea.

“Well, she felt bad for letting it progress to the disciplinary stage, she felt a bit responsible. I mean the administrator’s been off work now for a month with stress.”

“So what’s she stressed about?” Mum enquires. “Shouldn’t it have been her colleagues who were stressed by her absence?”

“That was the line manager’s worry. It’s a small team and they picked up her work in addition to their own. You can imagine how they must’ve felt. But evidently the administrator felt harassed and bullied by her supervisor. She emailed HR one morning stating that she didn’t like the way the supervisor had spoken to her and shown her up in front of her colleagues. That was the final straw as far as she saw it. She went to her GP who signed her off work.”

“And was she being bullied?” enquires Mum.
“I’ve interviewed the supervisor too. I think she was just trying to get a day’s work from her. Her only mistake was to speak with her in the open office but she’d often given her the benefit of the doubt when she was late.”

“So where’s the issue then? You said nothing is ever quite as it seems.”

“Mmm, I thought after reading the paperwork and interviewing the line manager and the supervisor that the interview with the administrator would be straightforward. I was meant to see her last week but she didn’t turn up. I was so annoyed, no regard for how busy we all are.”

“Any idea why she didn’t attend?”

“She was still signed off work and although we’d checked with occy health she didn’t feel ready so HR rearranged the meeting for today.” She turned up with a friend, which I wasn’t expecting. That didn’t bother me too much though, especially as she was a bit emotional and tearful.”

“I bet that made the interview more difficult.”

“Well, it progressed quite slowly. I needed to be careful about how I asked about her lateness and internet use. It was tough going especially trying to suggest that she think about her why the supervisor was abrupt with her. But then it all came flooding out. To cut a long story short it appears that her dad’s been unwell for a while, in and out of hospital, and it’s likely that her husband will be made redundant.”

“It never rains but it pours for some people,” Mum reflects. “So, what was the outcome?”

“The administrator will recieve an informal warning about her conduct. She’d been spoken to before about her timekeeping and use of the internet and we couldn’t let it go. The supervisor’s agreed to apologise for speaking to her in the open office about
her conduct. We’ll arrange for the administrator to see occupational health next week when she’s due back in work to see what support can be provided for her.”

“What was her reaction?”

“She wanted to know how her work colleagues were. I suggested that she’d have some bridges to build with them as she’d not been pulling her weight in the office and because they’d done her work while she was at home.”

“Was the line manager happy with the outcome?”

“We grabbed a coffee afterwards because she needed a chat and a bit of advice.”

“What about?”

“As I said she partly blamed herself for not dealing with the performance issues earlier. But it was hard, the administrator’s work was fine and it just started as five minutes late here and there and a few too many texts. I suggested that sometimes staff don’t realise the seriousness of their actions and a work issue can mask a personal one. I think the solution really is to try to manage the problem early on. The line manager also wanted to know how to handle the administrator’s first day back in the office.”

“What did you suggest?”

“That perhaps she be given time to settle back in and then an informal chat about standards as well as some support. I also suggested that doing something to recognise the efforts of the rest of the team might go down well.” I placed my empty mug back on the table.

“You know in every job I’ve had I must’ve come across a situation where someone in the office doesn’t quite fit in, can’t cope with any level of pressure, or doesn’t pull their weight,” I contemplate thoughtfully.

“Like what?” enquires Mum.
“One person dried their hair in the office after going to the gym. Seemingly trivial but everyone else found it annoying. When I worked in London one of the finance administrators couldn’t cope and put invoices and the like in the bin. It took months to rebuild the accounts.”

“Really?” Mum gasps.

“And in Epsom I had one member of staff, a PA with a master’s degree, who thought that routine tasks were beneath her. There were some real status, power and control issues at play. I can’t remember exactly what happened but there were words between her and another member of staff. The way the PA spoke to people was just dreadful and I ended up wishing that I’d said something to her earlier about her tone of voice. I didn’t realise how her manner was affecting her colleagues.”

“The delights of office work. I’m so glad that I don’t have to deal with those issues anymore!” Mum teases.

“Trouble is they’re all different and rarely as they first seem. You always have to go in with an open mind. Sometimes it’s work issues, sometimes domestic, maybe boredom, or a desire for status and control. And for the manager it’s just so hard to stay calm, discreet, impartial and professional. You just can’t learn how to deal with that stuff from a book or a training course.”

“My sentiments exactly,” replies Mum. The boys burst through the front door. “We’re hungry,” they call in unison. “What d’ you fancy for dinner?”

Summary of University Issues.

The need to keep up to date with technological change was noticed across the University. The pace of change in relation to email and social media had been fast and brought with it a host of unforeseen issues. Our pro-active approach resulted in my attending a central meeting and gave me the opportunity to discuss issues with those in
a position to make University policy. I was pleased because it showed the School in a positive light. My profile and abilities were also noted by HR as I was their choice of investigating officer. I noted how I had used the term a ‘safe pair of hands’ in two narratives. The first time was when I described one of the candidates for the Lead Administrator post and the second in reference to my qualities. In relation to the HR investigation, the importance of undertaking a task outside my normal remit helped to inform my managerial practice and ensure that I honed my interview and report writing skills; the additional task also presented me with a challenge and prevented boredom and complacency. The infighting over the classroom was an example of things not always going to plan but belief that it was a cause worth pursuing ensured that I was not deflected from the task. However, had I communicated better with the Cardiff School of Education an earlier and less fraught resolution might have been possible. As described in ‘The Office’, the HR investigation demonstrated that managing staff, no matter what the level of experience of the manager, is difficult. I reflected on whether earlier intervention in the situation that I investigated and personal experience in similar situations would have prevented such negative outcomes. I had always found it hard to accept that such issues are almost inevitable when managing staff and can be beyond one’s control. The line manager and I had to deal with our emotions and annoyance about what seemed relatively trivial matters. I learnt to accept personality differences and that the way that others cope, or not, is not the same as how I cope and deal with problems. The line manager needed to facilitate and support the administrator’s return to work and put her personal feelings aside. Although the administrator’s actions were difficult to countenance there appeared to be mitigating circumstances and it was important to appreciate different thoughts, values and actions. It was an illustration of
how ethos and culture can be misinterpreted or abused to the detriment of the department.

Personal.

The Reality of Research. At the end of January I sent a number of reflections to my supervisors. Despite being a year into my research I was still concerned about how my work would be received. One reflection (‘A Winter’s Tale’) was very personal and revealed a lot about me; I did not want it to affect our working relationship. A swift email response following its submission to the team put my mind at rest. I started thinking and questioning words and phrases that I had used, if I had conveyed my meaning correctly and perhaps the guilt that I was feeling. In mid-February, following a meeting with my supervisory team, I started writing a paper ‘Taking the Plunge’ which was to form the first chapter of my thesis. I was nervous because, as my first piece of academic writing, this was a far scarier prospect than reflective writing. I remained worried about not being academically capable of the work. On a positive note, the trust and understanding developing between my supervisory team and me in relation to my PhD seemed to spill over into our work roles.

In February I was busy with routine BSM work as well as redundancy and finance issues. After a year of reflecting on my managerial practice I felt able to draw on previous work to inform current actions and to make sense of events and thoughts. I felt that my outlook was more considered and noted that my advice and opinion were being sought on a variety of matters. I did not know if this was coincidental or if my research had brought about a change in me. I was more aware and sensitive to moral dilemmas, self-presentation and role conflict. Due to recurrent themes I could see developments and progress. The timing of my research, during those turbulent times,
was useful because the reflective practice benefited my managerial competence, which affected my management of school level change.

The reflective nature of my work was making me tired. I started to wake in the early hours of the morning with issues associated with my research running through my head. Evidently this was not uncommon; a notebook beside the bed was suggested. I knew that these insomniac habits were not conducive to a good work or family life. Going to the gym and cycling with the boys helped to make me physically tired. There was no room for reflective thought cycling on the velodrome centimetres from the rider in front’s back wheel. My research reared its head at unlikely times. During Sunday lunch the conversation turned to how one of the girls in the cycle club came off the track dripping with sweat but then did her make-up before going onto the podium; from nowhere I thought ‘image and self-presentation’. During the spring half term I took two days leave. On the first day I took the boys to a play area. They liked going there and I was able to read while they played. We arrived just after opening time and I found a table in the corner at which to sit. I looked around. The mothers usually arrived in pairs or groups with their children and chatted together over coffee. There were a few dads, all of whom were on their own. I had a table to myself on which I placed drinks bottles, bananas and a plastic container with snacks. I was reading one book and alongside me was a second, a journal article and paper and pencil. A woman approached me and asked if I worked there. I looked up from my book and said no; she apologised and commented that I looked like I did. I smiled to myself and the irony that I was reading Goffman. Despite my age, attire and the food and drink, the books and paper and my ‘isolation’ in the corner had marked me out as ‘different’. Weekends took on a familiar routine. Saturday was a family day. Sunday morning I read with the boys and we practised their spellings. Nick took them to cycle training or to a race and I had time to
myself. I would go out on my bike for an hour and then, with a clearer head, settle down to read. On their return I would spend time with the boys. We gardened, cooked dinner and then ate together. It became a careful balance between work, research and motherhood.

I needed to send the Management Research Information Sheet about my research to all Cardiff School of Sport staff but had put off doing so. The work had been progressing well and I was worried that others might interact differently with me when they knew the nature of my research. However, I felt uncomfortable about not telling staff. I hoped that once informed any behavioural changes would be short lived and my research activities soon forgotten. On sending the Information Sheet to the staff I had a few positive replies and one phone call, about a separate matter, in which the caller jokingly checked that the call was not being recorded.

In April an elderly relative, who lived in Kent, died. I decided go by train to attend her funeral; I could then study for two hours each way between Cardiff and London. The degree to which I had rearranged my life to fit in PhD study impacted at many levels. The funeral provided further proof that my perspective had changed. I looked at the undertakers in their suits and the Minister in his robes and thought of Goffman and image. I read the eulogy. The Minister noted beforehand how calm and collected I appeared and then afterwards commented similarly and that I seemed practised in speaking. I was interested in how I appeared to this stranger.

I completed a first draft of the ‘Taking the Plunge’ chapter just before Easter. The increased workload including finance, VS and recruitment had taken precedence over the research and it has taken longer than I had hoped to reach that point. Writing it had been interesting and I was able to find a reasonable amount of time in work to complete it because of the Easter break. I found that less than four hours to work on the
chapter was difficult. I needed longer spaces of time for academic writing and if possible to write on consecutive days. A couple of weeks later I received comments from my supervisory team on the chapter; they liked it but I kicked myself about some silly mistakes. The reading that was suggested on social support and coping and on mental toughness led me to question the managerial role. I was inclined to think that if I was not looking at the ‘big issues’ (e.g., finance, HR, estates, policies and plans) that I was not doing my job. Sometimes, at the end of a working day, although busy, I seemingly had not accomplished anything tangible. The provision of advice, information and guidance was probably as valuable as looking at the bigger strategic and operational parts of the job. We met in June to discuss the methodology chapter. I felt more in control, confident and less flustered than in our previous PhD meetings. The methodology chapter was going to be a challenge but I was more certain that I could cope with its academic demands. Writing the first chapter had allayed fears about my academic writing ability. Furthermore, I had not experienced any difficulties or uncertainties with the autonomous nature of the research. I had expected to be floundering and to have lost direction but this had not happened and I remained happy with what I was doing.

Work Hard and Play Hard. I was slightly hung-over; more jaded than anything. It had been a late night by my standards. I woke early with thoughts whirring through me head knowing that I needed to write but not wanting to get out of bed and disturb the rest of the sleeping household. I had attended the graduation ceremony in the Wales Millennium Centre and the School prizegiving which took place after the main ceremony. At the conclusion of formalities the School staff proceeded to a bar in Cardiff Bay. The Dean spoke and gave gifts to the staff who were leaving. Most staff went for food before returning to the bar for more drinks. It was an interesting evening.
This annual event and the one at Christmas were part of the school culture and ethos; the School at play. Getting to know a bit more about the staff with whom I worked was important. Three of the administration staff were there. Ian thanked me for recruiting him. I was struck by even after five months how much it meant to him. Colleagues seemed to be looking forward to the summer break. Everyone I spoke with said how tired they were and in need of time to relax. The sudden hospitalisation of a lecturer shocked everyone. Staff were genuinely concerned. The Dean stopped proceedings in the bar to give an update. For many, including me, it put life into perspective. I noted how this member of staff wanted colleagues to know about his illness.

One of the lecturers asked how my research was progressing. They commented that they had thought twice about coming to see me earlier in the year about an issue because of my research. They had come to see me but I had not written about the issue. I wondered if my selection of what I wrote about was biased. I remembered the issue and the conversation very clearly; but I had no cause to write about it. The problem had not involved me and it would not have reflected badly on the lecturer. On this basis I wondered why they had reservations about coming to see me. The conversation showed that my research could impact upon my role, the running of the School and staff’s efficiency. The lecturer commented that they thought it would be difficult for me to write truthfully as I could be tempted not to record something if I was questioning my actions. Although a concern I did not think it to be the case. The lecturer then proceeded to tell me about apparent failures in areas that were part of my remit including conference attendance and the recent omission of postgraduate awards at the School prizegiving. During a separate conversation, a female lecturer mentioned the imbalance of men to women in the School. I said that actually in numerical terms there was no longer a big difference. We agreed that there were more men in management positions.
in the School certainly at undergraduate level. She recounted an observation from a colleague who after shortly after starting work in the School attended a committee meeting and afterwards commented on how testosterone-fuelled it had been. I seemed to have been de-sensitised to the masculine environment. Ted joined me, clinked glasses and said thank you. I had helped him with a number of issues but as these were part of my job I felt rather embarrassed. The following week I cycled with five female colleagues from work. The culture at work and the time of academic year made this activity during the working day permissible. We enjoyed it and agreed to go out again. I also arranged an administration team day out; we played nine holes of golf (badly) and had a pub lunch.

**Summary of Personal Issues.**

In order to manage my research alongside other commitments I realised that I had to renegotiate how I balanced my roles and activities. Out of work activities, especially taking exercise in the form of cycling, helped me maintain a sense of perspective at times when research was dominating my thoughts. There was a convergence of the benefits of reflective practice which had a positive effect on my managerial practice especially my ability to think differently. I began to realise more and more that managerial work was not just about money, recruitment or producing a marketing plan, the tangible stuff which could be seen and counted but the subjective stuff too, like emotional and social support. Facilitating, leading, guiding and supporting seemed to be as important as the hard managerial skills and tasks. Self-presentation was a regular feature of my writing. Its importance to me and to others, in all manner of situations, and the signals that were sent and conveyed was enlightening. The more I wrote about it the more significant it became in my reflections. In the RAF I was criticised for my lack of self-publicity and for not always seeking the roles that would overtly raise my profile
with senior officers. It was for me to ‘tell’ rather than for my bosses to look and take notice. This way of managing staff ignores those whose presentation in the workplace is quiet and unassuming and who support others for the sake of the team and the organisation rather than for personal gain. Relationships initiated at work were enhanced by attendance at social events. These social evenings aided team cohesion and understanding. Furthermore, information imparted informed my research, forced me to consider any personal bias in my research, provided an alternative view on the School and revealed how I was perceived. It also kept the issues of managing multiple roles and role conflict sharply in view and reminded me of the difficulties involved with being both a manager and a researcher.

**Emerging Themes and Learning Points.**

Themes continued to emerge and develop during this period:

- The requirements to be self-motivated, to possess drive and energy, and to juggle roles and a wide range of tasks and to make a decision were again apparent.

- The need for the manager to look after his or her well-being, to avoid burnout and tiredness, and to cope with the demands of work and home were evident. This included getting adequate sleep, taking time for relaxation, to attend social events and for exercise, and having someone to talk to about work related issues.

• Emotion in the workplace was a recurring theme. It included a need to recognise and control emotions and subsequent responses and recognise emotions in staffs and colleagues.

• An understanding of, and response to, conflict and difficult situations necessitated an appreciation of anxiety, coping and of home and work-based stressors and daily hassles.

• Knowing how and when to deal with difficult situations and difficult staff in order to achieve a timely and workable solution and the effect of emotional contagion on the team was a clear requirement.

• Links between the management of emotions, the ability to make a decision and how others perceived me and my role were noted. Feeling comfortable in my role and working within the limits of my responsibility made it easier to make a decision; in turn making a decision helped me to manage and control my workload and hence any related anxiety.

• Building and maintaining relationships and recognising the contribution of individuals as well as teams was important to achieve things; effective relationships linked to the theme of social support.

• Little things were as important as strategy, policy, plans and management meetings, be they informal chats with staff or completing everyday tasks.

Autumn 2011

Financial Stability. In September I received the end of year outturn for 2011/2012. A deficit of £112,000 was achieved compared with the £150,000 deficit that had been forecast (the delayed building work to the laboratory resulted in £40,000 being paid in the next financial year). During the five years that devolved budgeting had been
in place the model for allocating financial resources changed, staff and student numbers increased, there had been two rounds of VS and in-year budget cuts. Despite these changes, the School had moved into the sixth year in a break-even position. At the whole school meeting at the start of term I provided an update on the financial situation. Having given prior consideration to the message I wished to convey I stated that our position was manageable and better than had been anticipated but there was no room for complacency. Costs still needed to be controlled and the situation remained uncertain especially with the forthcoming changes in tuition fees and the subsequent effect on student numbers.

