

# Association of Commonwealth Universities

‘Planning for the Future’  
Malaysia, September 2006

Theme: Getting the Organisation Right  
A Seminar on ‘Bridging the Gap’  
between HR and Academic Staff

# Introduction

## Purpose of the Seminar

Primarily an opportunity to:

- Hear the premise on which the project team's views are based.

But also an opportunity to:

- Share views and practice with the project team and other participants.

# Background

# Why?

- HEFCE - March 2002 report '*RDS in HE – Good practice in setting HR Strategies*'
- 'HR strategies submitted in June 2001 show that, while some strategies contain a good analysis of current HR practice and performance, in many others the analysis is limited.'
- 'perhaps the main consideration here is a real willingness to address concerns...'
- 'One-quarter of the strategies pay insufficient attention to the needs of people who are not academic staff.'

# Why?

- HEFCE August 2003 - *Implementing HR Strategies: A guide to good practice*
- ‘Perhaps because of the range of skills and attitudes among managers, there is inconsistency in the extent to which annual performance reviews take place, and the quality of the review meeting.’
- ‘Clarifying and creating appropriate expectations is an important part of the longer-term culture change that is necessary if these new systems are to work effectively.’

## Why?

- HEPI – March 2005 – ‘*Mission Critical? Modernising HRM in HE*’
- Interviews with 44 Heads of HEIs and Heads of HR
- ‘there is still a long way to go before many line managers consider personnel to be part of their job’
- ‘the rich heritage of our Universities of all ages sometimes translates into a robust resistance to change’
- ‘It is hard to think of another sector where managers would need to be reminded that people management is part of their responsibility’
- ‘....this is a major issue in HR today: many staff either fail to see HR issues as their responsibility or are inadequately trained to handle them’

## Why?

- OECD Conference August 2005 Paris
- ‘Bridging the gap’ between HR Departments and Academics is vital to medium to long term success for the Sector
- HR staff and Academic staff articulated similar issues from different perspectives
- There is a gap between HR and academic departments.....this is detrimental to effective and efficient strategy delivery

# Organisation Development Group

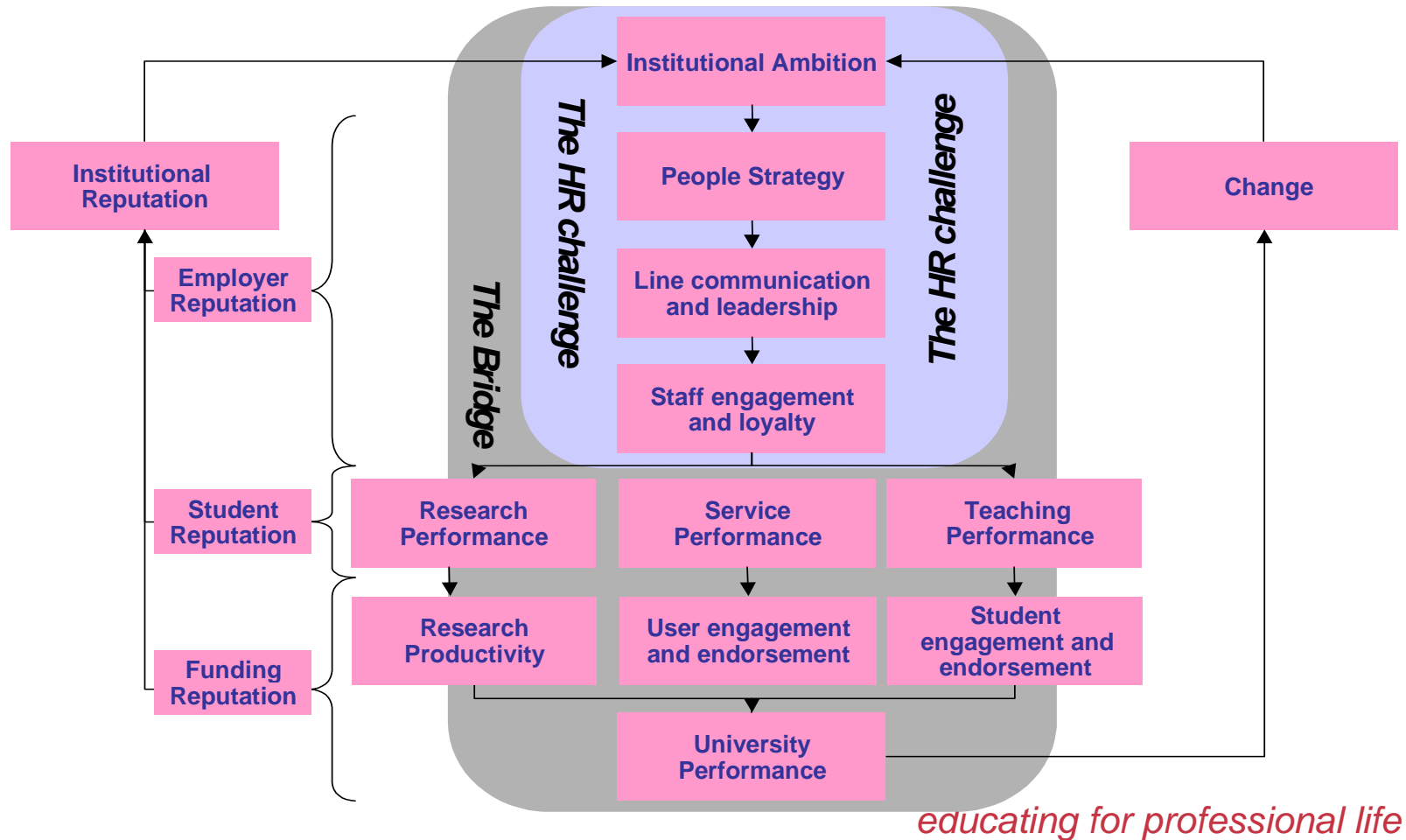
- Lived experience – Rhetoric vs. Reality
- Lived experience – Attitudes of academic staff to colleagues
- Tension between educational and staff developers (org. structures)
- Shared information about Attitude Surveys
- OD projects rejected for being inward-looking