Although I had struggled with the finance module during my MBA managing the School’s budget effectively was arguably one of my best achievements. Costs were controlled and there was little movement on the School’s predicted position each month. I treated the School budget like my own personal finances. I developed a good relationship with the other staff in the School responsible for purchasing. The finance administrator and the technicians sought the best deals and controlled their departmental spending. Maintaining a relationship with key finance staff was also important; I spoke on the phone and met them every couple of months outside the scheduled monthly finance meetings. I liked to have some rainy day money and to work on worst case scenarios. I usually kept the staff in the School informed on a need to know basis. Staying abreast of what was going on across the School helped me to make financial provision for its activities. Changing the financial culture of the School took time but it was worth it. We had achieved stability and viability.

**Still Not an Easy Decision.** Towards the end of the autumn term HR issues were prominent again. Following the three-year secondment of an administrator to a higher grade post in one of the other academic schools I started the recruitment and selection
process for the vacant post. The Director of Research post, undertaken on a three year rotational basis, had been put out to internal advert. I advertised for a 0.4 FTE tennis lecturer and a 0.4 FTE programmes administrator. Together with the manager of the Welsh language unit I had compiled applications to fund two Welsh medium lecturer posts. The other area of HR management which I was leading was the recruitment of two 0.4 FTE technician demonstrators for the physiology laboratory who would each be expected to undertake a PhD. With much of the research being in the area of cardiac function, which required the use of cardiac ultrasound and female research participants to be undressed to their bra, one of the posts had to be filled by a female. Following consultation with HR it was agreed that we could specify the sex of the person recruited. It was new ground for me, and interesting, because although I knew that it was lawful in certain situations to specify the sex I had never had cause to do so.

We interviewed for a replacement administrator in early December. Three of the five candidates were considered to be appointable. A debate ensued, not on the basis of their ability to do the job but on how they would fit in with the School and the admin team. Despite my previous reflections on recruitment and selection each set of candidates and interviews were different. Although the discussions were the same about the fit with the School and the job, the personalities of the candidates and what they brought were always different. It was a judgement call, it was head and heart and intuition. If there was a formula it would be simple but there was not. I was dealing with people and their hopes and desires, and the needs of the School and the team. It was at the same time interesting, fascinating and difficult. There was weight of expectation that the panel would select the ‘right’ candidate, the ‘best’ candidate, whatever that meant. I had to face up to my biases, expectations and prejudices in a very short space of time; too old, too young, too much of a ‘wide boy’, too quiet, too full-on. All these
judgements were made so quickly and impetuously. The Dean and I had a different perspective on the best candidate but I trusted his judgement on the right fit for the organisation. After sleeping on it I think we made a good appointment. Sometimes the ‘right’ candidate was obvious and unanimous. On this occasion I felt bombarded by information and unable to think as clearly as I might. A step away from the situation was needed. The next day, when less tired, a decision was easier and the best candidate emerged naturally. I phoned the successful candidate who was delighted.

A week later we interviewed for a programmes administrator. There were two internal applicants. One of the applicants had been working in the School in a casual capacity and had proven her worth. I had no qualms about potential lack of experience. Learning from previous recruitment and selection processes I was convinced that personal qualities were as important as direct experience. The student also lectured, held coaching positions and was eager to take on additional roles such as student ambassador or casual administration work; she was offered the post. I felt a bit guilty. The School had been accused of favouring its own but this had also been described as a strength. My view was that I was employing and assisting a research student in a mutually beneficial arrangement. We would gain two days a week good quality programme support and the applicant would develop a range of skills which, coupled with her academic qualifications would make her very employable.

**Bringing it all Together.** I seemed compelled to write about the recruitment and selection process. It was one area in which the action research cycle was readily identifiable and where I was able to use information from one recruitment process to help inform the next. In this instance it was the selection of two technicians capable of undertaking PhDs. During the interviews I brought together many elements of my experiences, learning and reflection. With nine candidates it was going to be a long day
but I was excited by the prospect of interviewing for the posts. I was entirely comfortable with the process and what I was looking for in the candidates and was confident that we would make two good appointments. I knew the other panel members well and we were not afraid to speak our minds. We had socialised together at Cardiff School of Sport events and I had cycled with one of them. We were all dressed in standard interview attire. Most of the candidates were similarly dressed. How they looked was important. One candidate unwittingly had his suit collar turned up which was noticed by all the panel members. Another had a carrier bag (presumably with food and reading material for the train) which looked amiss. We planned time to talk with the candidates in a more informal environment to find out a bit about them. How they interacted with the other candidates and the discipline team was important. They also had time with PhD students researching in the area of physiology and health and with the full-time technician demonstrator who was also a doctoral student. From personal experience I appreciated the nature and importance of the supervisory relationship. Time was made for them to speak with the members of the supervisory teams too. It had to be a two-way street. During the formal interview the candidates’ thoughts on starting a PhD, why they wanted to read for one, what they thought it entailed and its realities were interesting. How they intended to combine the research alongside their paid employment and family commitments turned my thoughts to my first chapter ‘Taking the Plunge’ and its relevance to others. As their line manager, I understood the requirements of the role of the technician demonstrator. The other panel members and I considered what technician skills could be taught and learnt relatively easily and balanced this with how the candidates might interact with students, academic staff, other support staff, their supervisors and research participants. Amongst other personal qualities they needed to demonstrate maturity, self-motivation and resilience.
At the end of the interview day I was mentally exhausted. I cycled in the evening; I felt better for the exercise and the change of activity. Next morning I woke early with thoughts of the interviews whizzing through my head. A decision had been made the previous evening about which candidates to appoint but it was suggested and mutually agreed that the successful candidates would not be contacted until the next day to allow us time to reflect on our decisions.

**Summary of School Issues.**

Team work and steady culture change helped to bring financial stability to the School. The hard skills and knowledge of HR processes and law were brought together with the softer skills required to interview and appoint new staff. The need for the prospective candidates to fit in with the team, as well as to perform well in post, was at the forefront of the panel’s consideration. Once again it showed that recruitment of staff is more than a box ticking exercise, that there is no formula for getting the right person, that it is mentally tiring and never easy. The other panel members and I made some judgements about the candidates based on how they presented themselves at interview. Taking time to think about the interviews before making a final decision on the selected candidates gave us time to reflect away from the intensity of the day. Taking exercise helped to clear my head.

**University.**

*What’s in a Name?* On 1st November 2011 the University title changed from UWIC to Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC). There was confusion over how the name should appear after the first use, for example to CMU or Cardiff Met or always used in full. There was lack of consensus across the University on brand identity for the new name and how the UWIC brand should continue to be used was also unclear. The planned domain name changed after 1000 prospectuses for the School’s undergraduate
programmes had gone to print. Clarity and a unified approach were required to maintain visibility, especially in relation to our sport activities in which the UWIC brand was strong. Without a new brand name and logo we risked diluting or losing our market-place identity; conversely, a strong brand would aid our marketing and promotional efforts. With so much ambiguity I decided to act and set up a meeting between managers and staff involved with communications and marketing, the Dean of School and Director of Sport, sports facility staff, and SU / Athletic Union. Although it was good to initiate the action an earlier, planned implementation would have been better. We seemed to be the only School driving the need for a strong identity for the University. At the meeting the main areas for discussion were branding, logo and how Cardiff Metropolitan University should be used and abbreviated in policy documents, academic papers, prospectuses, and the web. The meeting was useful and productive but long overdue. Questions remained that needed to be addressed or confirmed by other departments, for example how would the name change affect the bank accounts and to whom cheques should be made payable. A few weeks later a colleague and I met with Director of Marketing and a colleague from the creative services unit to review the Cardiff Met logo that had been designed to replace the UWIC one. My initial thoughts on the new logo were that it lacked imagination and was too long (having to incorporate the Welsh too) but we played about with it on the Mac placing different text above and below the Archer\(^{10}\). The letters were lower case and in a distinctive font, which was easy to read at a distance. It grew on me. The logo was agreed and guidelines for use would be compiled and circulated.

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\(^{10}\) The Welsh Bowman (the Archer) is the logo for the Cardiff School of Sport and for Cardiff Met Sport.
The importance of a name seemed to have been missed. What might initially have appeared to be a relatively straightforward task had been complex. The knock-on implications had been under-estimated as had the need to communicate, consult and keep staff informed of the changes. Although the name change needed to be done quickly more time, effort and money were required and consultation with interested stakeholders in a timely manner.

**Personal.**

*Normal Feelings.* At the end of September I had a lunchtime dentist appointment. About to leave the office I noticed that one of my staff seemed upset. I stopped to ask if she was alright as I knew that a visit at the weekend to an elderly relative had not gone well. Tearfully, she talked with me about the situation; I suggested that it was not about being strong or weak and that being emotional was understandable. She became calmer and I left the office a little late. I apologised to the receptionist for my tardy arrival. She remembered me from my previous appointment when, noting my military background, we had started chatting about her husband who was a member of an emergency services team. I asked her how he was. She told had been called to an incident recently at which there had been fatalities and that although it was his job it had been difficult for him. I told her that during service in the RAF I had been involved in the aftermath of a fatal aircraft crash and that although everyone was aware of the possibility it did not make it any easier when it happened. She searched her bag and found a photograph of her husband. At that point I was called by the dentist. Later that day, back at work, I commented to a colleague that I was looking forward to a couple of days away from home while I tutored on the Brecon residential. He looked at me with a mixture of surprise and gratitude and said that with a young baby at home that was how he felt too. People seemed to want reassurance that their emotions and feelings
were normal. They did not like to admit that they needed a couple of days away from
their children, that they were struggling to deal with an elderly relative’s behaviour or
that death had affected them even when it was a possible element of their job. The need
for support in the form of the chance to talk was important.

Towards the end of term a lecturer who had been on long term sick leave came
to see me about a phased return to work. We discussed assistance with working from
home and the need to resolve associated IT issues. It was agreed that a new laptop be
purchased to replace his four year old one; he requested a lighter model as he was not
permitted to drive and was travelling by foot, bike or public transport. It was a
productive conversation and the lecturer appeared less worried about his return. One of
the technician demonstrators agreed to source the new laptop and offered to set it up and
give instruction on how to use the system at home. It was sometimes the seemingly
small issues, such as the timely purchase of appropriate IT that allowed a member of
staff to operate effectively, that made a difference.

A little while after the lecturer’s return to work he asked to see me about a
couple of matters. After discussing the first issue which was work-related he seemed a
little uncomfortable as he mentioned that there was a matter related to his recent
sickness absence that he wanted to talk about. He explained that his return to work had
probably been too quick, that family members had suggested that he was doing too
much and his emotional response to a colleague who had asked how he was following
his ill-health. He said that despite his emotion he was alright. I listened. I agreed that his
return had been fairly rapid. I thought back to my stay in hospital and my desire to
return to work earlier than advisable and an emotional reaction the previous summer
when neonatal units had been mentioned unexpectedly in conversation. Either we were
both normal or we were both emotional wrecks. I did not understand what he had been
through with his illness but I could empathise. The lecturer was more open about it than I had been about my hospitalisation which I had hidden from almost everyone.

However, we were both keen to return to work and to be seen to be ‘pulling our weight’ despite concerns from family and friends about returning too soon. I suggested that working from home on occasion would be sensible and reasonable as would shorter days in the office; his health and well-being were more important than being in work from 9 to 5 every day. It was easier to suggest a course of action to someone else than to do it myself. The conversation remained in my thoughts over the weekend. I was flattered that he had talked to me. I did not know the reason for this. Perhaps it was because of the help and support that I provided during his phased return to work or because I was easier to find than other members of the management team.

Renegotiating Roles. By autumn 2011 I had been registered for a PhD for a year. The hours required were as anticipated but fortunately the research was not a chore or arduous. I remained surprised by how well my work was received. I knew that I could write well for reports, citations and other formal documents but not that my work would be considered to be engaging. I moved, most of the time, with relative ease between my disparate roles of researcher, manager and work colleague, wife and mother. The research and being a researcher had changed me. I had become more aware of how I presented myself physically and emotionally; how I presented myself in conversations and during meetings was important. I was even more organised than I had been previously, seemingly accounting for every hour. I gave thought to the tone and content of my written correspondence including routine emails and became annoyed if my meaning was less than clear.

I had not been able to give the PhD as much time as I wanted but I had prepared a draft of ‘Taking the Plunge’ to send to a second journal for review. I had also done a
little work on the methodology chapter. The more I tried to make time during the working day to spend on the chapter the busier with my primary role I seemed to become. I took stock of what I was doing and what could be delegated. There had been a reasonable but not excessive number of meetings and plenty of email traffic. Human Resource issues, predominantly involving recruitment and selection, had taken much of my time. I had analysed a spreadsheet to ensure that the baseline data about staffing and Higher Education Statistics Agency numbers were accurate. The spreadsheets were only sent to me and a colleague in another school as it was known that I would check the data accurately. This was another example of the downside of doing a good job. My advice had been sought on various issues. With the exception of a couple of coffee breaks I had worked almost constantly all week. In the short term I was efficient and effective but working at that level was unsustainable. I continued to feel guilty about working from home on occasion, predominantly because I expected the administration staff to be in work and available to assist staff and students. I liked to be seen to be in the office and to lead by example but I needed some quiet time away from it too. By the end of November work was quieter and I had time to dedicate to the methodology chapter. I was less anxious and more clearer headed. Having larger chunks of time benefited my writing. A sense of balance was restored between work, home and PhD.

**Boredom and Frustration.** I had trouble motivating myself for the start of the new academic year. It was the repeat jobs that I did not want to do. Checking induction arrangements for new students, reviewing and distributing the freshers’ survey, and updating the undergraduate prospectus did not fill me with enthusiasm. I liked the new and different tasks but not the routine. The lack of motivation continued into the autumn term. I did not enjoy the Brecon residentials as much as I had previously. Work had become rather repetitive and the battles that I fought seemed to be about issues that
could easily be resolved. The saving grace was that I continued to enjoy the company of my work colleagues. By mid-October I was so fed up I wondered how quickly I could finish the PhD and change job. Due to the action research nature of the PhD, the supervision arrangement and the waiver of tuition fees I needed to remain in the job until the thesis had been submitted. Management meetings had been particularly frustrating. I had requested that staff performance reviews be an agenda item but even before I tabled the subject I sensed that there was little appetite for discussion. Fewer than half the staff in the School had received a performance review the previous year and I wanted to explore reasons for this low number. The importance of reviews seemed to be missed by some colleagues around the table especially in terms of an audit trail and documentary evidence for any future redundancy, performance and equality situations. After much arbitrary discussion it was agreed that I would send an email to all academic staff advising them that if they wanted to change reviewer to make a case and also to ascertain from staff who had not been reviewed why this was the case. At the management meeting I also requested a discussion on the need for additional administrative support. One issue was that the administration team had outgrown the space in the main school offices. There were two, two-person offices in Warwick House each with only one occupant, there was also space available in the Queenswood office block and the Welsh language office which was large enough for four people but only occupied by two staff. I mentioned that I was embarrassed by there not being appropriate desk space for a new member of administration staff. The only option that appeared palatable was gaining the Welsh language office. I enquired if there was support for the establishment of additional administration posts. I was asked what type of person I wanted and what skills would be required for example someone to do the website with IT skills. I replied that this had already been discussed with the DLT and
the undergraduate programmes coordinator and that I was probably looking for a two part-time staff as generalists as there was insufficient work for someone to just do the IT related tasks. It was suggested that part-time staff had not proven to be the best staff in the past and that PhD students would be trained and then would move on in two or three years’ time.

I felt that my judgement was being questioned and that the discussion about establishing more administrative support, which was a widely accepted requirement, was more an interrogation than a meaningful dialogue. I had spent a great deal of time considering the pros and cons of the various options open to me in the employment of administration staff and had sought the opinions of interested parties. I was left to run a £5m budget but my ability to enhance the administration team was questioned. It was not as though I had a poor track record in recruitment. All I sought was agreement to pursue recruitment so that I could put a plan together. This was a downside of the PhD; I had anticipated that at times reflecting on my work would cause me difficulties. I had reflected at length on how to get the most out of the administration staff individually and as a team. I was researching effective management; therefore why would I do something that was likely not to be effective or increase efficiency? I felt unsupported and not valued. The meeting did not improve when the focus turned to School strategy and the forthcoming visit of staff from the strategy office. As we had just finalised the School operational plan I failed to see how we could then look at the strategic plan. The strategic plan should inform the operational plan and not the other way round.

**Christmas Festivities.** I went out with School staff for a Christmas social. It was a good afternoon and evening out. One thing that was reinforced was my discomfort with all female company / comfort with male company. I talked to some female work colleagues but most of the evening was with male ones. This was partly attributable to
them being fellow members of MPT or those with whom I worked the most. There was a group of female colleagues sitting at one of the tables, all about my age and in my peer group. But they had not become work friends. I was more used to talking and being with male colleagues as had been the case throughout my working life. I had worked in the masculine domains of restaurant kitchens and a cruise ship, I was one of only two female duty managers at Luton Airport, the lone female on the cattle station and the RAF was another masculine preserve. It was probably no wonder that I could hold my own. People looked at me sometimes when the conversation strayed into areas that they thought might be inappropriate in my presence. Most of the things said were relatively tame especially in comparison to that which I had heard in the catering industry. But in terms of presentation I wondered, on public occasions, how that looked to others.

**Summary of Personal Issues.**

People want to know that what and how they are feeling is normal. I wanted to be reassured that my feelings about undertaking a PhD were normal when I went to the researcher induction day. I noticed this too with people with whom I came into contact. They needed to be reassured that their emotions were appropriate and to share their feelings and be supported. This was intertwined with self-presentation and how well I or others believed that we were coping with a situation. Support to staff in such situations varied from the practical (providing a lightweight laptop) and reviewing working arrangements to talking and sharing. The skills to deal with these situations were as important as those needed to produce a strategic plan but were learnt rather than being formally taught. Work, research and home life did not stand still; there was a need to reconsider how I negotiated the time demands of these elements of my life to maintain an appropriate degree of balance. I had to deal with a degree of boredom and monotony in my primary role. This was exacerbated by others seemingly questioning my
judgement over tasks that fell squarely within my remit. I knew that even the mundane tasks needed to be done. I just did them in the knowledge that when completed I could turn my attention to something more interesting. I identified with teams that I worked with in the School and concentrated my efforts on achieving cohesion within the administration team and attending school-wide social events. I achieved support from colleagues on the MPT and the administration team. I had become sensitive to the type of person I was and with whom I worked best. There was nothing that I could do about it; rather it was important to be aware of it.

**Emerging Themes and Learning Points.**

During this period there was reinforcement of the themes and learning points that had emerged previously:

- The need for self-management appeared again. It included the need to recognise and acknowledge one’s biases, prejudices and expectations and to find time to think, to delegate and to deal with anxiety. Physical and mental well-being, avoiding burnout, coping with tiredness and a work-life balance recurred.

- The appreciation of emotion was again evident in relation to self-management and managing others. This included the ability to recognise, understand and act appropriately in relation to the emotional needs and responses of staff, for example, in relation to role underload and overload, motivation and morale.

- There was a link between managing and understanding emotion in the workplace and the provision of social support by colleagues and the manager.
- This linked with relationship management and team cohesion particularly in relation to recruitment of new staff and helping them to fit into the team.
- Self-presentation, including how I appeared to others and how others thought that their actions or emotions might be perceived, was evident again.
- A key issue was the link between emotion, self-presentation, staff relationships and how tasks and roles were managed.

**Spring 2012**

In the following section I provide a second example, written in diary format, of the range of tasks, both work-related and domestic which I am required to perform and manage. A commentary and analysis is provided after the last diary entry.

**Another Day in My Life.**

06.30 Got up. Made packed lunches. Dressed and fed boys ready for School
07.35 Left the house and took boys to Dyslexia tuition
08.00 Wrote in my reflective journal.
09.00 Dropped boys off at School
09.15 Arrived at work
09.20 Phoned DLT to discuss the workload model. Agreed to phone him back later
09.30 Liz arrived. Walked round to see if we could hold a cyclo-cross race on campus in December
10.30 Drove to Llandaff to collect application forms for two technician demonstrator posts. Chatted to the HR ops team about short list process as we had dispensation for one of the posts to be ring fenced for female applicants only
11.00 Went into Creative Services Dept. Talked to web team and choose photos for the UG prospectus for 2013
11.30 Arrived back at Cyncoed. Copied the application forms for the panel members
11.45 Bought a coffee to take away and returned to my office
11.50 Phoned DLT back 2½ hours late
12.00 Answered emails – a web link query; pay; new IT user; filming in NIAC;
request for a meeting room; student intake numbers for Sep 2012; Green week;
magazine advertising; 2013 prospectus; HR compliance outcomes; tuition fees
invoice; sports academy numbers. Authorised purchases and signed expenses
and other finance requisitions

13.00  Met two colleagues to discuss short listing
13.45  Chatted to my administration staff about what they were doing at the weekend
14.00  Met with colleague in student recruitment to discuss the postgraduate open
afternoon planned for March. Ran through what has been put in place so far and
what needs to be done
14.30  Met with DLT to prepare for the workload model meeting with senior university
staff from Llandaff. Discussed what we hoped to achieve from the meeting and
the main points that we will raise in terms of issues and difficulties
15.00  Workload allocation model meeting. Attended by: Dean, Head of HR, two Pro
Vice-Chancellors, DLT and me
16.00  Meeting ended. Emailed MPT members about workload model decisions
16.20  Met DLT again. We looked glazed and felt frazzled; it had been a long week
16.50  Turned off computer and said good night to my staff
17.05  Collected boys from childminder and went home via school to pick up cello
17.30  Did the weekly food shop
18.40  Arrived home, unpacked shopping, changed clothes ready for evening out
18.55  Went to friends’ house for dinner
23.15  Returned home.

My day was largely pre-planned primarily due to the number of meetings. There was
also time for the routine elements of my role including emails, phone calls, financial
authorisation and chatting with colleagues and staff. It was a busy and productive day. I
combined a visit to Llandaff to collect application forms with the completion of two
jobs with the creative services team. This saved time and the face to face contact was
beneficial. Some outcomes could probably have been achieved via phone or email but
going together helped maintain relationships. The same was true of the marketing
meeting. The meeting to discuss the short listing was really helpful; we agreed what we
were looking for which aided the short listing decision. The DLT and I had spent a lot
of time on the workload allocation model so I was pleased to be invited to the meeting. In preparation I had sent out the School’s workload allocation model data to the MPT and requested their thoughts, comments and difficulties in respect of its completion. It often appeared that the staff closest to the issues were not consulted. The final phase of the roll out of the workload model seemed to be dictated by the timescale for its analysis in preference to the development a useable form which staff had time to complete properly. At the meeting I had the opportunity to voice my concerns and opinions; due to the issues that we raised the trial was delayed by a month. Although there were frustrations, it was a good day. It was a day of balance – family, work (planned and reactive), research, out of work responsibilities and social life.

School.

Is This Right? One of the professors, a lecturer and a research assistant were going on a three week research trip to Asia. A couple of weeks before their trip the finance administrator spoke to me. She had been asked by the research assistant to purchase anti-malarial drugs for the three staff via the internet. The administrator had looked into the request and was concerned about purchasing such drugs in this manner. I agreed with her. I knew of someone who had a bad reaction to anti-malarial drugs. Although I was sure that the research assistant had investigated which drugs to buy I was unhappy with purchasing the drugs over the internet even if it was less expensive than obtaining them through a high street pharmacy. The financial and time saving (not having to go to the doctor and the chemist) was not worth potential risks to the three staff if the drugs were not as described or they had an adverse reaction to them. I emailed the staff and advised them that I had instructed the finance administrator not to proceed with the order.
A couple of days later we met to discuss the visit and the research project in general. We discussed travel and subsistence costs and a budgetary allocation for future travel and research consumable items. We talked about plans for the visit including a cash advance and health and safety issues, medication and vaccinations. I reiterated that controlling budget costs did not extend to saving a few pounds on drugs and that the full cost of these items, prescribed by a GP, was to be charged to the School. After the meeting we made arrangements through finance for a cash advance in US dollars and spoke with RES about a grant that had been awarded to cover the cost of the flights.

The situation showed that the culture in the office was such that the finance administrator was content to question the request and raise it with me as a potential issue. The open dialogue between us resulted in it being discussed quickly and effectively. Due to the trust and understanding that had developed between the professor and me when I told him that I was not prepared to purchase the drugs in the manner suggested this decision was accepted without further discussion. I was appreciative of the finance administrator telling me that she thought I had done the right thing. I drew on knowledge and experience to make a balanced decision on the drugs considering cost, risk and health issues. The meeting enabled us to talk through all aspects of the research visit. Our links and relationship with colleagues in finance and RES resulted in the cash advance being arranged quickly and the transfer of costs from one budget code to another.

**Summary of School Issues.**

The BSM role entails the ability to change task and thought processes to deal with diverse requests and meetings at short notice. Multi-tasking, juggling, keeping track of different needs are required to manage the wide ranging workload and demands upon my time. The situation involving the anti-malarial drugs struck me as important because
regularly there are news reports that managers have not listened to their staff’s concerns or staff have not raised their worries with bosses for fear of reprisal. The finance administrator had the confidence and the common sense to raise this with me as a potential issue. The previous finance administrator had also discussed a problematic claim with me. The culture in the office was such that both felt able to talk to me about potential problems and that a sensible discussion and resolution would be forthcoming.

**Knock Out**

During the Easter holiday the boys and I had a quiet morning at home followed by a trip to the cinema. In the evening I drove us to the cycle track for the track bike training session. We warmed up in pairs, then as a single pursuit line before stopping on the wall for further instruction from the coach. The first exercise was a sprint one which we repeated five or six times. Next was a similar exercise but sprinting sitting down. In the third exercise we moved into groups of similar ability. I went with two other mums. We rode three abreast then, when we reached the start of the back straight, we sprinted to the 200m line. We did this four times, chatting on the recovery phases. Last turn. Hands on the drops, head forward, out of my saddle, sprint. I heard the sound of metal on tarmac. A black bike was on its side, in my path, with a blur of blue attached to it, don’t run over the wheels I thought…

I could hear talking and I felt someone put a coat around my shoulders. I recognised the voice of one of the dads. ‘We’ve phoned Nick’ someone said [he was at a meeting in Cardiff]. There was talking around me. It was dream like. I became aware of someone touching my face just under my right eye. He was talking to me and saying it was a big crash and I should go to Accident and Emergency to be checked out. Suddenly, I could see. I took in the scene. I was sitting on the couch in the medical room. A recreation assistant was cleaning a graze under my eye. I looked to my left.
The other mum was holding a swab to her elbow which was bleeding profusely. Nick was talking to someone. I left the medical room with Nick and we walked to the car. He drove to the hospital. We checked in. I gave the receptionist my name, address and date of birth. As we sat in the waiting room I realised that I was still in full cycle kit including road shoes. We were called through to triage. The nurse asked me what day it was … oh god what day was it, we had been cycling, I tried to think… Thursday? We moved to a small waiting area near the examination bays. I was oblivious to what was going on around me but became more self-aware. Nick told me that the other mum’s foot came unclipped from her pedal and she lost control of the bike. How did the third mum avoid the accident? Could I have avoided it too? After an indeterminate length of time I was examined by a consultant in black scrubs. I described what happened. She looked at my head and neck and shoulder; my collar bone was not broken. She told me to go home, take paracetemol regularly, to stay at home the next day and not to drink alcohol for 72 hours. Nick and I returned to the car park. I had no idea where we had parked. We were home by about 22.00; I knew because the news was on TV. I went to bed and slept a while. I awoke and looked at the clock, 00.45. My first thoughts were my PhD, how was my memory, what were ontology and epistemology? Yes, I could remember. I lay in bed trying to work out what I recollected of the incident. There was a large blank between seeing the black bike and getting to the first aid room. I did not know how I had moved from the track to the first aid room. I was awake and hearing but unseeing in the medical room. Driving to the hospital, Accident and Emergency reception, triage and then waiting for the doctor were a blur. I drifted back to sleep. In the morning I sat up in bed with difficulty as my shoulder was very sore. Nick told me how ‘out of it’ I was in the car and at the hospital. I had asked where the boys were at least three times and repeated asked other questions. I got out of bed slowly and
looked in the mirror. There was a large graze on the cheek bone under my right eye, a
couple of grazes on my forehead, a small graze on my left cheek and one above my lip
and a few small cuts to my nose. Although raising my right arm caused pain in my
shoulder there was only a small abrasion on it. My right hip was sore too but not
bruised. I inspected each piece of cycle clothing. The thermal under-layer was torn at
the shoulder. There was a large chunk missing from the back of my helmet. The clip on
my road shoes had broken. In response to my question my children told me that I
walked from the track to the first aid room assisted by one of the leisure centre’s first-
aiders and some of the parents. Nick drove the boys to school and then went to work.
Between us we received numerous texts from cycling friends asking after me. I phoned
work and told them that I would not be in. I chatted on the phone to one of the other
mums. I explained that I had ‘lost’ 30-45 minutes immediately after the crash and asked
her to help me fill in the gaps. I phoned the mum who was hurt to find out how she was.
She had remained conscious throughout but suffered shock. She told me that I had the
same conversation with her in the hospital as we had earlier in the first aid room. I did
not remember talking with her in the first aid room in the same way that I did not
remember giving the recreation assistant my name, address and date of birth. I
remembered so little.

After showering I checked my emails. I then popped round to one of our
neighbours who was also at the track the previous night with his children. He told me
that I was face-down half on the grass and half on the tarmac. One of the dads who had
been cycling behind us was first on the scene, followed by the coach who sprinted from
the other side of the track to reach me. When I did not move my neighbour (a medical
professional) jumped over the wall and ran over to me. I was unconscious for two or
three minutes but when I came round I sat up on my own. With some of the gaps from
the previous evening filled in I went home and watched some daytime TV. Nick returned home from work and we did the weekly shop; I knew that my face looked dreadful but that did not concern me. On our return I had a nap and then got up and I cooked dinner. By 21.30 I was tired and went to bed. The following day my shoulder was less sore, the dull ache in my head had almost gone and I felt much better. I went on-line and ordered some new road shoes and a helmet. I was keen to ride my bike again especially in the knowledge that the accident was not my fault. Why was it when others my age were hanging up their rugby boots or other risk sport paraphernalia and turning to golf I was taking up cycling?

I returned to work after the weekend but by the first afternoon was so tired that I could not think straight. The next day I found it hard to concentrate for any length of time and kept forgetting what I was doing. Unaware of my cycling activities, the Dean asked about my grazed face. Other colleagues’ reactions fell into one of three categories; either they peered at me and asked what I had done, smiled knowingly and asked if I came off my bike or made no comment. My mood changed from being bouncy and happy immediately after the accident to upset, confused, angry, tired and emotional. An email, from one of the mums, asking how I was, made me cry. In work I became angry about the lack of office space which caused me, as a temporary resolution, to move to an office on my own away from the main school offices. It was quiet and I missed chatting to people as they walked through. Right then I needed company and to talk. I received comments from my supervisors on the methodology chapter. I should have felt pleased with their comments but I felt nothing nor was I in the mood to attend to the corrections. Doing anything more than amending grammar and typos was beyond me. Twice in eighteen months I had something serious happen to me. I began to question my earlier decision to ride my bike again. I had caused a lot of
people to worry. I started cycling to support my children and so we could do something as a family, not to cause anxiety to others.

One of my ground rules was that, in order to maintain a social life, I would not conduct research on my cycling life. This incident showed how much one area impacted upon another and how difficult it was to maintain separation. This was evident from my middle of the night reaction that I had to write about my experience and whether my memory and mental faculties remained intact. It affected my ability to cope with anything remotely complex or that required concentration. It affected how I felt about my work environment noted by my reaction to the remarks, or their absence, about my grazed face. There were only two people at work who I knew had concussion and I was annoyed that neither enquired about my recovery. It affected my home life because I was tired, distant and short tempered. In short, my ability to multi-task and to cope with the usual demands of work and home was compromised.

At the Tuesday evening road bike training session I asked a couple of people to tell me what happened when I came off. I needed to know. I liked to be in control of my life and but I had an impaired memory of the crash. On Wednesday morning I looked in the mirror. The grazes were almost indistinguishable; the scabs had gone leaving just a slight redness to the skin tone. On the outside there was nothing but inside I was not right. If colleagues had not seen me in work on Monday or Tuesday when my face was still grazed they would not know that anything had happened to me or that I was in any way ‘different’ from normal. A plaster cast setting a broken bone could be seen but not trauma to the head. Nick told me of the doctor’s advice to take it easy and to rest but I could not remember her saying that. That was impractical anyway. There were household chores to be done and my children to care for as well as my paid employment. A week after the accident my schedule was full again. At work I had
meetings at Cyncoed and Llandaff. A research student asked me about her scholarship and conference attendance, a technician needed a signature, another technician informed me he needed an operation, one of the administrators asked to finish work early to go and see a relative who had just had chemotherapy, one of the professors and I had items of business to attend to, there were emails to be sent and phone calls to be made. After work I collected the boys from the child-minder, had a quick cup of tea and then took them cycling. I had a dull headache, my back ached and I was really tired. I had no appetite and, with Nick away from home, I had no incentive to cook. It had not been a good week at work and the tiredness made me emotional. After serious thought and family telling me that I needed to recommence cycling I rode my bike again 10 days after the accident. I enjoyed the ride and realised that I had missed being on my bike and the social side of cycling. The reduction in physical activity had not helped my emotional state either as not exercising made me grumpy.