## Scottish Study (Knight)

- *prima facie* evidence of a gap - Knight's research in Scotland, within national evaluation of the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework
- Position is that bridges are built from both sides
- Clear indicators for the design of bridging tools and routines
- HR and academic staff in mid-level management is a highly significant area in strategic university leadership (engages those with operational as well as strategic duties)
- Bridging at this level is essential if the gap is to be spanned

# Tools & Routines

Aligning Institutional Ambition and University Performance (draft model) - Fig 2



# Phases of People Management

Phase 1 – Responsive Reactive (establishment services)

- The traditional state of the old-style personnel department. Dealing with problems and processes.

Phase 2 – Responsive proactive (client-facing)

- The advanced state of the traditional personnel function: client facing, actively seeking to help managers and departments.

Ref: 'MISSION CRITICAL? Modernising Human Resource Management in Higher Education'. Archer, W, MARCH 2005, Higher Education Policy Institute.

# Phases of People Management

## Phase 3 – Strategic Reactive (delivering strategy)

- Incorporates strategic HR activities, such as succession planning, reward strategies, performance management and organisational development. But in this phase the department is still doing what it is told: responding to the agenda, helping to deliver the ambition of the institution.

## Phase 4 – Strategic Proactive (informing strategy)

- The most advanced phase – when HR professionals come into their own: instrumental in strategy development and informing institutional ambition.

Ref: 'MISSION CRITICAL? Modernising Human Resource Management in Higher Education'. Archer, W, MARCH 2005, Higher Education Policy Institute.

**Progression through the first three phases appears to be driven by the HR Director and his or her Department.**

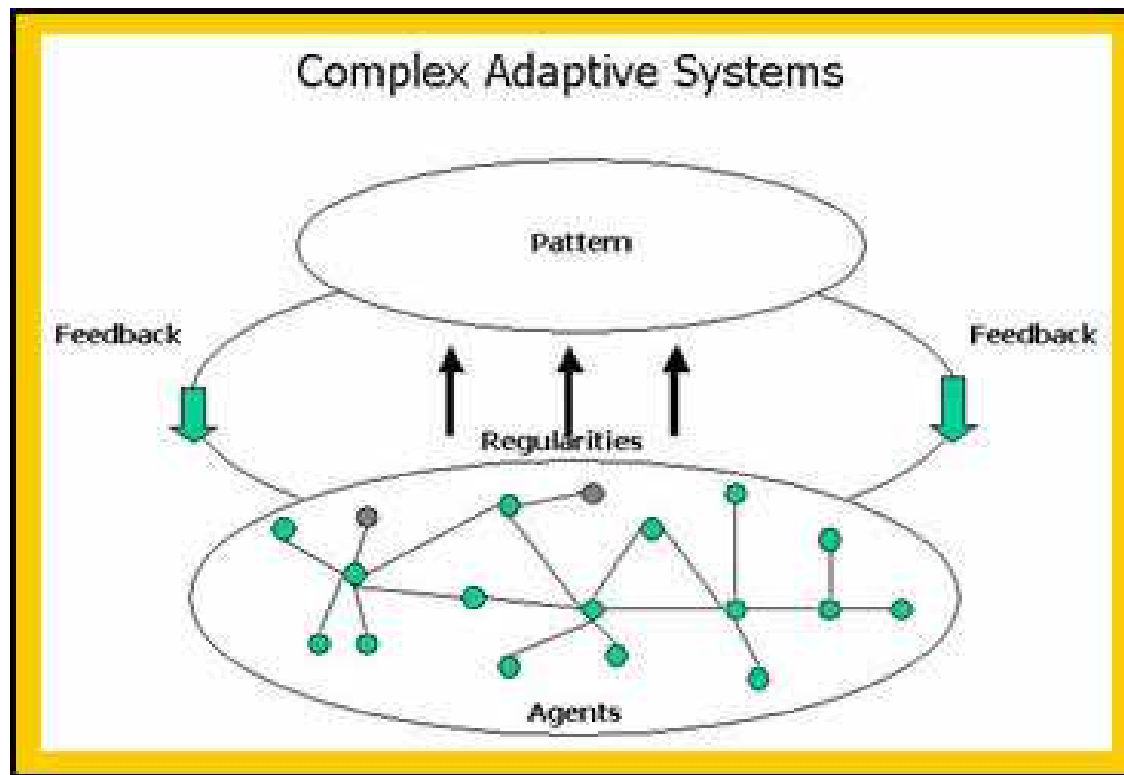
**The fourth phase involves buy-in at the top of the institution.**

Ref: 'MISSION CRITICAL? Modernising Human Resource Management in Higher Education.' Archer, W, MARCH 2005, Higher Education Policy Institute.

# Complexity Theory

- A theory based on relationships, emergence, patterns and iterations.
- A theory that maintains that the universe is full of systems, e.g. weather systems, immune systems, social systems etc and that these systems are complex and constantly adapting to their environment: 'Complex Adaptive Systems'.

# Complex Adaptive Systems



## Properties of CAS

- Emergence
- Co-evolution
- Sub optimal
- Requisite Variety
- Connectivity

## Properties of CAS

- Simple Rules
- Iteration
- Self Organising
- Edge of Chaos
- Nested Systems

# The Project

## Project Highlights

- Bridging the gap: improving LGM by strengthening relationships between Human Resource and academic departments
- November 2006 for a year (50% HEFCE funded)
- Collaborative Project
- Advisory Group
- 16% of all Universities
- Middle Managers
- Learning and Motivation focus

## Project Risks

**Risk 1** - 'Project fatigue'

**Risk 2** - Secure funds to deliver project aims

**Risk 3** - Rhetoric vs. reality

**Risk 4** - Delivery of Output 1 - Enhanced understandings and changes to planned practices

# A Preferred Approach

## Appreciative Inquiry

- The basic premise of Appreciative Enquiry is that it is better to build organisations around what works, rather than focus on what doesn't work. It is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations, and the relevant world around them.

Ref: Thackwray, R, Chambers, J & Huxley L (2005) Organisational Development in Higher Education: Some tools of the trade. In 'In Practice'. London: Leadership Foundation.

## Appreciative Inquiry

- AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential.

Ref: Thackwray, R, Chambers, J & Huxley L (2005) Organisational Development in Higher Education: Some tools of the trade. In 'In Practice'. London: Leadership Foundation.

## Appreciative Inquiry

- The AI approach, therefore, comprises questions - dialogue - 'stories' of peak experiences
- Used to support the development of a shared 'vision' - linked with detailed planning for the realisation of that vision.

Ref: Thackwray, R, Chambers, J & Huxley L (2005) Organisational Development in Higher Education: Some tools of the trade. In 'In Practice'. London: Leadership Foundation.

# The Seminar

## The Seminar: Our goals?

- Your views
- Your recommendations
- Responses to the questionnaire

AND

Examples of any good practice between HR  
Departments and Academic Departments