A month later I realised that despite writing frequently in the first two weeks that I was better, with hindsight I was not fully recovered. I had no reference point for a head injury. The situation was a dichotomy of unknowns and knowns. I did not know how I should feel. I did not know whether I should tell people that I felt tired and emotional because on the outside I looked no different. What I did know was that I did not want to be thought of as incapable of fulfilling my roles or not coping well. When John told me that one of his chefs had been signed off work with concussion after coming off her scooter I thought three weeks sickness absence was a long time. Now I knew differently. It actually took me about three weeks until I felt ‘right’ again. It was only then that I regained a sense of perspective and was able to rationalise and consider risk versus family and work life.
Support and understanding from friends at the cycle club helped me whereas the lack of support at work made me angry. Self-presentation was evident in my description of what I was wearing when I went to Accident and Emergency, how my face looked after the accident, not worrying what others thought when I walked round the supermarket, and that I looked ‘normal’ when I actually wanted others to know that I did not feel normal. The incident demonstrated that you never know what is just around the corner and one’s normal routine can be thrown off course in an instant. The crash affected how I felt about illness and other staff absences and how I dealt with them. In particular I realised that hidden injuries could be as debilitating as obvious, physical ones. The head injury and its effects exacerbated my annoyance about various issues, for example the enforced office move which resulted in me being on my own for a large part of the day especially at a time when I needed company. This isolation, coupled with my injury, highlighted the importance of staff welfare, whether that be chatting, going for coffee, reduced hours or a modified workload. Support networks in work, at home or in out of work activities were important. Although it is not possible to experience every situation that a manager may encounter, undertake a variety of activities will broaden horizons, increase understanding and enhance ability to deal with diverse situations. But for me the main lesson was to train harder to sprint faster and stay out of trouble.

**Emerging Themes and Learning Points.**

The themes and learning points, particularly coping and related strategies, that had developed during earlier academic terms were evident again this term.

- Coping with multiple and varied inputs and tasks and the associated mental tiredness while remaining motivated and achieving some level of work-life balance was a focus in these reflections.
• Drawing upon relationships with colleagues, leaving work on time and visiting friends socially were ways of coping with such demands.

• Well-being and the importance of looking after one’s self in terms of taking exercise, resting, sleeping and eating properly returned.

• Social support from friends and family, inside and outside work, recurred as did the ability to deal with the anxiety and emotional demands of incidents and to draw learning from these experiences.

**Managerial Lessons Learnt**

In this chapter I have told the story of my working life as the BSM in the Cardiff School of Sport drawing attention, where appropriate, to my previous managerial experiences and including events from my research and domestic life which have complemented, explained, altered and influenced my thoughts and actions. The autoethnography was developed from layered, reflective narratives written over two years which were reconstructed chronologically. A summary at the end of the main sections gave an overview of what happened with a focus on the lessons derived from the events. Due to the action research nature of the work I was able to apply my learning during the course of the research project and have continued to do so in my daily life. The lessons learnt can be applied across the traditional management discipline areas. The lessons focus on the more subjective areas of management practice some of which do not tend to appear in management textbooks. Broadly, the areas of efficient and effective management practice that will be discussed in the next chapter are self-management and the management of others.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion
Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider and examine the findings that emanated from the autoethnographic narratives in ‘A Manager’s Tale’. In order to discuss these findings in relation to other research on managerial effectiveness a section outlining some of the relevant theories is provided. This overview is followed by a synopsis of the aims and objectives of the research. A summary of this research and its results precedes the detailed discussion on the theoretical findings. The discussion is structured under a number of section sub-headings which relate to the emergent themes from the autoethnographic data. In order to complement this theoretical discussion, and in accordance with an action research project, consideration is given to the practical connotations that emanated from this work. In order to emphasise the substantive outcomes in a reader friendly format a summary of the key findings from this research follows the section on the implications for management education. To illustrate visually the theoretical findings and resultant practical considerations these are presented as two frameworks in diagrammatic format. Throughout this chapter references to ‘A Manager’s Tale’ are used to illustrate the discussion points; these are identified by their respective titles in the results chapter. Consideration is then given to the strengths and limitations of this project and directions for future research are suggested. This chapter concludes with a summary of the main points of discussion and final remarks regarding the nature and elements of efficient and effective management in higher education.

Theories of Managerial Efficiency and Effectiveness

The managerial role and its activities have been the subject of significant research over many years (Dierdorff, Rubin, & Morgeson, 2009). This is probably because managerial effectiveness is difficult to define and to measure (Mullins & Christy, 2010). In his classic and enduring article first published in 1955, Katz (1974) identified three basic
and interrelated skills that he believed were required of a successful manager. These were technical, human and conceptual skills. Technical or hard skills involved specialised knowledge, analytical ability and the use of discipline-specific techniques. *Human skill*, as an integral, consistent and unconscious part of a manager’s persona, was required to work successfully with people and to recognise the views, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of self and others. Finally, *conceptual skill* was required to appreciate the interdependency of the various parts of an organisation and how it was affected by economic, political, social and other forces. Since the 1950s the work environment has changed significantly in cultural, social and technological terms. In the last decade greater attention has been given to the soft skills needed for management. Although there is no set definition of soft skills they include attitudes, interpersonal abilities, and communication. Robles (2012) described soft skills as character traits, attitudes and behaviours that are intangible, non-technical and personality-specific. In keeping with this way of thinking and acting Watson (2001) divided managerial competencies into three areas:

- **Personal orientation** (setting realistic standards and goals, being proactive, decisiveness and self-confident, being commercially orientated, being adaptable and able to learn)
- **Cognitive style** (strategic thinking, collecting, analysing and using information, creativity, judgement and decision making)
- **Interpersonal style** (being sensitive and listening, presence and credibility, planning and organisation, presentation and communication, leadership and team building. (pp. 225–228)

Similarly, Hill (2003), in her study of new managers, noted that time management, agenda setting, decision making and building networks were critical management skills. Hill concluded that to be successful the new managers had to accept
new responsibilities, develop interpersonal judgement, gain self-knowledge and cope with the stressors they experience and emotions. Management effectiveness, according to Drucker, Maciariello and Collins (2009), requires the acquisition of specific managerial skills, undertaking management tasks and the use of personal skills and practices. Consistent with the findings reported above Dierdorff, Rubin, and Morgeson (2009) determined that, despite changes in the business environment over the last 50 years, managerial role requirements continued to fall into similar categories to those outlined by Katz. They described these as conceptual issues, interpersonal requirements and technical / administration requirements. The only change over the decades, they suggested, was one of salience towards conceptual and interpersonal requirements.

Other observers, including Mintzberg and Gosling (2002), Laud and Johnson (2012), and Robles (2012), believe soft and interpersonal skills and those attributes associated with organisational behaviour to be more applicable to success than technical skills.

More recently Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013) deemed emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management, to be the primary aspect of successful and effective leadership. There does remain, however, from some sources an implied emphasis on tasks, this is, doing things. Focussing on efficiency and effectiveness the suggestion by Drucker, Maciarello, and Collins (2009) that “efficiency is concerned with doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things” (p. 32) may be accurate but is not helpful in understanding what the right things are and how to do them in the right way.

Efficiency, Mullins (2010) suggested, encompasses input requirements including clarifying objectives, planning, organisation, direction and control. Managerial effectiveness “results from a combination of personal attributes and dimensions of the manager’s job in meeting the demands of the situation, and satisfying the requirements
of the organisation” (p. 475). Having provided a synopsis of what is believed by various authors to be required for efficient and effective performance, discussion centres now on the findings that emerged from this research in the attempt to understand efficient and effective managerial practice.

**Summary of Research Project**

Discontented with the compartmentalised teaching of much of my formal management education I wished to investigate what enabled a generalist manager, in higher education, to operate efficiently and effectively. Early in my management career, equipped with an HND in catering management and a range of technical skills gained primarily from work-based experience, I felt as if I was struggling to keep my head above water. Following several years’ management experience, and some time spent travelling abroad, I embarked upon an MBA. Although the subject matter was interesting the teaching did not seem to account for the daily reality of my managerial work. It certainly did not address the complex social and human factors and problems that I faced (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005). The MBA, and later a postgraduate certificate in Leadership for Collaboration, imparted conceptual, theoretical, subject-specific knowledge and training in the functions of business rather than an education in the practice of managing, a critical view shared by Mintzberg (2004). Guidance was not given on how to cope with the variety of often thorny situations and multiple inputs, or about how to act in such diverse circumstances. There seemed to be a gap in my managerial tool kit with the questions of ‘how do I manage?’, and ‘how do I draw upon both my formal and experiential learning to help me to manage a situation, the staff involved?’ remaining unresolved. In this longitudinal study, of my managerial practice I therefore sought to analyse what affected my managerial performance and, through structured reflection and action research, what would potentially enable me to perform
more efficiently and effectively. I also aimed to reveal the effect that experience, including that from other managerial life events, had on my managerial ability. There was relatively little literature examining the connections between leadership and management and effectiveness, particularly related to higher education (Bryman, 2007). As qualitative, ethnographic accounts of managerial work were also scarce, therefore, this thesis would meet the desire for research of this nature and make an original contribution to such knowledge. The findings of this project are discussed in relation to previous research on managerial effectiveness and also draw on research from associated and relevant fields.

**Summary of Results**

At the end of the data collection period each reflective narrative was reviewed and consideration given to what skills and personal qualities had enabled me to manage each day, task, member of staff and/or situation. As themes were identified the reflections were reviewed again with thought given to what led to successful and less effective management. Through an organic process I became conscious of what underpinned my managerial practice. Two distinct, but overlapping, areas were evident. First, how I managed myself, not just in my place of work but in my other roles too; and second, how I managed and worked with others. The importance of working well with staff other than those who may be subordinates was also identified by Drucker et al. (2009) who described them as ‘sideways’ relationships. These sideways relationships are significant in terms of decision making and information sharing with peers. The review of my narratives suggested that an ability to self-manage was an antecedent of the ability to manage others. Integral to the ability to self-manage and to manage others were four distinct themes necessary for managerial effectiveness. These were: emotional management, relationship management, presentation management, and role
and task management. The four areas overlapped and were inter-connected, influencing and informing the others, and were informed by experience. Experience and experiential learning was core to the development and improvement of my managerial practice.

Although there is no defined hierarchy of importance I believe, emotional management, particularly in relation to self-management, to be a precursor of relationship and presentation management. With these in place role and task management become easier. The context and setting in which this project was situated also impacted upon effectiveness and efficiency. The length of time spent performing in the role, the ability to transfer experiential learning and soft skills gained from other settings and the quality of the fit between the incumbent and the working environment also affected performance. A comprehensive knowledge of the organisation and the working environment combined with specific technical knowledge was required for efficient and effective management. I operated and coped well in an academic school that was male dominated. Although management and leadership style has been reported to have a gender bias, with female managers more likely to demonstrate a transactional approach (Rosener, 1990), my leadership and management style was appropriate to my working environment; however, the extent to which my gender affected my effectiveness is not known. In agreement with Dierdorff and Morgeson (2007) effective performance is believed to encompass both the activities and the attributes of the role holder. Throughout the period from the end of the data collection to the thesis write-up the findings were considered, tried and tested and informed my practice and the advice and guidance that I gave to others. New loops of reflection and learning have been begun. The results of this research, in order to aid understanding and appreciation of their interconnectedness, are shown in diagrammatic format in Figures 3, 4 and 5.
Figure 3. Theoretical implications of efficient and effective management in higher education.
Experience
Be involved, take on new roles and tasks, work outside your comfort zone. Reflect and learn from your experiences

Emotional Management
Support from others, make a decision, take action, relieve boredom, do something different, challenging, write / reflect, social or hobby, exercise

Relationship Management
Social events, team building, presence and availability, emotional sensitivity, communication

Task and Role Management
Maintain a work-life balance, make a decision, maintain focus, remember the little things, accept interruptions

Presentation Management
Apparel, availability, fitting in, physical location, communication and presence

Figure 4. Practical implications of efficient and effective management in higher education.
Figure 3. Theoretical implications for efficient and effective management in higher education.

This figure illustrates the theoretical constructs associated with efficient and effective management; it is applicable to self-management and the management of others.

*Experience Circle.* Experience, for which there is no substitute, is believed to be crucial to effective managerial practice. This centrality is shown through the middle ‘experience’ circle which overlaps, as a two-way flow of information, with the four themed areas. Experience can be gained from undertaking new and different roles and tasks, particularly those that require a different set of behaviours or some degree of personal risk or loss of control. Through structured reflection such experiences can inform beliefs, values and behaviours. They can inform decision making and problem solving by allowing managers to draw learning from similar previously experienced situations and events. Experience can also provide perspective or a benchmark against which a manager can assess a new situation and give confidence to proceed. The manager may also think about how experience affects the actions, roles and abilities of their staff. Experience is inter-connected to self-management and the management of others in terms of the four themed areas.

*Four Themed Area Circles.* The four outer circles overlap with the inner ‘experience’ circle. The four outer circles are connected with one another, shown by an outer ring linking the circles. For example, although on opposite sides of the framework, presentation management and relationship management are linked and inform one another in the same way that emotional and task and role management, inform presentation management. Similarly, emotional management informs task and role management and vice versa. The themed areas can be used to identify and explore implications for self-management and the management of others. For example, once a
manager understands the effect of role under or overload on their own emotions and behaviours it may be easier for them to recognise and put in place measures to help their staff to cope or to remove or reduce the stressor before its effects are felt or become problematic.

**Overall Implications.** A circular diagram is used to show that learning, development and the flow of information is continual and interconnected. The main theoretical concepts are presented in each of the four circles. Ideas in some instances are repeated because there are multiple dimensions to a particular concept. For example, there is a need to understand both the emotional and task management aspects of work-life balance. It is a framework rather than a model or a prescriptive means by which to manage because effective management is predominantly situation and context based. It is designed to provide guidelines through which efficient and effective practice can be considered and enhanced.

**Figure 4. Practical implications for efficient and effective management in higher education.**

The purpose of this figure is to provide applied examples of actions associated with efficient and effective management. This is derived from the theoretical framework and illustrates some of the practical considerations within each themed area.

**Experience Circle.** This inner circle provides suggestions on how new experiences may be gained and learning derived from them. This circle overlaps with four outer circles which describe the practical implications related to the themed areas.

**Four Themed Area Circles.** The four outer circles overlap with the inner ‘experience’ circle. The four outer circles are connected with one another, shown by an outer ring linking the circles. In each circle practical ideas, related to the theoretical concepts, are given to illustrate the themes and show their sometimes multifaceted
benefits. For example, not only can making a decision can help a manager to cope emotionally by reducing stress, decision making may also improve relationships with colleagues and staff and can help in the management of roles and tasks. The ideas presented are not exhaustive but are intended to provide an indication of the scope and variety of ideas that a manager could consider and build upon to inform and improve their practice.

**Overall Implications.** A circular diagram is used to show that the practical considerations are interconnected. The main practical concepts are presented in each of the four circles. Some ideas are repeated because in some instances there are multiple dimensions to a particular concept. For example, support from others, ‘fitting-in’ at work, and the formation of positive relationships can help with task management.

**Figure 5. Progressive elements of managerial effectiveness.**

This diagram shows other factors involved with efficient and effective management. It depicts a proposed rank order for effectiveness rather than the specific order in which the skills and knowledge are acquired. There is no significance in the relative size of the circles (a small inner circle compared with a large outer circle). Circles are used in this way to better exemplify the continuing nature of learning and informing. It also, especially for the outer circles, shows the ‘onion skin’ approach to effectiveness. Should context and setting specific knowledge be subject to change, for example if the manager were to change job, he or she would still have experiential knowledge and soft skills which could be drawn upon to manage staff. The manager would also be able to use generic knowledge on, for example, performance review, employment law and financial management gained from previous roles. Role specific knowledge is akin to the icing on the cake and the final piece in the effectiveness framework. In this framework
experiential knowledge forms the basis for effectiveness and the foundation on which further experience is built.

The circles’ utility. The findings shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4 provide guidance for practising managers in dealing with situations that they face. When using the practical framework for assistance and to guide action, a manager could ask of him or herself the following questions:

- What experience do I have of similar situations that can help me?
- What do I need to consider or do in terms of emotional, relationship, presentation or task management to help me to manage myself or others in this situation?
- What experiential learning can I draw from this situation?
When combined with Figure 5, managers should consider what knowledge derived from education, training, experience or other sources they can use to inform their actions and decision making. This may include, but not be limited to, learning from formal qualifications and short courses coupled with setting-specific awareness and expertise.

In summary, the two underpinning areas of efficient and effective management are considered to be, in priority order, self-management and the management of others. Experience, in a continued loop of learning, is required to manage oneself and others. Emotional, relationship, presentation, and task and role management of self and others needs to be combined judiciously with the role-related hard skills and organisational and sector specific knowledge. These theoretical and practical considerations will be discussed in turn in the sections that follow.

**Theoretical and Practical Issues**

In the first two parts of this section the ideas of self-management and management of others are examined. With the foundations established attention is turned to the importance of experience in relation to practice and then to the management of emotions, relationships, presentation and roles and tasks in oneself and others. The role and influence of context, setting and organisational appreciation on practice are the next to be assessed. Finally, in accordance with the action research nature of this project and my desire for practical utility the implications of this research in relation to management education are reviewed.

**Self-management.**

The accepted definition of a manager is someone one who plans, controls, coordinates and directs people or other resources (Mintzberg, 1990; Oxford English Dictionary, 2013). This vision translates into the manager as a doer, performing tasks, organising
and making decisions. It makes no suggestion that time or consideration should be
given by the manager to managing him or herself. Indeed, much of the literature on
management focuses on the management of others (e.g., Boddy, 2009; Clegg,
Kornberger, & Pitsis, 2011; Cole, 2004). Stewart (1999) left it until the final section of
her book to discuss ‘Managing Oneself’ in terms of understanding strengths and
weaknesses, coping with stress, time management, self-development and moral stamina.
Similarly, Drucker et al. (2009) in their book described as a “comprehensive treatment
of management” (p. xv) also provided just one section on ‘Managing Oneself’ which
included the need to understand personal strengths and values, most effective work
style, and responsibility for relationships. Some authors do give attention to the
development of personal management competencies. The work of Goleman (1995) and
Goleman et al. (2013) on emotional intelligence particularly in relation to leadership,
and Jones and Moorhouse (2008) on mental toughness in the business environment are
two examples.

Self-management, which Goleman et al. (2013) consider to be a component of
emotional intelligence, is described as an on-going inner conversation that keeps
feelings under control, thoughts clear and actions on track. In accord with the findings
of this thesis, Goleman et al. identified the need for leaders to manage effectively their
emotions before they attempted to manage those of anyone else. An example of the
need for self-management is provided by Watson (2001) in his ethnographic study of
managers. He noted the spill-over of emotions from work to home which included the
managers’ metaphorical taking work home in their heads, being distant and remote at
home, or taking their managerial persona home. Managers, Watson concluded, had to be
able to manage their lives and identities as well as their work responsibilities.
Throughout ‘A Manager’s Tale’ there were instances when I needed to be aware of my own feelings, interact appropriately with colleagues and be conscious of how I presented myself. It became apparent that this ability was a prerequisite of my effective management of other people. When I was unable to control my own emotions and lacked appreciation of how I appeared to others it was much more difficult to manage others effectively and with credibility. My reflections contained examples of when I managed myself well and when my self-management was lacking. For example, ‘A Winter’s Tale’ illustrated how a failure to manage myself affected personal relationships and rendered me unable to undertake effectively any of my tasks and roles. Worrying about my self-presentation and an overriding desire to carry on as normal were detrimental to my health and recuperation. On a positive note, more effective self-management was apparent in ‘Escape to the Country’ when I drew on RAF experience to help me tutor and get the most from a group of students. I managed the nervousness brought about by undertaking a role outside my normal sphere of activity. I built a relationship with each groups of students and helped them to work as a cohesive team; I also took the opportunity to enhance relationships with colleagues. The way in which I presented myself to the students and colleagues and how they viewed me was important. Finally, I had to balance two days away from the office and family with other demands upon my time at work and at home. Self-management encompasses the four areas of practice identified earlier, is influenced by experience and requires experiential learning for continued improvement.

Management of others.

The management of others, which includes working with others, is the second essential area of managerial practice. Mullins and Christy (2010), for example, state that “management involves getting work done through the co-ordinated efforts of other
people” (p. 476). There is, however, more to the management of others than the
direction, delegation, and organisation of people and tasks. The findings of my research
suggest that in order to achieve team productivity and complete the job, the
management of others requires the same skill sets as those required for self-
management: emotional management, relationship management, presentation
management, and role and task management. Managing other people is difficult. As
corroborated by Jones and Moorhouse (2008) and Mullins and Christy (2010) staff have
emotions and feelings, they feel the stress and pressure of work and home life and they
have their own ways, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about how things should be
done. Understanding these issues and adapting management practices accordingly,
sometimes at an individual level, is essential to the successful management of others.
Many of the facets of people management were evident in ‘The Office’. The line
manager needed to resolve conflict, deal with a member of staff who was stressed and
not coping while also drawing upon and maintaining the goodwill of the administration
team to complete their own tasks and those of their colleague during her absence.

**The role of and learning from experience.**

The way in which I managed myself and others was informed by experiential, tacit and
theoretical knowledge. It encompassed influences from my education, parental and
family values and other life events which affected my perspective on life, resilience and
coping mechanisms. This was in accord with Cushion, Armour, and Jones (2003) who
noted that a practitioner’s disposition was related to their personal history, past
experience and social position. The work experience and life skills that I possessed on
leaving higher education provided me with the foundations on which to base actions and
choices and thereby gain further experience early in my managerial career. Although it
did not seem like it at the time the feelings I experienced early in my career of just about
keeping my head above the water benefited my learning (Mintzberg, 2004). In keeping with Hill’s (2003) research on new managers, my perspectives and personal theories of management were adjusted, refined and revised as new experiences were encountered. My early career in the hospitality industry taught me the need for and benefits of soft skills, particularly those of a social and interpersonal nature (Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005). As advocated by Stewart (1999) in the first few years of my career I changed jobs to enhance my self-development. Experiences acted as a benchmark against which I was able to judge my ability to cope with new situations and how they could best be managed; it was these day-to-day challenges and problems that aided my learning (Daudelin, 1996). An experience based approach and improvement of practice though ‘doing’ is agreed by many management researchers to be beneficial to learning and the acquisition of business knowledge (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005; Katz, 1974; Kayes, 2002; Mintberg, 2004). In particular Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory, defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (1984, p. 41), accords with my understanding of management learning. Experiential Learning Theory features two modes of grasping experience – concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation and two modes of transforming experience – reflective observation and active experimentation; the learner (or manager) experiences, reflects, thinks and acts in a recursive process that is responsive to the context or setting (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The more situations to which someone is subjected and the more difficult decisions that have to be made, the more able they should be, within the limits of their capabilities, to deal with them.

Watson (2001) and Warhurst (2011) acknowledged the importance and influence of being managed well (or not so well), and in different styles, in the process of learning how to manage. They also noted the influence of bosses who were aware of
the value of experience and could provide mentorship to aid management learning. My managerial style was definitely influenced by my managers, particularly those who featured early in my career. The ‘don’t bring me problems, bring me solutions’ style of one boss, while frustrating at a stage in my career when I struggled to reach an effective answer, did enhance my problem solving ability. His regular tours of the conference centre in which we worked to talk to the staff, discuss the business of the day and find out about current issues was a highly effective tool which I adopted. Another boss, once he knew that I was comfortable in my primary role, gave me additional responsibilities and challenges which allowed me to increase my experience base. A third, later in my career, used a more ‘hands-off’ style of leadership. Being a worker, then a junior manager, then a middle manager, ‘getting it right’ and ‘getting it wrong’, being challenged, put under pressure and undertaking a diverse portfolio of roles enhanced my experience. I also learnt from family and colleagues through observation, sharing best practice and discussing concerns. Thus, experiential learning is of primary importance, for without it there is nothing on which to base, develop and inform the other four thematic areas.

A range of experiences and responsibilities and strategies to deal with this learning, can be included in staff personal development plans. Continuous learning, improvement and personal change were believed by Drucker et al. (2009) to be important in the achievement of effective management. The responsibility for such development and acquisition of new experiences rested, they proposed, not with the organisation but with the individual. They also advocated writing down actions and decisions of significance in order to show what was done well, strengths and limitations, where improvement could be made and what habits should be changed. During this research project the practice of writing about the events, my thoughts and emotions and
what happened were beneficial to my learning. Structured, written reflection may not suit everyone but it is one method through which to draw learning from experience (Knowles et al., 2001). Other managers may find that discussing a situation or event with a trusted colleague or a mentor who can act as a critical friend may suit them better (Knowles et al, 2007).

**Emotional management.**

As expressed by Schein (1987), management, especially managing and working with other people, is far from easy:

> The most difficult aspect of the general manager’s job is to keep functioning day after day without giving up, getting an ulcer, or having a nervous breakdown. The essence of the general manager’s job is to absorb the emotional strains of uncertainty, interpersonal conflict, and responsibility. (p. 167)

Watson (2001), in his ethnographic study of managers, concluded that ‘there is a significant emotional dimension to managerial work’ (p.180). Emotional management, within the context of this research project, encompasses the competencies and skills to cope with stress, role under-load and overload, boredom and monotony and lack of motivation. Although Golemen et al. (2013) judged relationship management to be one of four aspects comprising emotional intelligence, in the presentation and discussion of these findings emotional management and relationship management are considered separately. There are links and shared competencies between these two areas; because of its importance in managerial work, relationship management is worthy of discussion on its own.

Emotional self-management and an awareness of emotions in others was a frequent, although not always explicit, part of my managerial role. Understanding the feelings of others in respect of voluntary severance and office moves was important.
Expressing empathy, as witnessed in ‘Normal Feelings’, was a response that seemed to be appreciated by those with whom I came into contact. Dealing with the responsibility that is integral to the managerial role was noticeable in the narratives that detailed the recruitment and selection process and managing the School’s finances during difficult times.

Understanding feelings and emotions is an essential element of self-management and management of others. In order to be effective and attain organisational goals, managers need to employ empathy, compassion and sensitivity for their colleagues’ feelings (Goleman et al., 2013). Such emotional intelligence described as “the ability to read and understand others in social contexts, to detect the nuances of emotional reactions, and to utilize such knowledge to influence others through emotional regulation and control” (Prati, Douglas, Ferri, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003, p. 21) is invaluable in the workplace and enables effective managers to be aware of tacit messages (Goleman, 1995). This management of emotions in the workplace was described by Ashkansy and Daus (2002) as ‘emotional labour’. In their research on work intensification among university lecturers emotional labour was described by Ogbonna and Harris (2004) as “the effort which is required to display that which are perceived to be the expected emotions” (p. 1192). The examples of emotional labour described by the lecturers, which took the form of ‘surface-acted emotional displays’ and self-control and included their reactions to student interruptions and subordinate requests, correspond to my experiences as a manager. In a similar manner to these lecturers, I had learnt, and was generally able, to control my emotions and “to display the appropriate emotional response even under stressful conditions” (Ogbonna & Harris, 2004, pp. 1193–1194). The need to control my emotional response, often felt as annoyance or frustration, or find a suitable outlet for such reactions was evident in
‘Different Priorities’, ‘A Busy Couple of Weeks’, and ‘Whose Agenda?’. The notion of emotional labour is closely linked with self-presentation in that the lecturer or manager is undertaking a performance (Goffman, 1959). Managers should be able to recognise the emotional climate of the individual staff and the team with whom they work. This will help them prevent and rectify problems especially those which result from emotional contagion. Emotions can spread from the manager to others with whom and for whom they work and one team member’s poor performance or negative attitude can affect the attitude and mood of the whole team (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Goleman et al., 2013; Jones & Moorhouse, 2008). The negative effect of such emotional contagion on a small team was apparent in ‘Stress and Conflict’ and transmission of a more productive work environment in ‘Working Together’. Displays of positive emotions and upbeat moods by managers can be used to improve team cooperation, trust and productivity and lead to resonance rather than dissonance (Goleman et al., 2013).

Higher education in the UK is not immune from stress and research suggests that anxiety levels among university employees have increased (Kinman & Jones, 2004; Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper & Ricketts, 2005). A survey undertaken by Kinman and Wray (2013) for the University and College Union found evidence to suggest that people working in education were at greater risk of work-related stress than those in most other occupational groups. Notably, three quarters of their sample confirmed that they found their job stressful. In his discussion of effective leadership in higher education, Bryman (2007) suggested that role overload, role ambiguity, quality of communication, autonomy, ability to participate in decisions, collegial atmosphere and feedback on performance could impact on stress levels. ‘A Manager’s Tale’ reflected the need for me to cope when things went wrong and plans changed and revealed that no two days were the same but that routine jobs still had to be achieved. I had to
manage a team with diverse abilities and personalities and maintain focus in a role that required completion of the spectrum of general management tasks. Stress, caused by pressure to perform, was inherent in my role and correlated to the four stresses (sic) felt by managers that were identified by Hill (2003); these were role strain, the negativity of others and the negative emotions caused by continually dealing with problems, isolation, and the burden of responsibility. Other sources of stress in the workplace include organisational structure and changes, long hours and high workloads exacerbated by instant email communication, excessive rules and regulations, poor interpersonal relationships and lack of autonomy (Mullins & Christy, 2010). Although tiredness, behaviour changes or an inability to focus at work may result if managers do not recognise and deal with pressures and stressors in themselves and their staff (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Goleman et al., 2013; Hill, 2003) little attention is given to such an important issue in textbooks on management. For instance, there is no mention of stress or anxiety in the work of Drucker et al. (2010) and Stewart (1999) allocated just a page to the concepts. In other instances stress appears to be poorly understood by many management authors and researchers; the use by Hill (2003) of the word ‘stresses’ rather than stressors is one such example. The misuse and ambiguity surrounding concepts associated with stress described by Fletcher and Scott (2010) resulted in limiting the applicability of findings to professional practice.

Role overload, identified by Mullins and Christy (2010) and Shultz, Wang, and Olson (2009), can be caused by undertaking complex tasks, diverse tasks, having too many tasks or roles, and / or the need to work to short deadlines. Workplace technology can lead to information overload and workers feeling overwhelmed (Hudson, Christensen, Kellogg, & Erickson, 2002). These aspects of managerial work featured in ‘A Day in My Life’. The feelings of stress that can result may be attributable to the
person’s inability to meet expectations satisfactorily or because of conflicting priorities. In conjunction with role overload managers must cope with multiple inputs, frequent distractions and hassles. Hassles are the irritating and frustrating demands that most people experience at work and home (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer & Lazarus, 1981). They can include losing things, arguments, disappointments, financial worries, role ambiguity, role overload and the little discussed issue of role under-load. Role under-load encompasses the need to cope with the routine, sometimes boring, mundane elements of work, too few demands and the associated lack of motivation (Loukidou, Clarke & Daniels, 2009). Owing to the association with high staff turnover, absenteeism, poor performance, work-related illness, apathy and counterproductive behaviour, identification of these symptoms of boredom in staff is an important managerial skill (Denhardt, et al., 2009; Loukidou, et al., 2009; Shultz, Wang, & Olson, 2009). Such daily hassles and monotony can cause staff as much stress as major life events (Jones & Moorhouse, 2008; Kanner et al., 1981). Short periods of routine work may, however, be beneficial especially in jobs that are normally complex, and they can provide valuable thinking time. Routine tasks can be interspersed with the more challenging ones or scheduled for a time in the day when the capacity for complex thought processes has declined. In agreement with de Castella (2012), managers should experience a boring job to appreciate what monotony and boredom feel like and what can be done to deal with and buffer against these feelings.

Two areas of stress management identified by Denhardt et al. (2009) were the prevention of unnecessary levels of strain, and the ability to cope effectively with stress. Individuals and organisations, they proposed, both play a role in “creating work environments characterised by eustress rather than distress” (p. 99). Eustress is stress that is deemed to be healthy and leads to fulfilment. Self-management and self-
awareness are important in recognising and assessing the effects of anxiety on managerial performance and in the management of stress. Broadly, stress can be managed through three approaches: problem based, emotion based and avoidance based coping strategies. For example, Denhardt et al. suggested that goal setting, provision of resources (problem based) and support and effective communication (emotion based) could help prevent stress in others. Social support, manifesting itself as support with tasks, positive relationships and emotional assistance from colleagues, family and friends provides workers with someone to turn to for help in balancing their commitments and discussing work and domestic issues and can buffer against work-related stress (Ashkansay & Daus, 2002; Denhardt et al., 2009). Social support can also influence how staff cope with the daily hassles at work (Aldwin, 2000) including, for example, coping with difficult customers (Grandey, 2000). A supportive work environment can also buffer the effects of high job demands and low job control on the stress felt by staff (Grandey, Cordeiro, & Michael, 2007). Harris, Winskowski, and Engdahl (2007) noted that staff who felt successful and supported by their supervisor were likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction and were less likely to leave. A manager’s emotional, tangible or functional support can influence staff’s capacity to cope with the stresses of organisational life (Denhardt et al., 2009). Managers should therefore try to support their staff practically and emotionally and afford them the opportunity to develop a network of colleagues for social support.

Role ambiguity arises when there is lack of role clarity and insufficient information is available to enable satisfactory performance in the job. It encompasses the extent of someone’s authority and responsibility (Mullins & Christy, 2010). Role clarity and clearly defined levels of responsibility can help to reduce the stress caused by ambiguity. Clear parameters allow staff to operate effectively as they are aware of
the limits of their decision making and action taking. These issues are discussed in the later section on role and task management. The achievement and maintenance of a work-life balance is an important aspect of the successful management of emotions for the manager and their staff. The inability to achieve this balance can be a major source of stress that may transfer from the work to the home domain and vice versa. Work-life balance was discussed in detail in ‘Taking the Plunge’. As advocated by Denhardt et al. (2009) good health is an essential aspect in coping with work and personal demands and challenges. Eating well, exercising and getting adequate sleep are important factors in dealing with the negative consequences of stress-related symptoms. The flow of information is suspended during physical activity which gives the brain the chance to process information, thereby helping with the demands of emotional overload (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Daudelin, 1996). For me, going to the gym or cycling in the evening or at the weekend was a beneficial distraction from work, that provided thinking time, a break from mental stimulation, another focus and a group of like-minded individuals to whom I could turn for social support. The physical demands of exercise seemed to improve the process of reflection, aided sleep and made me inclined to eat well. It follows that staff will be more productive and effective if they are given time to take exercise during the working day.

There are links between experience and emotional management; Katz (1974) proposed that an effective manager:

…must develop his (sic) own personal point of view toward human activity, so that he will (a) recognize the feelings and sentiments which he brings to a situation; (b) have an attitude about his own experiences which will enable him to re-evaluate and learn from then; (c) develop ability in understanding what others by their actions and words (explicit or implicit) are trying to communicate to him; and (d) develop ability in successfully communicating his ideas and attitudes to others. (p. 98)
This reinforces the need for experience and experiential learning through structured and meaningful reflection in the development of skills related to emotional management.

**Relationship management.**

Interaction and relationships with people as formal, informal, collegial and other relationships that cut across line management and reporting structures are an integral and defining part of managerial practice (Cunliffe, 2009; Gramberg & Teicher, 2005). Managers’ accounts of their work described the relational nature of their practice rather than their use or knowledge of “rational modes of thinking” (Warhurst, 2011, p. 267). Although positive relationships are pivotal to successful cross-departmental working (Goleman et al., 2013), as Hill (2003) and Watson (2001) maintained managing relations is difficult, time consuming and demanding. Most of the stories in ‘A Manager’s Tale’ featured other people with whom I worked to support the work of the School. There was a need to manage complex and multiple relationships within and outside the University. Recruitment and selection, and team management issues were frequent features of my reflections. I aimed to build a cohesive team by recruiting competent staff who were likely to work well together. Once in post the aspiration was to communicate the team and School culture to them and provide the new member of staff with a supportive environment. Aware that the development and maintenance of relationships was vital to team solidarity, I promoted social events and scheduled formal administration team meetings. Such relationships had the potential to form the foundations of a social support network to which an individual member could turn for emotional support. Such strategies were confirmed by Hill (2003) to be an effective and efficient tool. My ability to do things on time, regardless of how mundane they were, achieved results and helped me to develop relationships with others.
Dealing with conflict, underperformance, disciplinary matters and helping with health and other difficult issues characterise the more complex side of relationship management (Gramberg & Teicher, 2005; Hill, 2003; Warhurst, 2011). Relationship conflict is associated with disagreements that stem from frustration and personal clashes; task conflict arises through disagreements about the tasks being performed (Ayoko, Callan, & Härtel, 2003). Workplace conflict can, therefore, manifest itself in various ways but interpersonal and task-related problems were most prevalent in my work. As occurred in ‘The Office’ interpersonal disputes between colleagues can lead to an inability to work together, absenteeism, hostility, anger and frustration which affect effectiveness and work outcomes (Ayoko et al., 2003; Gramberg & Teicher, 2005).

Although avoidance of conflict and adverse relationships can be achieved through understanding and communication of organisational culture (Tierney, 1988) in ‘The Office’ the culture was understood but conflict still occurred. Sometimes, despite the best efforts of the manager, conflict is unavoidable and in this instance damage limitation and resolution may be required.

**Presentation management.**

With increasing regularity the manner in which I presented myself and the importance of how I was viewed by others was apparent in my reflections. I reflected on my appearance in terms of how I dressed and also on more subtle areas including physical location, demeanour, availability and presence. The aims of wishing to be seen to be competent, efficient, organised, knowledgeable, helpful, in control of a situation and willing to be involved were recurring themes in ‘A Manager’s Tale’. I wanted to be seen as acting within the scope of my role and making decisions which were within my gift. The manner in which I was perceived by others was important to me and I wanted to be an accepted and valued team member. Knowing that my self-presentation was
appropriate to my role, as judged by others, was an integral part of feeling effective in my role.

Self-presentation and impression management and their significance to individuals in the workplace have long been noted. Gardner and Martinko (1988) described how impression management could affect organisational and personal success. In research within the service sector, Nickson, Warhurst and Dutton (2005) suggested that ‘aesthetic labour’ or ‘appearance labor’ (Peluchette, Karl & Rust, 2006) was essential. It is so termed because the ability to dress appropriately for work, to look good, sound right, and display a suitable attitude requires physical and mental effort by the wearer. Clothing decisions affect others’ perceptions about the wearer and the wearer can use their choice of apparel to influence how they are viewed by their work colleagues (Peluchett et al., 2006; Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, & Mackie-Lewis, 1997). In ‘Appearance, Apparel, Attitude and Acceptance’ when I changed role from manager to research student for the day I wanted to wear clothes that conveyed information to others about my role for the day and enabled me to engage comfortably and be accepted by the other students and the presenters (see Goffman, 1959). This has a relationship with the study carried out by Rafaeli et al. (1997) who found that dress was used by their female administrative participants as a symbol to engage in their work roles, to engender role feelings and to affect how they related to others. Similarly, Peluchett et al. (2006) concluded that attire played a role in individuals’ attitudes and beliefs regarding workplace outcomes and the achievement of power and influence. Furthermore, they found that positive self-perception, including being dependable, competent, productive and friendly, was experienced by individuals who used clothing to impress others. Despite the literature on workplace attire (e.g., Cardon & Okoro, 2009; Peluchette & Karl, 2007), and its implications in self-management and the management of others,
presentation management under any guise seems to feature little in management
education and curricula. In an age and culture where self-image and self-presentation is
frequently the subject of media debate and its links with workplace outcomes and
perceptions of significance, this seems neglectful.

Physical presentation in terms of office space and location for the manager and
staff is another aspect of presentation management and is highly relevant to effective
management, cultural communication and efficient working. Hill (2003) noted how an
open door and being available to staff, on a one-to-one basis, was important in terms of
the development of managers’ effective relationships and presentation. An open office
door and open workspaces was found by Tierney (1988) in his study of organisational
culture in higher education to promote visits by colleagues and students, lead to the
sharing of information and an enhanced awareness of activities and decisions.

Practical ways to facilitate presentation management can include scheduled team
meetings where staff are afforded the opportunity to update colleagues on what they
have achieved and what they are working on which allows them to project themselves
in a positive manner. The ‘right’ self-presentation, feeling comfortable in an
environment and that one fits in is one less thing to worry about. Suitable attire for the
office should be discussed with new staff before they arrive and will be one less thing to
be anxious about on their first day. Time is well spent on appearance and dressing
appropriately to the role and a change in apparel can be a strong signal to others.

**Task and role management.**

In relation to this research project task and role management includes the achievement
of a work-life balance, managing role conflict and multiple roles, multi-tasking,
decision making and maintaining focus. Managerial work is characterised by the need to
manage multiple projects and initiatives often involving tight deadlines and resource
constraints. The large number of interruptions, the need to switch between activities frequently, and often switch back again, makes managerial work taxing (Gonzalez & Mark, 2004; Hudson et al., 2002). Hill (2003) encapsulates the work situation succinctly and accurately:

Managers must juggle diverse, often ambiguous, responsibilities and are enmeshed a web of relationships with people who often make conflicting demands: subordinates, bosses, and others inside and outside of the organisation. As a result, the daily routine in management is often pressured, hectic, and fragmented. (p. 14)

The quotation highlights the interconnectedness of task management, relationship management and emotional management. Stressful situations can make decision making more difficult (Jones & Moorhouse, 2008) but making a decision can help with the management of stress and enable the manager to cope more effectively. Allowing staff to participate in decision making and establishing two-way communication helps reduce stress (Stordeur et al., 2001). Conflict resolution is also linked to decision making because a resolution is required to satisfy competing demands of those involved (Gramberg & Teicher, 2005). Management and accomplishment of tasks is largely concerned with balancing and making repeated adjustments to working practices. As well as being an important aspect of presentation management an open or closed door can be a social signal to indicate a manager’s availability and openness to interruptions. Interruptions, resulting from an open door strategy can, as Hudson et al. (2002) suggested, be beneficial because they allow the manager to respond quickly to problems before they grow. They also allow the manager to glean information in a more relaxed manner than through a formal meeting. If an open door policy is used tactics will be
needed to help maintain continuity and ensure that the work is completed. This can range from post-it notes to e-based methods (Gonzalez & Mark, 2004).

A closed door, however, can result in a manager not receiving important information. Managers must choose whether to be interrupted or take steps to give themselves time away from such distractions (Hudson et al., 2002). They also need to be aware of the implications of their coping mechanism; for example, Mark, Gudith, and Klocke (2008) reported that people whose work was interrupted frequently worked faster and wrote less to compensate for the time lost. This, however, led to a higher workload, more stress, more time pressure, higher frustration and effort. Interruptions, therefore, require role and task management and emotional management. Managers need to be effective in time management and find uninterrupted time to prioritise tasks and for reflection, rest, creativity and social contact (Denhardt et al., 2009). Needless to say, the interplay of these factors, the achievement and maintenance of a balance between positive and negative interruptions and between home and work life can be a struggle and is an inherently problematic (Hudson et al., 2002) but important managerial skill.

As outlined in the section on emotional management, role overload and underload can have a negative effect on health and well-being. Improved education and greater use of technology may mean that the skill level of workers exceeds the job requirements and leads to boredom and low satisfaction levels and high turnover. Motivation can be improved through feedback, mentoring and task support, enriched and more complex jobs with higher levels of skill use, autonomy and ability to influence decisions, and work scheduling (Harris et al., 2007; Loukidou et al., 2009; Shultz et al., 2009). A further benefit to staff of a degree of autonomy and control over their work is that they are less likely to experience job stress (Chiang, Birtch, & Kwan, 2010; Kim et
Conversely, role ambiguity can also lead to stress and strain (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Stordeur, D’hoore, & Vandenberghe, 2001). In ‘A Manager’s Tale’ I described my role autonomy but lack of clarity over limits of my responsibility caused me a degree of uncertainty. From a manager’s perspective a delicate balance, on an individual basis, is required to give staff an appropriate level of autonomy but to avoid role ambiguity. Staff need to be provided with a supportive environment with the goal of reducing stress and also motivated to ensure that all tasks, even the mundane ones, are completed.

There is a raft of literature on stress, strain, role ambiguity, role overload and role under-load undertaken in a range of employment sectors, on staff of varying grades and levels of responsibility (e.g., Chiang et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2007; Kinman & Jones, 2004; Loukidou et al., 2009; Shultz et al., 2009; Tytherleigh et al., 2005). The findings of such research cannot always be generalised and for the manager with staff of different ability, grade, role, age, sex, education, knowledge, experience and background, they can confuse rather than aid. What is more valuable is for managers to be aware of the potential sources of stress and what can be done to reduce stress in their staff. Consequently, staff need to be managed on an individual basis rather than as an analogous team; some prefer and need more direction than others who like to be more self-directing. A balance needs to be struck which requires the manager to know their staff well enough to employ an appropriate management style to allow staff to carry out their tasks and roles effectively.

**Context, setting and organisational appreciation.**

At the commencement of this research project I had worked in the School for four years and so my effectiveness was affected and enhanced by my understanding of how the School, and the University, culturally and organisationally went about its business. I
knew to whom to turn for help or to achieve things. Furthermore, I was well known and, I believe, reasonably well thought of by staff within the School and colleagues in the central service units. I was motivated by what the School aimed to achieve and there was a good fit between me and the cultural environment, which probably affected my efficiency and effectiveness (Tierney, 1988). Watson (2001) also noted the close link between managerial competence and organisational culture, arguing that “a manager’s competence is as much a matter of the structural and cultural context in which they are operating as it is of their personal qualities” (p. 222). In relation to the impact of leadership styles on effectiveness Tierney (1988) reported that similar leadership styles could produce different results in seemingly similar organisations. My management style was appropriate to the organisational context (Rosener, 1990). As a consequence of being in a job that reflected my skills, abilities and values and in which I could flourish I was more able to gain job-specific knowledge as well as enjoyment and job satisfaction.

Mintzberg (2004) proposed that, due to the complexity of organisations, in order to manage effectively, managers needed a deep understanding of the context in which they worked and that this knowledge was gained in situ. He further suggested that this knowledge was not particularly portable and that managers could struggle to move their skills across organisations or industries. I have worked across a range of diverse organisations and sectors. Although I undoubtedly became more effective in my current role over time, on appointment my soft skills and experience of managing myself and staff were transferable and relevant to higher education. I learnt quickly the contextual and broad-based technical knowledge that was required for me to work more effectively. Sir Clive Woodward proposed that a professional coach could coach any sport albeit with a technical coach to educate the players on its intricacies (Lee, Shaw,
Chesterfield, & Woodward, 2009). I believe that this concept can broadly be transferred to management; a professional manager can manage successfully within a similar organisation, for example, another public or not for profit organisation, if given support with the technical, context specific, requirements. This is illustrated in Figure 5 where organisational and sector specific knowledge form the outer layer of the managerial effectiveness model.

**Gender Issues.** A review of the management literature revealed there to be broad differences in management and leadership style between males and females (e.g., Deem, 2003; Priola, 2004; Rosener, 1989; Whitehead, 2001). I made reference to my gender within the narratives. For example, I had been informed that one reason for my appointment was that military service meant that I was used to working in a male-dominated environment and during the data collection period I was the only permanent female member of MPT. My management style was probably influenced by prior experience and the ongoing need to operate in and cope with the male-dominated environment of the Cardiff School of Sport. In her study of women managers in a UK academic institution Priola (2004) suggested that women constructed femininities around the following four discourses:

- The ability to manage multi-tasks (including administration)
- People and communication skills
- The ability to focus on support and care for the staff
- The implementation of a team-based approach rather than an authoritarian style. (p. 424)

These points can be aligned to the findings presented in this research project on what constitutes efficient and effective management. That is: the need to multi-task (task and role management), to possess people and communication skills (relationship
management), to support and care for staff (emotional management) and to use a team-based approach (task and role management and relationship management). Watson (2001) questioned whether women managers were more people-orientated than their male colleagues. I attributed my ability to achieve results to interpersonal skills, hard work and personal contacts rather than to my gender. My situation-dependent style of leadership was a hybrid of transformational and interactive approaches combined with the more male styles of being decisive, competitive and controlling and worked well in the School (Rosener, 1990). A blurred style and identity which included elements of masculine and feminine attributes, fitted comfortably within the School structure and culture.

**Research Implications for Management Education**

A starting point for this PhD was the perception that my formal management education had failed to address the realities of management practice. This research project has shown efficient and effective management to be multifaceted but with two primary aspects: self-management and the ability to manage and work with others. Managers need to understand why self-management is important, what this actually means and learn how to develop and improve their ability to manage themselves. Knowledge, derived from degree level management education, short courses and work-based experience, all contributed to my managerial practice. As discussed in chapter Two ‘Introduction’ there is a paradox between what is largely taught in business schools and what is believed to be important to succeed as a manager. Theory and analysis underpin many degree programmes because they are straightforward to teach and to learn, whereas communication, leadership, interpersonal skills and the ability to combine this with knowledge and experience, which are not as easy to teach or learn, are more valuable (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002).
Management education can, though, as reported by the graduates in Hay and Hodgkinson’s (2008) study, broaden perspectives and impart different ways of thinking and acting which can inform practice. Certainly, reading for this PhD confirmed the benefits of formal management learning when combined with practice. A range of soft skills, including emotional self-management and understanding emotions of others, an ability to develop relationships and an awareness of issues pertaining to presentation are necessary; however, these do not currently appear within the teaching of most business schools. For example, the MBA in Higher Education Management offered by one UK university features modules in strategic management, management of financial resources and management of teaching and research and a dissertation. Curricula, as Bennis and O’Toole (2005) suggested, ought to address the complex multidisciplinary and practical questions faced by managers and link hard and soft skills. Students should complete their degree studies knowing that managerial work is complex and fragmented, and that it is made harder, but also more interesting, by the need to manage people. Acceptance is required that although degree studies impart useful knowledge a management graduate’s learning about themself and others is continual and developed through experiential learning. Although in agreement with Cohen (2007) that students should understand ideas such as ‘Evidence-Based Management’ (Rousseau, 2006), management graduates should not rely on journal articles to provide the answers for most managerial issues as the subject matter is usually too narrow to be useful and they lack practical application (Cohen, 2007). In conjunction with formal management education and academic texts, effective management requires experience, judgement and balance. Action research and reflective practice could be taught as a means by which students can integrate experience into management education, particularly in the
management of change (Mullins & Christy, 2010). Accordingly, Hay and Hodgkinson (2008) suggested that within management education:

There is a space for critically reflective practice that raises social, moral and political questions which provide possibilities for enhanced management practice. Such interrogation may be sent to raise awareness of the different ways in which situations or events facing managers may be framed and this provides possibilities for acting in ways that are more sensitive to the complexities of managerial work. (p. 37)

Reflecting on my practice enabled me to understand the hidden complexities of managerial work and how to use my skills and experience to make effective decisions (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005). Reflective practitioners, who want to learn from experience and are willing to question and examine their beliefs and values, will experience personal development and become better managers (Hill, 2003; Katz 1974). The development of managers who are able or who have the ability to be reflective practitioners is likely to be beneficial to the effective running of the organisation. Correspondingly, because of the link between reflection and self-awareness, educating managers to be more self-reflective will probably result in them being less prone to act impulsively (Goleman et al., 2013). Equipping managers with the tools to be reflective, including how to use a reflective diary or journal or the benefits of talking with trusted colleagues may aid the process (Denhardt et al. 2009).

As Hill (2003) concluded, telling managers what they need to do and what they should think about is easy; the difficult part is acquisition of the competencies and using these in the workplace. Formal management education should not just impart conceptual knowledge based around the traditional subject areas but also include strategies to help students develop soft skills including how to manage emotions, self-
presentation, relationships and tasks and roles. This is best achieved through experiential learning and to enable experiential learning managers should be encouraged to become reflective practitioners. Such techniques will enable managers to learn, develop and adapt throughout their careers.

Summary of Key Findings

The keys findings and practical outcomes are summarised in this section. They are divided into three areas: Self-management, management of others, and those findings that are applicable to both managing one’s self and other people. The decision on what to include was influenced by what I learnt as a result of undertaking this research; the intention and focus of this section is towards relevance for other practising managers.

Self-management.

The manager needs to be able to manage him or herself particularly in the areas of emotional, presentational, relationship and task and role management. Managers experience anxieties and insecurities in the same way as the staff who they manage. Looking after one’s self and developing coping strategies to deal with the stresses, strains and emotional elements of work are vital. Effective self-management is a precursor to the effective management of others. Self-management includes the need for:

- Achievement of well-being. Physical and mental well-being can buffer against stress and anxiety. Getting enough sleep, finding time for sporting, recreation and social activities, eating well, taking annual leave, decision making, delegation, remaining focussed and time management can help manage workload and cope with and manage home and work based stressors.

- Management of role conflict. Conflict can occur between work and home life and is associated with work-life balance. The objective should be for
equal satisfaction with work and out of work / family role and with a minimum of stress and guilt spilling over from one role to the other.

- Self-Presentation / Appearance Labour. Looking and sounding right at work and presenting an appropriate attitude takes physical and mental effort by the worker. There are positive benefits to effective appearance labour. Using apparel to ‘fit in’ can reduce anxiety and make the wearer feel more comfortable, improve their self-perception, and therefore enable them to function more effectively. The physical location of office space and a manager’s availability to staff and colleagues is an important facet of how they present themselves.

- Emotional Labour. An appreciation of the effort required to display the expected and appropriate emotional response in the workplace and how this links to self-presention and appearance labour is need. It includes self-control and saying the right thing regardless of the emotions that the situation may generate.

- Reflective Practice is beneficial for managerial development and planning future action and improvements.

Managing Others.

Managing staff is difficult. It includes not just the need to provide direction, delegation, and organisation of people and tasks but also to understand and manage staff in terms of their emotions and relationships, how they present themselves. Staff should feel supported and valued. Staff well-being, positivity and satisfaction in the workplace are important in relation to their motivation and productivity.
• Conflict Management. Conflict and dealing with difficult people is an inherent part of the managerial role. An understanding of why it has arisen will allow it to be managed in a timely and effective manner.

• Emotional Contagion. Positive and negative feelings and emotions can spread between workers. If one team member displays negativity then this can affect the other members of the team.

• Small Things. It is not just completing the big things (a strategic plan or a policy document) that make a manager effective or which indicate that the manager is doing their job. It extends to the ability to notice and to do the little things, to take care of the daily tasks and be mindful of staffs’ and colleagues’ needs that make a difference.

Managing Self and Others.

Many of the findings can be applied to self-management and the management of others.

• Stress. Acknowledgement of workplace stress and recognition of its effects on productivity, health and morale are vital. Signs of stress can be cognitive (inability to concentrate or to make decisions, mistakes), emotional (inability to cope, lack of interest, poor self-esteem) or physical (headaches, tense muscles, stomach upset, high blood pressure). Workplace stressors include having too many or two few demands (role underload and role overload), lack of support, lack of role clarity, unsatisfactory relationships and poor communication of change. Daily hassles, arguments, family and money concerns and practical problems, may result also in stress and anxiety and can affect mental and physical well-being in a similar way to major life events.
• Coping. This relates to the cognitive and behavioural efforts required to manage the external and internal demands of a stressful situation. Managers need to employ coping strategies to buffer against the effect of stress and help their staff cope too. This may include finding time to deal with personal issues and similar distractions or the use of social support. In order to avoid burn out and maintain well-being a balance should be struck between activities. Balancing the needs of individuals, the team, the organisation and family is also a key skill. Managers may need to review staffs’ work and tasks for under or overload, role clarity and monotony. Experience can be used to benchmark situations and to help develop coping strategies and resilience.

• Linkages and interrelatedness. The steps taken to manage yourself or others are often interlinked and have knock on effects. For example, your physical location can help you to build relationships, may help you to manage your own roles and tasks and those of others. Relationships can help provide social support and the ability to manage tasks or have other to whom to turn for help can reduce stress and anxiety.

• Social support. Such support can be in form of emotional support, tangible support (help with tasks for example) and information giving (for example to resolve a problem). It can aid team cohesion and promote a sense of belonging and help someone cope with stressors and enhance their well-being.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research Project

There were a number of strengths and limitations associated with this research project. Perhaps of foremost importance is the uniqueness of this work from both a theoretical
and a methodological perspective. There is little qualitative, ethnographic research that focuses on the work of managers, their experiences and daily challenges (Karra & Phillips, 2007). Hill (2003) who traced the experiences of nineteen new managers and Watson (2001) who undertook ethnographic research in a manufacturing company, are two notable exceptions. Their work demonstrates the value of insight and in-depth analysis into what managerial work is really like. I am unaware of any similar autoethnographic research on management in higher education to that undertaken for this thesis. As such a major strength of this programme of research lies in its originality in terms of concepts and application of research methods. Watson (2011) emphasised the need for researchers to move “close to the action” (p. 205), which this research has achieved. The narratives and the findings provide a first-hand insight into managerial practice and organisational behaviour in higher education.

The autoethnographic approach of this project provided a distinctive view on managerial practice in higher education; however, this research method could potentially restrict the data recorded in the narratives. Although the work was principally about my management practice, I needed to continue working with colleagues who were actors in the narratives as well as those who might potentially be so. In managing this tension between my roles, and as reported by Karra and Phillips (2007), thought was given to the information that featured in the narratives and how the results were presented. Some issues, to avoid potential distress to those involved (Kidd, 2009) were not reported, possibly misrepresenting the reality of some aspects of managerial practice. Care was taken in respect of the ethical issues of informed consent, disclosure and personal harm. In order to mitigate the risk, certain events were not told explicitly especially where the themes and implications were present in other narratives or were included within the fictional narratives. These fictional narratives, and possibly
the non-fictional narratives too, have the potential to invoke doubt over the 
trustworthiness of the data. In order to establish the credibility of this research project, 
an important factor in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a number of 
the provisions described by Shenton (2004) were used. I used well-established research 
methods, had familiarity with the organisational culture, provided a reflective 
commentary on the data collection and recorded patterns and theories that appeared 
during this period and examined previous research findings. Perhaps most importantly 
in establishing dependability, transferability and credibility was the provision of thick 
description on the contexts, situations and events on which I reported and reflected. 
These detailed narratives will help the reader to assess the plausibility and credibility of 
the findings, the transferability from the described situation to similar ones experienced 
by the reader and the dependability of the work. I had experienced similar events to 
those constructed in the fictional narratives during my career; this helps to diminish the 
‘fictional’ tag that they have been assigned. Due to my managerial knowledge and 
experience and ability to write a narrative account it is anticipated that these stories will 
be judged as plausible by readers with similar experiences and fit with the truthfulness 
of comparable stories (Watson, 2001). On-going reflection on the results and integration 
of the implications into my managerial practice enhanced my confidence in the findings. 
Subsequently, I do not believe that the use of fictional narratives, my decisions on what 
to include, and to omit, in the results chapter have compromised the outcome and 
conclusions made.

My long term employment and immersion in the organisation, a strength of this 
research, had the potential to limit what I wrote about. Issues that were important to 
others may have been overlooked because to me they were normal, uninteresting or 
minor events, unworthy of inclusion (Klinker & Todd, 2007). There was also the
possibility that particular issues were under-emphasised, while others may have been overemphasised and made more significant than they actually were (Karra & Phillips, 2007). There were areas of my practice to which I knew I was sensitive. For example, emanating from observations made about me in the RAF, I was conscious of how I appeared to others, especially in terms of self-publicity and self-presentation. While writing the reflective narratives I noticed the recurrence of a number of themes with self-presentation being one of them. There was a desire, as with all forms of communication, to present myself overall in a positive manner (Goffman, 1959) but at times I was modest of my achievements and displayed a tendency to blame myself for problems within the administration team. Such personal bias and subjectivity is acknowledged and accepted (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Morton-Cooper, 2000) and described in the narratives. The collection of field notes over two years did help to reduce personal bias and balance out any emotional highs and lows or other external influences on the reflective narratives.

My qualifications and managerial experience in a variety of roles improved my credibility as a researcher in the area of management practice (Patton, 1990). Four years employment in the School at the commencement of this research eliminated the need for a period of integration into the School, something which would have been indicative of more ethnographic approaches to research; for example, Fleming (2013b) in his ethnographic study in a secondary school. My existing involvement and knowledge of the School and the fact that I did not have to “learn the ropes” (Watson, 2011, p. 209) had a positive effect on the quality of the data. As I was simply assuming an additional role as a researcher there was none of the suspicion and hostility that Fleming experienced. Linked with this, as echoed by Karra and Phillips (2007), there was pre-existing trust and rapport between me and the other staff in the School. Should this
research have been undertaken in another school or university, with me as an outsider, this may not have been the case. As an insider and employee, it was possible (and was the case on one occasion) that colleagues were wary about seeking my advice when I assumed a researcher role (Watson, 2011); by inference this limited potentially interesting and useful data. The extended data collection period, however, will have helped mitigate any discomfort about my dual roles and diminish any cautiousness. Furthermore, the research methods and attendant terminology were understood by many academic staff in the School which probably reduced any associated suspicion. A further strength of the prolonged period of data collection was that it allowed for themes, some very subtle, to become apparent.

Context, described by Johns (2006) as “situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behaviour as well as functional relationships between variables” (p. 386) impacts on organisational behaviour. The context, including the organisational structure of the School and the University and my work colleagues will have affected the results. Context also influenced the work that I undertook, the balance of my managerial duties and hence what I wrote about (Dierdorff & Morgeson, 2007). Hill (2003) proposed that situational and contextual variables result in there being no single best way to manage; in turn this could limit the research in terms of its potential usefulness or applicability in other contexts. While reading for this PhD research from areas other than higher education management, particularly those professions where practice is considered to be important including coaching, nursing and teaching, was drawn upon. Although context is important to the results of this research and this is just a single study (Shenton, 2004) the transferability of research from the aforementioned professional areas to higher education management would suggest that a two-way path for the flow of information is possible. The findings from
this research may then be of use within areas of management other than higher education and potentially in other spheres where practice, self-management, and working with others are fundamental to the role. The issues encountered were certainly not unique to higher education; stress, conflict, team cohesion, fitting in, workload management, relationship management, work-life balance are themes that cut across sectors and organisations. The other contextual and situational influences were the sporting and cultural environment in which this research was conducted; the background and research interests of my supervisors, as well as my own interests and out of work activities influenced the results and the discussion. Comparisons and lessons learnt between sport and business and management are well known, for example Jones and Moorhouse (2008) and Lee et al. (2009), therefore, the influence of sport on the research is seen positively.

This thesis also provides an insight into managerial practice from a personal perspective and captures some of the mundane, routine aspects of managerial work that Karra and Phillips (2007) believed some researchers would fail to register as significant. Alongside the transferability of some of the findings to other areas of managerial practice this project presents new knowledge on management practice particularly related to higher education. The data collected encompassed many themes and areas making it impossible within the scope and word count of this PhD to explore all the theories potentially relevant to efficient and effective management (Klinker & Todd, 2007). Identification of such potentially important areas allows for the development of these ideas in future research.

**Future Research Directions**

As a result of this thesis a number of proposals are relevant for future research. These directions are focused around three main areas: managerial effectiveness, the context
and setting of higher education, and the research method of reflection. In relation to managerial effectiveness the research and literature on management tends to focus on the management of others; however, the findings emanating from this project suggest effective self-management to be a precursor of the management of others. Further research is required into the role of self-management in the workplace and its relation and connection with the effective management of other people. A theoretical and practical understanding of how the ability to self-manage is acquired and developed and the ways in which self-management could be introduced alongside the traditional management disciplines would be beneficial. Although the value of reflective practice to enhance knowledge, learning and capabilities in practice settings is well documented (Raelin, 2002; Trede & Smith, 2012) workplace cultures and the busyness, messiness and diversity of work poses challenges for educators, students and practitioners (Trede & Smith, 2012). The development of reflective practitioners and the use of reflective practice in professional management development could be investigated. Such research would add to the understanding of management education and practice, facilitate its development in the curriculum and improve managers’ professional practice.

This research project focused on one manager in one academic school; although some of the findings can be transferred to other settings, certain contextual and situational factors that characterise the organisational setting will make other findings more difficult to generalise. A similar study by a manager in an administrative support role in another university using autoethnographic reflective narratives, could improve the transferability of the results. Such a project should be undertaken by someone at a similar stage in their career and who has a similar length of time in post. Alternatively, a project could be undertaken by a support service manager in a not for profit or public sector role other than higher education. Such studies would tackle how context, setting,
personal history and other individual characteristics affect managerial efficiency and effectiveness. A project that investigated the transferability of managerial skills between organisations and sectors would contribute to enhance the understanding of managerial skill acquisition and influence training in managerial competencies and career development. As managerial style, competencies, qualities and attributes (Priola, 2004; Rosener, 1990) have been reported to have a gender bias these results may have been similarly affected. A similar autoethnographic project conducted by a male manager in higher education could evidence any gender-related dimensions.

Managerial effectiveness is vast and each of the four themed areas identified in this project covered a broad range of interrelated subject matter. Future research projects could take a more specific approach and consider one or two of the reported elements of efficiency and effectiveness, particular where there were overlaps and links between the themed areas. This could include, for example, an investigation into stress and emotion, emotional intelligence or emotional contagion in the workplace. Self-presentation, including appearance labour, and how this affects emotion and effectiveness, is another area that would benefit from further investigation. Another research avenue would be an ethnographic study into efficient and effective academic management in higher education. Such research would provide different perspectives on managers’ and support staffs’ roles and interactions and on the skills required to be an academic manager, compared with a support services manager. There are a variety of avenues for further theoretical and practical advancement of knowledge and understanding in the area of managerial effectiveness in higher education.
Conclusion

For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.
(proverbial rhyme, circa fifteenth century)

Down the line, make them feel a part of what you are a part. Set up a school for managers and manage what managers learn; open a channel of two-way communication: commands go down, information comes up. Keep a firm grip but don’t boss them, boss their experience; don’t let them learn what you don’t tell them. Between decision and execution, between command and obedience, let there be reflex. Be calm, judicious, rational; groom your personality and control your appearance; make business a profession. Develop yourself. Write a memo; hold a conference with men like you. And in all this be yourself and be human: nod gravely to the girls in the office; say hello to the men; and always listen carefully to the ones above. (Mills, 1956, p. 81)

In this short extract on managers Mills encapsulates the key themes of efficient and effective management: emotional management (calm and judicious) presentation management (personality, appearance, being human and being yourself), task and role management (memos, conferences, decision making and action), relationship management (acknowledging colleagues, communication, allowing staff to feel part of things and listening to senior managers) and experience (develop yourself, manage experience, help staff learn, reflex). Although the piece is dated by gender stereotypes and the conventions of the day the instructions hold true and mirror the themes of my research conducted 60 years after Mills wrote about the managerial demiurge.
The fifteenth century rhyme highlights the importance of attending to and managing the little things in the achievement of the big things. In spite of any strategic plan formulated by those in charge of the army the battle was lost due to the loss or absence of a nail. In a modern day situation a well-researched and formulated strategic plan or initiative may fail if one small part of the organisation is unable to work properly. This research has shown how consideration of the small things, what to wear, going for coffee, helping some to balance their workload, or taking exercise can impact on individual and team effectiveness.

My background and diverse experiences were influential in moulding how I manage myself and others. Efficient and effective management requires an array of skills and abilities including the acquisition of knowledge from varied sources, in a similar manner to that described by Woodward in his reflections on coaching (Lee, et al., 2009). It entails an ability to deal and cope with the messiness, the problems and the complicated connections of management that can only be solved through the application of experience, intuition, judgement and wisdom (Mintzberg, 2004). Managers need to tread a careful path and one that is beset with the inherent tensions, overload, ambiguity and conflict that Hill (2003) confirmed to be part of daily practice. Predominantly, efficient and effective management is a balancing act. It is a balance, but not equilibrium, between the deployment of scientific evidence, conceptual skills and professional education set alongside the four themed areas identified and discussed earlier. Each situation has to be assessed and managed individually; rather than using every technique at their disposal the skilful manager cherry picks from his or her tool kit. In achievement of an appropriate balance the manager may need to use more of one skill set than another or draw upon theoretical evidence and professional education alongside practical experience to achieve a result. These need to be developed and
enhanced through experiential learning and deployed according to the requirements of the setting and context. This is summarised by Watson (2001) who aptly described managerial effectiveness as a “subtle, multifaceted and context-bound thing” (pp. 222–223). Complementing and enhancing this understanding of effective management is Cunliffe, (2009) with his proposition that, “management is not just something one does, but is more crucially, who one is and how we relate to others” (p. 11).

A defining conclusion is that you cannot manage someone else until you can manage yourself. Self-management precedes the management of others. The ability to self-manage is also considered to be an important distinction between leadership and management. A manager has to be able to manage himself or herself, as well as being able to manage other people, whereas this is not a critical leadership skill. It is probable that most managers demonstrate some leadership attributes as well as managerial skill. Effective management, therefore, is concerned with how someone conducts themselves in terms of their emotions, relationships, presentation and task management and how they manage other people. Managers must learn from the situations that they encounter and be able to adapt and apply that learning appropriately to other situations.

Experiential learning, through structured reflection, facilitates such ongoing personal development and allows managers to respond to change and maintain a flexible approach. Due to its importance in managerial development (Mintzberg, 2004) managers should be mentored and coached in reflective practice. As Hill (2003) concluded “becoming an effective manager is a process of lifelong learning and development” (p. 302). The definitions of management given in chapter Two ‘Introduction’ focused on the management of other people. Perhaps a more holistic definition of a manager would be ‘someone who is able to self-manage and manage other people in order to get things done’.
This thesis has revealed some of the personal skills and attributes that are required for the efficient and effective management of the support services in an academic school in higher education. The findings provide additional understanding of what it means to be a manager in higher education, what such managers actually do and what is required in order to be effective in the role. The multi-disciplinary nature of the manager’s role is revealed. In addition to being knowledgeable in the traditional management areas, to be effective a manager has to draw upon psychology and sociology in the management of relations, emotions and self-presentation. The findings from this thesis are likely to be of interest to researchers of organisational behaviour; however, more importantly for me, it is hoped that by providing a framework of areas to be considered, the findings will be of practical use to managers. Due to the complexity of the managerial role the ability to refer to a set of transferable principles should help improve efficiency and effectiveness.
CHAPTER SIX

Concluding Reflections
I was bright enough and I found the time, just. My first paper was published on 21st September 2013, about two years, three journals and four rewrites after I sent the first incarnation for review. I now understood the time issues and frustrations felt by academic colleagues for whom publications were important and essential. ‘Getting published’ was a low key affair. Over the following months, data from the publisher revealed that the paper was being accessed but I still could not bring myself to read the online publication, terrified that I would find an error. Hindsight clouded my initial judgments and I was not convinced that the thoughts and reflections written over two years previously about undertaking a PhD still rang true. What I had not taken into account initially were changes at home and at work. Finding the time to study required frequent reappraisal and renegotiation of my life and the roles of wife, mother, manager, work colleague and research student. In September 2010 when I registered, my children had just turned seven and home life was relatively uncomplicated. With each passing year, however, the boys’ needs changed; extra-curricular and sporting activities increased and homework was required. A seemingly inconsequential decision, when the boys were six, to improve their bike-handling ability by enrolling them on a five week road bike course had snowballed. Cycling began to take over our out of work lives and by the time the boys reached nine, weekends were often taken up travelling around the country to races, going on road rides and attending twice-weekly training sessions. In my desire to ‘give something back’ I had taken up voluntary positions on a club committee. At work there was a change of Dean, Director of Learning and Teaching, Director of Research, REF Coordinator and Director of Enterprise. The combined impact of the changes at work and my extra-curricular activities had a bearing on the time available to complete the PhD. Reassessment of how to fit in blocks of time for reading and writing up was needed.
There were times during the research when I wondered if my work really was worthy of a PhD. While academic associate colleagues were travelling the country with sports teams, trying to find an adequate data sample or conducting a number of separate studies, all I was doing was writing about what I did in the office. Due to work and home commitments I could not have done any other type of research but it did seem that I was having a bit of an easy ride in comparison with others. My supervisors liked my work although their excitement was a mystery to me. When Sheldon wrote in an email that ‘the work was coming on so well it was hard to put into words’ I was pleased but bemused. It was only when I started to draw the work together to write the discussion and read around the areas of MBA education, theories of management, management practice and experiential learning that I began to realise the relevance of my work. Things began to fall into place and there was growing clarity to my thoughts and beliefs. Apart from the vastness of the potential subject areas I was pleased that I had not reviewed the literature prior to undertaking the data collection. Such a review could have influenced what I wrote about, my thoughts and feelings surrounding these events and the subsequent findings. Instead I created the narratives, analysed this data and then went to the literature. It was rewarding to discover that my conclusions were legitimate, especially because they were validated from diverse sources and disciplines rather than just the literature on management. It corroborated the belief that management should draw on areas such as psychology, philosophy, economics and sociology (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005).

Undertaking the PhD left me more at ease with my managerial role. The data collection combined with the reading was illuminating and revealed the breadth and complexity of knowledge and skills that are required of a manager and how mentally draining it can be. I know that being a manager is genuinely difficult and that it is not
just me struggling to cope with interruptions, short notice requests, and all the other dramas of working and daily life. I came to appreciate that being a generalist manager was important and that a broad perspective and understanding was valuable (Hill, 2003). I was able to apply my new theories to my work and look for the recurring themes in other areas. I had just started writing the reflective epilogue when my supervisor sent me a book chapter that he had written. The themes of relationship management, self-presentation, decision making, task and role management and emotional management were all present.

I managed the data collection well. While writing the discussion and conclusion I realised that some of the personality characteristics that underpinned my management practice (i.e., generally being agreeable, conscientious and open) had also been important in completing the PhD in a reasonable timescale. These are probably characteristics that others considering a PhD of this nature should consider prior to registration. I wrote about everything that was important to me for two years. I found time, developed the habit of writing and just went for it. It was the best thing to do. It also provided me with an almost complete two year history of the School from a personal and an administrative support perspective. It was a diary that allowed me, on more than one occasion, to refresh my memory of events and inform decisions. The type of events and themes that featured the narratives recurred after the data collection had been completed. The PhD never became a chore or a millstone around my neck. Due to my enjoyment composing the reflections, pleasure in the written word and the cathartic nature of the reflections, I looked forward to writing, reading and researching. It did not stop me feeling guilty though, when I sat and watched TV for an evening and was not working on the PhD and vice versa when I was spending time on the PhD and not with my family. Trying to maintain some balance was hard and I was frequently
tired and sometimes fractious. Saying ‘no’ to anything and trying hard to please everyone and do ‘everything’ was a constant failing.

The relationship with and guidance provided by my supervision team remained key to my completion. Their skill in giving me the support that I need was well judged and their direction about which chapter to write and when ensured that the hurdle of a publication and the daunting methodology chapter were undertaken relatively early on in my period of registration.

I felt more confident in supporting my staff and certain that the guidance and direction that I provide was relevant and suitable. This was apparent when I undertook performance reviews for my staff and in particular for one member of staff who worked in a supervisory role. She had found delegation and line managing a diverse group of staff challenging and was keen to improve her performance. I based advice to her on my findings suggesting a range of methods including a master’s degree, short courses and structured reflection. Such a combination would help to improve her subject knowledge, establish academic credentials, and develop her research and analytical skill. It would also promote the enhancement of practical skills and provide her with networking opportunities and chances to share experiences and managerial worries with others.

Although I rarely assumed my student role at work, on those occasions when I did I enjoyed and valued the mutual support of the students who enrolled at the same time as me and particularly my fellow qualitative researchers. Six of us presented at a conference which drew us together and facilitated the sharing of some common ground. When we were at the writing-up stage, the peer pressure and connected desire to complete within a similar timescale seemed to spur us on. There was also casual support from work colleagues who were genuinely interested in how my work was progressing.
Some asked knowing the difficulties of reading for a PhD alongside the demands of a family and others knew of the challenges of qualitative research.

Some of the ways in which a PhD would change me were not foreseen. As is true for many other practicing managers (e.g., Cohen, 2007; Reynes, Giluk, & Brown, 2007), I had not read a single journal article during the years between completing my MBA and starting the postgraduate certificate and between completing that and starting the PhD. I enjoyed the research process and writing the journal article. What I could not reconcile was the disproportionate amount of time that it took to progress the article to publication. I felt that my time could have been better spent doing something more worthwhile than on the several substantial rewrites required prior to publication. The practitioner in me felt that I was almost selling out to the theory-driven stance with which I had become so disenchanted during my formal management education. On that basis I pondered who would read my work and who would be interested. It was potentially, and realistically, not those whom it might benefit. It would be important therefore to find an appropriate means to disseminate my research that will reach and inform practising managers.

I also wondered whether the PhD had turned me into or confirmed me as an academic geek. Towards the end of my research I started to apply for other jobs. I did not know whether to declare I was writing up my PhD or not. Would the interviewers think that I was unlikely to give sufficient time to a new job while writing up? What would an employer think of a manager reading for a PhD and would this label me? I began to realise and appreciate the changes that had taken place in me. I definitely had more confidence in my writing skills and ability to write a personal statement about how my experience and skills matched their person specification. I stopped worrying about spending time considering what I should wear to any particular work or other
event; I now knew that it was normal and important. The interview became the issue. I had written about and reflected at length on interview processes and had established views on what would enable an employer to find the right person. At the first interview I was disheartened by the poor welcome; no coffee, no tour, no chance to talk informally with prospective colleagues, just being moved from one room to another as part of a process. I wondered whether the facets of managing efficiently and effectively that I now thought important were different from those which the interviewers thought to be important. The interview seemed to concentrate on the big stuff I had achieved. My concern was that I had spent so much time looking at the detail and the minutiae that the major achievements had disappeared from sight. Attention to the everyday hassles, messiness and conflicts of managerial life for me seemed to be as significant as dealing with major projects or changes.

The one thing that did not seem to change anything was my researcher role. It seemed that within a relatively short space of time after I informed the School staff of my work most people forgot about it. There was only one occasion, recorded in ‘A Manager’s Tale’ when my researcher role was in conflict with my role as manager. The aim of leaving only footprints (Fleming, 2013b) was largely achieved. I do not believe that I caused any harm either through conducting the research or through the written results.

I have begun to ask myself “What next?” I enjoy being a manager, particularly the variety of the work. There has also been a pleasing degree of synergy in my life with links between my work, research and outside sporting interests. In early January 2014 within the space of a week I was emailed by one colleague from a central service unit for guidance on reflective practice, a colleague in the School told me that she was considering a PhD, which would be professionally based and could we meet, a second
colleague from Llandaff told me he was similarly considering embarking on a doctorate and my name had been mentioned to him and finally I was asked to deliver a personal perspective on reflective practice at a master’s seminar. Perhaps these requests represented not really a change in direction but more an establishment of the direction that I unwittingly set myself upon four years ago.

I am pleased that I took the plunge to register for a PhD. The challenge, intellectual stimulation, knowledge acquired and confidence gained were unrivalled. The process rather than the outcomes of a publication and, hopefully, a doctorate was worth the time, effort and sacrifices involved. Should I have the time again, even with the benefit of hindsight, I would not change anything. I remain unsure what, subject to satisfactory viva voce, will fill the PhD-shaped hole in my life. Family based extracurricular activities and the boys’ schooling requirements will certainly increase. A latent desire to become an academic member of staff and to lecture has not been uncovered as result of my researcher role. I will miss writing and the academic challenge. Life will remain a matter of balance, being flexible and grabbing opportunities, particularly those that present a challenge.
References


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Hudson, J. M., Christensen, J., Kellogg, W. A., & Erickson, T. (2002). I'd be overwhelmed, but it's just one more thing to do: Availability and interruption in research management. In proceedings of the *SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems* USA, 97-104.


APPENDICES
Cardiff Metropolitan University, Management Structure, as at September 2012

Appendix A
Cardiff School of Sport, Management Structure, as at September 2012

Dean

- DLT
  - UG Coordinator
    - UG PDs
  - PG Coordinator
    - PG PDs
  - Discipline Directors
    - Module Leaders
- Deputy Director Sport
- Director of Research
- Director of Graduate Studies
- Director of Enterprise
- BSM
- REF Coordinator
  - Admin and Technical Support Staff
Management Research  
Information Sheet

Dear Colleagues,

I am undertaking a doctoral research project entitled: *Efficient and Effective Management in Higher Education: An Insider, Action Research Perspective*. The study will use autoethnography\(^1\) and reflective practice\(^2\).

The aims of the project are to provide, through action research\(^3\), an in-depth investigation of efficient and effective management of services that support academic delivery in an academic school in the Higher Education sector. This programme of research is also intended, through reflection on my own practice, to develop my managerial effectiveness and competence. I will analyse the factors that underpin, contribute to and affect my efficient and effective delivery of support activities.

In order to engage in this research process I will write notes and record comments on my work and my interactions with others. These notes will be written up to form detailed, layered reflections. Importantly, I will place myself at the centre of the reflections and my comments and analyses will be in respect of my own actions and thoughts. However, it will be necessary to describe situations and conversations to inform my autoethnographic account, in which others are involved.

Throughout the duration of this programme of research the following general principles will be adhered to:

a. Identities will be disguised through the use of pseudonyms, vague descriptions and the use of general terms (e.g., administrator, lecturer, technician). Where necessary fictional narratives may be told to hide identities. Information will not be revealed without consent if identity could be compromised.

b. Informed consent will be sought from key actors whose identity would be difficult to disguise.

c. All of my research notes and reflections will be maintained electronically, and password protected to which no-one else will have access.

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\(^1\) **Autoethnography** is a form of autobiographical personal narrative that explores the writer's experience of life. Auto-ethnography focuses on the writer's subjective experience rather than the beliefs and practices of others.

\(^2\) **Reflective Practice** pays critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively.

\(^3\) **Action Research** is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams to address issues and solve problems. Action research can improve strategies, practices, and knowledge of the environments in which the researcher practices.
d. The information will be retained for up to five years when it will be destroyed. I will abide by the principles of the Data Protection Act.

e. You are welcome to seek clarification and to ask questions at any stage.

f. At the conclusion of the project there will be a seminar on the study findings.
Appendix D

Management Research

Voluntary Informed Consent Form

Dear 

I am undertaking a doctoral research project entitled: *Efficient and Effective Management in Higher Education: An Insider, Action Research Perspective*. The study will be using autoethnography\(^1\) and reflective practice\(^2\) as the principle methodologies.

The aims of the project are to provide, through action research\(^3\), an in-depth investigation of efficient and effective management of services that support academic delivery in an academic school in the higher education sector. This programme of research is also intended, through reflection on my own practice, to develop my managerial effectiveness and competence. I will analyse the factors that underpin, contribute to and effect my efficient and effective delivery of support activities.

I will write notes and record comments on my work and my interactions with others. These notes will be written up to form detailed, layered reflections. I will place myself at the centre of the reflections and my comments and analysis will be in respect of my own actions and thoughts. However, it will be necessary to describe situations and conversations in which key actors are involved, who inform my autoethnographic account.

As a key actor, and one in a digital position, it will be difficult for me to hide your identity. I wish to seek your consent for me to undertake this study and to describe events in which you are an identifiable actor. Your consent will be sought on an annual basis.

I will adhere to the following general principles:

> Every attempt will be made to ensure your anonymity. Situations that I write about that involve you will not be discussed with anyone except my supervisory team and therefore all information will remain confidential.

> Your ‘participation’ in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reasons and without prejudice.

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\(^1\) **Autoethnography** is a form of autobiographical personal narrative that explores the writer’s experience of life. Autoethnography focuses on the writer's subjective experience rather than the beliefs and practices of others.

\(^2\) **Reflective Practice** pays critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively

\(^3\) **Action Research** is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams to address issues and solve problems. Action research can improve strategies, practices, and knowledge of the environments in which the researcher practices.
All my research notes and reflections will be maintained electronically, and password protected to which no-one else will have access. The information will be retained for up to five years when it will be destroyed. In accordance with the Data Protection Act, you can have access to the information at any time.

I will provide information and feedback about the results of the study to you as a key actor in the experience for confirmation purposes to ensure that your experiences have not been misrepresented. This information will be used in research publications in both national and international domains.

I, ________________________________ (NAME) consent to descriptive anecdotal evidence, in which I am an actor, being included as part of the researcher’s reflexive critiques. I am fully aware of the purpose of the research project.

Signed:

Date: