DEVELOPING A THEORY OF EMPLOYER AND HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

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The need for more effective engagement between universities and business has been receiving more attention in recent years. Government policy aspirations are placing growing expectations that the higher education sector will play its part in economic growth. At the same time, funding restrictions are imposing more pressure on universities to find different income streams, including funding from industry. However, the relationship between universities and business is often problematic, and engagement between the two is frequently not done well. Meanwhile, the role that business schools are expected to play in that engagement is contentious, which appears to put them squarely on the fault-line of these policy shifts.

This study explores employer/HE provider engagement within the context of the recent policy landscape, responding with a proposed conceptual model of engagement. A business school relationship with three employer organisations forms the basis of an embedded case study, which employs an interpretive stance to help better understand the relationship between employer and HE provider. The study found that a demand-led provision of skills with employers is a more nuanced context than the narrow demand-led focus of the Leitch Review, which primarily frames the issue as a problem of supply. This study confirms that employers needs are indeed complex and often unclear, and that employers expect providers to help identify their needs. Therefore the study questions the assumption, implicit in recent policy, that it is possible to generate generic needs from employers. From the evidence addressed, it proposes that employers are seeking HE providers who can both identify their needs, and help address them with the challenge implicit in latest thinking. The study thus proposes a distinctive, dual-role for business schools, namely, a responsiveness *to demand* balanced by the creation and dissemination of a latest thinking which *leads demand*. In order to do this, the study proposes a conceptual model of relationship engagement, where the quality and importance of relationships were found to be critical for effective engagement. Therefore the study concludes that a distinctive, mutually beneficial relationship between business schools and business is unlikely to be realized without understanding and fostering effective relational engagement.

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Chapter 1   Introduction

Developing a Theory of Employer and Higher Education Provider Engagement

This study was inspired by my desire to reflect on a significant period of time invested developing a client provision within a Business School. The motivation to explore the relationship between an employer and a Business School is there partly because of the evident potential in such relationships, but equally because of the frustration that so much of that potential seems unfulfilled. The study provides the opportunity to reflect on a nine year period spent developing approaches for working closely with employers in a university context. During that time I experienced firsthand, the potential and frustration inherent in university/employer relationships.

Researcher background and position in relation to the study

This next section provides an introductory account of my role as researcher and manager in the case study. In doing so, I will also provide an overview of the case and sub-cases, and provide a sense of both the research context, and of my position in relation to the three sub-cases and the University Business School. These important aspects of the study, namely my position in the research and the justification of the selection of the sub-cases, will then be further explored in the later chapter on methodology.

Having established and developed the Business School's client provision (from almost nothing to the establishment of a client-specific department within the school), my research was aimed at developing a better understanding of the client/provider engagement process. In particular, I was interested in the factors that contributed to the development of those relationships. However, of equal importance was my intention to clarify my own thinking in terms of these relationships, and in so doing to add to the understanding of others involved in this kind of work. It is my hope that this research might help them avoid some of the frustrations I experienced, whilst also helping them to realize some of the opportunities which were evident from the cases. Therefore, the study needed to focus on the actual Business School and its sufficiently well established relationships with specific clients. Three client organisations were thus identified as meeting this primary requirement, each of which had been working with the Business School for a minimum of three

years. In each case, I led the Business School team to develop the proposals and carried out initial discussions with the employer. I then worked closely with each organization, managing the development of the provider/client relationship, and with overall responsibility for the resulting Management and Leadership programmes which we designed and implemented. In addition, I oversaw the appointment of a Business School colleague from my team to manage each client contract, and to develop further each relationship.

The initial part of this study began whilst I was still acting in my role at the University, during which time the first three client interviews were conducted. However, the majority of the interviews were conducted after I had left the University. This provided me with some distance, both from the actual events and from my previous position, which helped me to separate my role as a manager from that of being a researcher. Moreover, my thinking has also been influenced by my background before entering academia. Previously I managed a consultancy team for a major UK private sector business, consulting on the development of bespoke leadership and management programmes for client organisations. It is therefore not surprising that my initial position favoured an engaged and consultative approach to working with clients. Having worked closely with the respective client organisations in this study, and having had the opportunity to step-back and reflect from a distance, I was aware of the difficulties in building relationships. I sensed that they often take time to establish, that they are frequently built on individual relationships, and that they therefore tend to be quite fragile. My aim to explore these fundamental aspects of client-provider relationships thus underpinned my decision to study cases with which I had intimate knowledge, and which also involved participants who had a depth of experience upon which to reflect. Even given my position and presumptions with respect to my pre-understandings of the context, I found the strength of the findings vocalized by participants about the importance of the relationship was surprising. Thus, the views expressed indicated the value of selecting organisations where sufficient time had elapsed and where a necessary level of trust was present for the required depth of discussion to be possible for this study.

Consequently, this case study investigates the engagement of the Business School, subsequently referred to as ABC Business School, with three employer organisations, each from the public sector. In summary, ABC Business School is a relatively new Business School, which is part of a new

university which has a stronger focus on teaching than on research. The three employer organisations are all public sector organisations, each of which formed a relationship with the Business School based on receipt of a similar range of interventions (including management, leadership and organisational development activities). As previously suggested, in order to achieve my own research aim, it was important to select organisations with which the Business School had already developed a relationship over a reasonable period of time. This made it possible to find and explore evidence of an engagement that has already been sustained. In addition, the participants in the study were key people, from both the clients and the Business School, who had been significantly involved in the development of the relationship. An attempt was also made to ensure that the types of interventions considered were all in the field of management, leadership or organisational development. The justification for selection of the sub-cases will be explored further in the methodology section.

Rationale

As well as my personal reasons for undertaking the study, there are substantive arguments that help to make the case for the timeliness, relevance and potential significance of a study in this area. This study is situated within the context of policy-making from successive Governments which increasingly emphasizes skills as a driver of growth, and universities, through their engagement with business, as a vital means to achieving policy aspirations. The momentum to increase higher level skills (Kewin, et al., 2011) emerged from the Leitch Review of Skills (2006), which signaled a significant change of intention from recognizing skills as *a* key driver of economic growth to becoming "the key driver" (Leitch, 2006, p. 9). The clear implication of this report was that perceptions of skills were moving from lesser importance to becoming "a prime area of government activity" (Keep, 2010, p. 566). Policy aspirations have led to ever-higher expectations placed on higher education (Kewin, et al., 2011) and the part it can play in economic growth (Keep, 2014). Not surprisingly, given the extent of ambition expressed in the Leitch report, there are concerns about the underlying assumptions and logic of the argument behind the assertion that skills are "the" key driver of prosperity (Payne, 2008a). There is certainly a need to critique the Leitch review, but there is also a need to analyse the development of the policy landscape post Leitch, and the significance of differing responses to the review (Keep, 2014). The exploration of the

complex skills agenda, and issues surrounding the demand-led approach advocated by Leitch (2006), lead to the need to examine a further set of tensions surrounding engagement between higher education and employers. This set of tensions necessitates a closer look at the nature of such engagement, especially at the on-going, intensely contested debate about its relevance. This is vital to an understanding of the broader dynamics of the business school environment.

There are also important knowledge gaps in the literature. In particular, there has been concern expressed from within several related literatures about the lack of research carried out from the perspective of employers. According to Connor and Hirsh (2008) there are only a few cases investigating engagement from the perspective of employers. Within the debate about the relevance of academic teaching and research to practice, Bartunek and Rynes (2014) express surprise that amongst so much debate there is a significant lack of the practitioner perspective. Hughes, Bence, Grisoni, O'Regan and Wornham (2011) were surprised about the lack of research into how knowledge is transferred from academics to practitioner. Similarly Burke and Rau (2010) contend that the role which teaching and research can play in narrowing the relevance gap, is a "glaring omission" (Burke & Rau, 2010, p. 132) in the research debate. In addition, the relationship between the teaching of higher levels skills and engagement with employers is not well understood either (University Alliance, 2015, p. 4) (The Royal Society, 2008).

Then there is evidence in the literatures of problems associated with the relationship between business and universities. There are concerns that businesses place a low value on HE providers when compared to private providers (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2010) with concern over programmes that lack relevance and practical application (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013) resulting in employers lacking confidence in HE's ability to provide products and services that suit their purposes (Wedgwood M. , 2007).   As concerning, are indications that relationships between universities and business are problematic, with a general lack of understanding (Lambert, 2003) (The Royal Society, 2008), resulting in a lack of "good relationships" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 10). The above points suggest there is opportunity for this study to contribute to knowledge, in particular addressing the lack of practitioner perspective, and to practice with respect to the problematic relationship between universities and business schools.

Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to explore employer and HE provider engagement within the context of the Leitch report, and to investigate more clearly the relationship between a HE provider and an employer organisation. This will be done within the context of a particular Business School (ABC) and its relationship with three different employer organisations, all from the UK public sector. To address the aim, a number of research questions are proposed:

1. Why does an employer engage with an HE provider?
2. What factors support and facilitate HE provider and employer engagement?
3. What are the implications for the capabilities needed in business schools?
4. How can relationships be built and sustained between HE provider and employer organisations?

Given that the study will be centred in the context of the relationship developed by the University and the employer organisations, and focuses on the views and perceptions of the main participants involved in establishing and sustaining the relationship, a qualitative interpretative approach is adopted. Semi-structured interviews will therefore be used as the primary means of gathering data to enable the depth of discussion needed to meet the research aims. This research is best understood as an embedded case study, since the study investigates the engagement of one business school with three employer organisations, which constitutes the larger primary case (Anaf, Drummond, & Sheppard, 2007). The relationship of the Business School with each individual organisation then represents the sub-cases that are embedded in the primary case (Scholz & Tietje, 2002).

The next two chapters will outline the key literatures that are shaping and informing the context within which this study is situated and secondly, the argument for the methodology underpinning the research.

Chaper 2 Literature Review

This chapter begins by exploring a significant tension and debate about the relevance of business schools, a discussion central to any understanding of employer engagement. Then the wider policy landscape, particularly in higher education, is explored in order to inform the context of the study. Having explored the broader context, the discussion addresses more specific areas relevant to the investigation. Firstly, different interpretations of the meaning of engagement in higher education are considered. Then, themes relating to the nature of the interventions described in the study are explored. In particular, aspects of workforce development and the contested debate about the nature of demand-led provision are discussed. Finally, competing claims about the impact of leaders and managers can have on their organisations are outlined, illustrating a further tension particularly relevant to the leadership and management development interventions in this study. However, to begin the literature review it is pertinent to start with an old argument which is still often used as a springboard to stimulate thinking. This argument, about the purpose of a university, helps to frame some of the key tensions and contentions of this study.

The debate about the relationship between business and higher education has been a long-standing source of contention (Pearson, 2009), often expressed within wider discussions exploring the purpose of universities all together (Finlay, 2008), (Howard, Lorange, & Sheth, 2013). Frequently, such discussions evoke the fundamental difference between John Henry Newman's eloquent justification of a liberal education, and John Locke's opposing view (which partly informed Newman's treatise): that the focus of a University education should be on utilitarian skills for a profession (Newman, 1907). Newman's 'idea' of a liberal education has been a continuing influence on educational thinking (Grey & French, 1996), particularly characterizing tensions between a "liberal vs professional education" (Finlay, 2008, p. 17) within the continuing debate about the place of Business Schools within universities. Indeed, Newman's argument that professional schools should develop separately from universities, still resonates with the "uneasy tension between universities and business schools (which) has left many questioning whether business schools should exist inside modern universities at all" (Howard, Lorange, & Sheth, 2013, p. 63).

Moreover, this tension is not just evident between University and Business School. It can also be said to exist within Business Schools, where there is a recurring argument about the nature of management education, "which has always been particularly, and brutally, torn between liberal and utilitarian conceptions of education." (Grey & French, 1996). More recently there has been a renewal of this argument, about the nature of management education and the balance between professional skills and more liberal intellectual skills. As part of their discussion of Business Schools regaining a "new sense of identity and legitimacy" (2013, p. ix) post-financial crisis, Howard, Lorange and Sheth (2013) stress the importance of incorporating Newton's principles of a liberal education in the management curriculum. They emphasize the value of developing intellectual capacity and freedom of thought which in turn enables individuals "to become introspective, open-minded, insightful and possess the ability to absorb knowledge critically in framing problems and making decisions." (Howard, Lorange, & Sheth, 2013, p. 94) Given the importance of the context of this emphasis, it could be argued that Newton's idea of a liberal education is still both influential and topical.

Yet there are undoubtedly some key questions about the relevance of Newman's arguments to the current context. For example, Newman did not see research as a core function of a University, emphasizing instead the importance of teaching and dissemination of knowledge (Starkey & Tempest, 2005). Understandably, such "ideas sit rather uncomfortably with the contemporary university" (Anderson, 2009). Indeed, concern has also been expressed about the over-simplification of debate on polarized views of education as either intellectually worthwhile liberalism, or economically useful vocationalism (Collini, 2012). Others maintain that although Newman's 'idea' lives on "in the context of debates about the nature and purposes of universities, its place in these debates is now almost entirely ceremonial" (Dunne, 2006, p. 412). Indeed in Dunne's view, though some phrases from Newman's text are often used to lend respectability to formal occasions, universities no longer hide a less than liberal reality of "instrumentalist and managerialist ambitions" (Dunne, 2006, p. 412).

Nevertheless it is interesting to note how the title used by Newman for his collection of works: the Idea of a University, is still widely used to frame discussions of purpose within a university and business school setting (Howard, Lorange, & Sheth, 2013), (Starkey & Tempest, 2005), (Anderson,

2009). Clearly for those advocates of Newman's work, this is a constructive way to "remember and reflect" (Howard, Lorange, & Sheth, 2013, p. 62) on his ideas. Yet there are concerns about whether the debate actually makes any progress, instead resembling a process of "perennial self-questioning" (Grey, 2001, p. S27), prone to repeating similar arguments every generation (Collini, 2012). Despite this sense that little progress is made, there is another possible explanation for eagerness to repeatedly revisit ideas about the purpose of a University. Indeed for Anderson (2009), in his review of the state of such a debate, the necessity for this kind of repeated discussion is inevitable, and should be seen as constructive. In an attempt to move the discussion away from some of the specific detail of Newton's principles, Anderson suggests that "it is better to see the 'idea of the university' not as a fixed set of characteristics, but as a set of tensions, permanently present, but resolved differently according to time and place" (Anderson, 2009, p. 45). Amongst Anderson's tensions are some key areas that resonate with the themes of this study. Beginning with the tensions between the Newman ideal of teaching to encourage open and critical thinking, contrasted with use of teaching skills that are vocationally or economically useful. This tension is evident in the teaching of business subjects, particularly in teaching and learning approaches in leadership and management education (Howard, Lorange, & Sheth, 2013). Then there is the tension between differing approaches to research. This is characterized by those who see research as something to be applied, such as knowledge transfer, or by those who see it more as the pursuit of original truth. This tension is characterized by the rigour-relevance debate in business schools (Grey, 2001), (Starkey & Madan, 2001). These first two tensions point towards a more fundamental issue: that of creating a balance between teaching and research whilst managing the challenge to move towards a more engaged scholarship (Boyer, 1990). Then crucially, there is another tension around which much of the recent debate seems to have focused. This is the tension between balancing economic and utilitarian pressures, and the need to maintain a critical, independent distance - inevitably raising conflicting views about autonomy and accountability (Anderson, 2009). The context of the recent economic crisis, has served to amplify the debate around this last tension, focusing it, as already implied, upon a particular part of the University: the Business School. This suggests both a relevance and currency for this particular study, situated as it is in the relationship between a business school and organisations, where each of the tensions identified by Anderson, may themselves be magnified by the current economic pressures.

The relevance debate

The position of business schools in this context can be seen as problematic. From one perspective there are issues about the legitimacy and identity of a business school in relation to the idea of a University (Howard, Lorange, & Sheth, 2013). Then, with respect to business, there is criticism of the relevance of the skills that business schools teach (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013). Similar concerns are raised regarding both the relevance of research and the ability of universities to communicate research findings to business (Howard, Lorange, & Sheth, 2013), (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013). Not only do Business Schools face questions from both their University constituency and the business communities they seek to serve, they also face challenges to their traditional role of creating and generating knowledge (Ivory, et al., 2006). The assertion that a Business school is a privileged site of knowledge creation and generation is increasingly questioned (Starkey, 2006) where other entities (such as consultancies, corporate universities and training organisations) occupy the same 'space' (Ivory, et al., 2006). More widely, Gourley (2004) draws some notable inferences from the notion that knowledge is not just created in academia. He suggests that partnerships and collaborations will increasingly make "the borders of the institution as porous as possible" (Gourley, 2004, p. 6). New knowledge production is likely to emerge from a "growing variety of sites outside the university", with an emphasis on the co-production of knowledge (Starkey & Tempest, 2005). Co-production implies a high degree of integration between research and practice, which is consequently likely to increase the tensions between so called 'applied' and 'pure' research, discussed earlier. But there is a second area of tension to be considered here, which is emerging from renewed concerns about academic freedom and control. In particular there are concerns that the research agenda may be manipulated by pressure to research "what business, government or other agencies are prepared to pay for rather than for what is most needed" (Gourley, 2004, p. 6). And perhaps of more concern, is the danger of assuming that business actually knows what knowledge will be useful to it (Grey, 2001).

Such concerns clearly suggest risks associated with the position Business Schools find themselves in, but they may also herald significant opportunities, not least in the possible benefits

to be gained from re-assessing their purpose (Starkey & Tempest, 2005). Starkey and Madan (2001)[1] call for a re-focusing of research towards the idea of relevance, which they carefully argue involves building a relationship between academics keen to listen to the needs of practitioners and practitioners convinced of the value of research. In doing so, they stress the need to balance the important tension between maintaining a distance in order to secure rigour, with getting involved and delivering relevance (Starkey & Madan, 2001). In a critique prompted by Starkey and Madan's paper, Grey (2001) suggests a sharp contrast to their argument. He argues strongly against a dash to relevance, instead highlighting the need for independent thought and the freedom to experiment without concern for the relevance of the knowledge produced. However, Grey also stresses that he is not simply making an argument for disengagement, rather that he is advocating different *terms* of engagement. For Grey, the ability of a University to offer dispassionate, neutral research, at a critical distance from relevance, is what, often attracts businesses to seek out engagement with Universities (Grey, 2001). According to Grey this critical distance, provides a distinctiveness which attracts businesses. Without such differentiation, he provocatively asserts, universities "become entirely irrelevant" (Grey, 2001, p. S31).The argument is typical of the rigour relevance debate, which seems to stress either the incompatibility of the two positions, emphasizing the entirely distinct, unconnectable and unbridgeable worlds of academics and practitoners (Kieser & Leiner, 2009), or reduction to a compromise, where "to gain one, we must lose some of the other" (Gulati, 2007). Yet Grey's point about achieving relevance by maintaining distance offers an interesting insight. It suggests there may be merits in moderating what is often considered the pervasive argument to reduce the relevance gap (Hughes, Bence, Grisoni, O'Regan, & Wornham, 2011).

There is clearly a tendency for this debate to polarize, (Learmouth, Lockett, & Dowd, 2012) and in doing so, to lose some of the complexity of the context. This is illustrated by Grey's line of argument which progresses from one advocating distance, to the questioning of proximity. He maintains that a focus on relevance would make it less likely that academics would challenge current questionable practices, such as what Starkey and Madan describe as "fads and fashions"

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[1] The debate in this section refers to several papers produced as an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research grant led by Professor Ken Starkey to investigate the dynamics of knowledge production in the business school.

(Starkey & Madan, 2001, p. S24). This viewpoint seems to equate relevance with acquiescence to, or compromise by those fads or fashions, whereas Starkey and Madan quite clearly argue for a much more considered 'engagement with relevance'. In doing so, they draw upon Abrahamson and Eisenman's plea for "careful, impactful, value-driven scholarship capable of advancing and balancing the interests of all organizational stakeholders" (Abrahamson & Eisenman, 2001, p. 68). The extent to which relevance is synonymous with compromise is arguable and Starkey and Madan (2001) make a particularly relevant point, that there is value for business when academics challenge current practice and provide alternative insights.

In reality, the debate is clearly more complex than an either/or outcome, or even a 'less of one/more of the other' balancing act (Gulati, 2007). It is apparent that there is both a lack of a shared understanding about what relevance means (Abrahamson & Eisenman, 2001), and a strong tendency for the debate to be polarized. (Gulati, 2007) Such a tendency to polarization may be associated with an identity issue, characterized by "whether a given researcher identifies him or herself as a rigorous scholar or a practitioner of applied science" (Gulati, 2007, p. 779). This is a view that Gulati considers to be misguided, advocating instead a move from the "either –or" view towards an "and" perspective, where relevance and rigour are no longer thought of as opposites.

In view of the different interpretations of relevance, and the intensity of the debate, it is worth considering a deeper discussion of how relevance is being explained, the nature of the contentious relevance gap, and the ideas associated with bridging that gap. Firstly, there is a view that relevance and usefulness are inherently problematic (Learmouth, Lockett, & Dowd, 2012) and ambiguous (Augier & March, 2007). Even attempts to clarify an understanding seem to acknowledge some difficulty with the terms. For example, Vermeulen suggests that relevance is not about "immediate prescription" (Vermeulen, 2007, p. 754) but rather about "generating insight practitioners find useful for understanding their own organizations and situations better than before" (Vermeulen, 2007, p. 755). Similarly, Tranfield and Starkey (1998) are keen to argue for a broader sense of relevance which is not beholden to topicality or the need for immediate implementation. In support of their view they draw on Whitley, pointing to a relevance approach that focuses on the nature of management problems, "as distinct from some managers' problems" (Whitley, 1984, p. 371). Such a view implies that relevant research, rather than accepting the

immediate issues of those in positions of power, should challenge where existing structures and goals may be problematic, and in doing so "transcend current beliefs and practices rather than reproduce them" (Whitley, 1984, p. 371).

These statements illustrate a difficulty with demands for immediacy and with power in the understanding of relevance. It is apparent that there is a temporal dilemma with relevance (Learmouth, Lockett, & Dowd, 2012), raising questions about the time at which ideas/insights should be considered to be useful, and the extent to which 'near-term' or longer time periods are important (Augier & March, 2007). In an attempt to recognize this, Latusek and Vlaar (2015) contrast two explanations of relevance. The first suggests a focus on the immediacy of relevance which they argue, risks providing insight that has limited usefulness. The second approach (which they advocate as their preference for defining relevance) is "oriented towards inducing reflection by practitioners and generating insights that – although not always readily applicable – may prove their value in the future" (Latusek & Vlaar, 2015). This is not dissimilar to Vermeulen's approach to research that will help practitioners "gain insight they did not yet have" (Vermeulen, 2007, p. 755). Furthermore Learmouth et al (2012) argue that any attempts to classify research or ideas as useful are not only contingent on their immediacy or time period, as just discussed, but also on relations to power. This leads to the question: 'for whom is the research intended to be relevant'? Identifying the extent to which research should be relevant to the various stakeholders is a significant factor. Is it for business, managers, workers, wider society, or is it to meet academic criteria, such as publication conventions, or career progression of the authors? This is a dilemma for which there are no easy answers, as Augier and March illustrate with their observation that relevance for senior managers or leaders in society may well be very different from relevance for those situated 'near the action' (Augier & March, 2007). So it can be very useful to realise that relevance needs to be thought of as situational, moderated by different understandings of immediacy/timing and of power relationships.

There seems to be a value in maintaining a considered perspective on how relevance is understood, but it also may be important to challenge the notion that relevance and rigour should be thought of as opposites. In a movement away from the either/or debate an approach has been promoted which is less about finding a balance, and more about achieving synthesis of the two

perspectives. Vermeulen argues that academic answers derived from research too often "lack practical meaning because the questions that were asked to start with lacked relevance" (Vermeulen, 2005, p. 979). In this analysis the issue is not in the quality of the research, but in the quality or focus of the questions asked. There is also a second, closely related issue to consider. Pearce (2004), herself a US Business School Dean, provides an interesting reflection on her own experiences as a senior manager and as an academic. In Pearce's view, whilst much academic research may not lack relevance, it is certainly lacking in a more important criterion. Too often academic research is relevant "for those less critical, more technical problems, rather than for the most important problems that those coping with large, complex organizations face" (Pearce, 2004). Whether the research lacks practical meaning, or is relevant but not particularly helpful for important problems, either case, suggests an issue with the research questions being studied. Consequently, Vermeulen argues that questions should be asked that are important to practice leading to a position where "relevance is then found in the question, rigor in the method applied to provide the answer" (Vermeulen, 2005, p. 979). Gulati (2007) also stresses the importance of questions, suggesting that in order for research questions to be relevant they should be shaped by insight from practice. So for Vermeulen, this approach creates the opportunity to synthesise rigour and relevance, by asking the right questions and "not sacrificing rigor in searching for the answer" (Vermeulen, 2005, p. 980). Thinking about the nature of the questions being asked, and suggesting that relevance and rigour can be complimentary, is a helpful way of attempting to resolve the issue of the relevance gap.

However there is another related argument, which points towards the degree to which the research is understood. Here the problem of a relevance gap is not so much about the research question asked, it is more a problem of translation. Shapiro, Kirkman and Courtney (2007) identify two kinds of translation problems. The first is a knowledge transfer problem, which demands better presentation of research in terms that are effective for practitioners. For example, with frameworks and tools that managers can use. The second is a knowledge production problem, which more closely links to Vermeulen's 'right questions' argument. The knowledge production problem is associated with researchers not collaborating with business to identify the relevant areas/topics within which to conduct research. The former problem is characterized as "lost in translation", whereas the latter is seen as a gap due to relevance being "lost before translation" (Shaprio,

Kirkman, & Courtney, 2007). It is interesting to combine the contribution made by Shapiro et al with the insights from Vermeulen and Pearce. Such a combination would suggest that the relevance of research can be improved where researchers ask the 'right' research questions (Vermeulen, 2005), through collaboration with business. This will help to identify topics and themes (Shaprio, Kirkman, & Courtney, 2007) that address issues which really matter to practitioners (Pearce, 2004). Findings then need to be developed without compromising rigour (Vermeulen, 2005) and are presented in ways which are relevant and helpful for business, better enabling organisations to apply and use them (Shaprio, Kirkman, & Courtney, 2007).

Keiser and Leiner argue a contrasting viewpoint, that any idea of bridging the relevance gap is problematic. They maintain that the "lost before translation" scenario is inevitable, because the worlds of practice and academia are so different, resulting in research that is "unconnectable… to practice" (Kieser & Leiner, 2009, p. 517). Kieser and Leiner characterize the two worlds as having different language and styles of communication and differences in the way they define and tackle problems. So in order for academia to fulfil its role, it needs to be distant and separate from practice, an argument not dissimilar to Grey's (2001), discussed earlier. However Kieser and Leiner do advocate the need for translators, who can apply the knowledge created separately from research to problems in practice. Their critique suggests that any move towards closing the relevance gap compromises the legitimacy and rigour of the research. This perspective has raised concerns that Kieser and Leiner are applying a natural science world-view to a social science, and that applied engaged research should "not be judged by the criteria of positivist science (as is being done by Kieser and Leiner), but rather within the criteria of their own terms" (Shani & Coghlan, 2014). Similarly , Fincham and Clark (2009) contest the assumption that the positivist stance taken by Keiser and Leiner, should result in the parameters of natural sciences becoming the arbiters of rigour for non-positivistic applied management research. There is a sense that some of the differences in the relevance debate are rooted in researcher identity issues (Gulati, 2007), and reflect similar difficult discussions in relation to quantitative and qualitative research paradigms (Thorpe, 2011). As Thorpe points out, there are similarities between the two debates, arguing that "If quantitative research has a problem with its being too distant from immediate problem-solving activity, so qualitative research might have the problem of being too complicit with it" (Thorpe, 2011, p. 24). This is an area which will be explored in more depth in the methodology section of

this thesis, since, given the contentions in the relevance debate, it is clearly important to position the nature of the research conducted in this study within the argument about relevant criteria for determining rigour.

In a departure from the common debate about a relevance gap, there is recognition that there are also overlaps where academics and practitioners may share more common ground than is generally recognised. According to Baldridge, Floyd and Markoczy, (2004) both academics and practitioners value interesting research which can be justified by evidence; it's just that they differ in the criteria they adopt, having a different view of what is interesting and of what constitutes justifiable evidence. So whilst there will be differences, there should also be some areas of research which are interesting to both, and which can be justified by sufficient evidence. Pearce (2004), whilst also recognizing this potential for overlap, nonetheless expresses frustration about its extent. She discusses two kinds of knowledge which she uses as a senior manager and as an academic. The first she characterizes as 'folk knowledge' which can be seen as useful applied knowledge, whereas the second is academic knowledge, which is rigorous but of limited use in practice. She argues that "both worlds would be enriched if the overlap were just a little bit bigger" (Pearce, 2004, p. 178). For Pearce, this would require subjecting folk wisdom to more careful analysis, whilst at the same time directing academic scholarship towards important organisational problems. In a similar attempt to encourage more overlap, Baldridge et al (2004) propose that researchers "should study questions that challenge both existing scientific theory and conventional management practice" (2004).

So there is an interesting and complex debate about how universities should demonstrate their engagement with, and relevance to, the business world. There is a contested tension between the need to encourage closer engagement with business, or the desire to maintain distance, in order to provide scope for a more critical, dispassionate research contribution. There are also difficulties in gaining a common understanding of relevance, with the need to recognize temporal and power complexities which vary in different situations. The idea of a 'relevance gap' is also contested. Some views advocate the need to bridge the gap, whilst others maintain that it is unbridgeable, or that it should not. In contrast to the either/or debate on relevance and rigour is a view which stresses their complimentary roles, but with a focus on careful identification of the research

questions. Others have expressed an alternative perspective, with an emphasis on seeking more situations where the interests of academics and practitioners overlap. This complex and contested backdrop to engagement and relevance is a crucial factor, informing the debate which is central to this study: how business schools engage with business. But there is one more important aspect which underpins the debate, which to a large extent has been neglected in the majority of the literature.

The missing aspect ironically is the perspective of the practitioner, especially given that the challenge about relevance to *practice* results in "an endless debate amongst academicians" (Thorpe, 2011). The argument so far, whilst presenting very different contested views, has predominantly focused on the role of academia (i.e. the supply of knowledge and research), and has taken place in journals aimed at academics. Whilst an extensive literature has developed around the debate, Bartunek and Rynes (2014) discovered something unusual in their review of that literature: "what is noticeable by its absence is the comparative lack of practitioner voice in the conversation" (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014, p. 1188). Allied to this lack of practitioner perspective is a tendency for the debate to be extensively about the producers of knowledge, a perspective challenged by Karl Weick. He suggests that the issue, rather than being on the supply side of knowledge, may be more to do with the nature of the demand for research. He argues that the relevance problem is not just about academics being wedded to their ways, it is also "that practitioners will not set aside their fads and begin to work with fundamentals." (Weick, 2001, p. S72) Through Weick's lens, the tension between academics and practitioners has much to do with practitioners being unaware of the benefits to be gained from the knowledge universities create. He suggests that what "the best of academia offer" (Weick, 2001, p. S72) is a focus on the big story, and on the fundamentals which can help practitioners.

Elsewhere, Weick discusses his approach to executive education, arguing for a scholarship of integration. This draws on Boyer's work on the scholarship of engagement[2] (Boyer, 1990), in preference to a scholarship of application, because "people do want to know what to do, but even more, they want to know what things mean, how to make sense of events, how their labels may constrain the options they see" (Weick, 1996, p. 257). This focus on integration encourages

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[2] Boyer's scholarship of engagement is explored later in the section on engagement

practitioners and academics to make connections together, to give meaning to facts, and to find alternative interpretations. What is also interesting to note is that Weick (1996) often uses vivid stories to move away from superficial simplicities and to help practitioners make connections, thus asking executives to set aside their business specific knowledge and enter a different world. In setting out how they consider business schools can become more relevant, Starkey and Tempest (2005) paint a picture of academics who act as scribes to the manager's storytelling. In the future, they contend that this storytelling relationship will change. In the future it will be shared, as academics will need to develop the role of sage rather than scribe, a description that seems to fit well with Weick's interpretation of a scholarship of integration. For Weick there is a need for universities to keep their distinctiveness, but also for them to be engaged by demonstrating a scholarship of integration which uses teaching to make connections and find meaning with practitioners. In explaining his approach Weick takes us back to the debate discussed earlier, reflecting on the underpinning idea of what a university is. He argues that "if the university continues to stand for wisdom rather than vocation, character rather than technicalities, and mindfulness rather than rationality, then it will remain a stronger partner…. And foster a richer definition of the 'context of application' (Weick, 2001).

Weick provides an alternative view of the relevance gap, advocating that the users of knowledge (the practitioners) are a part of the problem, and that to some degree the tension expressed in the idea of a gap may be a necessary part of the challenge that academia makes to practitioners to think beyond the immediate. Yet Weick describes a very inter-connected approach towards teaching practitioners, with the expectation that discoveries and ideas will emerge from working together in the classroom context. He recognizes that "academics have no corner on answering questions of meaning" (Weick, 1996, p. 256). Weick points to the tendency for academics to seemingly claim "a corner on isolating facts" (Weick, 1996, p. 256) from within their discipline boundaries. In contrast, practitioners are more likely to discuss connections in the world which completely disregard such artificial boundaries. In doing so Weick is referring to Boyer's original work on integration, where Boyer advocated a scholarship of integration which "gives meaning to isolated facts, putting them into perspective" (Boyer, 1990, p. 18). But what is particularly interesting is that, whereas Boyer discusses academics working together across their disciplines to achieve this, Weick introduces the idea that it is the practitioners who are ideally

placed to make those connections. Similarly, Gulati (2007) points to classroom engagement with practitioners as a context to test ideas and build theory. In a discussion that is particularly relevant to this study as a professional doctorate thesis, Thorpe believes that one area of promise with potential to bridge teaching, research and engagement is that of professional doctorates, where "the relationship of theory to practice as well as for practice to be questioned" (Thorpe, 2011, p. 26).

However, before leaving some of Weick's ideas on integration there are some important implications to draw from his approach to teaching practitioners. Not least that for engagement to happen in the classroom it is useful to take in to account concerns expressed by Pfeffer and Fong (2002) about Business Schools teaching "the wrong things in the wrong ways" (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p. 80). This underpins concerns that there is a lack of faculty skills to deliver effective executive/practitioner teaching, which it is argued requires different approaches. The skills needed for this type of teaching are different to conventional didactic teaching. Academics instead need to develop their skills in leading interactive discussions, using facilitation and their ability to work with the context, knowledge and experience of the participants (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013). And there are other concerns related to the claim that business schools risk losing their privileged status with research. Starkey and Tempest (2005) also suggest that their privileged position with respect to teaching and disseminating knowledge will also be contested to the extent that its production of knowledge becomes less relevant.

Despite concerns about the influence and position of business schools, the relevance agenda has intensified in the post-financial crisis era. Government argues that business schools are "well positioned to make business engagement part of their DNA" (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012). Similarly, the Association of Business Schools thinks that "schools can make an important contribution to the revival and rebalancing of the British economy" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 3). With such demands, this is not an easy position for Business Schools to occupy. And the tension seems likely to increase given descriptions of business schools as being on the "fault line" between universities and society (Starkey, Hatchuel, & Tempest, 2004). With such a burden of expectation placed upon business schools, this is perhaps an appropriate point at which to consider the policies and strategies at play.

The policy context emerging from the Leitch Review of Skills (2006) was critiqued in a previous literature review conducted earlier in the professional doctoral programme (see Appendix 1). This previous analysis forms the backdrop to the current review which, in turn provides a more detailed exploration of the current landscape of engagement with particularly reference to business schools.

Shifting balance of the policy context

The policy landscape for UK Universities means they are facing considerable challenges and potential opportunities. Pressure on universities is emerging from a number of different sources. Firstly there is the HE policy agenda, within which all universities must act, with its current emphasis on significant change to university funding arrangements and a focus on how universities contribute to economic recovery. Added to this are a range of national policy drivers aimed at enhancing higher level skills in the economy. Both of these policy areas gain further significance within the context of responding to a global recession. Business schools seem to be right on the fault-line of these policy shifts, making the focus of this study all the more relevant and interesting. Therefore the next section of this literature review updates the previous review of the policy landscape (Appendix 1), with particular emphasis on three key strands: broader skill policy; HE sector policy; and the position of the business school within this context.

Within the broad context surrounding government policies on workplace skills (especially higher level skills) there is concern that successive Governments have placed too much emphasis (and trust) on supply side measures to address a perceived UK skills problem, and the implied connection to inadequate UK productivity (Wright & Sissons, 2012). Even significant reports such as the Leitch review (2006), which argued for a demand-led approach to skills still pointed towards supply-side reform as where changes needed to happen (Buchanan, Scott, Yu, Schutz, & Jakubauskas, 2010). In sharp contrast, whilst recognising supply side change is required, there has been a growing argument to balance this focus on the supply side addressing crucial concerns about problems on the demand side (Buchanan, Scott, Yu, Schutz, & Jakubauskas, 2010). Foremost in this debate has been the notion of skills utilization, an aspect of the skills debate about which the final Leitch report only made a fleeting comment (Payne, 2008a). More recently England's policy language has changed slightly (Keep, 2014) with a simple but effective acknowledgement the UK commission for employment and skills (UKCES) state that "there is little value to an organisation

having a skilled workforce if the skills are not used well" (UKCES, 2009, p. 12). Although, as Payne also reflects, the idea sounds like a statement of the obvious, it is nevertheless an important change in the policy discourse (Payne, 2012). The diagnosis may sound simple, but attempting to prescribe solutions is complex.

The research in the area of skills utilization has been described as "patchy and disparate" (Buchanan, Scott, Yu, Schutz, & Jakubauskas, 2010). And according to Payne and Keep, the real challenge is to identify "policy interventions which will make a difference" (Payne & Keep, 2011, p. 15). They describe a much more complex and nuanced landscape, where a number of factors impact on skills utilization. For example creation of high performance workplaces, improvements in leadership and management, and Government provision of wider incentives in the economy for firms and managers to change their behaviours (Payne & Keep, 2011). They argue that such changes need to be integrated within an overarching focus on getting the context right. Indeed UKCES (2009) identify similar issues associated with both raising skills levels and making use of them more effectively. Foremost is the need for better work practices which encourage high performance. Then there is the need for more businesses to focus on producing high quality products and, by implication, more businesses targeting moves to a high skill, high value proposition[3]. However, UKCES point out that in the UK there are neither enough high performing workplaces, sufficient businesses producing high quality products and services, nor (again by implication) enough organisations with high value strategies. The issue of skills utilization thus becomes a complex and integrated problem, involving work practices, business strategy and wider incentives and environmental factors.

The contention here is that skills are a derived demand, dependent on other factors which tend to be more important to an organization. For example Hogarth and Wilson (2003) refer to skills as a third or fourth order priority. They firstly highlight that skills are dependent (derived from) the product/service marketing strategies. Then, as a second order of importance, they are dependent on the way the organisation is structured to enable the strategy. Only then, at a third order of importance, come the people management practices within which skills are situated (Hogarth &

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[3] High skill, high value propositions or high value business strategies were discussed in the previous literature review based on Porter and Ketel's (2003) argument that the UK is in transition from a low skill, low economic value economy to a high skill, unique value economy, competing on unique value.

Wilson, 2003). This all suggests a more complex landscape than pictured in the Leitch report. To navigate this landscape implies that there is a need for a breadth of interventions to address the different "order" of priorities. Of even more concern are the dissenting voices that doubt the extent to which demand anticipated by Government really exists. This is especially important, given that skills are a derived demand. If a business does not see the need to progress to a higher value product/service strategy then neither will they see the need to move towards a higher level skills strategy. Demand for skills is derived from a business need. Consequently, at a more fundamental level, the actual demand for higher level skills may well be relatively low (UKCES, 2009), (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003)

There is a clear suggestion that a breadth of interventions are needed to increase skill levels and their use. However, Hogarth and Wilson (2003) with their order of priorities, also imply, that sequence seems to matter. This brings into question the implied supply-led assumption emphasized in the Leitch review that developing higher level skills will lead towards better organisations, with higher value strategies. As Warhurst and Findlay (2012) argue, there is no evidence that better skills lead to wider workforce development which, in turn triggers organizational development. In fact they argue that a derived demand perspective means that business development is the dominant driver and therefore a first order priority. It is this that leads to organisational development, and only then to the workforce development within which skills are situated. Warhurst and Findlay conclude that this is a "reversal in the direction of change causality to that often assumed" (Warhurst & Findlay, 2012, p. 4). Similarly Payne, argues that demand for skills is a function of the organisation's strategy and the extent to which it is in a high value, high skills market (or aspiring to be). In such circumstances it is innovation and business development that "drive skill need (rather than vice-versa)" (Payne, 2008a, p. 10)

In contrast, Scottish policy[4], has taken a separate path to that of England with more emphasis on a broader agenda. This recognizes that in order to achieve better use of skills in the workplace, wider factors should be considered and policies need to influence business improvement, innovation and economic development (Payne, 2008a). In the previous literature review (appendix 1) the Scottish experience of skills and their initial response to the Leitch review was explored in

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[4] Skills is a devolved policy area, so Scotland and England in some aspects have divergent policy agendas

order to contrast with the response from England's policy makers. This next section will discuss how policy in Scotland has developed since that literature review. When the Leitch review was released, Scotland had already identified that, although it had a higher level of skills in the population than the rest of the UK, it nevertheless had lower productivity figures compared with England (Warhurst & Findlay, 2012). Consequently the Scottish Government re-framed the debate in terms of skill utilization, setting the challenge to deliver a step-change in using skills (The Scottish Government, 2007). As a result, there is a "broad stream of policy activity" (Payne, 2011) in Scotland, making a serious attempt to address the problem of utilization (Keep, 2014). There are also concerns about the capacity of education providers to support skills utilisation projects. This is especially so in relation to finding researchers "with an orientation to and experience of applied research who are able to work with practitioners to broker and solve business problems" (Warhurst & Findlay, 2012). Scotland then has led the way in moving the debate away from supply side issues towards addressing the demand for and use of skills (Payne, 2012). There is some evidence of change in England too, at least in principle (Payne, 2012). The UKCES has recognized that there is a significant policy gap which will require "the future employment and skills system…to invest as much effort on raising employer ambition, on stimulating demand, as it does on enhancing skills supply" (UKCES, 2009).

Current Government policy, the wider debate around skills, and the nature of the economic environment within which higher skills can flourish all provide the broader backdrop for this study. The implication of a derived nature to demand for how business schools engage with organisations clearly needs further investigation. This is especially so when the demand is also often unpredictable or poorly expressed. Such demand, it has been argued, may often be expressed or felt in terms of a business need, rather than as a skills need. It is also worth noting that much of both academic literature and Government policy still stems from key arguments in the Leitch report. This makes a considered assessment of Leitch essential to an understanding of how skills policy has developed (Grant, Maxwell, & Ogden, 2014). There also seems to be a lack of focus on the kind of research that can inform practice. For example, there is a claim that too many researchers have focused on a dispassionate perspective of critiquing and criticizing policy as opposed "to engaging with it and seeking to improve it" (Warhurst & Findlay, 2012, p. 12). So this broader skills policy and practice debate also brings the role of academics into sharp focus. In doing

so the argument returns again to the notion of relevance and engagement, with a key role proposed for academics as informers and shapers of practice. First, though there is a need to understand the specific policy landscape for HE which informs these issues.

Higher Education Policy

The coalition government's Higher Education White Paper, Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011), encapsulated two aspects which are significant for this study. Firstly, following the Browne review of funding and student finance (Browne, 2010) it set out to redress funding as a consequence of the financial crisis. Secondly, the white paper commissioned further work to be undertaken by Sir Tim Wilson to review "how we make the UK the best place in the world for university-industry collaboration" (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011, p. 6). No sooner had Wilson's report (2012) been completed, than the Coalition Government was awaiting Sir Andrew Witty's (2013) report on how Universities can enable and generate local growth. Illustrating the pace of change influencing the policy landscape and the clear emphasis placed on how Universities engage with businesses and on their contribution to economic growth (Keep, 2014).

One significant change heralded in the white paper was to prepare the way for a more diverse provision of HE education to incorporate non-traditional providers. This change ushered in "a more market-based approach to higher education" (Hughes, Porter, Jones, & Sheen, 2013, p. 13). In doing so the White paper indicated "a period of significant change for the sector" (Universities UK, 2011) that will "require universities to shift the balance of their sources of income" (Crossick, 2010).   At the same time there was an increasing emphasis from Government on the contribution Universities can make to economic growth (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011), and from collaboration with business (Wilson, 2012). For some, Government expectations placed an increased burden on universities to contribute to economic growth (Keep, 2014). Whereas others saw the opportunity for university business schools to "make a transformational contribution to British economic performance" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. i). The twin pressures of finding other sources of income and contributing to economic recovery placed a renewed emphasis on engagement with employers. Having explored current issues within the policy context, what now needs clarification is the use of the term *engagement* within this setting.

Engagement

To assist in exploring the concept of engagement, four different perspectives will be explored. Firstly engagement will be considered from an organisational and societal perspective, as a mission. Second it can also be thought of in term of interactions, as a set of activities. Thirdly, engagement can be seen as the building of collaborations and connections: in this sense it is about a relationship. Finally, engagement can be thought of as an academic vocation that is, as engaged scholarship.

The first perspective of engagement is often expressed in the mission of a University, with the Universities Commonwealth Association advocating engagement with the wider society as a core mission of a University (cited in Gourley, 2004). In this setting the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) defines engagement as "a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit" (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2013). Additionally the NCCPE have led calls in the UK for universities to sign up to a public engagement manifesto, to recognise their "major responsibility to contribute to society through their public engagement" (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2010, p. 1). Similarly UK research funders produced a concordat for engaging the public in research, with a "vision for a research culture that values, recognises and supports public engagement (Research Councils UK, 2011, p. 4)." Recent Government policy (as already noted), has tended to highlight the contribution universities can make by engaging with business and contributing to economic growth. Whilst there is a broader discourse about public engagement, there is also considerable pressure for universities to engage specifically with business. Such expectations are illustrated in statements such as this, from the Wilson review of university-business collaboration: "for UK universities to take their place as world leaders in business support and interaction, we need a new covenant between business and universities" (Wilson, 2012).

More specifically, engagement is often referred to as being a third stream of activity, alongside the traditional university emphasis on teaching and research. In this respect the term "third stream" can be problematic, implying a third, lesser stream, which tends not to be "an integrated strategy of most HEI's" (Kewin, et al., 2011, p. 20). Third stream activity is frequently framed in terms of knowledge exchange. For example, in its strategy document responding to the

Government's White paper: Students at the heart of the system (HEFCE, 2011), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) refers to teaching, research and knowledge exchange as the three strands of University activity. Indeed HEFCE has become increasingly involved in trying to shape the engagement of universities with business and the wider community. According to HEFCE the Governments view of the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) is framed within wider policies to reduce the deficit, promote economic growth and rebalance the economy towards the private sector. The Government has requested that HEFCE incentivise knowledge exchange that demonstrates performance. As a consequence funds will focus on those institutions that can show "impact for the national interest" (HEFCE, 2011).

It is important to appreciate the way engagement is understood at a mission level, but it is also valuable to understand the activities around which action is organized to achieve engagement. Therefore the second way to think about engagement is to review the range of activities which constitute this view of engagement. These interactions are wide ranging, including: provision of graduates to employers; delivery of continuing professional development (CPD); involvement in consultancy assignments; pursuit of research and development; and other wider economic and community development activities (Hogarth, et al., 2007). However there has been a tendency for engagement and knowledge exchange activities to be more closely associated with research and applied research (Bolden, Hirsh, Connor, Petrov, & Duquemin, 2010). This is illustrated in the Lambert report (Lambert, 2003) on Industry-University interaction which focused on the research contribution of universities to industry. Subsequently there have been numerous reports investigating varying aspects of university and business collaboration, largely focused on research and innovation, culminating in 2015 with the Dowling review[5]. The focus of this review unsurprisingly was business and university research collaborations. Dowling acknowledges at the start of her review that this theme has proved an "exceptionally popular target for reviews and studies in recent years" (Dowling, 2015, p. 10). To illustrate her point, Dowling helpfully lists fourteen reviews which have addressed University-business collaboration, beginning with Lambert's review in 2003. In sharp contrast, "employer engagement in educational provision within the University sector is less well understood" (University Alliance, 2015, p. 4). Indeed, there has been

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[5] The Dowling review was set up by the coalition government, but which reported to the newly formed Conservative Government

relatively little emphasis placed on appreciation of the role of teaching related activities in supporting engagement, and especially in relation to the provision of higher level skills for those already in the workplace (The Royal Society, 2008).

In some respects the emphasis on research related activities is understandable, but it does leave a significant gap with respect to understanding of the potential of teaching and development activities within the engagement context. In particular there is a clear opportunity to investigate engagement in the context of teaching higher level skills. Additionally, there is also concern that too much emphasis is placed on research related activities, and not enough recognition of the contribution of other activities. According to Dowling (2015) the focus on research collaboration may not be surprising given that the Government see it as important to supporting economic recovery. Yet as the Royal Society (2008) points out, there is a different balance evident when one assesses the current engagement activity within universities. According to the Royal Society (2008) an important part of income generated by universities is due to other forms of engagement and collaboration involving CPD, training and consultancy[6]. In fact, around a third of commercial income is attributable to consultancy and CPD (HEFCE, 2011). Similarly a difference balance between research and teaching activities is reflected in the CBI survey of business collaboration with Universities (CBI, 2008a). They found that over 60% of the organisations they approached said they had developed links with Universities, with 47% stating they did this to provide research and development specific to their business. What is interesting is the figure for workforce development, 45%, which was broadly similar to the number of organisations more interested in engagement for research purposes (CBI, 2008a). According to the CBI, this indicated "extensive existing practice among employers in using Universities for staff development" (CBI, 2008a, p. 45). Judging from these statistics, there appears to be more engagement evident in teaching/development activities than was first thought, given general assumptions about a greater emphasis on research related activities. There is also another view which brings some of the assumptions in reports (such as the Lambert review) into question. For example, Hughes and Kitson argue that the Lambert narrative could be misleading, with too much emphasis placed on business interactions with the science base to improve their technology, whilst largely ignoring "the other

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[6] The Royal Society source this information from a House of commons report (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2013), which was based on HEFCE data (HEFCE, 2011)

reasons why businesses may connect with academia" (Hughes & Kitson, 2012). From their research Hughes and Kitson found that businesses interacted with academia for a wide range of reasons. Not simply for innovation and technology research, but for aspects such as marketing, sales, human resource management and operations. It would seem that the relationship of teaching and development activities to engagement is not well understood, yet there appears to be a significant proportion of university activity with business in this area.

It is clear that the range of activities that might be considered as employer engagement are extensive, even when narrowing the scope to teaching and development activities. So at this point it is helpful to focus the discussion by adopting the cluster of activities suggested by Bolden, Connor, Duquemin, Hirsh and Petrov (2009). Whilst the clusters they propose are not exhaustive, they do offer some structure to what can otherwise be a rather confusing area. The categories for activities they propose are: customized programmes, which are usually accredited; CPD professional development (typically short bespoke courses); integrated interactions which combine work based learning with a programme; and assessment or accreditation of in-company learning. Interestingly these categories have a close similarity with those identified by the CBI in their literature review of business and university collaboration (CBI, 2008). They identify areas both where higher education might be relevant, and where they consider higher education is likely to be more successful with employers. Like Bolden et al (2009) the CBI highlight: customized learning; accredited programmes delivered part-time; accreditation of in-house learning and development; and integrated programmes (CBI, 2008). In sum, the activities proposed by Bolden et al (2009), and reinforced by the CBI, provide a focus for this study. They also provide a rationale for this analysis, given that the CBI suggests they are likely to be fruitful avenues for higher education to pursue.

Up to this point engagement has been discussed as a mission or as a set of activities carried out by universities with business and the community. However engagement can also usefully be thought of as a relationship. This is the third way to think about engagement. Of course both activities and relationships can be developed with businesses and with the community, but in the succeeding discussion the focus will be upon businesses and employer engagement relevant to the study. Universities build different relationships with employers and therefore an important issue to clarify is "how to build and maintain these relationships" (Bolden et al, 2010). Indeed the idea of building

a relationship does seem to be problematic as, according to Lambert, "companies and universities are not natural partners" (Lambert, 2003, p. 13). There seems to be issues due to the two communities not understanding each other (The Royal Society, 2008), resulting in a "lack of good relationships and networks" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 10). Interestingly, Bolden et al (2010) went on to suggest that a valuable way to develop employer engagement is by "holding onto the idea of 'engagement' as being about "relationships rather than activities" (Bolden, Hirsh, Connor, Petrov, & Duquemin, 2010, p. 24). They argue that such a perspective can help address issues associated by terms like 'demand-led' because of the two-way conversation implied by a relationship. It was also noticeable from their research that when the importance of relationships was recognized, the value and importance of the individuals who sustained those relationships came to prominence. This argument connects well with the fourth and last of the ways to think about engagement, which will be explored next. However, before addressing the fourth area, it is useful to note that this study seeks to explore the notion of engagement both as an activity (specifically higher level skills), but especially as a relationship to address how effective relationships can be initiated, built and sustained. To this end a provisional conceptual framework was developed in an earlier methodology paper (appendix 2) written as part of the professional doctoral programme. The framework was based on Connor and Hirsh's (2008) model of employer engagement, which focused on collaboration through mutual engagement. They argued that a more complex model than a customer-supplier relationship was needed to reflect HE and employer engagement. Their model positions collaboration at the centre of a dialogue between an employer and a university. The dialogue allows both parties to understand each other's needs and capabilities and to explore how a partnership could work. The argument for thinking of engagement as a relationship (made in this review) fits well with the earlier, provisional model, based on Connor and Hirsh's work.

The fourth approach to thinking about engagement brings the discussion full circle, returning to the sense of mission, connected with the role of the academic. This is the perspective of engaged scholarship, one which shares common ground with interpretations of engagement as mission. Boyer expresses mission as a need to "become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems" reaffirming an historical "commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement" (Boyer, 1996, p. 11). In a turn of phrase which

resonates with one of the key tensions outlined at the start this literature review section, Boyer advocates moving beyond what he suggests is the "tired old 'teaching versus research' debate" (Boyer E. , 1990, p. 16). In an attempt to challenge this kind of tension, which perhaps unsurprisingly reflects the debate about relevance, Boyer calls for a more embracing view of scholarship. It is a view that rejects defining the work of academics in narrow terms of traditional teaching and research. However, critics such as Fish, author of a provocatively titled book: "Save the World on Your Own Time", suggest the opposite (Fish, 2008). For Fish, a university should be just about teaching and research and the academics role is therefore to produce knowledge in a dispassionate, separated and rigorous manner, and to then disseminate that knowledge. Though, from Boyer's perspective, scholarship certainly does mean a primary focus on original research with dispassionate freedom; or the scholarship of discovery. However, as discussed earlier with Weick's approach to teaching practitioners, (Weick, 1996) scholarship also means looking for connections, "giving meaning to isolated facts, putting them in perspective" (Boyer, 1990, p. 18); or the scholarship of integration. For this to happen Boyer argued for sharing across academic disciplines, which Gulati more recently argues will necessitate academics "rising above the politics of identity and recognizing the benefits of collaboration" (Gulati, 2007, p. 781). These first two interpretations fit with more widely accepted views of scholarly activity, namely investigation and synthesis. But Boyer argues for a broader sense of scholarship with two further categories. The scholarship of application seeks to apply theory to problems of significance, but it is not a one-way process, theory is applied to practice, and practice informs theory, in a quest to ensure knowledge is useful (Boyer, 1996). The last of Boyer's engaged scholarships, recognizes that for any academic's work to be of consequence it needs to be understood by others; it needs to be taught. Yet for Boyer, "teaching, at its best, means not only transmitting knowledge, but transforming and extending it as well" (Boyer, 1990, p. 14). According to Boyer this can be done by listening and learning from students, and reflecting on their perspectives and insight. So, in this context academics learn as they teach. Boyer sees the four scholarships as complementary together forming a scholarship of engagement.

In the UK the notion of a balance between a sense of mission and academic engagement is captured by Pettigrew, who argues that "if the duty of the intellectual in society is to make a difference, the research community has a long way to go to realise its potential" (Pettigrew, 2001,

p. S67). He points to the limitations of efforts to resolve the theory to practice gap which typically take the form of researchers being asked to improve their dissemination. This is otherwise referred to as a knowledge transfer gap (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006), where too often research is lost in translation (Shaprio, Kirkman, & Courtney, 2007). Pettigrew argues forcefully that dissemination is "too late if the wrong questions have been asked" (Pettigrew, 2001, p. S67), a view which resonates with Van de Ven and Johnson's (2006) knowledge production problem, where research is lost before translation (Shaprio, Kirkman, & Courtney, 2007). As a consequence Pettigrew argues that a "wider and deeper form of engagement between researchers and practitioners is needed in the co-production of knowledge" (Pettigrew, 2001, p. S67). Similarly Boyer considers there is plenty of evidence that society is "vitally enriched as scholars and practitioners speak and listen carefully to each other" (Boyer, 1996, p. 15). Boyer has developed an expansive view of how scholarship can engage with practitioners, and provides a more integrated language to recognize the contributions possible when academics engage with practitioners to connect ideas, bridge the gap between theory and practice, and create insights with practitioners through teaching.

The four ways of thinking about engagement discussed above provide a helpful framework for understanding the issue. It begins with considering engagement as mission, demonstrating the intent of a university to engage with business and the community. Then it encourages thinking of engagement as a range of activities which give structure to purpose, and helps to shape and combine how practitioners and academics engage. So thinking about engagement as mission helps to provide direction and purpose, whereas engagement as activity provides structure in the form of tangible interactions. But crucially, engagement as relationship is about making connections with practitioners building the trust that makes the mission a possibility. Then finally engagement as scholarship provides the capability to make an impact, and values a wide range of ways in which academics engage.

Within the context of engagement (and especially employer engagement) there is a further widely used concept that needs clarification. The discussion of engagement as an activity has clarified the scope of activities and provides a very useful cluster of activities for this study. But what is noticeable about the nature of the interventions whether customized, integrated or client designed programmes is that they all are focused on the workplace. This leads to a key aspect of

the engagement agenda, namely; how Higher Education and Business Schools in particular respond to the needs of employers to develop their workforce. Workforce development can be thought of as an activity within the wider concept of employer engagement as just discussed. However like the term engagement, workforce development also needs clarification, as it suffers with definitional issues and confusion in how the term is used.

Workforce development

Workforce development has emerged as an increasingly important issue for Business Schools and Universities following the Leitch report on World Class Skills (2006), commissioned by a previous Labour Government. As discussed earlier, the report argued for a central role played by skills in helping to drive economic growth. In doing so, the report set out a challenging goal aimed at increasing world class skills in the UK workforce by 2020. This has serious implications for Higher Education, not least for a different focus. Because, as Leitch emphasized, 70% of this workforce, which needs to be up-skilled by 2020, are both already beyond the age of compulsory education, and are already in the workplace. A similar point, but one that further heightens the problem, was made by Porter and Ketel when they suggested that the UK's issues with skills appeared to be "a problem with the current stock of employees" (Porter & Ketels, 2003, p. 12). If Higher Education is to address these issues then, according to Leitch (2006), significantly different strategies will need to be adopted which are aimed at workforce development.

Subsequently, the Coalition Government, whilst abandoning the focus on targets explicit in Leitch report (Payne & Keep, 2011), has indicated they are supportive of the "Leitch ambition" to raise skill levels and it does want suppliers to have greater flexibility to achieve this. (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010). For HE, Leitch (2006) advocated an increasing role in "up-skilling" the workforce which has expanded during the recession to include an emphasis on "re-skilling" (House of Commons Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee, 2008). These two terms seem to encapsulate the focus on workforce development and echo earlier work which attempted to define workforce development as "the upskilling and reskilling of an organisation's employees" (Nixon, Smith, Stafford, & Camm, 2006). The definition was subsequently adopted in a study of employer engagement, since it clearly captured the policy drive to upskill the current workforce (Bolden, Connor, Duquemin, Hirsh, & Petrov, 2009). However, both the definition of

workforce development and the popularity of the term are matters of contention. A review of an HEFCE flagship project to promote engagement and workforce development at HE level, itself a direct response to the Leitch agenda, acknowledged that there are no common definitions. This has led to a variety of activities coming under the label of workforce development. (Kewin, et al., 2011) The use of language is also a concern with some evidence that "the term 'workforce development' does not play well in HE". (Bolden, Hirsh, Connor, Petrov, & Duquemin, 2010, p. 49) Consequently some HEI's prefer to use terms such as 'professional development' and 'CPD' to reflect their offer to employers. (Bolden, Hirsh, Connor, Petrov, & Duquemin, 2010). Such confusion may well reflect the suggestion that workforce development in HE is still mainly a niche activity, with institutions only in the early stages of developing their approach. (Kewin, et al., 2011)

Understanding the context of workforce development has become vital if there is to be any progress on improving skills in the workplace. Workforce development is a relatively unfamiliar practice for many higher education institutions, with most being only in the early stages of development, and for some it is not a priority at all. (Kewin, et al., 2011) However, as noted earlier, there is evidence from a CBI survey that businesses do make a wide use of Higher Education to help them in their workforce development (CBI, 2008a). Yet more generally, there are question marks about the level of demand compared to the aspirations of Government policy, and more fundamentally about the extent to which businesses realise their need for workforce development. With a clear policy shift suggested from supply-led to demand-led provision (HM Government, 2007) this in turn raises important questions about the nature of demand.

Demand-led

So far the discussion has emphasized that a demand-led approach to skills is problematic, with demand being derived from other business priorities. At the same time, questions have also been raised about the real level of demand. But there is a further concern related to knowing what skills are actually being demanded by business. The argument of promoting a more demand-led provision, made explicit by both Leitch and subsequent Government reports, seems initially to makes sense (Leitch, 2006). Especially since employers have made similar calls for provision to more closely address their needs (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2010a). However,

there is also an apparent disconnect: employers are themselves often unclear about their needs (Brennan & Little, 2006). Consequently they require support in clarifying needs, especially as their first and second order needs are likely to be business-related, while skills improvement may be seen as in-direct, implicit need. There is a clear implication that skills needs that may emerge are likely to be specific to the demands of the individual organization (King, 2007). This makes it unlikely that the notion of a collective employer "voice" (Leitch, 2006) might deliver generic needs, when collective demand is so unclear. (Brennan & Little, 2006)

If this lack of clarity is then combined with a second issue (that of weak demand, as discussed earlier in this literature review), then the problem becomes more pronounced.   Successive Governments have advocated a move towards a higher skill, higher value economy, (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009) (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010), which is also recognised by many commentators as crucial to re-shaping the UK economy and developing international competitiveness (Keep, 2006) (Porter & Ketels, 2003). Yet businesses do not necessarily aspire to raise the skill levels of their staff. This is not necessarily seen as a priority for many businesses, where their current strategies are proving successful with relatively low skill levels (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003). Indeed, Mayhew and Keep point to evidence in the UK of low levels of skills, combined with limited skills shortages and low demand for skills in relation to supply, which they argue suggests a "demand-side weakness" (Mayhew & Keep, 2014, p. 12). So it would appear that employer demand for skills may be both unclear and weak. As a result, there is a danger of assuming that the totality of employer demand adds up to what is optimal for the wider society (Payne, 2008). Consequently the problem is not just about making sure the HE offer meets the needs of employers; rather it is also how to motivate employers so that the demand for higher-level skills development is increased. (Nixon, Smith, Stafford, & Camm, 2006)

The context of demand is complex, and the degree to which organisations aspire to an upwards skills trajectory in order to change their strategy is unclear. There is uncertainty about the extent to which such an outlook from employers is due to ignorance (or lack of awareness of skill gaps) (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2010), or due to a lack of persuasive evidence to change. Or it may be that the incentives to encourage change towards higher value, higher skill strategies are perhaps not there. What is apparent, according to Hogarth and Wilson (2003), is evidence that

organisations which set clear goals over time tend to perform better than those that do not. However the quality of goal choice is significantly dependent on the background of the manager. According to Hogarth and Wilson (2003), the goals of a business, the skills of its management and therefore the wider demand for skills, are all interwoven. This raises the concern that the choices which can shape the direction of an organization, if dependent on the "characteristics and skills of managers" (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003, p. 10), are jeopardized by evidence which suggests there are "significant deficiencies in the skills of managers". (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003, p. 11) Clearly this position differs considerably from Porter and Ketel's (2003) assessment which, whilst acknowledging that managers make a difference, did not consider that contribution to be especially significant. Yet a paper by the Advanced Institute for Management Research (AIM) seems to contradict this, arguing that there is evidence to suggest management skills complement wider workforce skills, and do make a significant difference. This is because, utilizing the skills of a workforce, especially a highly skilled workforce, "requires skillful management." (Bloom, et al., 2004, p. 22)

In policy terms, the UK skills problem has been framed as a supply issue (Keep, 2014) and now appears to comprise "not just problems of skills supply but also demand and usage" (Payne & Keep, 2011). In particular, there are questions about the clarity and the weakness of demand. All these factors illustrate a more nuanced context in which there is a need to consider the role that Business Schools can play. On the one hand responding to demand, but on the other the possibility of creating, shaping and informing demand. Whilst workforce development, and higher-level skills in general have been closely linked to economic growth by various Government papers (Leitch, 2006), (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009), there is a claim that some skills in particular have an additional importance. In a recent Government report an argument has emerged to place a priority on leadership and manager development as a key lever to the UK's ability to grow economically (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2012).

Leadership and Management Skills Identified as a Priority

A picture is emerging that suggests better leadership and management can enable skills to be utilized, and improve choices about seeking higher level skills and higher value strategies. Whilst

intuitively, these ideas may seem sensible, there is concern about whether there is sufficient evidence to support this assertion. The recent Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) report (2012) has re-iterated the assertion that good leadership and management in a business can improve performance. Such claims have a long tradition, (Burgoyne, Hirsh, & Williams, 2004) with a recurring sense that good management and leadership must make a difference, but they also raise questions about how this can be realised (Payne & Keep, 2011). Unfortunately the evidence is often either conflicting, or there is lukewarm support for the notion, leaving an unsatisfactory assessment such as that proposed by Porter and Ketel. (2003)

In the context of this study, this is an interesting debate about the influence managers and leaders have on skills development, utilization and productivity. In the previous literature review, as already mentioned, an aspect of Porter and Ketel's (2003) assessment of UK productivity was critiqued. The Government of the day specifically requested that the review considered the influence of leadership and management on UK performance. Porter and Ketel's assessment was largely lukewarm about the connection to performance. Whilst recognizing that good management matters, Porter and Ketel concluded that "management practices, then, are not at the core of the UK competitiveness challenge; however, there is always room for improvement". (Porter & Ketels, 2003) However Tiratsoo and Tomlinson (2004) provide a contrasting view. They suggest that Porter and Ketel's assessment was based on a "relatively restricted range of resources" (Tiratsoo & Tomlinson, 2004, p. 5). In so doing they questioned the basis upon which Porter and Ketel were able to make their assertions. Tiratsoo and Tomlinson view UK managers as being handicapped by low skills, and consider them to be significantly less able than implied by Porters and Ketel. Whilst Porter and Ketel may have provided an unconvincing assessment, their central argument in the report does have skills implications. They advocated that the UK needed to transition from a low cost efficient business environment toward a high value economy. In order to do that, it could be argued that skill development and especially management skills are an implicit requirement. Indeed a recent research report for the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) comments on how a decade later this central advice from the Porter and Ketel report, to transition to a higher value economy has largely been ignored (Mayhew & Keep, 2014). According to Mayhew and Keep the consequences of not responding to Porter and Ketel's advice are the development of confused policies, which on the one hand attempt to promote the UK as a low cost employment

destination, whilst at the same time suggesting that businesses need to move to high value products and services. The first policy: implying a low cost, low skills environment, is in contrast to the second policy's emphasis on high level skills.

The DBIS report (2012) referred to previous research to support the assertion that management and leadership is a vital lever for improving UK performance. Two areas are particularly informative for this discussion. Firstly the DBIS report claims that qualified managers tend to have more qualified staff working for them, and they do seem to perform better. This assertion is based on research by Bosworth, Davies and Wilson (2002) who did identify that qualified managers are associated with better qualified workforces. They also found that qualified managers were more likely to implement strategies to introduce new or improved products and to improve efficiency. However, Bosworth, Davies and Wilson (2002) presented a more nuanced conclusion than that summarized in the DBIS report (2012). They argued that, whilst evidence suggested that proficient managers are linked to high performance, this is not a causal link: it could be two way. So proficient managers could raise organisational performance, or organisations with high performance might result in perceptions of better management.

The findings from Bosworth, Davies and Wilson suggest that qualified managers may well utilize skills more effectively and be more likely to implement high performance work practices. They conclude by suggesting "there are significant links between management qualifications and establishment aspirations which leads to a demand for a better skilled workforce" (Bosworth, Davies, & Wilson, 2002, p. 1). Whilst the findings are promising, there is a need to consider further evidence to strengthen the argument about the contribution leadership and management can make.

The second area of research referenced in the DBIS report is a more recent set of studies, which provide some corroboration of the work by Bosworth et al (2002). The research by Van Reenan and colleagues from the London School of Economics provides some support (from a different perspective) for the argument that good management impacts performance in a way that is more significant than Porter and Ketel's assessment. Some of Van Reenan's work was used in the previous literature review to illustrate the contested position about the influence and impact of management skills. Here in this review more recent work by Van Reenan and his colleagues will be considered.

The DBIS report (2012) asserts that UK management and leadership is relatively weak compared to competitor economies, and consequently suggests that this has a direct bearing on the UK's ability to deliver sustainable growth. In part the argument is based on research by the London School of Economics (LSE) which found that UK productivity is "distinctly mid-table by International standards" (Bloom, Lemos, Qi, & Van Reenan, 2011, p. 5). In addition, the UK has a deficit in management quality relative to its main international competitors. The LSE report suggests that this management deficit is likely to be a cause of the productivity gap. Bloom et al (2011) do however caution that their work is "suggestive". There is a correlation between management practices and productivity but as yet they cannot interpret this as causal (Bloom, Lemos, Qi, & Van Reenan, 2011). Their conclusions are also interesting in relation to what organisations say are constraints on improving their management. Three areas stand out from their conclusions in relation to this debate, the most important of which is the lack of high quality managers. Bloom et al make the point that "skills are highly correlated with better management". (Bloom, Lemos, Qi, & Van Reenan, 2011, p. 36) But it is not just the skills of managing that matter, it is also the skills of the workforce who are being managed, as it is difficult to manage well if the workforce lacks appropriate skills. This is the second constraint identified by Bloom et al, the lack of adequate worker skills. The third reason (in order of importance) is that of not knowing what changes needed to be made to improve management. The research provides an interesting agenda for the integration of high quality managers, with the right skills in the workforce and effective processes to improve management. In many ways the second two constraints can be enabled by the first (and what Bloom et al found to be the most important): the presence of high quality managers. If improved management practice does have a significant impact on business performance, one might expect all businesses to make it a priority. Yet the evidence suggests that too few do, a point made by Bloom et al who note, based on their criteria, that "many organisations throughout the world are badly managed." (Bloom, Sadun, & Van Reenan, 2012). This raises the question as to why more businesses do not capitalize on ideas that are free and widely accessible. According to Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy and Van Reenan (2007) whilst the lack of take-up might be because implementation is too difficult or perhaps not prioritized, it may also be for another reason. In their interviews, Bloom et al (2007) were surprised to discover that managers "had little idea of the overall management performance of their own organisations" (Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy, & Van Reenan,

2007, p. 3). They conclude with a striking statement that in their view "many organisations are probably missing out on an opportunity for significant improvement because they simply do not recognize that their own management practices are poor." (Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy, & Van Reenan, 2007, p. 8) The case for the impact of leadership and management on performance has been enhanced by some of the emerging research. However the argument is perhaps more persuasively captured by a contribution to the Leitch Reviews call for evidence by the then government's leadership and management advisory panel. The panel acknowledged at the time, that it may be difficult to marshal compelling evidence about the value of leadership and management. Nevertheless, they pointedly asked the question: "how certain are we that our leaders and managers are fit for the future? Are our leaders and managers, to quote Lord Leitch "world class"?" (Leadership and Management Advisory Panel, 2006, p. 5).

Summary

This section began with a reminder of an old argument. The purpose of a university as expressed by Newman, still has resonance in the debate about the role of universities. This is especially the case with respect to the role of business schools in universities and in the wider business community. In particular Anderson (2009) provides a helpful perspective around holding a set of tensions which need to be continually re-assessed in relation to the current context.

The policy context reveals key tensions relevant to this study, which only seem to have intensified as a result of the recent financial crisis. Indeed, financial constraints on HE organisations may well mean this study potentially has wider applications. Not only has the relationship between business schools and clients received more attention in recent years. Changes in funding arrangements are acting as a driver for many more university disciplines/departments which are now seeking to develop client engagement opportunities. What started as analysis of a business school issue may well now relate to the HE sector more generally. Along with the skills agenda comes tension between notions of demand-led provision and what that means both for business schools and business. This emerging policy area in skills suggests there is an opportunity for this study to argue for a more nuanced and complex landscape, if skills are indeed to be a driver of economic growth. One important aspect of that landscape relates to

leadership/management development. There are growing claims about the impact that leaders and manager can have on business performance. Though these claims are contested, there is an important opportunity to explore the role of business schools in this more complex context, both considering how they respond to demand and also their possible role in creating and shaping demand.

The debate about the relevance gap is important, contentious and often polarized. Yet it is also central to any attempt to explore employer engagement. Views about the relevance gap range from those who think it should be bridged, to others who consider it unbridgeable, and to those who think it should not be bridged, even if it were possible to do so. There are interesting attempts to re-frame the debate. These range from suggestions that the nature of research questions asked needs to be changed, to recognising that there are valuable areas in which the interests of practitioners and academics overlap, leading to more focus on finding common ground rather than any perceived gaps. Then there are calls to re-assess the relevance gap, recognizing that any issues may actually be due to practitioners as they are to do with academics, which is how the problem is more typically framed. The relevance discussion in this paper ended with a valuable insight. In the midst of so much debate there is an obvious but largely hidden gap: the voice of practitioners. This thesis in particular investigates the view of employers and allows their perspective to be heard.

Attention then turned towards an understanding of the term engagement. Three areas emerged which are important to this debate. Firstly it became clear that some engagement activities have received less attention than others. The influence of teaching-related activities on engagement has been underplayed with government focus (evidenced in the reviews/reports commissioned) predominantly on research–related issues. As a consequence, the impact of teaching-related activities on engagement is less-well understood, even though there is significant activity and engagement in this area. The second, thinking of engagement as a relationship, is important because there is evidence suggesting that universities find it difficult to build relationships with business. Thirdly, the thesis explored the idea of a 'scholarship of engagement', which expands the role of academics to reflect a richer broader approach. The breadth of scholarship advocated by Boyer provides a broader framework within which to recognize academic contributions in relation to engagement.

Without doubt, tensions are a recurring and significant theme. In a number of instances there are attempts to reframe particular tensions and to view them differently. For example Vermeulen's approach to characterizing the relevance debate as a matter of asking the right research questions. Similarly, Boyer reframes scholarship to rethink the teaching vs research debate and generates a richer more varied understanding of scholarship. Then Weick turns the relevance gap around, challenging the extent to which it is also a problem with practitioners. All of these examples offer promise for anyone trying to think differently about tensions.

To end this chapter, it is particularly appropriate to note calls for further research that are emerging from this debate, and which relate to this study. In the midst of the debate about the role of business schools, recognizing that it is not easy to find answers to difficult questions, Starkey (2006) suggested that business schools in higher education policy are an under-researched area of national importance[7]. In 2015, Starkey and his colleagues re-emphasized the importance of the discussion, arguing for a need "to reignite the debate concerning the nature and purpose of management research" (Romme, et al., 2015, p. 545). They considered it timely to review the debate with, for example, recent changes to the research excellence framework (REF) (an important means of determining government research funding in the UK) to make research impact integral to the assessment. Similarly, Bartunek and Rynes (2014) also consider that changes in the REF towards assessing impact are making the debate around the academic-practitioner relationship especially 'relevant'. They note that there is a gap in research which involves the practitioner perspective and suggest there is a need for "more empirical research on the topic" (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014, p. 1183). Even dissenting voices, such as Keiser who advocates that the relevance gap is unbridgeable, have recently called for more research on this matter (Kieser, Nicolai, & Seidl, 2015). Or as Bartunek and Ryne conclude: "This is a time when the contradictions regarding dimensions of academic-practitioner relationship are particularly salient. Thus, it provides a particularly good opportunity for academics…….to reflect on the tensions" (2014, p. 1195)

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[7] This reference is based on a research grant from Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) led by Professor Ken Starkey to investigate the dynamics of knowledge production in the business school.

Chapter 3   Methodology

In this chapter, I will clarify the research methodology, beginning with my role within the research study, as a professional and as a researcher researching my own organisation. Firstly, I will explore the theoretical position and argument for the dual role of being a professional and a researcher (which I introduced in the first chapter). Secondly, the selection of the case will be explained, making the argument for the selection of the case, sub-cases, and the participant sample. Then, the detail of the research design and procedure will be described, providing an overview of the process as a whole. Finally, the research process and approach to data analysis will be developed, using an example to illustrate the data analysis.

The study aims to investigate, appreciate and conceptualise the relationship of a university business school with employer organisations. Given these intentions, the dynamics of this study fit well within a case study approach. Firstly since, as Eisenhardt suggests, a case study is aimed at "understanding the dynamics present within a single setting" (Eisenhardt K. , 1989, p. 534). Then, more particularly, Stake (1994), emphasizes the importance of the natural context, and Gummersson (2007) and Yin (2003) both stress the need for complexities and ambiguities of the situation to be studied holistically. But, perhaps of most relevance to this study is Gummesson's assertion that one or more cases "from real life" are especially valuable "when knowledge of an area is sparse or missing, and when complex phenomena are studied." (Gummesson, 2007, p. 87). Gummesson's words neatly capture the aim of this study: to explore and derive empirical data from an area where more knowledge is needed, and where better understandings of the complex interactions of relationships are required.

Development of the methodology

As previously mentioned, this thesis develops ideas from a methodology developed earlier in the professional doctorate, with an interpretative qualitative approach (see appendix 2 for this initial explanation). However, whilst many aspects of the prior work have remained the same, some key elements have undergone further development in this main version of the study. Therefore, this section re-visits the main elements in order to encompass the detail of the methodology. Particular attention will be placed on the justification of the sample, and on the research design and procedure to clarify the data gathering and piloting aspects of the methodology. The broad

principles of this methodology have remained the same, adopting an interpretative qualitative approach, based on an embedded case study comprising a primary case of one business school's relationship with employer clients. There are three sub-cases, each relating to the Business School's relationship with a specific employer, which combine to form the larger case. This contrasts with a multiple case design, which would contain several business schools and their relationships with employers.

The position of the researcher

It is apparent from discussions to date that my role as researcher and as a professional, managing the relationships being studied, is important to understand. More generally, my professional role could be considered as that of facilitating the relationship between the Business School and the client organisations. Seeing my role within the case as a facilitator provides a helpful distinction with my role of studying the case as a researcher. Such dual roles have variously been referred to as researching professionals (Bourner, Bowden, & Laing, 2001) , insider/outsider researcher (Evered & Louis, 1981), (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007) and scholar-practitioner (Tenkasi & Hay, 2004). They are terms that have become more commonplace with the emergence of professional doctoral programmes, such as the Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) and the Doctorate in Education (EdDoc), which have led to an increase in research that is sited within the researcher's own organisation (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007), (Tenkasi & Hay, 2004). Similarly, this study began as research into my own organisation as part of an EdDoc, which has typically been characterised as insider research in the sense that it is research conducted in an organisation from which the researcher is a member (Greene, 2014). Such a position is in contrast to outsider research, where the researcher is not a member of the community or organisation and does not have any prior knowledge of the context (Greene, 2014). Often the outsider position is identified as being distanced and dispassionate, in contrast with insider research which is close and involved.

However, there are concerns about positioning the argument between inside and outside research as an "either/or dichotomy" (Greene, 2014, p. 2). Indeed, the tension could be an overly simplistic or even false dichotomy (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) which, according to Greene (2014), is better conceived as a continuum, where researchers may occupy a breadth of positions. This is a view that is supported by Tenkasi and Hay who argue that scholar-practitioners are "actors who

have a foot in both worlds and are broadly interested in advancing the causes of both theory and practice" (Tenkasi & Hay, 2004, p. 178). This is an important point to be made when considering the approach I have used in this study, where my intention was to contribute, both in theory and in practice, what Coghlan terms actionable knowledge: "at the service of both the academic and practitioner communities" (Coghlan, 2007, p. 301). To enable this dual emphasis implies a need to move flexibly along the continuum of insider/outsider researcher. For Evered and Louis (1981), the continuum indicates the degree to which a researcher is immersed within the organisation and led to their suggestion that researchers should consider alternating or cycling between insider and outsider research positions. In a similar vein, Hodkinson recommends stepping-in and stepping-out, as an approach that an insider researcher should adopt in order to "combine insider experience with more distanced perspectives throughout the project" (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 145). Such an approach requires continuous awareness of the researcher's position on the continuum and an adoption of a reflexive perspective, with the need for researchers to "reflect on the nature of their involvement just as they consider the meaning of their participants' contributions" (King, 2004, p. 20). Although, according to Anderson and Gold (2015), the term reflexivity does not have a generally accepted definition, it is considered to be a term with wider connotations than the arguably more simplistic word 'reflection'. This point is helpfully made by Alvesson and Skoldberg, who suggest that reflexivity has "two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 9).

At this point it is therefore pertinent to 'reflect' on the 'interpretation' process adopted in this study, which can be understood in relation to the insider/outsider researcher positionality. The decision to lead with Stake's (2005) direct interpretative analysis supports an insider focus. This recognises my position, and the insights possible from having been immersed in the context, thus utilising my knowledge and experience to interpret the data. To balance this insider perspective, there is a need to adopt a more outsider perspective, creating opportunities to pause for reflection on emerging interpretations. Encouraging participants to review and confirm the findings also allowed a form of triangulation, as advocated by Patton (2002). This, it is argued, helps to ensure the accuracy, fairness and perceived validity of the analysis. On reflection, this approach suggests a movement from insider towards a more outsider perspective. Such a move can help to mitigate the chance of going 'native', a charge sometimes levelled at insider researchers at risk of being too

close to the context, and losing the separation and objectiveness argued as crucial to research (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). However, Hodkinson (2005) makes a perceptive point on this issue. Whilst there is a widespread acceptance that researchers who may begin at a distance, but then 'go native', could lose their ability to critique the data, those researchers who travel in the opposite direction may have a very different experience. For Hodkinson, researchers beginning from an insider position who "at least partially 'go academic' may find themselves in a strong position both to empathise and to scrutinize" (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 145). Indeed Dwyer and Buckle (2009) reiterate the importance of accuracy and fairness, as opposed to arguments about the relative merits of insider/outsider positions. In doing so they contend that what matters most is the "ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 59). Therefore, alongside gaining the participants' views as to the accuracy and extent to which the initial findings and interpretations represent their experience, I have also adopted a transparent approach to coding. The approach incorporates Gioia, Corley and Hamilton's (2012) use of coding terms, which, as far as possible, reflect actual words and phrases used by participants.

Together with a continued awareness of my position in relation to the insider/outsider continuum, there were also practical aspects of this study which proved helpful in this respect. Firstly, the events being discussed had happened over at least a three year period, so there was some distance (in terms of time) between the interviews and the events. This is something which can be helpful in providing distance and separation for the insider researcher, always remembering that, irrespective of time and distance, what is crucial is "an ongoing reflexive and reactive approach to the ways one is positioned" (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 146). In this case, time provided distance but also assisted in ensuring that role duality (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007) between myself as manager within the case and as researcher studying the case, would be less likely to conflict. There was a clear separation in time between the activities that I had been involved in managing, and the subsequent research interviews I conducted as part of this study. Similarly, a practical change in my role helped to re-inforce my ability to step-back, important given my active involvement in the context. A change of job, which entailed moving out of the organisation,

supported the psychological need to create distance, whilst still allowing me to draw upon personal experience and insights in relation to the case studies.

Case study selection

As outlined earlier, the selection of the case sites was based on the need to provide rich information to inform the understanding of the phenomena being studied. In this context, the need to purposefully select sites where relationships had developed over time, and where a level of trust was already established, was considered a necessary pre-requisite for in-depth discussions. Therefore, the sampling criteria was purposive, through which the cases were selected because they would be able to address the depth of information suggested by the research questions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). Indeed the selection tended towards what Patton refers to as critical sampling, an approach designed intentionally to "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 236). The three case sites selected all met key criteria: having had on-going relationships of over three years with ABC Business School; having established trusting relationships (enhancing the likelihood of sufficiently deep discussion of relevant issues); and all related to a similar range of leadership and management development activities. Consequently, each provided good potential as information-rich case sites for the study, which is a central principle of purposive sampling (Patton, 2002)

This case study, of a business school's relationship with three sub-cases, is intended to provide insights from the employers perspective into how and why effective engagement worked, and to help develop better understanding of the nature of the relationship. All three sub-cases relate to contracts won by the Business School through competitive tender processes. For sub-case one, the Business School successfully won the tender for an organisation-wide, corporate management programme. The second sub-case relates to a multi-professional leadership programme for the Children's Services Department (initally) within the same local authority. This subsequently developed more broadly to incorporate work with Childrens Services activity in six other local authorities, with the initial local authority remaining as the lead for the contract. The third sub-case also related to a local authority, and featured leadership and management development programmes at three levels in the organisation. These included: an in-company MBA programme for senior managers; a bespoke post graduate diploma programme for middle managers; and a

customised certificate of higher education for front-line managers. Full details of each sub-case and of the university business school are contained in appendix 3.

Research design and procedure

In this section the research design is outlined, followed by an explanation of the rationale and methods which underpinned it. The research design followed an interpretive methodology using an embedded case study. This enabled the depth and complexity of relationships between different client organisations to be studied. The primary aim of this study was to gain an employer perspective on engagement, complemented by views gained from the provider side. In order to do this, a general sequence of interviews was established, with an initial focus on the client perspective. Thus, all sub-case interviews began by interviewing client managers from the employer side. This was followed by an interview with the manager from the business school with specific responsibility for the relevant client. The schedule of interviews can be found in appendix 4. All interviews were taped and transcribed, augmented by field notes taken to help record reflections or initial salient observations, during the interviews. The taped interviews were listened to on several occasions, helping to build familiarity with the raw material.

In parallel to the main research approach of semi-structured interviews, a secondary activity involving document analysis was also conducted for two reasons. Firstly, the three specification documents (tenders) were analysed to identify common themes and to provide a form of triangulation with the interview data. Secondly, this document analysis was expanded to enable evaluation of a wider context; by comparing eight nationally released tender invitations. This provided the opportunity to explore whether findings from the study might be applicable to the public sector more broadly. The final stage of the interview sequence adopted in the study involved two senior managers (one from the university and one from a client organization). These were conducted to help provide a broader perspective to the study.

The design began with the selection of three employers, each from the public sector. Prior to any interviews being carried out, broad questions were developed based on the research questions, the literature, my own knowledge of the situation, and that of others who were aware of the context (Charmaz, 2005), what Gummesson (2000) refers to as pre-understanding. In this instance,

a colleague with familiarity of the cases proved valuable by providing a means of checking the questions and broad themes before their use.

Prior to the interviews, document analysis of each organisation's specification documents (their tender documents) for the interventions were analysed, using a thematic coding method. Identification of initial themes from the tender documentation proved a useful mechanism to inform the primary research design, by identifying possible areas to be probed during the course of the interviews. These themes also provided a form of triangulation, helping me to check the degree to which themes from the written documentation resonated with the themes which emerged from the semi-structured interviews.

Thus a set of broad questions were developed, along with some initial prompts for the researcher to develop during the process, based on Charmaz's (2006) preference for keeping the interview informal and conversational, in order to enable the flexibility to explore issues as they emerged (King, 2004). This approach also seemed most appropriate given that the participants were known to the researcher. Indeed this position, of being an insider researcher, recognises the importance of researchers being able to "draw on their own experience in asking questions and interviewing, and … to follow up on replies, and so obtain richer data" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 69). The interview guide with questions and potential prompts derived from the document analysis for the client interviews can be found in appendix 5. As recommended by King (2004)the interview guide provides some suggested areas to explore rather than a formal schedule.

The process was then piloted with sub-case 1. The first interview with Client Manager 1, indicated that the broad questions did provide the opportunity for this manager to discuss areas relevant to the study, at some length. What also became obvious was the value of asking the interviewee to expand or further explain points they had made, an important aspect of the flexible, semi-structured format (King, 2004). Reviewing the transcript revealed that clarifying questions were asked throughout the interview, encouraging the participant to explain their "intentions and meanings" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 26). This approach, of offering secondary questions to further open up the theme of the initial question, was one that I adopted in subsequent interviews. The semi-structured nature of the interviews therefore allowed for further exploration

of areas that emerged in the conversation, along with the opportunity to ask supplementary questions which allowed me to probe for more depth and clarity from the interviewee.

This process was then repeated with Business School manager 1, responsible for sub-case 1, to check that the interview approached worked with provider participants. The interview guide was modified slightly, although still designed to explore similar themes. The modified interview guide can be found in appendix 6. This interview also enabled me to ask similar broad-based questions, which were followed up with more probing questions to explore responses which this time emphasised the provider perspective. These supplementary questions became a valuable part of the subsequent interview process, providing deeper insights than those prompted by initial questions alone. In particular, such prompting often keeps "a story coming when a participant can and wants to tell it" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 29) . This led to a later recognition that many of the interviewees had used stories, often in response to the clarifying or probing questions. As a result, at a later stage, I reviewed the primary data after all the interviews had been conducted, listening to the tapes and reading the transcripts once again, to help me reflect on some of the stories told by the participants.

Having confirmed the interview approach with participants from sub-case one, the participants from sub-case two and then sub-case three were interviewed in the same order: client managers first followed by the business school manager with responsibility for that client. The business school managers were interviewed separately (and after the client managers), without any knowledge of the findings from the client views. This ensured independent views were gained about the client business relationship, without any influence from what the client managers had said.

Finally, two senior managers were interviewed with a direct connection to the cases, but who had no day-to-day involvement. These two senior managers were chosen to provide a strategic perspective on the relationship, but they were also asked to provide a broader dimension. Both managers were senior leaders in their respective organisations. One a senior manager from the university, the other from the organization in sub-case 3 with the longest relationship with the university business school. Both were asked to discuss their perceptions of how business schools and employer organisations might engage effectively with each other.

Having explained the research design and procedure, the argument now leads to the area of the methodology that has experienced most on-going development, the process for analysis of the data.

Process for analysis of the data

The methodology proposed is a direct interpretive analysis approach supported by themed coding. This is in line with Stake's (2005) view that qualitative research often utilizes both approaches, but with one or the other being used as the primary analysis. Whilst in principle the distinction is helpful, it became evident as the study progressed that more consideration would be needed as to how the approaches are balanced. In particular how the analysis moderates the tension between direct interpretive analysis, and themed or data coding analysis (Stake, 2005).

Of particular concern was how to put into practice Stake's suggestion of the critical need to be ever reflective in "pondering the impressions, deliberating on recollections and records" (Stake, 2005, p. 449). This approach is advocated in part to counter the concerns that coding can result in the fragmentation of qualitative data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). Given that the aim is to maintain the emphasis on a deliberative reflection process rather than a very detailed coding, more specific approaches needed to be considered to enable such an analysis. The research process begins with a preliminary first stage of coding the semi-structured interviews, and is explored in the chapter on 'findings and preliminary analysis'. The analogy used by Charmaz (2005): coding as the scaffolding which helps build an interpretation of the research issue, is helpful to understand the intent in this study. Namely that coding provides a supporting role for a direct interpretive approach used in the analysis process. The subsequent chapter on 'analysis and discussion' then views the preliminary analysis through this lens of direct interpretation, with integration of relevant literatures to develop the depth of analysis, interpretation and conceptualization of the study providing a more in-depth second stage of analysis.

The approach taken has been to balance a first stage of coding with a second stage that incorporates an analysis data from participant's stories, which helps to keep intact participants' views, and hence aids a direct interpretative analysis. The following section clarifies the coding method used, before describing how the use of stories emerged as a means to balance coding

approaches, along with an explanation of the approach adopted to analyse the data emerging from the stories.

Initial analysis coding process

As mentioned earlier, this study's methodology has adopted Gioia et al's (2012) notion of structuring the coding as a two level analysis. The first level conveys the voice of the informants while a second level more clearly conveys the voice of the researcher. Such an approach to analysis demonstrates the links between the findings from "informants" to the concepts and interpretations drawn by the researcher. Gioia et al use the phrase, '1st order' analysis, for data which remains true to the participants terms, and '2nd order' analysis to distinguish the concepts and interpretations of the researcher. They attribute this approach to Van Maneen, who explains that the "first-order concepts are the "facts" of an (investigation) and the second-order concepts are the "theories" an analyst uses to organize and explain these facts" (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 540). However, according to Blaikie (2007) this idea has its roots in the work of the Austrian social scientist Alfred Schultz. Blaikie argues that Schutz stressed the importance of ensuring the voice of the participant is heard, with their own explanation of their reality, if social research is to be effective. According to Blaikie, this focus on the participants led to Schutz arguing that "the concepts of social science have to remain consistent with common sense, with the first-order concepts" (Blaikie, 2007, p. 95).

Gioia's approach will be adapted in this study since it has been used more widely within the field of organisational studies (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012). It therefore relates both to the context of this study, and fits well with ideas of naturalistic inquiry, where listening to the voice of the participants is important. Gioia et al's approach begins with the coding of data using the informant's terms. This is similar to *in vivo* coding, where the coding is derived directly from the participant's language (Strauss, 1989). Their approach to the use of participant language was adopted, with initial coding of the semi-structured interviews leading to the identification of similarities and differences across the three sub-cases (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012). The statements, terms or phrases used by participants form the codes (Nag & Gioia, 2012), which were then brought together as categories. Constant comparison across the sub-cases and the participant interviews enabled recognition of relationships between statements, phrases and initial codes

(Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). The interview transcripts were re-read and the tape recordings listened to several times, in order to continue comparison and recognition of patterns across the data.

As discussed earlier, in parallel to the semi-structured interviews, a secondary coding activity was conducted using each organisation's specification (tender) documents. This process was secondary to the main research instrument of semi-structured interviews because the research intention was to gain insights into the relational aspects of the engagement process, which was best gathered through the depth of discussion made possible by interviews. The main purpose of the document coding exercise was to act as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009), confirming the degree to which formal requirements stated in a written document supported the themes emerging from the semi-structured interviews. However, the document coding also provided an early indication of initial common themes across the three sub-cases, and identified possible areas which could be used as prompts for exploratory questions to be asked in the semi-structured interviews (Bowen, 2009). Finally, the document analysis was expanded to incorporate eight national specification documents, enabling a direct comparison with a wider range of public sector organisations across the U.K.. This activity provided some indication of the extent to which there are similar themes across other public sector organisations, what Patton (2002) refers to as confirmatory significance. That is, to note the extent to which the areas identified within the three sub-cases tally with documentation from other organisations.

However, a more robust approach, which for some researchers provides the "strongest available check" (Mays & Pope, 2000, p. 51) on the credibility of the findings from a study, is to seek the participants' views. Having conducted interviews with participants from each of the sub-cases, an initial version of the possible grouping of themes, along with the statements from the participants, was sent to the participants, in order to gain their view of the initial findings. This step is commonly referred to as 'member checking' (Cresswell & Miller, 2000) or 'respondent validation' (Mays & Pope, 2000), in which case participants are able to see how their own views have been grouped, alongside the views of other client manager participants from the three sub-cases. Participants were asked to determine: if the themes and categories made sense; if they agreed with the evidence statements; and the extent to which they considered the initial findings

accurate and realistic (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Crucially, this stage provided a check on the accuracy of reporting of participants' views and an initial confirmation that the participants recognised the grouping of common themes, before progressing towards any further analysis. It is therefore only at this point that the initial categories, with the informant descriptions, were interpreted by the researcher, firstly to develop aggregate participant categories and then to indicate possible second order concepts. In order to do this, the terms, and the evidence supporting the terms (that is the participant statements and phrases which support the category), were reviewed, along with consideration of related theory to inform the intepretation. This two stage coding is similar to Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) first and second cycle coding, or to Charmaz's (2006) initial coding and a second stage of focused coding. In Miles et al's (2014) method, the first cycle summarises sections of the data, after which the second cycle groups similar data into a smaller number of categories or themes. They suggest that the second cycle involves looking for threads within the data in order to draw together meaningful categories. In doing so, Miles et al (2014) advocate an approach to assist pattern recognition, which was adopted in this study. They recommend researchers should "look for recurring phrases (i.e. In Vivo code) or common threads in participants' accounts" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 87). This approach is helpful to inform how aggregated codes can be developed, and along with Charmaz's (2006) advice for developing focused codes by seeking the most significant or salient, to provide guidance for the process.

At this stage, Gioia et al (2012) recommend a mechanism for linking what they term as informant views to the intepreted analysis of the researcher. This approach tables the informants views as categories which are then aggregated and linked in a table to the researcher themes, which then begin to make sense of the data. These second-order themes are then aggregated to help begin identification of emerging ideas and concepts. According to Gioia et al (2012), this is a highly iterative process moving between data, second order categories, concepts and relevant literature. These go through cycles as the researcher returns to participants' views in order to check both emerging second-order themes, and the aggregated, more conceptual, final ideas. The aggregated themes, and progression to more conceptual constructs, draw upon the literature reviewed in the previous chapter and in other relevant literature. In this study, the data table proposed by Gioia et al (2012) will be developed with the first two columns representing

participant views, from first-order categories, to aggregated first-order themes. The second two columns reflect the researcher's perpsective, with initial second order themes drawn from the aggregated participant themes, leading to initial aggregated second order themes at a more conceptual level.

Worked example to illustrate the research process

Before progressing beyond the explanation of this preliminary coding analysis, it is helpful to illustrate the analysis process with an excerpt of data. The study findings are reported in the next chapter, and a preliminary analysis is carried out using coding and the data table proposed by Gioia et al (2012), in order to arrive at some initial conceptual themes. The data is coded from the transcripts and grouped to form common threads, and potentially significant or salient points. Statements expressed in the participants' words are used as codes, and an explanatory section is written referring to other statements from the participant or other participants, which provide the supporting evidence for the first order code. The code is given a reference to denote whether it is a client manager view (CMV), a Business School manager response (BSM), a client senior manager (CSM), or a university senior manager view (USM).

The data table is then constructed by grouping similar themes and ideas from all the first order codes created. The illustrative example from the data table will be the second order theme of 'nurture'. A section of the data table is reproduced in table 1.0 with the relevant theme sections emboldened. The idea of 'nurturing' emerges from the senior university manager's emphasis on the importance of establishing a rapport with a client. As a researcher, this aspect of the interview immediately struck me as a potentially significant and salient theme (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, an initial code was formed using the participants' words of 'establish a rapport'. This code appears in the first column of the table (table 1.0) in bold as a first order participant code. Other codes from the initial analysis were then identified to support and justify the selection of 'establish a rapport'. These codes are effectively supporting statements coded from the interviews. They are referenced and placed in column 1 underneath the primary code of 'establish a rapport'.

First order participant code | Aggregated first order theme | Second order theme | Second order aggregated theme

CMV4: Track record, reputation, and expertise
CMV3: Skills knowledge and abilities you brought to the table was a massive selling point
CMV4: The knowledge of other work elsewhere with other people, so track record was important

→ Track record, reputation and expertise → Credibility

CMV3: A big part of it was....building the relationship with us
CMV9: The fundamental issue was how you worked with us....I think universities need to get out more
CMV3: All about that relationship
CSMV3: Relationships evolving over time

→ How you work with us, building the relationship with us → Relationship building → Relational engagement

USM7: Establish a rapport
CSMV4: Good connections
USMV3: An organisation they could grow together with
USMV7: This hasn't been just a way of getting an entrée and contract this is about an on-going relationship and I think people really value that.

→ Establish a rapport and growing together → Nurture

Table 1.0 Section of the data table illustrating the second order theme: 'nurture'

These supporting codes also help to build evidence for the aggregated first order code in the second column. The supporting codes are primarily other first order codes, determined in the initial findings, which have a similar thread or which help to build a broader theme. In this case, the aggregated first order theme captures two ideas from the grouped codes. The aggregated code is therefore expressed as: 'establish a rapport and grow together'. This code begins to capture the ideas of establishing rapport, which happens at the initial stages of a relationship, along with the notion of 'continuing to grow together and connect', indicating its occurrence throughout the length of the relationship. This possible understanding prompted me to review the data, and as a result include a senior manager statement to further support the development of the code. The statement stresses that building rapport is not just a process that occurs at the start of a relationship, but is rather about an 'on-going relationship'. This distinction is an important one to make in order to progress to the researcher-interpreted second order theme. Rapport building is clearly important in building relationships, but without reflecting on the wider perspective gained from other participant statements, then the more interesting and broader concept of 'nurturing' may have been missed.

It is at this stage that engagement with the relevant literature becomes part of the interplay between data, and reflection. The literature review has particularly explored engagement from the perspective of a collaborative relationship, based on Connor and Hirsh's (2008) model of a collaborative relationship between an employer and university. In addition other research about collaborative relationships, by Huxham (2003) and Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1994), were explored, in which both strongly argue for an on-going nurturing process if collaborations are to grow and last. These arguments reinforced my own sense of the importance of the nurturing theme within the context of this study, to the extent that 'nurture' emerged as a preliminary second order theme. The final step in this initial process is to aggregate the second order themes to create some initial conceptual elements. This involves determining which second order themes seem to be connected and related, or form part of a bigger conceptual idea. To do this, an iterative process was performed, by returning to the earlier initial participant codes and their statements, to help make the connections. It is apparent that 'nurture' is associated with the idea of 'relationship building' and with the strand of codes aggregated to form the theme of 'credibility'. The three codes are therefore aggregated to form the provisional conceptual theme of 'relational engagement'. The significance of relationships in this study has emerged from the very first interview, so there is a clear argument to recognize connections from the participants' statements, which generate a conceptual code relating to this theme. All three second order codes have supporting statements that connect them together and inform the importance of the relational factors in this study. The theme of 'relational engagement' attempts to capture the points made by participants that credibility, alongside the building of a relationship, were important. However, it appears that nurturing processes are critical to the development of sustained relationships. This conceptual theme will be studied in more detail in the second part of the analysis, along with a deeper exploration of the 'credibility', 'relationship building' and 'nurture' constructs, and how they form the conceptual element of 'relational engagement'.

At this point in the study, the intent is to develop preliminary conceptual elements using a coding process. The next part of the analysis uses a more direct interpretive approach, and a deeper discussion of the findings interweaved with a more comprehensive consideration of relevant literatures. A similar illustrative explanation of the second analysis approach will be conducted later, but first the analysis approach needs to be introduced.

Direct interpretive analysis

The data table represents the preliminary analysis using coding as a mechanism to support the interpretation of the data. Now a second lens has been applied to the analysis, with a more direct interpretive approach. As already indicated, it became clear as the study progressed that the intent to apply a more direct interpretive process needed more thought in order to determine the analytical approach. During the early stages of the study it was felt it may have been appropriate to rely on a deliberative holistic reading of the transcripts as a means of analysis, where a coding method such as what Saldana (2010) describes as holistic coding, could be applied. Indeed, Saldana suggests that this use of code enables the researcher to grasp big themes, as opposed to conventional coding which is more focused on detail that splits and fragments data. Interestingly, Saldana further suggests that the holistic coding technique could be particularly relevant when used with "vignettes or episodes – such as interview excerpts of a participant's story with a definite beginning, middle and end" (Saldana, 2010, p. 119). However, Saldana also argues that holistic coding is more appropriately used as a preliminary activity, and whilst it may hold some merit in the context of understanding vignettes and episodes, more consideration of an appropriate direct interpretive method was needed.

On reflection, it was at this point that an incident occurred which illustrated the need for an "on-going reflexive" (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 146) approach in the research. During one of the final interviews with the senior manager from the University, the manager told a striking story that captured what appeared to be important themes for the study. The power of the story led me to suspect and then to recognize that stories had also been evident in the earlier interviews. As a result, the transcripts and recordings were reviewed and did indeed reveal a wealth of stories told during the research process. At this stage, I was immersed in the study, and the senior manager's story resonated with my own experience, triggering my recognition of story in the other interviews. This resulted in a need to step back and to reflect on the insight. The event represents a point of reflexivity, moving away from an insider position by stepping back from the research context, to reflect on the research process. It seemed that the data called for a different means of analysis.

When reviewing the tapes and transcripts, it was also striking to notice that some of the stories told in the individual cases seemed to resonate with the emerging evidence and themes from across

the cases, in the findings and preliminary analysis represented in the data table. It became clear that the use of stories may be a vehicle to keep participants' thoughts and ideas intact, in a way that would also more easily enable a direct interpretive stance. This is a perspective supported by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2014), who argue that "stories should have an intactness, a wholeness, that should not be fractured during analysis." (2014, p. 349) What was also noticeable was that stories emerged naturally as a part of the conversation/semi-structured interview. This tendency is actually widely recognized in the literature as interviewees, often without prompting, tell a story to make their point, rather than simply answering questions asked of them (Elliot, 2005) (March, 2010) (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2014). Yet despite this implied prominence in interviews, researchers have often suppressed stories or seen their analysis as problematic, and in so doing "have not recognized the persuasiveness of stories" (Mishler, 1986, p. 69). This seems to be a situation, which I had nearly mirrored in my own research. Moreover, there is a view that such stories can be potentially advantageous for the qualitative researcher, because the interviewee uses the story in "'making sense' out of experience" (Elliot, 2005, p. 24). Since "stories are told to make a point" (Elliot, 2005, p. 24), as a consequence, the narrator assumes responsibility for making their points clear, allowing a better understanding of their perspective to be gained. (Elliot, 2005) This enables the researcher to concentrate on listening to *how* the interviewee makes sense of their experience.

This second phase of analysis, in contrast to the preliminary coding, forms the more in-depth and holistic consideration of the findings, and requires further explanation in the next sections. First, the research process adopted to incorporate story and enhance the analysis will be explained, after which the justification and theory to support the analysis process will be explored.

Having arrived at initial conceptual themes in the data table (findings and preliminary analysis chapter), the initial themes in the table can be analysed adopting a more holistic approach, with the use of stories. Alongside analysis of data presented in stories, relevant literature is reviewed to help the development of the depth of interpretation and conceptualization of the study. This combination of analysis of data presented in stories and of literature is explored in the 'analysis and discussion' chapter. At the end of this chapter the final stage in Gioia et al's (2012) method is presented. They argue that the data table, whilst indicating the conceptual elements of the study,

is never-the-less a static representation of something that is actually more dynamic, and often with processual relationships (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012), (Clark, Gioia, Ketchen, & Thomas, 2010). For Nag and Gioia, a theory not only develops the concepts that make up the theory, but also the "linkages or relationships among those concepts in describing or explaining a phenomenon" (Nag & Gioia, 2012, p. 436). Therefore the final stage, based on the analysis of data emerging from the stories and integration of relevant theory, is to propose "the dynamic relationships among the emergent concepts that describe or explain the phenomenon of interest" (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012, p. 22). The relationships and links between the concepts are thus described at the end of the 'analysis and discussion' chapter and culminate in a diagram to represent the interconnectivity of the concepts, what Gioia et al (2012) refer to as a dynamic theory model.

Story-telling in organisations

Whilst story-telling appears to be a useful vehicle to interpret some of the findings from the study, there is a need to clarify the nature of stories. This is in order to justify their relevance as a method of study, and to explore how they can be used in this particular study. Firstly, it is helpful to state what is meant by a story. According to Polkinghorne "events and actions are drawn together into an organized whole by means of a plot" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7). A series of events are combined by the story teller into an episode. In particular "story plots entail conflicts, predicaments, trials and crisis which call for choices, actions and interactions" (Gabriel, 2000, p. 239). Importantly the nature of story is not so much to convey facts but rather that "they enrich and infuse facts with meaning" (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2004, p. 115). They can also progress to a solution or provide clarification or, alternatively, illustrate the unraveling of a situation (Polkinghorne, 1995). In this study, the purpose of the story will be assessed with a view to recognizing how and where it expresses tensions, such as where conflicting principles are bridged "either by appearing to offer a reconciliation, or by holding irreconcilable alternatives in suspension" (Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkim, 1983, p. 448). Alternatively organizational stories may also relate to the overcoming of adversity, and as such are influential in the sense making processes (Parry & Hansen, 2007). This understanding of stories helps identify their benefit in making sense of the meaning that the actors in the study wished to convey. This is because their story helps to explain how they made sense of the context. However, therein lies a concern: that

they may not be conveying a situation accurately. As Gabriel and Griffiths argue, "ultimately, the truth of a story lies not in its accuracy but in its meaning" (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2004, p. 115).

There is some evidence to suggest that organisational stories often cover similar themes. For example Parry and Hansen claim that most of the stories they analysed tended to have a "general theme of overcoming adversity" (Parry & Hansen, 2007, p. 283). Similarly Martin et al. suggest that the most common theme in the stories they studied were "the obstacles story", which made them think that these kind of stories "may be particularly salient and important" (Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkim, 1983, p. 445) within an organisational context. The story usually ends with resolution, though not always. So, the analysis will attempt to characterize the kind of story being told, and to then determine its ending. Namely, whether it ends with a resolution to a tension, an unresolved tension, a moral, or final point/punch-line. Martin et al (1983) point out another interesting feature of common stories told in organisations, which is of value to this study. They argue that stories tend to have a tension built into them. Building on their earlier discussion of tensions and dualities, Martin et al explain that "a duality is an issue that cannot easily be resolved, because contradictory aspects of the issue are inevitably present and are simultaneously desirable and undesirable. Dualities cause tension" (Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkim, 1983, p. 447). This leads to an important aspect of story analysis, namely to identify whether there is a tension or duality present in the story, and to explore the nature of any tension identified. To help present this story analysis an approach similar to that used by Gabriel and Griffiths (2004) will be adopted. They categorized stories by; type of story; theme; emotions; and moral, using a table to provide a summary of the features of the story.

From the perspective of this study, the interesting thing about the use of stories is how they are used to both make sense of a situation. Sense making is about arriving at "a sensible, workable interpretation" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 444), by continually reworking an "emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 415). It helps to develop a plausible map where information, conversation and action help to shape meaning and build credibility (Ancona, 2012). From this understanding of sense making, stories gain value in both articulating meaning, and in being a persuasive way to give sense to others. However, it should be noted that through any process of sense making "people may get better stories, but they will never

get the story" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 415). Indeed, "what is plausible for one group, such as managers, often proves implausible for another group, such as employees" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 415). In the context of this study, it is valuable to explore the plausible story from two perspectives: that of the employer and that of the business school.

Analysing tensions

The tension between insider/outsider research discussed earlier is also reflected in the way researchers approach a study. Some argue that there is considerable value in attempting to consider the data without pre-conceived ideas (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012). Yet, in reality, a researcher always comes to a study with some level of understanding, and often may be well informed. Having a pre-understanding of the study is, in one sense, inevitable, especially if the researcher has a professional background in the field. Indeed, this can also be advantageous to the research process. For example, Gummesson (2000) argues that a pre-understanding can prevent a lot of unnecessary work. A view counter-balanced by Gioia et al (2012) who advocate a conscious attempt by the researcher to distance themselves from theory, and a focus on the data of the research. This is both a dilemma and a tension which Sigglekow captures when arguing that "an open mind is good; an empty mind is not. It is true that one wants to retain the capacity to be surprised, but it seems useful (and inevitable) that our observations be guided and influenced by some initial hunches and frames of reference" (Siggelkow, 2007, p. 21). Acknowledging this tension between knowing and not knowing offers a useful approach to analysis, one that recognises the "fine balancing act that allows for discovery without reinventing the well-ridden wheel" (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012, p. 21)

Eisenhardt argues that the interplay between analysis, data and theory provides a particularly helpful context for theory building, asserting that "creative insights often arise from the juxtaposition of contradictory or paradoxical evidence" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 546). Similarly, Klag and Langley use the phrase "conceptual leap", to explain the process of "bridging the gap between empirical data and theory" (Klag & Langley, 2013). This, they argue, can be achieved by exploring conflicting tensions that emerge in a study. This bridging process, avoiding a tendency to move toward one extreme or the other of a tension, and instead encourages a progression to synthesis. It therefore seems pertinent to explore the application of the concept of tension as part of the

analysis process. There is a clear suggestion, from the discussion in the literature review, that competing tensions play a significant part in the debate about business school engagement with organisations. This recognition of the importance of tensions continued as the data and field research were conducted, prompting this discussion about how tensions can be incorporated into the analysis. In this respect Eisenhardt's (1989) contradictions and paradoxes, and Klag and Langley's (2013) conceptual leap to bridge a gap, both suggest that there is potential for tensions to inform theory building. To understand this better, the nature of tensions will be explored followed by an investigation into their application as part of an analysis process which utilises contradictions and paradoxes.

Tensions are typically understood as conflicting positions or views, or contradictions which pull in opposite directions (Higson & Sturgess, 2014). They may be visible in dualities and inconsistencies, and are often experienced as competing and contradictory poles that demand a choice of either one or the other (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014). Dualities are polar opposites, with the difference between the opposing positions experienced as a tension. However, they are not necessarily either/or choices, or "contradictions that are mutually exclusive" (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004). In fact, Seo et al (2004) suggest that there is a spectrum of ways in which a tension or duality may be viewed, expressed in four possible responses to tension. The responses provide some helpful insights into how tensions could be used in analysis. The first of the possible responses is perhaps the most familiar. Selection is the choice of one pole of the tension as opposed to the other; it is when interested parties ignore one pole in preference to the other. The second response is separation, which is when the contrasting positions are separated temporally, analytically or topically. The third response is to integrate the positions. This is more commonly recognised as agreeing a compromise between the two positions. Then the fourth response is what Seo et al (2004) refer to as transcendence, an approach that seeks a "new synthesis of the poles wherein dualities are transcended" (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014). This particular response, according to Seo at al, holds significant potential in an analysis process since "transcendence results from change that occurs when dualities are transcended so that the original tension among them no longer exists. In reframing, new conceptual definitions arise" (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004, p. 77).

The different possible responses have some resonance with the discussion so far presented in this study. For example in the earlier analysis of the relevance and rigour debate, Gulati (2007) characterised the tendency of the rigour-relevance debate to be reduced to an either/or outcome or a less of one/more of the other balancing act. The former fits the selection response, whilst the second is more akin to the integration view of compromise. It could also be argued that the Kieser and Leiner (2009) position, that the relevance gap cannot be bridged because the world of academia and the world of the practitioner are different, resonates with the separation response. There is also Gulati's argument, advocating a move towards an "and" rather than "or" perspective in the relevance debate, which is an attempt to seek a synergistic way forward and to "accept that rigor and relevance are not opposites at all" (Gulati, 2007, p. 779). Such an argument indicates a transcending perspective. Similarly Weick's (2001) proposal, to rethink the so called gap between relevance and rigour as a problem with practitioners and not just academics, can also be seen as an attempt to reframe the situation. Thus the four tension responses proposed by Seo et al (2004) provide a very helpful way to frame the tensions expressed in the relevance-rigour debate, and especially to indicate arguments attempting to transcend and synergise the tension, which in turn may indicate areas of possible theory building.

It is also interesting to note that Bartunek and Rynes (2014) identified a series of tensions based on a subject relevant to this study: a review of the literature on the academic/practitioner divide. Their article indicates an approach to applying tensions proposing use of the concept as a means of characterising and framing issues. Bartunek and Rynes outlined what they considered to be five prominent tensions in the academic practitioner debate. Firstly, the tension of **different logics** captures the idea that practitioners and academics often use different criteria by which they define and address problems. Secondly, the tension of **time dimensions**. This relates to academia's generally lengthy timescales for developing research, which is something that practitioners do not often value. The third tension related to **communication practices**, where research is not translated in a way which makes sense to practitioners, who thus do not always recognise the value of such research. The fourth tension highlights the crucial issues of **relevance and rigour**, which according to Bartunek and Rynes (2014) has generated the bulk of the literature. The fifth tension stresses differences between **interest and incentives** and points towards differing motivations.

These examples illustrate a process which applies tensions to elements of the context within which this study is situated, in doing so suggesting a possible approach to adopt in this analysis.

There is also a second way in which the concept of tension can be applied to analysis. As they reviewed the literature relating to conceptual leaps, Klag and Langley "were struck by the frequency of elements of opposition or contradiction" (Klag & Langley, 2013, p. 152). This led them to identify four tensions which they considered helpful in creating the conditions for conceptual leaps. For example, the contrast between a deliberate, structured research method, and the results derived from the happy co-incidence of serendipity. There is also a tension between engaging with, and becoming immersed in the research data, and stepping back, becoming detached, and allowing thoughts to incubate. Not surprisingly (as already highlighted), there is a key tension to be balanced between prior knowledge and pre-understanding, and the state of 'not knowing' (Klag & Langley, 2013). It is argued that holding these tensions, which are about how analysis is conducted, can provide a means for "navigating among and around a series of dialectic tensions" (Klag & Langley, 2013, p. 161), in order to achieve a conceptual leap. Klag and Langley particularly suggest that there is a common pattern to these tensions. Each of the tensions has one pole which seems grounded in structure and discipline, whilst the other pole reflects "a liberating influence, offering openness to chance, to imagination, to surprise" (Klag & Langley, 2013, p. 161). They stress that an over emphasis on one or the other can be detrimental, instead arguing for a healthy recognition of the value of the different poles of the tensions. This perspective is not that dissimilar to Weick's (1989) call for disciplined imagination in the theorising process, which is another way of framing the pattern Klag and Langley suggest is evident in the tensions they identified.

There is clear potential to use tensions as part of an analytical framework to shape features of this study. This may indicate some promising theory-building opportunities. Secondly, use of tensions as part of a conscious research approach (analysis as research process) could also suggest options for insightful theory-building. Such a view has particular potential when acknowledging one possible impact of stories (discussed earlier): their use in revealing tensions and conflicts.

Explaining the analysis of data presented in stories

The justification for using stories as a means of applying a more direct interpretive analysis is supported by arguments for the intact nature and wholeness of a story (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2014). The adoption of stories affords an alternative perspective to coding. The stories provide a means of presenting the data holistically, generating a more contextualized account from which key issues can be identified in the analysis. This is in contrast to the tendency for coding to split and fragment data, as discussed by Saldana (2010). The transcripts were re-read and the tape recording interviews were listened to again, focusing on where stories emerged in relation to the five preliminary themes identified in the data table, namely: demand dilemma; relational engagement: new competencies: client management processes; and springboard to new opportunities. It was apparent that stories were told naturally, often being used to emphasise an important point being made by the teller (Elliot, 2005) (March, 2010) (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2014). The stories were selected primarily based on their appropriateness to inform the emerging preliminary conceptual themes

It is worth noting that since all the transcripts had been a part of the initial coding analysis, effectively statements from the stories had already been included in the findings and preliminary analysis. Thus the first stage of the analysis using coding, constituted a comprehensive and detailed breakdown of all the data which, to extend the analogy used by Charmaz (2005), can be thought of as providing the scaffolding and foundation for analysis. Whereas this second stage analysis, using the same data, provides a more holistic assessment, with the intent to introduce more depth to the interpretation and analysis. Thus, it was helpful to notice whether any of the initial codes that had been identified in the data table to inform the development of the five preliminary themes were in fact statements from stories told by a participant. This proved a useful activity with statements in each of the five themes recognizably part of a participant story. For example the emerging theme of "nurturing" has a code of "establish a rapport" which is actually within the story that the university manager told about how he nurtured clients. This story, which I subsequently titled "the nurturing story", then provides the basis for exploring further the nurturing and relational engagement theme. Similarly, the demand dilemma theme is informed by "the selection story" and "the greatest strength story" the former includes the code "Repute, price, flexibility, ability to actually listen." and the latter "academia's greatest strength – latest thinking". Both codes are in

the data table section related to the theme and also a part of the respective stories. In effect, the essential elements of the stories were actually already present in the preliminary data coding table.

When reviewing the data and identifying stories, it was noticeable that stories did indeed emerge unprompted, but during the telling of the story in some instances, suggestions and reminders or supporting comments from the researcher encouraged the continuation of a story, an approach advocated by Charmaz (2006). On reflection, this approach of the interviewer sharing "aspects of their own narrative" is recognized by Edwards and Holland as especially helpful when the "research topic is about a shared experience" (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 36). Two further insights were applied to the process of selecting stories primarily based on the need to provide insight into the five preliminary conceptual themes. Firstly, Lichtman (2013) suggests that qualitative researchers often identify salient stories, recognizing the potential for the story to resonate with the researchers understanding. Then secondly, Charmaz (2006) argues that stories should be preserved as a whole, although typically in a condensed form, partly because often there is not an obvious way of distinguishing stories from other forms of narrative, with a story frequently punctuated with "asides of commentary that are indistinguishable in form and content from interview responses" (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2014, p. 322). The 'asides of commentary' were noted in some of the stories selected in this study as participants digressed to other points. Thus, condensed stories focusing on the raw data related to that story were produced to generate what Saldana describes as "interview excerpts of a participant's story" (Saldana, 2010, p. 119) (See appendix 7 for the interview excerpts of participant's stories). For each of the stories, the analysis draws upon the guidance discussed earlier to produce a story analysis table. The table provides information about: the type of story; the key messages within it; what tensions (if any) are characterised in the story, the moral or punch line; and finally the purpose of the story (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2004), (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004), (Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkim, 1983). The story analysis table (see appendix 8) is supported with an explanation of each of the stories, providing a summary of the main points emerging from the story (see appendix 9). The analysis of the data presented in the story is then explored in more depth in the 'analysis and discussion' chapter. The structure of this chapter broadly follows the five preliminary conceptual themes, using a story related to each theme to extend the analysis, and identifying and exploring tensions

and dualities present in the theme, to indicate where there might be opportunity to reframe tensions and propose alternative explanations. Relevant literatures will be drawn upon to extend the understanding of the theme. In doing so the preliminary themes are extended, or changed with respect to the insight gained from the analysis of the data presented in the story. Then in the final section of the chapter the dynamic relationships and connections between the concepts are drawn together in a model.

Worked example to illustrate the analysis of data presented in a story

To illustrate this second more direct interpretive analysis process, the preliminary second order theme of 'nurture', discussed previously, will be considered (see appendix 7.1 for the interview excerpts of participant's stories, appendix 8 for the story analysis table, and appendix 9.1 for the summary explanation of the story). The context within which the senior university manager's 'build rapport' statement occurred, was actually a story that the manager told. The interview with the senior manager was one of the last interviews conducted in the study and the striking nature of the story prompted me to review the data to identify stories in the previous interviews. When the statement about building rapport is considered as a whole, within the story of the senior manager building rapport with a client, a different emphasis can be noticed. The senior manager clearly sees that rapport building is not just about initial activities, but also about an on-going approach. It is an approach that the senior manager sees as significant and one that he also recognises is not commonly practiced by academics. This supports the choice of 'nurture' as a theme to capture the depth of the approach emerging from the story, and the need to capture the sense of an on-going activity. In addition, the emphasis given to the idea by the senior manager resonated with my own experience, and I was also struck by the power of the story, with the obvious integrity and authenticity demonstrated by the senior manager. The saliency of the story, and the clear distillation of wisdom within it (from an experienced senior manager) provided an early sense that this may be an important theme. The story appeared to be an exemplar, conveying tacit knowledge and sharing wisdom (Sole & Wilson, 2002)

At this point relevant literatures beginning with those initially identified in the preliminary analysis are now considered, in an engaged process with the analysis of data within the story, and are explored in the 'analysis and discussion' chapter. In particular, literatures associated with

collaboration were considered since the initial literature review discussed the collaborative conceptual model proposed by Connor and Hirsh (2008). Their emphasis on a collaborative relationship between universities and employers led to a consideration of the work conducted by Huxham (2003) and Moss Kanter (1994). What was immediately apparent was firstly the emphasis on nurturing processes to support collaborative relationships, and (strikingly) the need for nurturing to be a continual, central activity for relationships to be sustained. This is an important development since my initial thoughts considered rapport building as processual and often associated with early activities in building a relationship. However, the on-going sense of the need to nurture a collaborative relationship suggests that nurturing is central to sustaining a relationship, and should not be represented as either merely processual or limited to the early stages of a relationship. This insight, drawn from a holistic reading of the story, and consideration of the literature, then informs the final stage of analysis, proposing the linkages and relationships between the conceptual themes proposed by Gioia et al (2012). It is thus important to represent 'nurturing' as an all-embracing process surrounding the collaborative relationship, rather than just a step in a process in the model. A similar discussion for the other themes is conducted in the relevant section of the 'analysis and discussion' chapter.

Two further points emerge from the analysis of data presented in the nurturing story. Firstly, the story supports the connection of nurturing with credibility and relationship building suggested in the preliminary analysis data table. The senior manager saw rapport building as central to an on-going relationship building process. He also argued that the skills to nurture a relationship, whilst important, are not possessed by many academics, indicating a need for people who are credible in front of clients. Then secondly, this also leads to a tension expressed in the story, between the importance of having people who are able to nurture relationships, and the view expressed by the senior manager that such skills are in short supply in academia. Thus, as is the case with most of the stories selected, they inform both one preliminary theme but often also provide a secondary support for other themes. In this case, the 'nurturing' story also supports the client skills/new competencies theme. Indeed, it is interesting to note that a coded statement from this story ("skills that not every academic possesses") is used as a supporting evidence statement for this theme.

In summary, this second level of analysis, incorporating story, tensions and relevant literature, enables a more directive interpretative process to be applied to the analysis, which has helped to draw more depth of understanding and insight from the study. It would have been easy to stay with the theme of 'establishing a rapport' from the data coding, a necessary element, but this would not have been sufficient to capture the sense of importance and extent of influence that emerged from considering the senior manager's story as a whole. Presenting the data for analysis within the natural context of the story is thus an important way of generating a more contextualised holistic account to then form the basis of the analysis.

Generalising from qualitative research

The discussion to date has advocated an open transparent research process in order to build confidence that the facts of a case are being made understandable. This places a responsibility on the researcher, but it could also suggest a responsibility for the reader of the case study. To explore these ideas, its helpful to turn to an argument made by Stake (1994) about the value of studying the 'particular' in case studies. Stake echoes Campbell's sense of discovering what might be a messy and incomplete reality of the social world, whilst also recognising and accepting the competence of human beings to make sense of things (Campbell, 1975). Stake (1994) argues that readers of case research will find value if it resonates with their experience. In order for this to happen the case should faithfully present the findings, but it is also implies that to some extent the researcher certainly shapes which parts of the story is being told. For this reason, Gioia, Schultz and Van Maneen stress that both the informants and the researchers voices need to be clear in the research analysis. Which means that the extent to which the reader of the research considers the argument to be valid and of value, to be convincing and resonating with their experience, is enhanced by a clear demonstration of findings from the participants, with interpretation built from those findings. This then leads to a discussion of the way in which those who read the research make sense of it. For Stake, gaining a deep understanding of the particulars of a case is the starting-point from which to then recognise the case in different contexts (Stake, 1978). In other words "a 'common-sense' view of generalizability such that the reader is left to make up his or her own mind as to how far the evidence collected in a specific study can be transferred to offer information about the same topic in similar settings" (Elliot, 2005, p. 26).

Similarly, for Tsoukas, the issue is that the particular is conventionally subsumed in the general, and in so doing loses the importance of the particular to shape the general. In exploring this different perspective, Tsoukas recognises a dilemma faced by researchers, and calls for the right balance to be struck between two extremes. On the one hand, too much focus on the particular and unique elements of a case limits an assessment of the "significance of the phenomenon at hand" (Tsoukas, 2009, p. 298). On the other hand, placing too much emphasis on connecting the particular to already known general categories risks losing the opportunity to "make creative use of the case, namely [to] use it to extend what is already known and further specify generic concepts" (Tsoukas, 2009, p. 298). This seems a helpful tension to hold because it builds on the discussion so far, emphasizing the need to attend to tensions in this study and to find ways to balance or transcend them. This offers clear potential for any practitioner reading the research case to benefit from the research. As Tsoukas concludes, "practitioners are invited to reformulate distinctions relevant to reported cases to take account of their own experience and thus make even more refined distinctions" (Tsoukas, 2009, p. 299).

Summary

The intent of this investigation is to better understand the factors that contribute to the development of relationships between a business school and an employer. I want to clarify my own thinking having developed a client provision within a business school, and as a result inform the understanding of others involved in this kind of work. This chapter has explored the methodology adopted in order to achieve this intention. It is important to capture the depth and complexity of the relationships and in particular, to understand the perspectives of key employer participants. Consequently, I have adopted an interpretive embedded case study approach based around semi-structured interviews, in order to capture the views and perceptions of participants and to allow deeper exploration of the particular Business School's relationship with three organisations (the three sub-cases). Thus, my dual role as professional and researcher has been discussed to identify both the possible strengths of the position and to assess the limitations. Emerging from this discussion is the need to recognize the need to 'step-in' and 'step-out'. This realizes the advantage of being an insider, close to the context, with the awareness to step back and demonstrate a more distant objective perspective, combined with the reflexivity to sense when to do which. The

selection of the sub-cases is determined by the primary need to identify organisations which have already established a sustained business school relationship, over a minimum of three years, and where a sufficient level of trust has been built to encourage the depth of discussion necessary.

The proposed analysis will follow a two stage process which ensures that the data will be viewed from two different perspectives. The first stage applies data coding as a preliminary analysis aimed at providing the foundational work ready for the second and main analysis approach of direct interpretive analysis. The data coding analysis is derived from Gioia et al's (2012) process of capturing statements using the participant's voice as initial codes and then aggregating codes by recognizing patterns and common themes. Adopting this method will provide a level of transparency, by clearly showing the development of ideas from the participant statements and views. Part way through this process, and before progressing to the interpretive analysis, the participant views will be checked using a number of different sources. The participant data will be compared with statements made in the tender document analysis and secondly the client views will be checked with statements from the Business School managers, providing a level of triangulation between other participants and with written documentation. More importantly, a 'member checking' exercise will be conducted. The initial findings will then be presented back to the participants from each sub-case and confirmatory evidence sought as to whether the findings resonate with their experience, and the extent to which they consider the findings to be accurate and a realistic representation of their views.

Only when this has been confirmed will the next stage of the preliminary analysis take place. Here Gioia et al's (2012) process is followed to capture codes using participant phrases in a data table. The information in the table will make visible the process of grouping and clustering codes using participant phrases, and then developing aggregated codes. The process then incorporates researcher interpretations to propose codes from the researcher's perspective. These second order codes are further developed by recognizing patterns and engaging with the literature to identify more conceptual themes, thereby completing the first stage of the analysis. This analysis is intended to break down ideas from across the sub-cases and then re-configure the statements by grouping common themes. In contrast, the next stage develops insights and conceptual themes by seeing the whole in relation to a broader form of interpretation.

The second and main stage of analysis adopts a more holistic direct interpretive approach, countering concerns that coding can fragment data. The preliminary conceptual themes developed in the first stage of the analysis are thus re-visited with a more in-depth analysis. In practice, as the study developed, it became clear that more thought was needed to clarify the methods applied to enable a direct interpretive analysis. A way forward emerged during the interchange between transcripts, data and coding in the first stage of the analysis. It became apparent that the use of stories would be a viable mechanism to help keep participants' thoughts and ideas intact, which thus suggested a way forward for the second stage of the analysis. Alongside the analysis of data presented within a story, tensions and dualities relating to each theme, and often evident in the stories, will be analysed. The benefit of identifying tensions is that they can indicate where there might be opportunity to reframe and propose different alternative explanations. This stage of the analysis is supported by engagement with relevant literatures, to extend the conceptual themes. The preliminary conceptual themes from the first stage of the analysis will be reviewed, extended or changed through this second stage. Finally, the emerging conceptual themes are brought together in what Gioia et al (2012) refer to as a conceptual model, which represents the dynamic relationships between the conceptual themes.

Chapter 4 Findings and preliminary analysis.

This chapter focuses on the first stage of the analysis which uses coding as a preliminary process to identify themes and ideas that emerge from the semi-structured interviews. As the overall intent of this study was to provide insights into the nature of the relationship between a business school and an employer, emphasis is placed upon the depth of discussion possible through semi-structured interviews to illicit the perceptions, views and insights from the participants. Accordingly the focus of this chapter is on the semi-structured interviews and the voice of the participants from the respective sub-cases. Therefore, the structure of the main part of this chapter follows the research design interview sequence, focusing first on the client perspective. The client manager findings are presented first, as these views are central to the aims of the study, followed by the Business School manager's views. Finally, findings from the interviews with the two senior managers are discussed to help provide a broader perspective. Alongside the semi-structured interview coding activity, a secondary coding procedure is applied to the tender documents of the three sub-cases.

The themes from the document analysis, along with the Business School manager codes, provide a means of triangulation with the client manager semi-structured interview themes. In addition, the document analysis is also extended to include a wider range of tender documents. The extent to which similar themes are identified from the three sub-cases with other tenders begins to indicate the possibility of what Patton (2002) described as confirmatory significance. Then the crucial step of checking the initial findings with participants from each of the sub-cases provides a level of assurance that the themes both resonate with, and reflect, the understanding of the participants. When this is confirmed, the preliminary coding can be analysed and synthesized in what Gioia et al (2012) describe as a data table, where both first order (participant) codes and second order (researcher interpretation) codes are developed into initial conceptual themes.

Setting the scene with the case stories

Before focusing on the findings from the semi-structured interviews, it is helpful to recall the nature of the cases that are the subject of the study, and then to consider the tender document analysis as a means of introducing the context of the study.

Reflection on the key features of the respective organisations helps to maintain a sense of the shape and distinctiveness of the cases, from which the participants expressed their views. Of primary importance was the need to study sub-cases with sufficiently well-established relationships (over three years), in which high levels of trust existed. These requirements ensured that participants had a depth of experience upon which to reflect, and expressed a willingness to share their views. The three sub-cases were all public sector organisations, as detailed earlier in the methodology and in appendix 3. Sub-case 1 was a metropolitan local authority implementing an organisation-wide management development programmme. The programme requested by the client was bespoke and the organisation had had previous experience with university providers. This resulted in concerns being expressed about the degree to which universities listen to employers. Two client managers (CM1 and CM1A) were interviewed, with senior manager CM1 being pivotal in setting-up the programme and was therefore a key relationship within the organisation. CM1A was also a senior manager within the HR function.

Early on in this relationship, another opportunity emerged with the same local authority. This time ABC business School was approached separately by the organisation's Children's Services Department to provide a leadership development programme in response to the Government's "Every Child Matters" policy. The Department's intention was to improve leadership across services working with children. The contract, and the key contacts involved with it, were completely separate from the team managing sub-case 1. This relationship quickly expanded to become a regional, multi-professional leadership programme, with several other authorities participating. Both of the client managers in this sub-case had direct experience of another programme run by a different university during the same time period as this intervention. The other programme proved problematic for the organization and provided a very interesting contrasting perspective. So, many of the comments by client managers CM2 and CM2A often compared and contrasted their experiences with the two universities. This case also provides valuable insight with respect to building relationships within a regional partnership, which was led by the two client managers interviewed.

The third sub-case, with a large local authority, offered a different perspective since this client had the longest relationship with ABC Business School. It was thus particularly interesting to listen

to the client's views on such a well-developed relationship. This also incorporated the widest range of interventions, from front-line management development, to middle manager and senior manager/leader development. The client managers here (CM3 and CM3A) not surprisingly provided interesting insight into the development of relationships over time.

To enable a straightforward means of connecting the participants to their respective sub-cases, they are all referenced with the same number as their respective case. So for example, the two client managers for sub-case one are referred to as CM1, CM1A respectively, and the business school manager with responsibility for this client, BSM1. Referencing participants with the same number as the case ensures that the quotations are easily attributed to the respective sub-cases.

Setting the context by reviewing the tender documents

Before progressing to the main part of this chapter, and as a way to set the context, the secondary activity of coding each organisation's specification (tender) documents is undertaken. This provides some initial indication of potential themes as articulated in the formal documentation. The themes developed from this coding activity are used as prompts for the semi-structured interviews, which were included in the interview guide (see appendix 5). The coding also provided an indication of common themes to act a means of triangulation with what participants said within the interviews. Although the document anlaysis is not a central part of the study, it does provide some background and a means of determining if the themes from documentary sources resonate with the interview findings. This document analysis was further extended to include a wider range of national tender documents which allows a comparison of such requirements with those of the three sub-cases in this study.

Document analysis

Comparing key statements from the three tender documents indicates some common initial themes. All three tenders emphasized the need for tailored, bespoke solutions that met specific needs, and stressed the value they placed upon working with organisations who had experience, a track record and therefore credibility. They also articulated an expectation that the provider would have the skills to build good working relationships, by partnering and collaborating to jointly develop the programmes. These initial themes of flexibility, credibility and relationship, indicated

key areas to explore, where the semi-structured interviews could enable much deeper understanding and provide a richer basis for interpretation. The tender documents also indicated that distinctive ways of working with the clients were needed, to provide knowledgeable delivery that is experiential, with an emphasis on transferring learning and encouraging network opportunities. The expectations were that the programmes would be research-informed, incorporating latest thinking, and that the interventions could be managed effectively, including the effective monitoring and evaluation of progress and outcomes.

A detailed comparison of the documentation relating to the three sub-cases documentation is contained in appendix 3. The three themes (flexibility, credibility and relationship) were created using actual phrases from the 'invitation to tender' documentation. It is noticeable that the initial themes do provide a very good fit with the codes that emerged from the client manager interviews, although this is probably not particularly surprising, since the documents are statements from the respective organisations of their requirements. What the document analysis does not provide is any further depth to the themes, which is why the semi-structured interviews were so valuable, in allowing for more exploratory discussion.

Before turning to the main focus of the chapter, there is one further avenue to explore. The document analysis suggests that there are common features within the three sub-case requirements. However this does not provide any indication as to whether these might be more widely applicable in other organisations. In order to provide this broader perspective, other 'invitation to tender' documents from public sector organisations, all of which were for similar leadership and management development services, were compared with the document analysis from the three sub-cases. Interestingly, there were some common characteristics to emerge. Thus, the documents provide an indication of the kind of demands made on potential providers, indicating a surprisingly common expression of need. In analyzing these documents, text and phrases were initially tabulated to form clusters, providing an indication of related ideas across the different documents (shown in appendix 4). The first analytical iteration was then grouped to provide initial clusters, which were then categorised to form the emerging themes which have been illustrated in table 2.0.

Initial clusters from the three cases	Emerging tender requirement themes supported by the wider document analysis
Bespoke	"Bespoke" "meeting emerging needs" - customised solutions with elements of co-design/delivery;
Co-designed	
Track record and experience	"Proven track record", experience, and staff expertise;
Knowledgeable	"Extensive management development knowledge" "Deep knowledge of challenges facing the sector"
Partnering, well-developed partnering behaviours	A partnering approach; "Weave values into the partnership" "Well developed partnering behaviours"
Organisational fit	
Understanding the organisation, vision and improvement focus	
Flexible accreditation	Flexible: • Learning methods • accreditation and progression; • delivery styles
Flexible progression Flexible learning methods with experiential learning	
Project management	Project management approach; programme management, co-ordination, scheduling
Transfer of learning	Strong transfer of learning focus; "maximum learning transference to the workplace"
Network	Network – "Knowledge management transfer", "Network opportunities and knowledge sharing to maximise learning opportunities" "stakeholder engagement"
Innovation and value-added services	Innovation and "value-added" elements;
Latest research thinking	The application of research, latest thinking, knowledge exchange;
Evaluation framework	An evaluation methodology focused on outcomes and impact.
Monitoring, support and feedback processes	

Table 2.0: Invitation to tender document analysis

Although these findings were based on a limited number of tenders, they do suggest that there is potentially wider agreement of common demands by client organisations. Moreover, as will become evident in the next section, client managers interviewed in this study seemed to suggest that many of these demands were not often very well addressed by universities.

Client manager views

The client manager views are central to the study and therefore are the first aspect of the three cases to be considered. The initial themes are coded with a heading and then referenced as a client manager view (CMV). In this section, there are nine codes, each developed from a range of statements made by different client managers. The codes are highlighted because they represent views expressed across the cases and often express common themes and patterns or particularly salient points. For example, all of the codes have statements and phrases drawn from managers from each of the three sub-cases, except for code CMV7 which is based on statements from two of the sub- cases. Actual phrases and words from the participants are used in the code heading. The section is structured with a section on each of the nine codes which contains supporting statements from across the sub-cases, to build the justification and explanation of the selected codes.

A summary at the end of the section firstly reports the 'member checking' process, to confirm the extent to which the findings represent the views of the client managers. The main findings are then brought together, to summarise the emerging picture based on the coding of client manger views.

CM View 1: "The needs we didn't even know we'd got"

All the client managers from each of the three cases stressed their desire to work with a provider who would develop a solution tailored to their needs. They also articulated an interesting distinction between knowing they had a demand for an intervention within the organization, whilst being uncertain of the actual development needs. For example, the Client Manager (CM1a) in Case 1 argued that whilst the organisation might have a "basic idea of what the programme would be" they needed a partner who "would work with you to help you develop (the programme) to meet the needs of the organization." They were looking for an organization able to take "the initial scope but also offer: have you thought of this or that." A point supported by client manager 2 who described a need for "a willingness from the University to look at the needs of the services, and then develop a specific programme which could impact on all those services."

What emerged was recognition of, and expectation that, needs would surface as the two parties began to talk. Firstly, there was an acknowledgement that a specification was only a start

point (as expressed by client manager 3a in Case 3): "What's written there (in the specification) isn't necessarily what we're going to deliver. You meet the need of the organization." However, in a more candid admission from client manager 1a, there seemed to be a deeper requirement: "Actually I was really, really confident that the programme would meet our explicit needs and the needs we didn't even know we'd got if you know what I mean." These views were supported by the client manager of case 2 (CM2) who articulated this distinction between knowing and not knowing: "We didn't know what we wanted, we knew what the end result had got to be, but we didn't know how to get there."

Whilst summarising the key elements they used to assess the different proposals received from potential providers, Client Manager 1 highlighted their central requirements. Four criteria were important: "Repute, price, flexibility, ability to actually listen." What the manager then focused on was the last of these points: the ability to listen. "You'd be surprised how many organizations ignored completely our invitation to tender. Some acknowledged (our requirements) and then proceeded to tell us what they thought we wanted. They didn't respond to what (our organization) had asked, some said: we know what you want."

It was particularly noticeable that many of the client managers highlighted the benefit of in-depth initial discussions and conversations, and stressed its importance in the process.

CM View 2: "a lot of discussion"…"an awful lot of time talking"… "I think that was essential"

Case 2 was a programme for multiple client organisations, with a partnership group set-up for the various clients who were managing the process. The client manager CM2A emphasized that there "… was a lot of discussion between the partnership and the university. I think that was essential." Having stressed the essential nature of the conversations, the manager went on to underline their value. "If that discussion hadn't taken place, then I think it [the partnership?] would have not worked."

A similar point (with equal emphasis) was made by client manager 2, when discussing the initial phase of the project: "I think at that point we did spend an awful lot of time talking." "That was crucial, and that's what I would call coming to understand the organisation." "But if you are going

to get quality at the end you have to invest the time." The importance of both quality and level of conversation were apparently recognized, as key factors in ensuring that the 'uncertain' needs were identified. Alongside this need for detailed discussion, client managers also talked about flexibility and responsiveness.

There appeared to be little doubt in the mind of client manager 3 about the most important thing to look for in a provider. This manager was emphatic, suggesting the key factor could be captured in one "massive" word: flexibility. "What's written there [in the tender document] isn't necessarily what we are going to deliver, adding (as if to underline the point): "you meet the need of the organization."

For client manager CM2a, a similar sentiment was captured as the manager described the need for the provider to be open and receptive. "We were looking to find a vehicle by which we could move things forward. The only way to do that is to have organizations that are open and receptive and I think the University was particularly open and receptive in what we were trying to do in terms of a higher level qualification for senior leaders from a variety of services."

For CM1 what mattered was "Flexibility in terms of ability to respond to any potential changes that we may want to make from the first proposal. The reason for that is based on previous providers who have been relatively rigid." Clearly previous experiences had informed this response, and it's worth noting that other client managers contrasted their current experience with potential providers.

Some possible reasons for this provider emphasis on flexibility and responsiveness emerged from the conversation with client manager 1. Here, in a more fulsome explanation, the manager explained how they increasingly needed an "emergent" approach because, "let's face it, especially if you don't know what is on the horizon, somebody's ability as a provider to respond to that (is important)." The manager then qualified this point, referring back to remarks made earlier in the interview which stressed "… flexibility and ability to work with responsiveness at the start."

The statement not only illustrates reference to a flexibile approach which was highly valued by the client, but also illustrates another theme which was found to be common across the sub cases - the idea of "working with you". This leads to a discussion of client-provider relationships.

CM View 3: "A big part of it was… building the relationship with us."

All client managers referenced in the three cases alluded to the importance of building a relationship between the two organizations, and the role of key managers involved in developing that partnership. Indeed, the very first point made by CM1a in discussions about choosing a provider was to say: "[the] main thing for me is finding an organisation that works in partnership with us." This manager then went on to discuss the importance of flexibility and responsiveness within the context of that partner relationship. Reflecting on how a contract was working, client manager 1 echoed this point, pointing out that the "… strength has been the on-going relationship really. That for me has been a big selling point to be honest."

The value of an "on-going" relationship which has developed over time, was also expressed by two other client managers: CM3a from case 3, and CM2. CM3a emphasized the benefits of relationship-building, stating that "you begin to understand our organisation so I imagine the second and third years that went through (the programme) had the advantage of yourselves understanding what some of our issues were. That is the beauty of any long term relationships isn't it: beginning to understand more." In reflecting on what had been effective with the engagement, CM2 suggested it was that "you worked with us (for the) long term, and 'relationships' is the key word, you made the 'relationship's', you were honest - you say you are going to do a, b and c ….and ab and c is what comes. You did that and we then developed and did other things."

The extent and depth of the relationships developed, and the resulting sense of partnership, was captured by CM3. This manager went so far as to say that the project seemed to be managed like there was one team working across both client organisation and the University supplier. "It was a very easy relationship, I think that was because of the personalities involved, because they were on a business level it was easier to communicate and appreciate the needs. If we had issues they were sorted in a very amicable way. The support, in terms of some of the processes were appreciated, there was no objection about doing the work." Perhaps even more telling was that

the client felt they were "very much part of the programme, the measurement and evaluation and support. That meant that we were able to support the students."

What seems most striking about these comments from CM3 is that the depth of relationship resulted in a sense of togetherness, as if all parties were working for the same organisation in the same team. "It didn't feel like [the client organization's name] was working with the University. It felt like there was a corporate team in the middle that was running the programme.…And I think it was lucky that the personalities got on, understood the remit and were all working to the same agenda. I think that that was one of the most positive things that came out. There were no barriers."

This sense of an integrated team was also expressed in Case 2, where the client invited a Business School manager to be a part of the partnership team's regular project meeting. CM2A thought this to be important and "for [the Business School manager] to be there gave her a much better understanding of the way the organization works and the way we were able to share experience and expertise across the authorities which normally wouldn't have happened if you didn't have that partnership (between several client organizations and the University)." According to CM2a: "I think there was a shared ownership of the programme, a very wide shared ownership." This echoes the point made by CM3 , about the personalities getting on, and underlines a common message which has emerged from the different cases. Namely, that the contributions of individuals were of particular importance in the building of effective client-provider relationships.

Interestingly, CM2 attributed something different to the *quality* of the discussions held, which seemed to be based on the impressions made by individuals from the University team. In this case, the client had already met with another University representative who had not been convincing in his understanding of the client's needs. This had resulted in a hastily arranged second meeting, with a different team, to try and save the situation. Reflecting on this second meeting, CM2 called it "… a completely different ball game. We decided on the spot of the second interview to go with you, and we were, I have to say, terribly impressed with you [referring to the researcher], and what the Business School had done." From that initial start CM2 then stressed the importance of the individuals who had built the relationships with them. "One of the key assets, I mean you were a key asset yourself [referring to the researcher], XXX [name of another colleague] is the other key

asset. Now YYY [another colleague's name] came in later and has been a delight….. It's XXX as a person as well as his experience…..He's been a huge asset." CM2 concluded that "You had two particularly engaging personalities, that was very important."

CM1a also stressed that a "big part of it was about you [researcher] and XXX. You were characters, building the relationship with us. The skills knowledge and abilities you brought to the table was a massive selling point. From a kinesthetic point of view, the emotional relationships are important as well as the academic elements." This echoes another reminder of what is important to clients, illustrated by CM3a, who made the point: "I always say I'm not employing your (business) I'm employing your staff. If you change them I won't necessarily work with you."

CM3 made two particularly interesting points emerged. One stressed the value of not just being connected but about being well-connected and the other was a reinforcement of the importance of relationships.

"The university had fantastic relationships with key managers in the [client] organization."

For CM3 it was "all about that relationship. If we didn't have the relationship we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we did." The manager then proceeded to qualify the assertion. "You have got to have that easy flow. To trust somebody, feel comfortable with somebody. You've got to have the belief that they are able to deliver on the agenda you have given them, and you've got to have the confidence that when they stand in front of a group of your professionals they are going to get a "class" experience and walk out with some really good outcomes."

The point to be emphasized here is that good relationships were clearly qualified with the need for the right skills and knowledge - there needed to be credibility as well as a good connection. For example, CM1a expressed the need for both good relationships and the right skills, but clearly stressed which was the more important: "If you haven't got that partnership and relationship then it is difficult for the programme to work. Don't get me wrong you need the ability and knowledge and experience as well. But you need to have that confidence that you can go to somebody and say, right we need to look at doing this differently etc".

The significance of skills and experience form part of a bigger theme which was discussed by all client managers: the importance of track record and reputation.

CM View 4: "Track record", "reputation" and "expertise"

As discussed earlier, CM1a stressed that the "skills knowledge and abilities you brought to the table was a massive selling point." The importance of this topic was also emphasized by CM2 who also combined this idea with many of the themes discussed so far. "Reputation, your known success, I wouldn't underestimate that success. It was knowing the success you had at BBB [the name of another similar organization]. You had two particularly engaging personalities, that was very important…..you were really bespoke, totally flexible."

This point was confirmed by CM1 who, commenting about what was important in the decision to select ABC Business School, stressed: "The knowledge of other work elsewhere with other people, so track record was important. In addition, CM3 suggested that they would look for "someone who understood what the public sector was and (had) the expertise in the organisation of academic staff to provide that interface." A similar point was made by CM1 who felt that "subject knowledge and track record are important. In this organisation that I work with at the moment it is important that there is a track record or precedent that's been set."

So it seems that it was not just general knowledge and expertise that were vital for client managers but provider knowledge of the relevant sector, and specific knowledge of the client organization. CM3a particularly emphasised this specific requirement, insisting that the provider has "to know your client. [You have)] got to understand the public sector, understand it not just research it. You can keep up to speed simply by the interaction you have with the client."

CM View 5: "Ability to mix the business world with the academic world."

It was evident in all three cases that the client managers were interested in any provider's ability to balance the academic and business worlds. This was illustrated by CM1 when responding to a question about what was important in a provider, namely "… knowledge of real world scenarios. I hesitate to say that especially if you are paying a Business School you want the bit that's theoretical but you want the theoretical bit with a suggested impact or exemplars drawn from experience. I think you want the two really. Those are important for me."

CM3's emphasis on a business-focused approach has already been discussed in relation to Case Study 3 where attention was drawn to the contrasting approaches of different universities. This manager argued that ABC Business School was "very much business focused and built in the academic content where needed. YYY [name of another University] were very academic-led and not flexible to bring in the business led elements. We felt that if we went to YYY's modular based programme [then] you do this, this and this and you come out with that. Whereas ABC said we've got this model but we'll work with you to get the right solution." CM3 particularly argued that YYY demonstrated a lack of flexibility through their reluctance to blend an academic focus with a more business focused approach. "[YYY] were very academic led and not flexible to bring in the business led elements." So what CM3 both recognized and valued was that ABC was "always business focused as well as academic whereas other Universities lacked that. I've always said that. [ABC] seemed to have the ability to mix the business world with the academic world."

The significance of such an approach was further supported by CM2 who argued that: "apart from anything else the University brings the whole research informed practice. It's really important that practice is constantly refreshed." This ability to effectively blend both business and academic worlds also led to a number of client managers commenting on another key theme: the way teaching and learning was delivered.

CM View 6: "A weight and depth of learning… making it real"

The notion that a certain kind of teaching and learning was required for these types of programmes surfaced in the conversation with CM3 (from Case 3). This began with a reflection that teaching on such programmes "… wasn't always right, some staff were not suitable and changes had to be made." However CM3 also acknowledged that ABC's teaching provision was different, and worked well.

The manager acknowledged that the "style and (the) approach of staff delivering (on the programme) had a big impact." Effective delivery was considered to be a "major benefit" of the programme and teaching staff "were respected" by those on the programme. Two colleagues were particularly referred to as examplars of the teaching style valued by the client. "Their approach to the delegates was so easy going they got the best out of people. When they facilitated feedback sessions, they just had the right manner to deal with it." Case 3 involved a number of programmes,

delivered to different levels of manager. So this provided a very useful perspective not just about effective delivery for clients, but also in relation to delivery methods for different managerial levels within a client organisation. At the middle manager level the client manager felt that the delivery "got business/academia at the right mix." The manager also commented that teaching on the MBA programme, aimed at more senior managers, was also pitched at the right level, and "… in a manner that didn't intimidate people." Alluding to another important point, the client manager also attributed the very high programme completion rates to the way it was delivered, which was "… a credit to the delivery of the programme."

CM2 underlined the importance of an appropriate teaching approach, not one which simply entailed "… sending [delegates] off to lectures". This manager stressed the need for more tailored teaching focus: "you know, making it real, appropriate to their real job, that's the skill. It broadens their thinking, opening their thinking to academic insights, but at the same time never undervaluing or underestimating the importance of their and their colleagues on the ground day-to-day experience." The value of insights which broaden thinking was also stressed by CM1 who argued for "a weight and depth of learning; I'd rather buy someone with consolidated thinking than somebody who comes in flash and is a consultancy (one trick poney)… I'm not interested in systems I'm interested in a level of insight and thinking."

CM View 7: When things "don't go right first time"

Inevitably issues arise with any project. Two of the client managers specifically addressed the outcome of things not working as intended. The first example emphasized the way in which the client-provider relationship helped to address issues. The second illustrated a wider problem for universities which can occur where different parts of those organisations need to engage with a client. CM3 provided an interesting insight into how a good client-provider relationship can help to deal with issues that arise. For this manager, what was important was to have the "… confidence to know that if it doesn't quite go right first time to have those constructive conversations to put it right. [It's about] going on a learning journey together." To emphasize this point the manager argued that even "… when harsh conversations were had" there was sufficient understanding to ensure that the issue was dealt with "in the right manner. Some things weren't always pleasant but

I knew that I'd get to [what we can] do to overcome [the situation]. That, I think, that was really good."

In contrast, the second example is about one of the client managers having a difficult experience with other services within the provider organisation. This manager found the University "to be very unhelpful", most notably in relation to a significant event. One of the outcomes of the programme for this client (Case 2) was the organization of a regional conference for the North of England, to be jointly hosted by the University and the (local authority) client. Given that the client viewed this event as high profile (and therefore very important), they were unhappy at their perception that parts of the University seemed unappreciative of their expectations. The manager reported that it was "a very successful conference (but) if we'd let ABC University have its way it wouldn't [have been]". In the manager's view this was an opportunity missed: "The Directors of Children's Services could have gone back saying (the University) is a fabulous place but instead…" they did not.

The manager concluded that "you have got to know what the client group is", and respond accordingly. "It's an issue around knowing and understanding the client."

But whilst there is much to be learned from things that do not go right, there are also considerable insights to be gained from exploring client managers' views on individual programme successes.

CM View 8: "Benefits in its own right" …. "and a springboard."

The way that client managers discussed the benefits of their different programmes illustrated an interest, not only in specific outcomes within their respective organizations, but also in relation to wider benefits. Some commented both on how programme delegates had benefited directly and in general experiential or developmental terms. CM3a (Case 3) argued that for impact "… you look to see how individuals have progressed. Grow that talent and keep it in the organization." The manager then referred specifically to the projects (based on addressing real issues within in the organization) that were set up as part of the programme, stating that "… some very useful work came out of the projects." The manager then went on to reflect on his own experience: "I think that someone showing interest and [as an organization to be seen to [be] developing all levels [of]

people [is a clear] benefit in itself." What is interesting to note is that the manager, who was also a participant in the programme, felt "… felt valued. [The organization] got even more out of me because I felt they had invested in me."

One of the other benefits identified by CM3a was that of "having managers from across the organization" coming together. This resulted in enhanced opportunities for "having that common understanding and knowledge and discussion." This manager reflected on the organisation's commitment to the development programme, suggesting it was "fantastic what they did there. Certainly I learnt a lot from it and so did others. There was a real focus on upskilling middle managers."

CM3 (Case 3) began by acknowledging the personal benefit gained from the relationship, stating that from "… a personal point of view, it was a massive learning curve for me." For example, "different kinds of relationships, [learning from the] development of the programme; support mechanisms for students". All of which the manager felt "gave me confidence". The whole experience gave the manager a "… lot of respect for investment in people." The client manager then returned to a central point made earlier in the interview. Without doubt "wider support came out of the growth of the programme as a whole, but the relationship we had as a University and an Authority" is what made things work. According to the manager, this was most evident "where we trusted each other enough to say it might work" or "shall we just try that" and it grew out of these ideas in a collaborative way.

The mix of personal and wider organisational benefits was also captured by CM1a (Case 1). Beginning with a focus on the delegates, this manager asked: "What did delegates get?" In answering this question she highlighted an interesting point, it was about "Knowledge people didn't have, and confirming what you already knew, things you had been doing for years but didn't realise it had a name!" The manager then went on to express a personal perspective "… and then I think there was a big thing around transfer of learning, things that felt meaningful that you could take back and apply in the organisation and see that it made a difference." "Of course you've also got the personal things around self-confidence and making yourself more sellable. Also gaining the qualification, all helped me move on in my career. Also I have to say a fantastic thing for me was the networking ability. Although it was only with XXXX [the name of the client organization]

managers - the things I've been able to achieve because I have met people on that programme has made a difference. That was fruitful."

The wider benefits of the programme became a feature of the discussion with two other client managers. CM2a discussed two important points that developed from the relationship. Firstly, commenting on how the initial project created a platform for further work, the manager was certain that "had we not had the initial University [relationship] we would not have done a lot of the other [things we did]. I'm convinced about that." The manager then affirmed that "the most positive benefit is how managers and practitioners got a delivery programme that was second to none, and I think it was."

For CM2a there were also significant, wider benefits resulting from the relationship. "Had we not had the initial experience of being able to demonstrate how good partnership … with the University [worked] then we would not have been successful in [gaining funding to set up another contract]……That would not have happened if we hadn't been able to evidence our work." Thus the programme not only delivered benefits in its own right but was also a springboard to other things. "The dynamic that evolved enabled the partnership to move forward in a number of areas which we wouldn't have previously done so: a spring board to a number of other activities."

The second discussion of wider benefits was with CM2 who addressed the importance of sustaining the client-provider relationship. "I think you have to find a purposeful way of engagement with each other." Having achieved successful initial outcomes the manager posed the question: "how will you network? How do you sustain what has been very profitable for both sides. How do you get the inside track?" The manager went on to distinguish between short and long-term engagement, and the notion of investing time. "Yes that's purposeful, you are investing the time, and you're seeing it long term. I think short term hits to sell for one job, like [the other university] sold us a pup. So I think that's how to do it."

This comment, contrasting the manager's experiences with different universities, was not an isolated incident. Other client managers also reflected on differing experiences and were keen to use the examples to make their points.

CM View 9: "the fundamental issue is how you worked with us... I think...universities have to get out more"

Although the client managers were not specifically asked to compare ABC Business School with other universities they have worked with, many of them did do so. Consequently, one strong and surprising theme emerged from many of the conversations, namely the sharp contrasts in client managers' experiences with university providers. In each of the three cases analysed, client managers contrasted their positive experience with ABC Business School, in comparison with other universities. Their views provided an interesting insight into their varying experiences, and provided a cross case set of findings.

In the earlier themes discussed in this section, reference has already been made to the differing approaches to client work used by other universities. For example, CM3 argued that [another university] was very academic-led and inflexible about incorporating business-led elements. "We felt that if we went to ([XXX University's] modular-based programme: you do this, this and this and you come out with that. Whereas ABC Business School said we've got this model but we'll work with you to get the right solution." CM3 pointed towards an apparent disregard for what the client actually wanted. "In some respects [another bidding University] didn't read the spec properly and didn't answer the questions in the way we expected, whereas ABC Business School hit the nail every time.

Perhaps the most interesting (and disturbing) example comes from the discussion with CM2. In this particular project two universities were commissioned to deliver different elements, which allowed the client to make some direct comparisons. CM2 illustrated the difference between the two Universities in a telling statement: "... the fundamental issue was how you worked with us. How you worked was completely different. University 2 had a "can't do" approach: really, you can't do that in a university. Whereas your approach was: this is hugely exciting and a problem, how can we help and how can we make it match the needs of this particular group of people (the bespoke part)".

The full narrative suggested that the other university had created a good initial impression, based on a very professional presentation. This prompted the client to offer part of the delivery contract to this bidder. However, according to the client manager, the impression given of a flexible provider, offering tailored delivery solutions proved to be "...a total illusion, there was nothing

bespoke." The client manager then proceeded to describe a fraught relationship with that provider, characterized by regular disagreements. CM2 concluded that this provider was "totally inflexible. They actually had no multi-professional experience."

CM2 then offered another example to illustrate the difference between the two universities. The manager contrasted the varying approaches to engagement at a steering group meeting, The client manager explained that the ABC Business School representative would say things like: "We'll take that on board and think about what we can do. Or immediately she'll say yes we'll do that... It's thinking it's being flexible and it's understanding the needs of the organization. Whereas the other university stance all the way has been how will you fit in with us?"

For CM2, this raised a very important issue. "I think Universities, - I don't think it applies to your department - I think they have to get out more. You know if I look at XXX [name of the other university] they haven't got recent and relevant [experience]. The world is changing so fast, how you manage to do that [gain recent and relevant experience] I don't know."

'Member checking' with client managers

A draft of this section of the findings was sent to client managers involved in each of the three cases. Their individual comments were highlighted so that they could check for accuracy and validity. Each manager was also shown the comments made by the client managers from the other cases. The client managers were then asked to confirm that the preliminary analysis properly reflected their understanding, and to comment on whether or not it resonated with their experience. They were also given the opportunity to add comments or to challenge any assumptions that may have been implied in the themes. This is important both in terms of establishing the validity of the findings, and in testing the initial themes which have emerged. Client manager feedback at this stage is indicative of the extent to which individual participants recognized the emerging ideas and considered them credible. The response from managers involved in each of the cases has confirmed the preliminary themes identified in this study.

Summary of client manager views

The client managers confirmed that their organisational needs were initially unclear in each of the cases, and that the process of listening and discussion (in order to build understanding and clarity

about what needed to be done) was essential. Such conversations also began to build the trust and confidence upon which a productive client-provider relationship was developed. Relationships were seen to be of prime value, but could not be a substitute for skills and expertise. This combination of relationship and skills prompted managers to talk about what they most valued in a provider. In doing so, they emphasized track record, reputation and expertise as being important. It can be concluded that there are two tensions implicit in this kind of relationship. The first is the need to achieve a balance between the needs and activities of both business and academic worlds. The second is the challenge inherent in providing an acceptable depth and rigour in the teaching/learning process, whilst keeping activities rooted in the reality of working peoples' experiences. An interesting area explored by the client managers was how ABC Business School and its parent university responded when things went wrong. All of the managers referred to the benefits their organisations gained from the business school interventions. It was particularly interesting to hear how the client-provider relationship also became a springboard to 'new things' for one of the client managers in particular. These new opportunities, according to the manager, would not have been possible without the capabilities and capacity developed through that relationship. A final theme emerged in the form of contrasting experiences, which the various managers have had with a range of university providers. This revealed some very helpful insights into how ABC Business School had worked with its clients, and what made its approach distinctive in comparison to other provision.

Business School manager responses

This section will consider the responses of ABC Business School managers (BSMs) involved with each of the sub-cases. In the first instance, responses from these managers will be assessed in relation to the initial themes identified in the previous section, based on client manager interviews. This assessment will provide an indication of the extent to which the business school manager's perspectives support the client manager findings, and the proposed initial themes. Following this, emerging issues which extend the initial findings will be presented, also as a result of the interviews with the business school managers.

Overall, it can be concluded that the BSM statements suggest a strong level of support for the themes identified from the client manager interviews. Firstly, the client managers emphasized "the

needs we didn't even know we'd got". This was supported by one of the business school managers, BSM3 who stressed that "we didn't impose the way we do things" instead we tried to "understand how best to fit and work with their needs." Similarly BSM2 observed that the clients were often unclear about their needs and that the presenting issue "may well not be the real issue at all." The CMs also noted the importance of dialogue with "a lot of discussion" taking place, which all the client managers felt was essential. There was good agreement from the business school manager interviews with this theme. BSM3 commented: "I remember they appreciated the fact that we listened to them…..listening to their needs." This view was echoed by BSM1: "[investing] significant time to talk about things; what were they into, what is going on."

The client managers indicated that relationships appear to be a crucial success factor: "a big part of it was...building the relationship with us." So it is particularly interesting to note the extent to which the business school managers also recognized the importance of relationship-building in the process - in fact, all three business school managers emphasized this point. For example, BSM3 talked about establishing a "level of trust [where] they [the client] were getting feedback about how good it was…which comes down to relationships and how they were built up. This meant spending time so that you build trust: a really positive client relationship." The depth of this relationship was captured by BSM2 who reflected that "you get to know an awful lot about the organisation as well." "You get to know secrets and dirty washing and everything when you have a partnership for a couple of years or so. They are trusting you with that."

The client managers were clear that they selected a partner on the basis of "track record", "reputation" and "expertise". The business school managers also clearly recognized the importance of such requirements. BSM2 concluded that: "I think they are looking for evidence that there is experience of delivering to clients and that experience has in some way been evaluated" This view was supported by BSM1: "Yes credibility of experience and (the right) individuals that they look like they are going to be able to solve the problem. I think it's the credibility and then confidence and then relationships, looking for a partner with a trust relationship."

The next two themes to emerge from the client manager interviews relate to the importance of balance when selecting a university provider. Firstly the provider's ability "… to mix the business world with the academic world", and secondly the ability to balance "… weight and depth of

learning [with] making it real" Both of these 'balancing acts' were also highlighted by the business school managers. In the view of BSM3: "I would say it's more about practical application of theory rather than theory with an intention to apply. It' a shift of balance" BSM1 also described the need to balance new thinking with impact, stating that "fundamentally [the client] wants a group of managers who have had their heads stretched so that they can think differently, and think strategically about the consequences and so that they can think ultimately about the impact on their community."

Both business school and client managers recognized similar difficulties in relation to how things were managed "When things don't go right first time". In particular there was a tension between the need for responsiveness and availability of staff to deliver on the development programmes who could really fit the client's needs and expectations. BSM1 described this situation noting that "on the one hand you have an approach that has been successful. It says we want to talk to you about a developmental process. On the other hand we have put in staff who are wholly inappropriate" which led to "being very careful to select people who are credible in front of clients."

Client managers also discussed the impact of the interventions with a twofold acknowledgement of "Benefits in its own right … and a springboard". Business school managers also emphasized the wider benefits which they felt were evident. BSM3 thought that students "worked together and supported each other and networked across the organisation which they wouldn't have normally had an opportunity to do …. Many [of the students] said that now they were doing things in their job that they never thought they'd be able to do."

Business school and client managers agreed on one other significant point which emerged from the initial themes derive from the CM interviews. . The importance of this point is implied in the statement that "the fundamental issue is how you worked with us … I think … universities have to get out more." It is therefore interesting to note that business school managers also attributed similar importance to the way key people from both organisations worked together. BSM1 referred to a different approach which meant "going in without your formula and listening to what the organisation does and how it goes about it and what it aspires to be. But to do that you have got to start connecting with the various management levels". BSM3 then articulated the motivation

behind the actions explaining that "We said: what is it that would actually be best for them ... It was as much about culture as skilling people up and about networking and confidence as it was about qualifications."

There is clear confirmation and support from the comments made by business school managers, which appear to endorse the initial themes developed from the client manager interviews. However, it is also important to note some new themes which emerged from the BSM conversations. In contrast to the supporting statements above, these themes often emphasize differing perspectives and insights. Each of the themes emerging from the BSM responses will now be discussed in more detail.

BSM Response 1: "Proper Organisational Development (OD)"

Conversations about clients lacking clarity in their needs led all three business school managers to explore the implications for ABC Business School. For BSM1, "the ideal view would be to have a consultancy approach, [but one which has] a listening approach without formulas and thinking widely about an OD approach." This view was very similar to that held by BSM2 who suggested that ABC Business School used a "consultancy model" based on being "able to go in and discover what they want and more and more its moving to an OD model that they [the client] want and need."

However, BSM1 was keen to point out an uneasiness about some consultancy approaches: "consultants to me are not listening, they re-cycle and repackage and charge a fortune for it." Instead, this manager advocated "going in without a formula and listening to what the organization does, how it goes about it and what it aspires to be." Thinking about different approaches to working with clients prompted BSM1 to recognize that what was needed was "Proper Organisational Development [OD[which starts me to think we need more formal staff development." This recognition, that staff on the provider side may not have the expertise to provide different kinds of learning experiences and wider interventions implied by an OD approach, was an issue highlighted by all three business school managers.

BSM Response 2: "A shift of balance"..."teach corporately not academically"

BSM3 addressed one of the balance issues discussed earlier, that of an appropriate focus on client needs rather than a purely academic approach. This manager argued that you have got to

have "dedicated people who are good. It's something you need in place: facilitation skills, understanding corporate needs and how to teach corporately not academically." BSM3pointedly suggested that it was a "shift of balance" that was required towards approaches that emphasize learning together, and learning from each other. BSM2 elaborated on this point, recognizing that "it may not be the typical standard courses that meet that need, because some of that development may be one to one coaching. Maybe it's recommending places, having a bank of information so that somebody can get the best solution to their OD [organisational development] problem. You may not be in the future just a provider of courses you may be almost a resource … where you know where you can find the key people to help. "

The interview with BSM2 progressed to a discussion on how issues around this "shift of balance" could be addressed.

BSM Response 3: "people who are credible in front of clients."

One of the key issues addressed above related to client dissatisfaction with teaching methods which were perceived as being too conventional. This was particularly problematic when part of the consultative process indicated a more bespoke approach to teaching and learning. The response from BSM1 illustrated this point. "On the one hand you have an approach that has been successful; it says we want to talk to you about a developmental process. On the other hand we have put in staff who are wholly inappropriate….which is why we have selected an associate team to support what we do, being very careful to select people who are credible in front of clients." BSM3 re-inforced this point, considering "only thirty percent of the resource pool at [ABC Business School], at that time, was capable and had the necessary skill set to deliver with a style that the client understood …There were several people who just didn't fit." Indeed for this manager this illustrated why "some businesses won't engage with universities" because they are "so aloof that they can't relate back to the business world."

An issue which ran parallel to this was raised by BSM2, who pointed out that different kinds of roles were also needed. "It is undoubtedly the case you need people with client-facing skills which aren't necessarily the same as academic/teacher skills." Similarly, BSM3 identified some of those roles, including: "project management, contract management and client management, all wrapped up together." This manager went on to suggest that what was needed was "everything you'd get in

an academic context plus what you get in a work context." This different-skills / different-roles debate led to further discussion about how ABC Business School coped with these demands. BSM3 acknowledged that this was something the Business School struggled with "and had to balance out in the end and [that] led us to recruiting associate lecturers to blend with the full-time staff." The Business School managers outlined how they had recruited an associate teaching team, with the right blend of skills, as a creative way to meet the differing needs and expectations of their clients. However it was also clear that this approach was a source of tension and frustration within the Business School, as it grappled with effective mechanisms for delivering to its corporate clients. Such tensions were not restricted to teaching approaches.

BSM Response 4: "People in HE who understand the commercial world"

The contrasting priorities of Higher Education and business organisations were an issue for BSM3. The manager summed up a sense of frustration suggesting it "was a nightmare trying to get the University people and procedures to fit what a commercial client needed." This was typified by University systems that "were all student-focused and [set-up] for the individual student and not for individual clients." This, the manager explained, was illustrated by differing requirements in relation to speed and responsiveness: "Commercial clients want to move fast and expect a response. Universities work in year cycles, so the speed requirements of clients doesn't fit at all" with a typical university response. To conclude, BSM3 argued that "unless you've got people in HE who understand the commercial world and know how to work with it, then you're asking for trouble. It's a nightmare."

The introduction of associate staff, not permanently employed by the University, illustrated one flexible and creative way to address some of the issues discusses. However, this also created a source of tension and ambiguity from the provider side. Addressing the other practical arrangements also contributed to these tensions, and, perhaps more importantly, raised questions about how such client work was really sustainable. BSM2 elaborated on the latter point, pointing out that, as so few staff had the desire or ability to work appropriately with clients, "they can only do so much, so anybody who wants to scale it up … has got to find processes that are scalable. Otherwise you keep re-inventing new programmes for clients: you would have to say we can't keep

doing this." Exploring some of these tensions also led to some interesting ideas about how business schools might more effectively engage with employer organisations in the future.

BSM Response 5: "In the future... a resource...to help."

A part of this reflection on the future of client/business school engagement prompted questions from BSM2 about the role universities should play. "The university can provide good theory and programmes. Can a university provide that high level consultancy or should it call in high level consultants?" Teaching style differences have already been discussed but it is interesting to note the language used in this part of the interview. BSM2 reflected on the need for a significantly different approach, suggesting that "somehow we have to develop programmes that can change. This is a good example of a programme that is constantly changing because a lot of its power is in its delivery, in the discussion that goes on and not particularly in the curriculum."

This different approach was particularly apparent when the manager continued to suggest a much wider role for business schools. "In the future … you may be almost a resource .. where you can find the key people to help ... I don't necessarily think that if a client comes to your university you should think that you are the only university that can help." The manager also made a point about the extent to which it's possible to "think of a networked university and … the relationship the university has with other providers, or small consultancies and with other universities." A networked university might also feature the associate staff to which the various managers had previously referred. In fact, in a questioning discussion, BM2 suggested that the boundaries of the Business School might become less defined. "… where is the boundary of the Business School and the client, and where do the associates fit in: are they part of us?" A networked university may well also, by implication, be well connected, which was an area two of the managers explored.

The notion of making the right connections with clients surfaced in the conversation with BSM2. "Maybe it's about having the right management in the Business School. Yes it's important, the difference between taking [name of a colleague] who immediately has credibility, compared to a senior manager who did not have that kind of credibility, in fact [that person] did us harm." The manager then went on to suggest it was important to be able to introduce "the right people to the right people" to position what the University could do. A similar point was made by BSM1. "You have got to start connecting the various management strata because for this to be a fundamentally

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different process you need to engage with employees." This manager later went on to stress: "you have got to get your levels connected." This was in reference a perceived need to build relationships between managers at different levels (from senior to operational), in both client and provider organisations.

Summary of Business School manager responses

The Business School manager interviews provided a very good level of support for the initial themes which emerged from the client manager interviews. They also introduced additional insights from the provider perspective. The lack of client clarity with regard to their needs led to interesting discussions about the importance of a consultative approach from the provider. It also emphasized a broadening of the support from provision of training, education and development towards an approach more grounded in organizational development. In parallel with the flexible and responsive nature of a consultative, listening process, the business school managers emphasised the need for more flexible teaching and learning techniques. They reflected on issues arising from teaching styles and methods which were seen by the client managers as being inappropriate, causing problems on the programmes. Their comments re-inforced the notion that these were important elements to get right for the client. Inevitably, this led to conversations about the skills of staff in ABC Business School, with each provider manager recognizing that there were clear differences between client programmes and more traditional university teaching.

However, the managers went further than just identifying a need for different skills, but went on to argue the need for different roles within the Business School. These are not necessarily teaching related but are more focused on: roles enabling effective engagement through client management; roles that interface effectively between business and academia; and roles that facilitate management of contracts and projects. A number of issues were also discussed relating to the need to make university systems and processes more flexible and responsive, with particular reference to the client's timescales and operational issues. The final set of ideas could be loosely grouped around future possibilities for how business schools might be shaped to encourage more effective engagement with clients in the future. This is a subject which was explored in more depth in two further interviews, one with a senior manager from a client organization and another from ABC

Business School. This enabled consideration and understanding of a broader perspective than the mainly operational focus hitherto addressed.

Senior manager views

The participants for the two senior manager interviews were selected to help provide a broader commentary, although still with a direct connection to the cases. Both participants were very senior members of their respective organisations, one being the chief executive of a local authority (the client senior manager) and the other being an Associate Dean with the provider university. Both were asked to discuss their perceptions of how business schools and employer organisations might engage effectively with each other.

Client senior manager views

CSM View 1: "Best fit rather than perfect fit" "Try and bring them together"

The client senior manager (CSM) characterized the relationship between a business and a university as a partnership of contrasts, using the phrase: a "bit of an unholy alliance." The CSM argued that the reality of the relationship would be based on finding a "best fit rather than perfect fit." This meant that businesses would often start with what a university has got, but "then it needed to be shaped round [the] organisation's needs." This manager thought that universities had improved in that respect, becoming more aware of what is needed. They were now "more likely to tailor programmes, saying 'this is what we've got: now tell us what you want'." The phrase unholy alliance was explored in more detail so that the CSM was given the opportunity to elaborate on what was really meant by the phrase. In essence, it meant "different agendas, one [organization] runs a business, the other is a university. We're both experts in our fields and you've got to try and bring them together."

CSM View 2: "Watch and learn"

The CSM suggested an interesting approach which universities might take, arguing that they "should be an organisation that is prepared to watch and learn so that they come up with ideas and adopt a continuous improvement approach almost." This approach should become evident in the client/provider relationship, meaning conversations about improvements could happen more often. The CSM illustrated the point with an example, stating that university staff should be saying: "I

know we've done this so far but we think it could be done better if … or we don't think this is working as well as it could, people don't seem to be getting what they could from the programme." The CSM then reflected on why this mattered: "… I think that was quite important to us, but also that the University begins to understand our problems so they are able to come up with ideas and solutions or even proposals that weren't in the original scope." This discussion clearly implies the need for a partnering relationship based on a consulting and learning focus.

CSM View 3: "Relationships evolving over time"

The client/provider relationship proved to be significant part of this interview. It particularly addressed the need for such relationships to be continually developing and evolving. The CSM was clear that "what you're looking for is for those relationships to evolve over time. So that when people do change that you continue to build." To develop such an evolving, longer-term relationship, the CSM suggested two important factors: firstly the value of "good connections" and secondly becoming a "provider of choice" for the business.

CSM View 4: "Good connections"

As part of the relationship building between the client and ABC Business School, the CSM had become a member of the visiting professor network at the University. This manager greatly valued the networks formed as a result of "being able to work with people who have those connections … because you never know when you might need them." It is "always good that they [Universities] have good connections particularly in a region, because there is more chance of that linking up [to happen]." This ability of universities to provide a wider network of connections was complemented by a second "widening" theme, that of being able to offer a wider range of interventions and support.

CSM View 5:"The provider of choice"

Interestingly, the CSM thought that one way to ensure that client/provider relationships last was consideration of the kind of support a university provides to the client; support that goes beyond any programmes which initially helped form the relationship. As the CSM suggested, "there will always be cycles unless the product offer goes beyond the cycle." The manager recognized that whilst programmes may come to an end, there are other valuable contributions that a university could offer. The CSM intimated that this "was more about growing the width of it", meaning

development of a much wider range of interventions and connections so that "the University could then become the provider of choice."

For this to have happened with respect to this particular relationship "on reflection both parties should have worked harder at that [increasing the range of interventions] and I think [ABC University] probably should have been more innovative [in] coming to us to lay on seminars, as part of our relationship." The CSM illustrated the point by suggesting an example, that the University could have come to the "organisation at lunch time providing a person who will challenge people in the organisation about new ways of working and thinking, or new ideas. That would have been a way to go beyond the MBA and we [the University] didn't do that." Other examples of such missed opportunities were also mentioned, including the possibility of programme update sessions or design and delivery of other short courses. In reality, the client organization had to provide these because, in the CSM's view, "… there is a vacuum. If there was something that was off the shelf I'd use it." This discussion about offering a wider range of interventions led to thoughts about the kinds of skills needed by client organisations.

CSM View 6: "Less of … yesterday's skills"

In response to a question about what business schools should be providing, The CSM was clear that "it would be less of what I would call yesterday's skills; much more about innovation, styles of thinking, creativity, spontaneity and risk taking." Underlining this point, the manager stressed that "these things we're desperately short of but that's quite hard to capture in something that's got to be validated." This point hints at a possible frustration with formal qualifications which may not obviously include the kind of skills the CSM felt were needed in organisations. This point was re-inforced by the suggestion that it "… comes back to, I don't need them [managers] to learn about Taylorism or [how to read] accounts. What I do need is thinking, being creative and decision making ability." This argument seems to contain an implied criticism that Higher Education may be providing too much of what the CSM called "yesterday's skills." This point was in fact made in explicit and challenging terms, at the same time revealing a tension between business schools and businesses.

CSM View 7: Academia's "greatest strength"

The CSM strongly expressed an apparent paradox in business school provision to clients. That "One of the powerful things about a University is the latest thinking. But often the courses they deliver aren't the latest thinking!" In this part of the conversation the leader appeared to use latest thinking and current thinking interchangeably, and developed a compelling argument that contrasted a university's greatest strength with business's biggest need. Having aimed such a challenging statement at universities the manager then pointed to another (equally) problematic issue for businesses: "current thinking is what an organization doesn't have because it's too busy doing." There then followed a very interesting discussion proposing a twin-track approach, with the CSM expressing the view that business might be asking academia to provide something it is incapable of supplying. By this the manager meant that traditional qualification routes might be too rigid and "that you can't bend academia to what you want, so maybe you have to accept there are two [academic routes] that you bend one as much as you can to fit [the route]), but you also accept there is a second ... route which is about answering the question 'How does academia provide to an organization its greatest strength which is current thinking.'"

In elaborating on how this might work, the CSM felt that "if they [Universities] share their thinking and bring in the practitioners, the [University] experts can say this is what we're thinking. Then you let the practitioner decide: does this work. The practitioner is thinking: how can we bring that thinking into my business problem. What you can't know is the current thinking."

It is appropriate to end this discussion of the client senior manager's expert perspective on that point. The dilemma of how universities provide latest thinking to businesses which are too busy 'doing', which serves as an appropriate way to introduce the views of the University senior manager.

University senior manager views

USM View 1: "Stamp of approval"... "Added value"... "Address a problem"

The interview with the senior manager from ABC University (USM) broadened the discussion, outlining three possible reasons why employer organisations might choose to work with a university for learning and development support. "Sometimes they're looking for an accrediting body to give a

stamp of approval to their own in-house delivery. They might be looking for added value from the university, sometimes wanting the university to deliver from its expertise a programme that they don't have the capacity to deliver themselves. Sometimes it's helping to address a problem that's emerged that needs some outside objective view that helps then to get back on track." These three categories will be considered in more depth in the next chapter but the USM felt there were more general benefits to be gained from working with a university.

USM View 2: "Making people think more than they are used to thinking"

The USM felt that one of the key things businesses gain from working with a university is "improving people's critical thinking skills and critical reflectiveness." Along with such "cognitive skills" the manager felt that "a lot of what we have done is about change management. It's about making people more flexible and adaptable and more understanding of the need for change." The USM summed up by saying: "We had an understanding of how you can help people grow in terms of their intellectual capabilities, making people think more than they are used to thinking."

Having set out some key ways in which organisations could benefit from working with a university, the USM next began to focus on an issue which had emerged across each of the interview groups in the study.

USM View 3: "An organisation they could grow together with"

The USM suggested that many client organisations "even if they don't recognize it themselves … often don't actually know when they come to us what it is they want." The manager used an interesting example to illustrate his point, and how a university might effectively engage with a client organisation. In this instance, the manager had been presenting a proposal to a client, in response to the latter's tender document. The client organization had booked a hotel so that the short-listed bidding organizations could present their proposals throughout the day. "We went to the [presentation] room … and ripped up the presentation and said look we think you probably don't know exactly what you want and we think that we don't know exactly what you want. So let's talk about it – and that clinched the deal for us." It seemed obvious that this response was different from the other provider presentations on the day. It was unlikely to be a response that would work in all contexts, so it is interesting to hear how the leader explained how they came to make this decision, in the midst of a presentation meeting.

USM View 4: Giving them the "answer to a question they haven't asked"

In the example given, the USM had come to the view that the client was "… looking for an organisation they could grow together with as it were, to crack the problem." The manager explained that there was a sense that a different approach was needed. "We were a bit intuitive and decided this isn't going to work." Instead of giving them an "answer to a question they haven't asked … [the client seemed] refreshed by the fact [that] we were open with them and were frank with them and had a conversation with them. That secured a contract for seven years." It was an unusual response to a formal presentation setting but it does echo some of the client comments discussed previously. Specifically, that they are seeking providers who will listen, and who demonstrate that they listen and will engage in conversations to gain a deeper understand of the client's needs. The USM captured the sense of this in some interesting terms. "It seemed to us that it was obvious they wanted their staff to learn and to grow to learn how to learn how to do their job better." Such thinking signals a significantly different approach to working with clients.

USM View 5: "To be responsive to employer's needs...this is going to be different"

In elaborating on this view, the USM offered an example. "One of the crucial things for any university going into this area of work is they have got to have a system that facilitates this, which is different to their full-time undergraduate systems. If you're not prepared to set up a system then life becomes difficult. You need to get Registry and Finance on-board to accept that this is going to be different." The USM was clearly talking from experience, pointing out that the University "… sets dates in a cyclical way and it can be quite embarrassing [in relation to client work]. If, however you've already thought through what the issues are and you've developed a framework that the University has accepted and you've persuaded the University to set up special measures to accommodate this, then it is a much better way of operating in my view."

One significant systems issue related to the University's ability to validate tailored programmes quickly. In the case of ABC University, this was facilitated by the existence of an existing, robust framework, which enabled rapid accreditation of bespoke, client-specific modules. "The framework itself doesn't do a lot for the client, but it allows the University to manage things effectively and responsively so that people aren't kept waiting as the University goes through some tedious process

of validation. It's a slick way of operating which enables the University to be responsive to employer's needs." However, the USM felt such systems and frameworks were not the only elements which needed to be changed for more effective client/provider engagement.

USM View 6: "Skills that not every academic possesses"

Another key issue for the USM was "the staff you employ. People need to have a skills set that not every academic possess or is willing to adapt to. You have got to have an interest and see the potential [of client work]. We talked right from the start about not employing lecturers with a conventional brief, but learning facilitators. We talked about learning facilitation rather than teaching. You've got to have people who trust the learner to learn independently. Unless you've got that sense of independence as a learner and sense of self-sufficiency people aren't going to succeed." Having emphasized the need for change in both university systems and staff delivery skills, the USM then returned to a discussion of how universities need to work with clients.

USM View 7: "Establish a rapport"

The University senior manager also wanted to explore the differing approaches needed when working with clients. To do this he recounted a recent experience with an existing client. That organisation "wanted to know if ([ABC University] was the right place for them." Initial contact had helped to build confidence as "we held several meetings where we discussed the framework that we would use for getting their programmes approved through the University." The USM and client representative had further developed the client/provider relationship over lunch, but it seemed that it was the visit by the client to the University which was of particular significance. The USM commented that one of two things in particular "struck me that caused them to suddenly accept us".

"One was that I knew the [client] was a staunch Roman Catholic [so] I said to him that one of the things I do is to go to the Choral even song at the Cathedral. His eyes lit up and demeanor changed. He said he'd love to go." Then shortly afterwards, on a second occasion, when they went for a meal together and again "had a relaxed time. We did talk about business once or twice but we got to know each other. The next day they couldn't have been happier about the arrangements." The senior leader then quickly qualified the point of the story by stressing that "you can't do these things disingenuously; the connections have to be real."

It is interesting to note the importance the USM placed on building a rapport: "Sometimes just finding a chink in the armour, the protectiveness some people wrap around themselves when they just want this to be a purely functional arrangement. I don't think that works. I'm not suggesting cozying up to people, but I do think you have to establish a rapport with someone if it's going to work." It's clear that this experienced university manager placed a very high value on finding different ways to build a rapport with clients, stating: "if you think about it you've got people coming from different workplace cultures, so you've got to bridge that gap somehow, because you don't understand their business enough, and they don't understand yours. You've got to find a way in and that is usually by getting to know someone a bit better and freeing up some of those areas where perhaps people wouldn't normally think of talking, unless they were in a mind to disclose more that they thought perhaps they would. When you get to know people they begin to open up about what the issues are in their business and how you might be able to help. I think it's quite a fragile area in some respects." In a further attempt to qualify the ideas being discussed the USM emphasized another important point. "It's not just saying those words it's actually living them out in the way you work and behave: which is built on relationships.

The USM then attempted to distil his approach to client/provider relationship building. In essence it required a balance between the sensitive or intuitive, and more tangible factors, including solid knowledge and experience. The USM argued that "It's about personalities, about striking the right note, about sensitivity. I guess those are some of the things you need in addition to what you know and what you think you can offer. There has got to be a balance with some fairly solid inputs about how things work."

Summary of client and University senior manager views

The client senior manager reinforced the level of engagement needed between a business organisation and a business school. This was characterised as an engagement that valued the different foci of the academic and business worlds. However, this needs to be balanced by a tailored approach to matching provider input with the actual needs of client organization. Without doubt, significant emphasis was placed on the importance of building and growing a relationship which brings with it broader beneficial connections. However, what was particularly striking was the implied irony expressed by the client senior manager. In his view, business's greatest need was

latest thinking, which is what the leader perceived universities had to offer. Yet the courses and programmes they run do not seem to feature latest thinking sufficiently. There is also another, twofold challenge. This seemed to be asking business to find ways to access latest thinking (when managers are often too busy "doing"), alongside a challenge to universities to offer less of "yesterday's skills" and more of their "greatest strength": latest thinking.

Similarly, the University senior manager also stressed the value and importance of clients and providers growing closer together, in order to better meet the needs of the former. This manager identified different categories of help that clients might need, which could begin to provide a helpful framework for developing appropriate interventions. It is useful to think of such interventions in terms of whether they are accredited (perhaps providing a university stamp of quality on in-house provision), or whether the University is bringing particular expertise and knowledge to the client. The university may also be helping to solve a client's problem(s) in a more consultative capacity. These different categories of interventions imply that client engagement places some quite distinctive demands on a university. It was particularly noticeable that two key areas were stressed as being crucial to support and enable this kind of work. Firstly, the appropriateness of the university's internal systems, if they are to facilitate client work. Secondly, echoing the views of business school managers, the need for different skill sets amongst the staff employed. However, what seemed to be especially significant was what the USM expressed as the power and potential of rapport building with the client. The example of rapport building which he provided implied a skillful approach to client/provider engagement, and emphasized the key role of authenticity as a success factor. That story provides a rich vein of thought for further consideration of how relationships are built between employers and providers.

The views of both senior managers provide broader perspectives through the lens of both a client and a University, complementing the views of operational client and business school managers. This section has presented the findings from the study by focusing on the participants 'voice'. The final part of this section is to summarise the initial analysis based on the participants' perspectives and to indicate provisional themes for the second level of analysis.

Preliminary analysis

The next step in the research process, as explained in the methodology section, is to apply Gioia et al's (2012) recommendation to develop the initial researcher interpretations from the participant views identified in the previous section. This was done using a table (table 3) to demonstrate the link and connection between the data and the interpretation. Each of the participant codes from the previous section, were then analysed in an iterative process, cycling between the participant codes and possible aggregated themes. The codes from the previous sections in this chapter have all been referenced and every referenced code discussed in this chapter was used to help build a comprehensive set of first order constructs in the data table. There are a total of twenty eight codes with nine client manager views (CMV1 to 9), five Business School manager responses (BSMR1 to 5), seven University senior manager views (USMV 1-7) and seven client senior manager views (CSM1 to 7). This analytical process is explained in detail, using an illustrative example of the 'nurture' second order theme, in the methodology section, page 62.

Particular codes that seemed significant, which captured common threads, or that encompassed a recurring emphasis are identified. These codes and their reference were placed in the first column of table 3, in bold font, as a first order participant code. Other codes were then grouped beneath this primary code, both to help explain the code and to provide a richer description. The descriptions can help to indicate broader themes to inform the term, used in the second column of the data table, i.e. the aggregated first order (participant) themes. All twenty eight codes referenced above were used to build the constructs in the first column. This analysis also involved an iterative process returning to some of the early statements and codes used to develop the referenced codes. Some of these early statements and codes were found to be helpful in providing more explanation and justification for the highlighted codes. Consequently, where I felt that statements enriched the data, they have been included in the table and referenced by the suffix 's' after the main code. This indicated that they are a 'source' code, used to support the development of that particular referenced code. This process illustrates the value of an iterative process that returns to original statements to help construct and confirm the emerging first order themes.

Having the supporting code statements in place then enabled development of the aggregated first order theme, in the second column of the table. These aggregated codes recognised broader

themes and connections but still used participant words in the code statement, either continuing with the use of the code statement from the first column if applicable, or combining elements of code statements to capture the aggregated idea.

It is at this point that patterns began to emerge which can be represented within the table in two ways. Firstly, similarities and possible patterns between codes could be recognised by grouping the codes together to form combined rows. The grouped rows indicated patterns and common themes which led towards the five second order aggregate themes. Secondly, patterns emerged due to the configuration of the third column of the table which represented the progression from participant or first order codes to an initial researcher interpretation or second order themes. This is a process of recognizing connections and relationships between second order themes, engaging with literatures to expand ideas, and suggesting where they might form part of a bigger conceptual idea.

The result is five preliminary themes shown in the data table (table 3), namely: demand dilemma; relational engagement: new competencies: client management processes; and springboard to new opportunities.   A detailed illustration of how these preliminary themes were developed has already been presented in the methodology section. Here I include a short summary of the thinking which developed each of the five themes, indicating areas that will be investigated in greater depth in the next chapter of the study.

First order participant code | **Aggregated first order theme** | **Second order theme** | **Second order aggregated theme**

CMV1: the needs we didn't know we'd got
CMV2: A lot of discussion an awful lot of time talking
USMV4: giving them the answer to a question they haven't asked
BSMR1s: Listening approach without formulas

→ The needs we didn't know we'd got → **Demand led**

CMV5: Ability to mix the business world with the academic world
CSMv7: Academia's greatest strength – latest thinking
CSMV6: Less of yesterday's skills
CMV5s: Research informed practice. it's really important that practice is constantly refreshed.

→ Latest thinking blending the business world with the academic → **Leading demand**

Demand dilemma

CMV4: Track record, reputation, and expertise
CMV3: Skills knowledge and abilities you brought to the table was a massive selling point
CMV4: The knowledge of other work elsewhere with other people, so track record was important

→ Track record, reputation and expertise → **Credibility**

CMV3: A big part of it was….building the relationship with us
CMV9: The fundamental issue was how you worked with us….I think universities need to get out more
CMV3s: All about that relationship
CSMV3: Relationships evolving over time

→ How you work with us, building the relationship with us → **Relationship building**

USM7: Establish a rapport
CSMV4: Good connections
USMV3: An organisation they could grow together with
USMV7s: This hasn't been just a way of getting an entrée and contract this is about an on-going relationship and I think people really value that

→ Establish a rapport and growing together → **Nurture**

Relational engagement

CMV6: A weight and depth of learning…making it real
USMV2: Making people think more than they are used to thinking
BSMR2: A shift of balance teach corporately, not academically

→ Depth of learning and making people think, making it real → **Engaged teaching**

BSMR3: People who are credible in front of clients
BSMR4: People in HE who understand the commercial world
USM6: Skills that not every academic possesses project management, contract management, all wrapped together

→ People who are credible in front of clients and understand the commercial world → **Client skills**

New competencies

BSMR1: Proper OD
BSMR1s: A consultancy model based on being able to go in and discover what they want.
USMV1: Stamp of approval, added value, address a problem

→ Added value, addressing problems → **Consultancy approach**

USM5:To be responsive to employer needs….this is going to be different
USM5s: A slick way of operating which enables the university to be responsive to employer's needs.
BSMR4s: It was a nightmare trying to get the university people and procedures to fit what a commercial client needed
BSMR4s: Commercial clients want to move fast and expect a response.
CMV7: When things don't go right first time

→ Responsive people and procedures to fit what a commercial client needs → **Client management and relationship processes**

Client management processes

CSMV2: Watch and learn – on-going review and evaluation to improve
CMV8s: Things that felt meaningful that you could take back and apply
CMV8s:I think there was a big thing about transfer of learning
CSMV1: Best fit rather than perfect fit

→ Watch and learn continually improve → **Improvement and learning**

CSMV25 the provider of choice
CMV8:Benefits in its own right… and a springboard
BSMR5: In the future a resource to help

→ The provider of choice and a springboard → **Springboard**

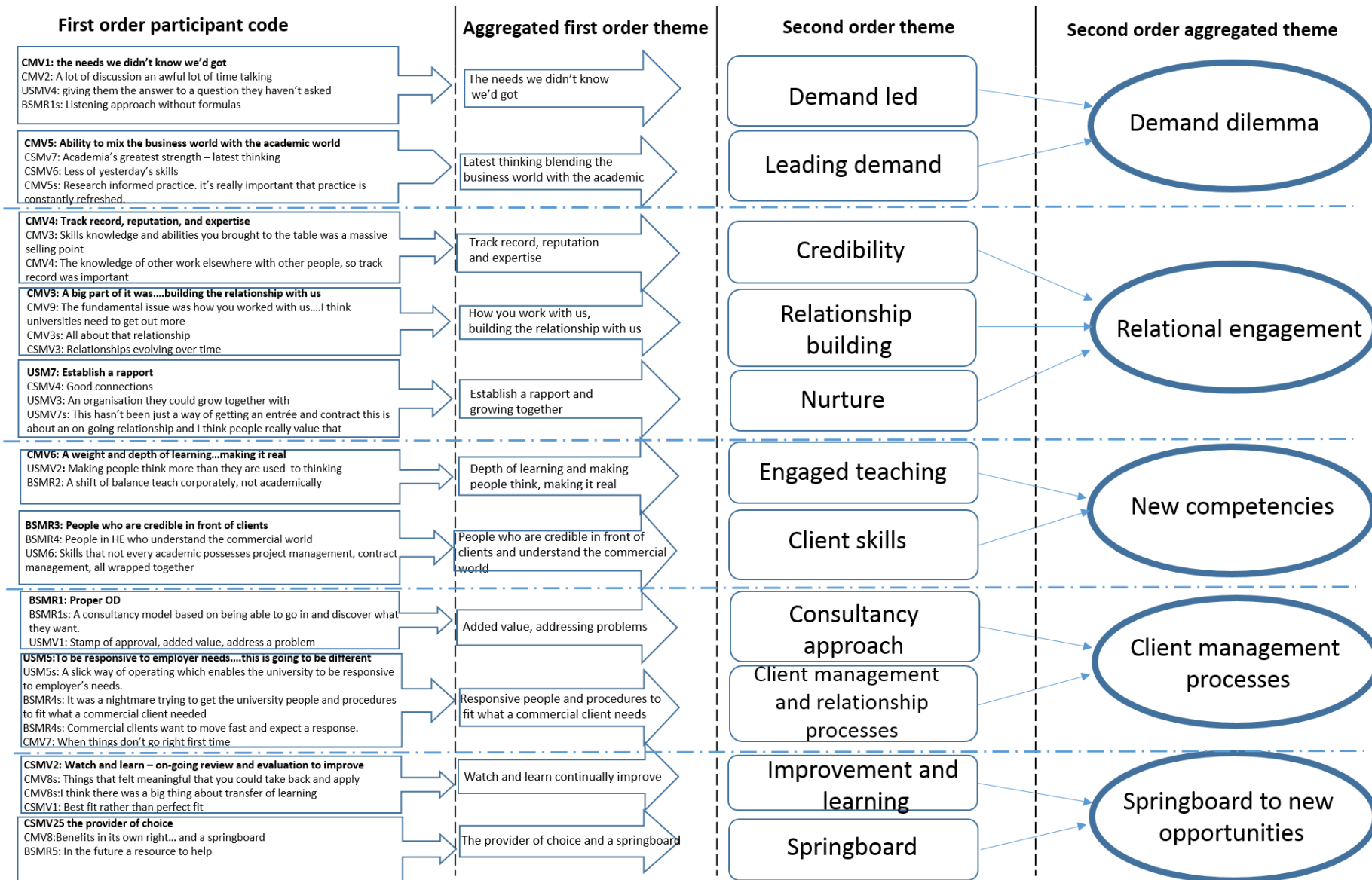**Springboard to new opportunities**

Table 3: Data coding table: Preliminary first and second order analysis

The data confirmed that the client managers did indeed value flexible and bespoke solutions, as suggested in the literature (King M. , 2007), (Wedgwood M. , 2007). Yet the managers also wanted the latest thinking and ideas from a business school. The first suggested a demand-led approach, the latter by contrast, indicated that business schools could be instrumental in forming and shaping demand, which is captured in the theme 'leading demand'. At the same time, the client managers were critical of business schools which purported to provide a customized solution, whilst actually doing the reverse. This point was supported by evidence of some business schools which had presented existing programme provision in response to 'listening' to the client's discussion of needs (Kewin, et al., 2011), or delivered courses that "too often reflect the research interests of academics rather than the real needs of British business" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 10). Drawing these themes together suggested a dynamic tension, which led to the theme of 'demand dilemma'.

The notion of 'relational engagement' captured the striking emphasis, placed by all participants, on the value of relationships, whilst recognizing that these could not be a substitute for skills and expertise. Therefore, whilst the building of relationships based on credibility was essential, effectiveness required a third element. The idea of nurturing a relationship emerged towards the end of the interviews, and brought together the themes of building relationships and being credible. This idea resonated with literatures advocating collaborative engagement, where nurturing is instrumental to sustaining such relationships (Kanter, 1994), (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2010), (Huxham, 2003). Interestingly the client managers pointed towards difficulties they had experienced with other business schools who had not placed an emphasis on building relationships. The stated experience of the client managers appears to be a wider concern with literature sources, affirming that business schools and universities too often find it difficult to build relationship with employers (Lambert, 2003), (The Royal Society, 2008), (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 10).

Therefore 'relational engagement', as a theme, appears to be a vital factor, in which credibility, relationship building skills, and nurturing behaviours need to combine.

The next two themes: 'new competencies' and 'client management processes', address the need that client managers expressed for business schools to deliver in a different way to their conventional approaches. Similarly, the ABC Business School managers emphasized the importance of these two themes. This too resonated with research that argues for a different kind of teaching, one that is less didactic and much more facilitative (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002), (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013). Along with this is the suggestion that a wider range of skills are needed, beyond simply different teaching skills, in order to manage the client. The Business School managers emphasized the need for new roles to enable effective engagement through client management, and thus to better manage the interface between business and academia. Not forgetting the very different demands of project and contract management. These areas clearly point towards new competencies that are necessary, and imply that different systems and processes need to be in place. Again, there is good evidence in the literature that there is a gap between what is needed in order to work with employers, and what is all too often practiced in business schools. For example, Kewin et al (2011) argue that there is a shortage of staff who possess commercial skills. Ideas within this theme draw upon, and are informed by, consultancy and professional services literatures. This is in order to better understand how clients can be managed effectively (Nixon, Smith, Stafford, & Camm, 2006), (Stumpf & Longman, 2000) (Gummesson, 2000), and is expanded in the second phase of analysis in the next chapter.

The fifth and final theme appropriately develops an important area if relationship sustainability, based around the notion of realising the benefits from the relationship. This idea is captured in the client manager statement: 'springboard to new opportunities'. Similarly, this theme is also supported by literatures from consultancy and professional services, where for example Sieg, Fischer and Wallin (2012), within the context of professional services, advocate continuing dialogue with the client at the end of a project as a springboard to further work. Likewise, Stumpf and Longman (2000) stress the importance of continually seeking opportunities to add value and demonstrating commitment to furthering the interest of the client. This theme complements the all-embracing nature of the nurturing theme. In particular, the associated literatures on collaborations inform the theme,

illustrated by Kanter's (1994) advice that successful collaborations are based upon generating possibilities, creating extra value and continual nurturing.

At this stage, the themes are preliminary, but they do suggest some very interesting areas for further exploration. For example, there are interesting tensions between demand-led or leading demand approaches, and issues over employers' perception of the value in relational engagement and the fact that many business schools find this difficult to do. In such circumstances, the requirement for different skill sets and process systems can be particularly challenging in business schools. Finally, there is the issue of how the engagement results in new opportunities both for the client organisation and for the business school.

The aim of the next chapter is to explore in more depth the emerging themes and issues which have begun to surface in this preliminary analysis. The second part of the chapter will then go on to explore the second order themes and the preliminary aggregated themes in more depth. To do this, a holistic, direct interpretive approach will be adopted, incorporating a more comprehensive engagement with relevant literature.

Chapter 5   Analysis and discussion

This chapter explores the preliminary themes from the previous chapter using a second stage of analysis, by adopting a direct interpretative approach which analyses stories, and tensions and dualities, and re-engages with the relevant literature. The five preliminary themes form the structure of this chapter. Each section investigates one of these themes, using a related story and identifying tensions and dualities evident in the theme. The analysis and discussion is informed by relevant literatures to develop the conceptual themes. Finally, the analysis also explores patterns and associations between the themes in order to present what Gioia et al (2012) call a dynamic conceptual model, which recognizes and depicts the connections and relationships between the respective conceptual themes.

As discussed previously, it became apparent during the preliminary analysis that there were some valuable stories told by participants in the semi-structured interviews. The stories are in-case, which helps maintain the richness and specific context of the text, rather than plucking the text out and grouping this selection with other text to provide a cross-case focus (which was the process adopted in the first stage of the analysis). Stories and tensions complement the initial analysis, resonating with many of the cross-case findings, but they also allow a more in-depth exploration of the themes. Therefore, stories will now be used as a means of reviewing interview narratives, with a fresh lens. In this section, key stories (see appendix 7: interview excerpts of participant's stories) will be analysed in relation to their message, along with a discussion of the moral or main point being made, any tensions identified, and their potential significance. These are summarized in the story analysis table in appendix 6. A summary of each story in appendix 9 provides an overview along with some explanation of the main points and ideas that emerge from the story. The conceptual themes will then be discussed in relation to the analysis of the data presented in the stories. The discussion will consider the emerging themes in combination with the findings from the participant interviews, to help the exploration of tensions and interpret the findings. At this point, extensive engagement with the earlier literatures will enable the ideas and insights to be developed. New areas of literature will also be introduced, prompted by emerging themes from the analysis, in order to help conceptualize employer engagement.

In particular, an analysis of tensions will be conducted applying Seo et al's (2004) framework, as discussed in the methodology. The framework suggests that tensions can be managed in four ways. The first response is selection, in which one pole of the tension is chosen in preference to the other. The second is separation, where the poles are still held in tension but are separated either temporally, or in relation to level of analysis. The third is integration, more commonly referred to as compromise. The fourth response is of special interest, which is where a tension is transcended by re-framing the situation. This fourth response will be particularly applied to indicate possibilities of where new conceptual interpretations may be found. The responses proposed by Seo et al are similar to Poole and van de Ven's (1989) earlier work. Poole and Van de Ven also caution that tensions in the social world can be complex and imprecise where opposing terms of the tension are relatively vague. In addition, the tensions are often constrained by issues which might be temporal (taking into account different perspectives on time) or spatial (different levels of analysis, such as management levels in an organization). Nevertheless, both Seo et al and Poole and van de Ven argue that, though there are difficulties inherent in tensions, the analysis can assist in identifying relationships between the poles of the tensions and any possible resolutions. This analysis of tensions provides a helpful vehicle to enable a deeper exploration of the preliminary themes.

The themes, their related stories and the implied tensions.

As discussed in the methodology, the primary rationale for the selection of the stories, is the extent to which it is related to a preliminary theme. As noted earlier, the contribution of stories to this study was almost missed, only becoming apparent during one of the later interviews. This interviewee told a story that strongly influenced the emerging code of 'building a rapport'. In fact, the story told was so powerful that it encouraged me to extend the scope of the theme, leading to development of a code which was much more broad and significant: 'nurturing'. This expansion of the code would have been unlikely had the story not been read as a whole, enabling me to see the emergence of a much bigger picture. This then led me to re-reading of the findings section and the transcripts, in order to search for other stories which may also have inferred salient themes resonant with the findings so far

reported. My intention here was to deliberately seek stories which were striking and thus helped to convey and reveal the broader 'story' of this study: how a business school develops a relationship with an employer organization. This story search also helped me to recognise that some initial codes in the previous chapter's data table (table 3), which were instrumental in the construction of the conceptual themes, were actually taken from the stories. This indicated that elements of the stories had already been recognized as important in the development of the conceptual themes to which the stories relate. The diagram in figure 1.0 brings these ideas together, firstly by showing which of the stories related to particular preliminary conceptual themes, and by referencing the participant who told the story, and the sub-case to which the story relates, where applicable. Secondly, the initial codes, which were a part of developing the preliminary theme, are placed next to the story within which they belong.
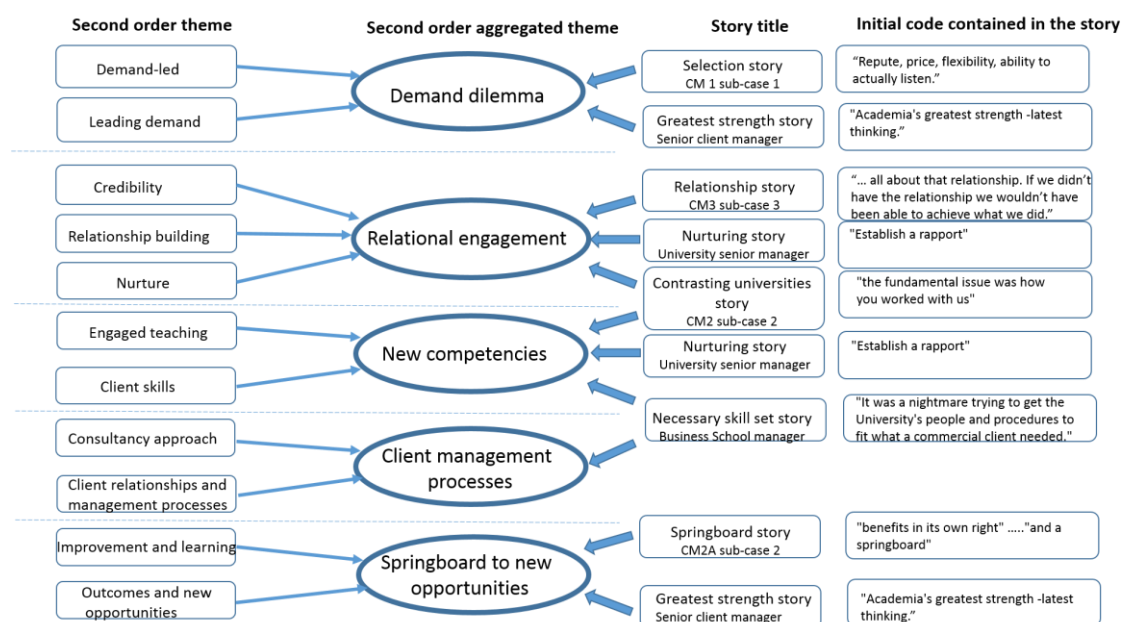

Figure 1.0 Relationship of stories to preliminary second order aggregated themes

As already stated, the stories related directly to the second order themes, but they also have been selected because they were a salient story. They are thus chosen purposively (Patton, 2002), because of the richness of the story, providing insights into the sense-making of the participants.

There were other stories evident in the findings and transcripts, such as the stories about when things go wrong, which were noted in the findings section (see page 95). However, the intention was to deliberately choose stories that stood out, and that conveyed the strength of views expressed by the participants. Nevertheless, the selection activity did ensure that there were stories from each of the sub-cases, and represented each group of participants, from client managers, Business School managers and the senior managers. In addition, three of the seven stories are about the relationship between the Business School and the client organisation. This was intentional, firstly to reflect the focus of the study, but also because these stories seemed to be an important part of the striking emphasis that all the participants placed on this theme. Finally, the stories selected help address the original research questions of this study. The 'selection story' provides insight into the research question: Why does an employer engage with an HE provider? The 'relationship' and 'contrasting universities' stories inform the research question: What factors support and facilitate HE provider and employer engagement? The 'necessary skill set story' then addresses research question three: Finally, the 'springboard story' provides ideas to shape the fourth research question: How can relationships be built and sustained between HE provider and employer organisations?

Before starting the analysis process in this chapter, the following section sets the stories in their context, providing an overview of the themes and their related stories. The overview explores the distinctive features of the story, emphasising the sub-case context and the perspective of the participant who told the story.

Demand dilemma

The 'selection story' indicated reasons why the client chose the University to be its service provider. It is the shortest of the stories, but was chosen because it most clearly identified the reasons for selecting a provider. In doing so, the story offered insights related to the demand dilemma theme. Client manager CM1 told this story from sub-case one, where they had had experience of previously working with another university during which there had been a number of issues. The story reflected some of the concerns of the organisation and brought together the key elements they considered crucial when selecting a provider, hence

the decision to name the story: the 'selection story'. All three sub-cases emphasized similar requirements, and a tendency to compare their experience with other providers. This story also prominently emphasized the requirement for flexibility and the need to listen to the client, which both point to the tension between providing customized or standardized solutions, and the associated dilemma of a client wanting their needs to be met, despite being unclear about what those needs are. A second story also supported the analysis of the demand dilemma theme. The 'greatest strength story' sheds light on the leading demand aspect of the demand dilemma theme. The story was told by the client senior manager and highlighted the value placed upon latest thinking by the senior manager. This story began to pose interesting possibilities between approaches that lead demand and those that are demand led, suggesting strategies to reframe the tension implied by 'demand dilemma'.

Relational engagement

There are three stories which provide the basis for the analysis of this theme. Firstly the 'relationship' story captured the perspective from sub-case three. This is an important view to understand since sub-case three had experienced the longest client-provider relationship of the three organisations. It was apparent from the transcript that the story told by CM3 had rich insights into how the relationship had worked. Whilst sub-case three had the longest relationship, sub-case 2 is distinctive for having the most complex relationship. This case comprised several partner organisations and also featured a different programme, run concurrently but managed and delivered by another university. It is this factor, and the stark comparisons drawn by CM2, that makes the story so interesting. The 'contrasting university' story offers a surprising perspective and allows negative experiences to be contrasted with aspects of the relationship, which the clients felt worked. In doing so it highlights tensions between the different ways universities work with employers.

The third story related to the theme is the 'nurturing' story. The senior university manager told the story, to illustrate his approach to working with clients. On initial reading, it reinforced the view from the preliminary analysis that 'building rapport' was important. However, as has been discussed, this story pointed towards the need to consider the deeper, more embracing theme of 'nurturing' and in doing so prompted the more involved analysis

and discussion to be found later in this chapter. The story also indicated an issue and tension expressed by the senior manager, namely that he did not think many academics had the skills needed to effectively engage with such relationships. Indeed, skills are the focus of the next two conceptual themes.

New competencies and client management processes

The next two conceptual themes are closely related, one emphasizing new competencies, while the other has a focus on the different processes and systems required to work effectively with client organisations. Clearly the 'nurturing' story informed these themes, as did the 'contrasting universities' story. Here the difference between the way two universities engaged with the sub-case illustrated both a difference in competencies and a difference in the way the two universities worked with the organisations. However, the story which proved to be most helpful in extending the analysis was told by the Business School manager with primary responsibility for sub-case 3. This story, 'the necessary skill set' story, reflected on what is needed for a Business School to engage with a client organisation. It was a story that highlighted tensions, both in skills and in systems and processes, which were deemed necessary to meet the client's needs.

Springboard to new opportunities

The final theme, 'spring board to new opportunities', draws upon two stories, one from a client manager in sub-case 2, and the other from the senior client manager. The 'greatest strength' story not only supported the demand dilemma theme, but also pointed towards client aspirations in relation to the benefits to be gained from working with the University, and the idea of creating new opportunities. However, the main story that addressed this final theme was the 'springboard to new opportunities' story. This story was also the source of the code that formed this conceptual theme in the preliminary findings. The story, consequently referred to as, the 'springboard to new opportunities' suggested the hope that much wider benefits could be realised from the relationship. Indeed the client manager from sub-case 2 illustrated the points with examples of what he considered had already been achieved as a result of the relationship. The story raised the issue of how further benefits could be realized

from the relationship and hinted at the tension between a tendency to move on to the next thing, without seeing the new opportunities emerging as a result of the relationship.

The main part of this chapter will adopt a direct interpretive stance, using stories and tensions as a means of analyzing and interpreting the findings. The chapter uses the conceptual themes as a structure, beginning with demand dilemma and then relational engagement, followed by the 'springboard to new opportunities'. Then, the themes of new competencies and client management process are grouped together in the section on skills and systems. Finally, each strand of the study will be brought together via an original model which is designed to conceptualize the client/provider engagement process.

Analysis of themes

Demand dilemma

As discussed in the literature review, the Government's policy approach to encourage demand-led provision of skills is contested (Keep, 2014). Demand is often unclear and businesses seem unaware of the wider organizational factors recognized as important to improving the chances of success in this area (Payne & Keep, 2011). Consequently there does appear to be potential for business schools to play two roles: one which is responsive to demand (helping clarify demand) and one which helps to inform, create, and shape demand. Such roles imply business schools are subject to a tension: between behaving as a demand-led organization and/or an organisation which leads demand. The concept of providers being 'demand-led' and/or 'leading demand' was prominent in this study and will be explored through two initial tensions which emerged in the 'selection' story. Firstly, the tension between customized and standardized provision and secondly, the related tension caused where clients specified bespoke solutions, despite being unclear about what their needs actually were. Analysing these two tensions will help inform a discussion of how to reframe the tension implied in the demand dilemma, between being demand-led or adopting a leading demand approach.

Customised or standardized-provision tension

The 'selection story' from sub-case 1 (Appendix 7.4) is about a past problem or obstacle (Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkim, 1983) which the organization had to address. In so doing, the client organization makes sense of the situation in order to provide a new, workable interpretation of what is needed (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). The purpose of the story (see appendix 9.4 for summary and appendix 8 for the analysis table) was to clearly emphasize the factors which the client considered important when selecting a provider, using an example to underline their importance. Central to this story is the tension which is implied between the offer of a customized, flexible approach or one which is rigid and inflexible. This tension appears to be managed by selection, where one pole or the other is chosen (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004). However, there is a second and related tension which emerged from the client manager interviews. This is the tension created by the client wanting a bespoke solution to meet their needs, yet at the same time being unclear about what exactly those needs are. This introduces an added complexity to the first tension. This situation was also evident in each of the sub-cases. It introduces a dilemma since, providers can only provide effective customised solutions to specific client's needs, once they are properly understood and expressed. Investigation of these tensions may suggest potential ways in which the issues can be re-framed and thus create possibilities to transcend the dilemma (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004)

The first tension is clearly illustrated where the other university in the story claimed it had listened to the client, but then proceeded to provide a standardized solution. In terms of tension analysis, the other university managed the tension by selection (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004), selecting one pole, in this case the supply-led pole. They implied that they understood the organisation's needs but then proceeded to provide a solution based on their existing programmes, apparently managing the tension in a misleading way. Unfortunately, this approach seems to be widespread evidenced by a HEFCE report evaluating employer engagement interventions, which noted that some universities 'dress up' existing provision, and "pretend you've gone through a consultation exercise" (Kewin, et al., 2011, p. 46). However, that is not to discount situations where a standardized solution may be appropriate. It could be argued that the dilemma described above echoes the competing demands faced by

consultancies: that of offering clients a bespoke solution, incorporating novel innovations or of using standardised but tried and tested solutions, which might be as effective but less costly (Whittle, 2006). If standardized solutions can be seen as appropriate under certain conditions, then it could be argued that the tension between customization and standardization is a fact of life. This would suggest that the provider and client must agree a judgement as to whether a bespoke or a standardised solution is most appropriate. However, such a judgement implies consultation between the client and provider, to clarify the client's situation needs. This leads to the second tension in the selection story.

The second tension is evident with the client requiring a bespoke solution to meet their needs, yet at the same time stating that they are unclear about those needs. This was common to all the sub-cases, suggesting that it may well be an important consideration. Alongside this unclear understanding or expression of 'need', client managers also stated an associated requirement for a provider to be flexible. The first point to note about this position is that it confirms Brennan and Little's (2006) argument that organisations are often unclear about their needs, and as a consequence those needs tend to be specific to that organisation (King, 2007).   This study therefore lends support to the argument that a collective employer 'voice', as proposed by Leitch (2006), may prove problematic. A unified employer expression of demand seems unlikely if employers are unclear about their needs. If this is indeed the case, then alternative approaches to need analysis and identification will be required. A different approach is illustrated by the actions taken to resolve this tension in the sub-case under discussion. This largely revolved around both provider and client spending a considerable amount of time in conversation, thus building a mutual understanding. This clearly had a number of benefits, but it especially helped in terms of identifying and clarifying needs. In effect, the tension is resolved through effective need exploration by both the university and the client although, as will be discussed shortly, even this approach may hold some hidden complexity. Such a process effectively reflects the consultative activity of diagnosis (Kubr, 2002), and is increasingly recognized as a priority area in employer engagement where universities need staff "to effectively diagnosing employer needs", working as 'consultants' (Nixon, Smith, Stafford, & Camm, 2006, p. 44). Clients in all three cases discussed in this study were unclear about their actual needs, reflecting a wider issue

that seems to be present with a significant number of organisations. This is a perspective recognized by Schein who argues that clients "often seek help when they do not know exactly what their problem is. They know something is wrong but the help they really need is in figuring our exactly what that is" (Schein, 1990)

Although progression to a consulting solution may seem a straightforward approach, resolving the tension of unclear needs may be more complex than it seems. Business School Manager 1 implied one possible hidden complication when he stressed the importance of making connections at different levels in the client organization, suggesting that needs may be interpreted differently at each of these levels. Therefore, adoption of a consultancy approach to help diagnosis of client needs may not resolve the tension if they are expressed differently at different levels of the organization. In this situation, analysis of the tension can enable implicit assumptions to be identified (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004), such as a more complex understanding of the 'client'. Seo et al (2004) suggest one approach to managing this tension is by separation of the poles by levels of analysis, or what Poole and van de Ven refer to as level of "reference and connection" (Poole & van de Ven, 1989, p. 567) in the social world. To separate by level, a means to categorise by type of client or position of client can be adopted (Alvesson, Karreman, Sturdy, & Handley, 2009). Schein recognizes that the notion of client can be "ambiguous and problematical" (Schein, 1997, p. 202), because of the tendency to think of the client as one organisation or as one person representing the organization with a single, common view (Alvesson, Karreman, Sturdy, & Handley, 2009). To counter this problem, Schein (1997) prefers to use the term 'client system' recognizing that providers are "always dealing with more than one part of the client system, and some parts may not have the same needs or expectations as do others" (Schein, 1997, p. 203). He proposes a helpful distinction between 'initial contact' clients who first bring the provider into the organization, 'primary clients' who ultimately 'own' the issue being resolved, and between 'ultimate clients' who experience the benefit of the interventions directly. Separation by level, using the level or position of different clients in the organization, enables the second tension to be resolved by ensuring the different needs of the various types of client are each addressed. This also enables the provider to recognise the relative positions of different 'clients', usually associated with levels of authority, but may also

indicate the type and degree of involvement in the interventions (Alvesson, Karreman, Sturdy, & Handley, 2009). Such a separation can prevent the assumption that a need identified at one level, or with one type of 'client', means the second tension is resolved.

In the case study, business school managers emphasized the importance of relationship-building and of understanding issues at different levels in the organization. And, as BSM2 argued, they recognised that the presenting problem "may well not be the real issue at all" (BSM2). This led to a considerable amount of time spent talking with the client to assist in understanding the organization and the issues. All the client managers confirmed the need for this level of conversation, and client manager 3 also appreciated that "the university had fantastic relationships with key managers in the organization", demonstrating the commitment to build relationships and a shared understanding with different stakeholders, many of whom were part of the client system.

The 'customized or standardized' tension poses an interesting question about understanding the conditions in which a standardised solution may be beneficial for the client. The evidence from the study also supports the idea that businesses often do not know what their actual needs are, and significantly that the needs may actually differ within the organisation. This suggests that a consulting process is appropriate to determine the needs of the organization. However, the resolution of the 'unclear needs/bespoke solution' tension has revealed implicit assumptions made by the business school managers, who seemed to recognize the importance of gaining clarity and building relationships at different levels of the organization. Consequently, use of Schein's 'types of client' framework can help to identify explicit, potential differences in needs and expectations throughout the organisation. The argument also provides support for the rationale of developing relationships at all levels in the organization.

Re-framing the demand dilemma

The tensions discussed so far form part of the broader tension caused by perceptions of universities as being either demand-led or leading-demand. This is emerging as a central theme both from the literature and from the findings of this study. As part of the exploration of this tension, the 'greatest strength' story (see appendix 7.5 and appendix 9.5 for summary)

will be used to help inform the discussion. The significance of this story is that it indicates the frustration seen by some in the unfulfilled potential of academia to work more effectively with the business world. Interestingly, the story also implies that one business need may be to gain access to the latest thinking, perceived by business to be something which universities can help them to do. This indicates an important aspect for further discussion, since it suggests one way to reconcile the demand led/leading demand tension, where the former can mean meeting business needs and the latter means access to the latest thinking.

Critics may suggest that an emphasis on latest thinking may tend towards the promotion of fads and fashions (Grey, 2001). However, latest thinking can also be interpreted in the way the senior client manager seems to suggest: as academics bringing their latest ideas to business. Whilst the phrase 'latest thinking' may limit the breadth of ideas, it does suggest a direction to explore. Of course, there is much value to be found in ideas that have stood the test of time or in consideration of fundamental principles, although the principles relevant to an unpredictable and complex business environment may need to be clarified (Weick, 2001). It is perhaps in this sense that even 'old' ideas, when applied or interpreted in a new context, may become latest thinking. These aspects of the 'greatest strength' story will be incorporated into the subsequent discussion.

Returning to the demand dilemma it is hard not to notice similarities with the relevance rigour debate, since each reflect a balance between responsiveness to clients and meeting their demands (relevance), and provision of ideas and insights which they may not have thought about (rigour). Since there has been little attention given to employer perspectives on this rigour-relevance debate (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014), it is particularly informative to reflect on the views of the various managers from the client organisations in this study. It is therefore especially interesting to note that participants valued both poles of this tension, appreciating the "weight and depth of learning" (CM1) and also being assured that the intervention would "meet our explicit needs and the needs we didn't know [we had])" (CM1a). Their views imply that it may be possible to re-frame the tension between demand-led and leading-demand. Such a perspective indicates opportunities where business schools could differentiate themselves via a dual approach that both meets demand and leads

demand. However, before exploration of how this might be achieved, it is useful to consider some other ways of managing the tension.

One mechanism for managing this tension could be a conscious movement towards one pole or the other (selection). If the provider focused on the clear request for bespoke solutions, then the demand-led pole would be selected. On the other hand, a call to use the latest thinking might prompt a provider to choose the leading-demand pole. Alternatively, another strategy to manage the tension might lead to integration (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004) or adoption of a compromise solution situated somewhere between the two poles of the spectrum. Both of these strategies were evident in the relevance-rigour debate which was discussed earlier. However, such an approach can often result in an unsatisfactory solution or "a middle of the road approach" (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004, p. 76), which is neither demand-led nor leading-demand. Just as concerning are the persistent claims that business schools deliver programmes which lack relevance and practical application, or that they "too often reflect the research interests of academics rather than the real needs of British business" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 10). There is also the concern voiced by the senior client manager in this study, about programmes and courses that do not include the latest thinking but instead focus on "yesterday's skills". There thus seem to be genuine concerns that business schools often fail to address this tension effectively, resulting in compromise, irrelevance, self-interest or out-of-date ideas. Yet this study would also suggest that both poles of this tension are indeed valued, which indeed warrants consideration of how a dual approach might be effective.

Seo et al (2004), suggest that one way to transcend this tension is through thinking differently, that is by reframing the situation or what they call 'connection'. A connection strategy "seeks ways to embrace, to draw energy from, and to give equal voice to bipolar positions" (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004, p. 101). Instead of thinking of the two poles as opposite and mutually exclusive, this strategy searches for ways in which two poles can be viewed more as different, albeit with a distinctiveness recognized as being mutually beneficial. So the next section will explore three possible methods to enable this tension to be transcended. The first suggests thinking differently about the leading-demand pole. The

second encourages consideration of an alternative perspective of the opposite (demand-led) pole. The third method suggests that, rather than viewing the tension in polar terms, it should be re-framed and so viewed from a perspective which sits somewhere between the two extremes.

In proposing that academics should bring and present their latest thinking to business, the senior client manager implicitly suggested a promising strategy for consideration. He introduced the possibility of transcending the duality by creating a demand that businesses need. The implication is that a business school, by adopting a 'leading-demand' approach, can effectively shape and create demand with businesses. What is also interesting to notice is the senior client manager's perception that, what he called latest thinking, is both a strength of universities and also something that business needs. In this interpretation of the context, if a business school's research incorporates latest thinking and ideas that businesses need, then a business school begins to create and shape demand. This means the ideas that business schools research are indeed what organisations need. However, as discussed earlier when analyzing the 'greatest strength' story, there is a frustration conveyed by the senior client manager that businesses are too busy to find out about the latest thinking, and business schools do not incorporate enough of that latest thinking into their teaching. Hughes et al (2011) express a similar frustration. They characterize academics as not being close enough to practice, whilst at the same time "practitioners don't make the most of management academics as a source of knowledge" (Hughes, Bence, Grisoni, O'Regan, & Wornham, 2011, p. 40). In the 'greatest strength story', the senior client manager proposed addressing this tension by suggesting that academics should present their research to practitioners who could then determine what is relevant to their business. This suggests that practitioners apply the theory and ideas to the business context, identifying need and matching ideas to that context. In other words, in such situations practitioners would carry out the activities, such as identifying need, which were expected on the demand-led side of the tension. This also implies that academics can effectively translate their ideas and communicate them to practitioners. There is a further implication that a business school needs to focus research on areas that could have relevance and significance for business.

Such a focus suggests a second approach to transcending this tension. In order to lead-demand there is an assumption that business schools have identified areas of research that are relevant and significant for business. To do so implies close connection to, and understanding of, the organization and its issues. This study has indicated both the value and the importance that clients attach to finding a provider who can help them identify their needs and provide bespoke solutions. As already indicated this suggests that business schools need to adopt a consultative approach to address this context. The resulting close proximity to the client, and focus on trying to understand their needs, can enable the business school to identify crucial questions and areas for further research that are relevant and interesting to practitioners. The senior client manager stressed the importance of a consultative approach by emphasizing the need for the business school to "keep watching, looking out for ways to improve, things to change, introducing new ideas or seeking out new ideas as needs arise." To effectively identify and respond to client needs means combining access to an existing body of knowledge and generation of new knowledge, then applying both or either to the business context. Therefore this demand-led consulting is enhanced through the ability to apply latest thinking to the needs identified. Interestingly what has just been described is effectively the attributes of good scholarship: staying up to date with the latest knowledge, contributing new knowledge (Pearce & Huang, 2012) and then sharing the latest thinking (Burke & Rau, 2010). So again, the benefits associated with one pole in the tension continuum can enrich the other; they are mutually beneficial. This discussion therefore suggests a way in which business schools can lead demand by having a consultative dialogue with business, in order to define problems, questions and approaches that would facilitate knowledge generation (Starkey & Tempest, 2005).

A third way to resolve the tension between being demand-led and leading demand draws upon Weick's reframing of Boyer's scholarship of engagement, designed to see the scholarship of integration as central to teaching practitioners. This perspective is situated somewhere between the leading-demand and demand-led poles. At one extreme, leading-demand suggests a research focus, while at the other demand-led implies a consultative approach. Therefore, it could be said that the teaching perspective lies somewhere between the two poles. With Weick's interpretation, the classroom becomes a context for both application and

integration. The scholarship of teaching, as envisaged by Boyer, has the potential to be transformational, combining as it does, the application and extension of research ideas. This resonates with ideas from business school managers who pointed to teaching delivery with a client that focused more on the facilitation and learning process than is normally the case in a set curricula. As BSM2 stated: "because a lot of its power is in its delivery, in the discussion that goes on and not particularly in the curriculum".

These three ways to reframe the tension between a demand-led approach and a leading-demand perspective build on the two traditional, core activities of academics (teaching and research) but also adds a third: consulting. Consulting might be seen as a familiar activity within academia, however this analysis proposes a more central role for this activity, within the context of employer engagement. There is a well-recognized triangle of relationships between research, teaching and practice with two-way connections between each of these activities (Kaplan, 1989). However, more recently Burke and Rau (2010) have argued that, in the extensive debate on how academics can narrow the gap between theory and practice, a crucial element has been understated. They actually go further and argue that the "glaring omission from these discussions is the role that teaching and research together play in creating, and, we hope, ultimately narrowing the gap" (Burke & Rau, 2010, p. 132). This study both supports and extends their conclusion, providing evidence from an employer context. The three reframing strategies explored here address the issues Burke and Rau raised. Firstly the 'omission' to which Burke and Rau refer is explored in the particular application of 'the scholarship of integration', advocated by Weick. Integration combines both the teaching-research and the teaching-practice relationships (see position 1 on the C-R-T-P diagram, figure 2.0). Secondly, the research and practice relationship is explored through the practice of academics presenting latest thinking to practitioners (the approach recommended by the senior client manager). What is missing from both Kaplan's and Burke and Rau's analysis is the consultancy relationship. So this study proposes that a fourth activity should be incorporated into the research-teaching-practice relationships. Consulting forms an important bridge with practice, both informing and shaping the interactions in the other activity relationships. In the third strategy introduced above, a consultancy–practice relationship ensures that latest thinking addresses important questions, issues and

practitioner needs (see position 2 in the C-R-T-P diagram). The consultancy-teaching

relationship also helps to shape teaching to meet and address those needs (see position 3 in
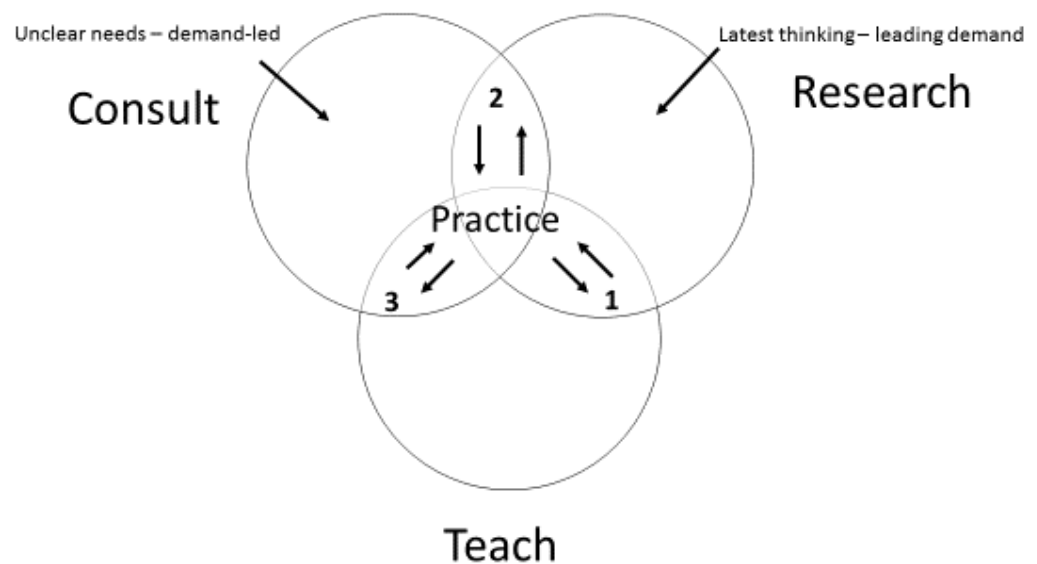
the C-R-T-P diagram).

Figure 2.0: Inter-relationship between consulting, researching, teaching and practice (C-R-T-P diagram)

There is clearly an argument that recognising the two poles of the tension are actually

mutually beneficial opens the way for some different thinking. For example, business school

managers in the study highlighted the potential to think more broadly within the client

organisation by introducing an organisational development approach to the relationship. Such

an approach tends to be consultative and therefore on the demand-led side of the tension.

However, it could also create the opportunities for some of the wider research discussed in

the literature review to be interpreted, discussed and where relevant applied in the client

organisation. These ideas could be considered as latest thinking and a part of the leading-

demand side of the tension. For example, areas such as the factors to create the conditions

where skills can be utilized more effectively (Payne & Keep, 2011). Or developing

management and leadership capability (Bosworth, Davies, & Wilson, 2002) in the context of

considering performance issues and higher value business strategies (Warhurst & Findlay,

2012). Within this mutually beneficial context, there is scope to reconsider Warhurst and Findlay's argument. Namely that too much of the research into skills utilization has been focused on dispassionate critique of the issues and policy agenda, and too little has been engaged with trying to improve practice (Warhurst & Findlay, 2012). Warhurst and Findlay effectively describe the two extremes of the tension, but they also affirm the necessity and complementarity of two poles. It may be possible to consider academics moving between the two, providing critique from a distance to analyse in depth, and from this vantage point to then work more closely to engage and impact on business practice. This may suggest the need for different academics conducting different types of research, but it may also suggest a cycle where academics first step back to reflect and consider, and then step forward to engage. This is not unlike the metaphor Heifetz and Linsky adopt to explain their approach to adaptive leadership: the balcony and the dance floor. They argue that "the only way you can gain both a clearer view of reality and some perspective on the bigger picture is by distancing yourself from the fray." However "if you want to affect what is happening you must return to the dance floor" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 53). For Heifetz and Linsky moving between the two is crucial and they warn that "staying on the balcony in a safe observer role is as much a prescription for ineffectuality as never achieving that perspective in the first place" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 53).

It could be argued that the tension between demand-led and leading-demand can be mutually beneficial since it keeps the two extremes of the tension 'honest'. In this sense the two extremes need the correcting influence of the other. The demand-led approach carries the risk that academics may be too close to business, in the sense that there may be compliance, compromise, and a tendency to chase fads (Kildruff & Kelemen, 2001), rather than insight, challenge and fresh thinking. Alternatively, the leading demand pole could steer academics towards insignificance, irrelevance and disinterest (Tranfield & Starkey, 1998), rather than a dispassionate scholarly pursuit of fundamental ideas that can shape thinking.

The demand dilemma can actually be re-framed as a mutually beneficial tension. This tension is resolved by research that *leads* demand, but which by implication then begins to *create and shape* demand from practitioners and clients. The demand-led pole incorporates

some consultative elements to the research approach and to developing relevant teaching interventions. At its most effective, this consultative approach both draws on latest thinking to inform the bespoke solutions, and identifies where research is needed to address key questions relating to business. The leading-demand position is broad and inclusive, recognizing the value of fundamental research, which can act as a challenge to business, as well as being inspirational through exploration of latest ideas. This strategy informs both teaching and consultative approaches. Perhaps Weick's alternative view of the relevance gap, attributing part of the problem to practitioners, does require a gap to be maintained. As Weick suggested, this may be an important challenge, requiring practitioners to learn to think beyond the immediate. It would also appear that employers and practitioners may be more open to the insights and depth of thinking that universities should be able to offer. Perhaps Weick's other concern, that practitioners may need to change their ways as much as academics, is closer to reality than he imagined.

Relational engagement

The quality and importance of relationship in this study has resonated throughout. All client managers emphasized the value they attached to good relationships. In the 'relationship story', CM3 was emphatic: "It's all about that relationship. If we didn't have the relationship we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we did." The findings have suggested that the relational engagement can be interpreted as comprising three themes: relationship building, credibility, and nurturing. Each will be considered in turn to help understand how relational engagement has worked in this study. However, in order to frame these themes it is first worth exploring the implied tension between relational and transactional engagement, as illustrated in the 'relationship' and 'contrasting university' stories (Appendices 7.2 and 7.3).

In order to explore this tension, the discussion will engage with literatures from the fields of consultancy, professional services, communications and relationship marketing, where relevant concepts and theory have emerged which offer the potential to help frame the relational engagement evident in this study. These will be considered in addition to the literatures already explored in the literature review. The argument for doing so is partly

because there are many interesting similarities between professional services (and especially consultancy firms) and universities which provide services to business clients. In fact Gummesson (2000, p. 7) elaborates on this similarity, suggesting that both academics and consultants are "in professional services; they are 'intellectuals,' 'knowledge workers'". And each work in a knowledge economy, where they are both influential contributors to what are sometimes referred to as knowledge intensive firms and organisations (O'Mahoney & Adams, 2011). Yet they also compete for similar work, with academics needing to differentiate themselves from consultants and in so doing maintain a distinctiveness (Ivory, et al., 2006), whilst at the same time some consultants attempt to add credibility to their consultancy by seeking associations with business schools (O'Mahoney & Adams, 2011). At the same time, the relationship between consultancy and academia can be problematic, with academic research tending to extremes of critical or positive assessments (Bouwmeester & Stiekema, 2015). However, there does appear to be a range of areas where academia and consultancy interact, not least in relation to how consultancies and professional services engage with their clients.

Transactional and relational tensions

The 'relationship story' (Appendix 7.2, and see the summary in Appendix 9.2) is a success story which stressed the critical importance of the relationship in order to make the engagement effective. It also suggests that relationships emerge as a very important theme in this study, with language and statements that indicate the value of high degrees of trust, shared commitment and collaboration. The moral of the story makes the point that the client manager thought the success of the engagement was "all about the relationship" This is a view that resonates with the idea of viewing engagement from the perspective of relationships (Bolden, Hirsh, Connor, Petrov, & Duquemin, 2010). Together with the findings from the client manager interviews, this story also provides an interesting focus for further discussion, since the quality of relationships between HE and business can often seem problematic (Lambert, 2003) (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013). The story also reflects the importance of individual relationships, something that was particularly noticeable. This aspect was also reflected in the client manager interviews. Yet, often engagement is discussed in terms of developing "institutional relationships with businesses" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 7); a relationship between organisations. Therefore, it is particularly

interesting to note this emphasis on the importance of individual relationships. This point, which is echoed by Bolden et al who also noticed that one or two relationships, especially at the early stages of an engagement, are the "nexus of the partnership" (Bolden, Connor, Duquemin, Hirsh, & Petrov, 2009, p. 32).

The 'contrasting university story' (Appendix 7.3) provides something of a balance to the positive message of the relationship story. It uses a powerful contrast between 'good' and 'bad' in order to highlight exactly what was valued by parties to the relationship between the Business School and the client. Lessons from this story centre on the importance of providers being flexible, of having a clear track record (which could be evidenced), and of genuinely listening to the client. The quality of the relationship was seen as crucial, demonstrating the expertise and credibility of the university and having a "can-do" approach that was focused on helping the client. The story illustrates a tension that was difficult to resolve whereby the client had to overcome adversity (Parry & Hansen, 2007). It was a story of opposites, which provides a very helpful context in which to compare the factors considered important to the client. Together with the 'relationship story', the 'contrasting university story' informs the relational/transactional tension, which appears to be a tension managed by selection of one pole or the other (Seo, Putnam, & Bartunek, 2004). The tension is about the kind of relationship that is developed between client and provider, and whether it should be relational or transactional.

In relationship marketing, transactional relations are depicted on one end of the continuum and contrasted with relationship building at the other extreme (Gronroos, 1991). In this context, there is an argument that relationship building is the best-fit approach for an organization that provides services (Gronroos, 1991). In fact, Gronroos and Helle argue "service is inherently relational" (Gronroos & Helle, 2012, p. 345), and consequently advocate a much richer understanding of the relationship. However, there is a tension about the relationship strategy that an organisation may choose to adopt, for example whether to be relational or transactional (Broschak, 2015). From the examples of other universities provided by the client managers (especially in the contrasting university story) it is apparent that such a tension exists. The two relationship strategies are quite clearly differentiated and

recognisable in the descriptions given by all the study participants. For example, participants stressed the value and significance of having a good relationship, they emphasized the need for a relationship evolving over time, and for organisations growing together with a high level of contact and engagement. All of which recognizes that relational characteristics tend toward long term engagements with wide-ranging activity and connections (Broschak, 2015). The study provides strong support for Broschak's argument that such relationship strategies tend to be "founded on attributes such as attraction, trust and commitment" (Broschak, 2015, p. 306). In contrast, transactional relationships are "short-lived and episodic" (Broschak, 2015, p. 307), and are more arms-length with limited amounts of information shared. A transactional strategy also tends to adopt a standardized provision approach where typically, that provision is considered more as a product than as a service (Gronroos, 1991).

The relationship engagement tension captures key differences expressed between ABC University and others that the client managers had worked with. The argument here suggests that the tension should be managed by selection, choosing a relational engagement. This view is also supported by Connor and Hirsh (2008) and by Wilson (2012) in his review of Business-University Collaboration. They all argue that a traditional supplier-customer model is inappropriate for HE/employer engagement. Instead they propose relational approaches in keeping with Bolden et al's assessment that "HE-employer engagement is fundamentally relational" (2009, p. 40). It is therefore a concern that based on the evidence in this study, some universities appear to be unaware or unwilling to apply relational strategies to their engagement with employers. This study did seem to reveal issues that pointed to academic staff not having the skills and experience to work with employers with a relational approach. This is as a wider issue, with similar concerns highlighted by the recent evaluation of the HEFCE Higher Education Employer Engagement Initiative. This report identified that many institutions found it both challenging to motivate staff to get involved and crucially, difficult to "attract and retain the 'right' staff with a mix of HE and commercial experience" (Kewin, et al., 2011, p. 114). This aspect of skills and experience will be considered in more depth later in this chapter. However, as is apparent in this study, if a business school can successfully adopt a relational strategy then there is considerable potential to differentiate itself from other providers. This is also identified as an area for improvement for the HE

sector in the HEFCE Evaluation of Employer Engagement report (Kewin, et al., 2011). What also emerges from this overall discussion is one further, important aspect of relational engagement. Namely, that if the intent is to establish a sustained relationship with longer-term benefits, then clearly relationships need to be built.

Relationship Building

To gain a better understanding of this apparent truism, the findings from the study will be further explored, drawing on literature associated with a consultative approach in which client relationships feature prominently. In order to do this, analysis and discussion will be structured by processual (order and process), temporal (time spent on building a relationship and sustaining a relationship), and spatial, (level) considerations. There is general agreement in the literature that relationship building is a vital part of engagement with a client. Pellegrinelli (2002) argues that the client-consultant relationship is central and that a primary task for the consultant is to make the client feel comfortable, both with the consultant and with the process. Client managers in this study recognized both aspects. For example CM3 referred both to feeling comfortable and confident with the relationship. Kakabadse et al., (2006) suggest there is wide agreement that effective consultancy interventions should start with establishing the relationship. However, traditional consulting processes often do not make this stage explicit.

Typically, consulting processes consist of similar stages to the five proposed by Kubr: entry; diagnosis; action-planning; implementation and termination (Kubr, 2002). Or, the four elements proposed by Kakabadse (1986): entry; intervention; evaluation; and disengagement. Whilst these models may well imply a focus on relationship in the initial stage of gaining entry to the organization, they do not reflect the importance assigned by many commentators. In addition, they often suggest that the engagement is a single intervention with terms such as 'termination' or 'disengagement' signalling the end of the engagement. Therefore these common process steps do not adequately reflect the focus or emphasis of this study, either from the perspective of stressing the importance of starting with relationships, or in terms of encouraging a sustained relationship over time. An alternative view, proposed by Stumpf and Longman (2000), begins with a first phase aimed at creating enough interest to encourage a

client to begin a conversation. The approach then incorporates initial conversations, which in this study were repeatedly stressed as important by all the client managers. This is followed by a needs analysis, again mirroring the findings in this study, in which a bespoke solution is developed and, according to Stumpf and Longman, leads to the first engagement. Two more stages in the model emphasize the focus on a sustained relationship. The first is termed enrichment, where the consultant adds value to the client. This then progresses to a 'sole vendor' status, or as the senior client leader stated a situation where the organisation "become[s] the provider of choice".

Clearly, relationship building can be understood in terms of process, from its beginnings through to a long-term relationship, but this also introduces a temporal dimension: the critical factor of time. A temporal understanding of relationship building enables a consideration of the effect of time relative to process. According to Liang and Lian, the time orientation of a relationship is both about the time already invested in the relationship, as well as the "expected future length of the relationship" (Laing & Lian, 2005, p. 116). Laing and Lain draw upon Yorke's (cited in Laing and Lain, 2005) argument that as the relationship develops over time, the client and provider's expectations are likely to converge with a 'meeting of minds'. Laing and Lian conclude that "a long-term perspective or time orientation is central to the formation of close inter-organisational relationships" (Laing & Lian, 2005, p. 116). CM2 captured this sentiment, stating "… if you are going to get quality at the end you have to invest the time." The willingness to commit the time to the relationship, which is evident in this study, appears to be a central factor in developing a sustainable relationship.

The third consideration relates to the spatial aspect of relationship building: level. Earlier in this section the issue of complexity in client relationships was discussed. A helpful way to resolve such complexity was proposed, based on Schein's (1997) view of a client system with different types of client, with varying needs and expectations. This approach may help to explain the value attached by business school managers to spending considerable time building relationships at different levels within the client organisation. The strategy appeared to be effective with one client manager, (CM3) describing the relationships the university had

with key managers as "fantastic". Business School Manager 1 added a further dimension to this discussion of building relationships at different levels. The manager stressed the importance of connecting "the right people with the right people" to position what the business school could do, a view supported by Hughes et al (2011).

Credibility

The issue of credibility has proved to be an important factor in a client's decision to engage with a university provider. This has also been a central issue in the rigour-relevance debate, discussed in the literature review. However, in the context of that debate, credibility is understood both in terms of the quality of research produced and also the implied credibility of academics amongst themselves. This is in contrast to the overall use of credibility in this study, which relates it more to the perceived credibility of providers from the client's perspective. This section will begin with an exploration of the general understanding of credibility, drawing on communication and relational marketing theory to inform the discussion. These ideas will then be applied to the context of credibility as applied in this study.

The 'selection story' (Appendix 7.4) emphasizes credibility alongside other factors, for example where client managers indicated that track record, expertise and reputation were especially important. Whilst track record and previous success, especially with similar organisations was emphasized by the client managers, it was interesting to note the importance of individuals as factors in the establishment of credibility. It was clear that trust, expertise, reputation and credibility were all considered to be important factors for selecting and working with a provider. These factors are also prominent in relevant literatures from communications research and relational marketing. For example, two factors are commonly recognized as particularly important to understanding credibility, namely: trustworthiness and expertise (Ferguson, 1999) (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). And more recently, there has been an argument to include goodwill as a third primary factor associated with credibility. Goodwill refers to perceptions of care and genuine interest, and an ability to display understanding of others ideas, feelings and needs (Gass & Seiter, 2015). Interestingly, all three factors were prominent in the client interviews. Firstly, goodwill was evident in CM2's perception that ABC

Business School really wanted to help, to find out the client's needs, and showed genuine interest by spending a considerable amount of time in discussions to better understand the organisation.

All the client managers were keen to stress the importance of relevant expertise as a credibility indicator. Similarly, CM3 stressed the value of trust and feeling comfortable with people, adding a comment that perhaps appears to express the very core of what it means to be credible: "the belief that they are able to deliver on the agenda" (CM3). This is a view supported by Hiligross and Rieh (1993) who, whilst recognizing there is no clear agreement on a definition of credibility, argue that at its essence credibility is about 'believability', the extent to which a client believes the intentions and the capability of the provider (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993).

Hilligoss and Rieh include the notion of benevolence in their work on credibility, which is the extent to which a client believes the provider is genuinely concerned with the client's interests (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). Both are apparent in the client manager interviews. Confidence seemed to be established relatively quickly, for example where CM2 commented on being "terribly impressed" with individuals who seemed to impress personally and professionally with their expertise. According to Herbig and Milewicz "to achieve credibility a provider must first build a reputation" (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993, p. 30). In their explanation, credibility represents the extent to which the client believes in the intention of the provider at that particular time, whereas reputation is based on what has built up over time. Often, as in this study, reputation is referred to as 'track record' (Glasser, 2002). The interplay between credibility and reputation indicates that they are closely related. Herbig and Milewicz (1993) suggest that a good reputation produces credibility, whilst Glasser contends that credibility is "one of the prime determinants of reputation" (Glasser, 2002). In this study, reputation is seen as informing credibility (which is identified as a main theme in the analysis), since credibility is what the client perceives at the time of the engagement. However the two concepts reinforce each other. Credibility builds the reputation of the provider, which in turn helps establish credibility with the next client. In this sense reputation and credibility inform each other.

In both the literature and in this study, there is a clear recognition of the importance of the credibility of the individuals involved in the engagement. According to Glasser (2002), the distinctive factors that shape credibility-building are interpersonal skills, which he argues is not surprising given the central role of relationships in consultative engagements. In this study, as already suggested, the relational engagement was significantly affected by a combination of recognized experience and engaging personal qualities, in the provider personnel involved. This clearly resulted in the rapid establishment of trust and confidence between client and provider. It certainly indicates the importance of having the 'right people' involved in the relationship-building, if it is to develop and succeed. Indeed, perhaps in relation to using the 'wrong people', Hughes et al (2011) identify the credibility of individual academics as a key factor which might also *hinder* engagement. The 'right people' on the other hand, can generate credibility and can also begin the relationship-building which creates the conditions for relational engagement.

Nurturing

The argument so far positions relational engagement as informed by: relationship-building; investing time; connecting levels; progressing through stages of development; and informed secondly by credibility through reputation, expertise, building trust and confidence. However there is another factor to consider, one which only emerged later in the analysis: nurturing. Earlier discussion in this study has identified networking and rapport-building as important client manager roles when connecting relationship-building with credibility in an attempt to establish sustainable engagement. However, during the analysis of key stories from the participants, it became apparent from the 'nurturing story' (Appendix 7.1) that the Business School senior manager involved was doing more than building a rapport. There seemed to be more depth, and a wider agenda, implicit in that narrative.

According to that senior manager, the 'nurturing story' is about establishing a rapport, which suggests activities to be found during the early stages of relationship-building. However, the manager also emphasized that it is crucial to maintain this focus on developing the relationship, on an on-going basis. Initially it may have seemed appropriate to think of this activity as processual, a normal, early-phase part of relationship-building. And there is no

doubt that rapport-building is vital during the initial stages of engagement, something evidenced by the 'breakthrough' effect described as key to convincing a potential client to enter in to a contract. However, it is clear that the senior manager did not intend this approach should be limited to the early stages of the process, and that the relationship-building approaches in the story may have much greater significance in any attempt to better understand engagement. It is for this reason that, as a second level of analysis, the 'rapport-building' theme has been re-labelled 'nurture', as a better reflection of the on-going nature of this activity.

Like the 'relationship story', the 'nurturing story', also demonstrated the importance of personal relationships. The senior manager clearly emphasized the need to build rapport by finding common ground and interests, in order to better connect with the client. This approach needed to be genuine and based on integrity but it also had a clear intention: to put the provider in a better position to help the client. Similarly, the senior manager's argument resonated with Stumpf and Longman's (2000) view that, the extent to which a client will share information, is dependent on the ability of the consultant to build both trust and emotional depth in the relationship.

According to a dictionary definition, nurturing is about encouraging development, caring for and cultivating (Manser & Thomson, 1997), and implies actions associated with supporting and sustaining. In this study, the theme of nurturing helps to reflect the depth and breadth of engagement approaches, which include building both rapport and networks, both of which are crucial for establishing effective relationships. For example according to Wilson (2012), in his recent review of university and business collaboration, networking is fundamental to the process of collaboration. In explaining the importance of networks, Wilson draws upon Smith's understanding of networking as "the human process that creates and maintains relationships based on trust for the exchange of valuable knowledge and collaborative working" (Smith, 2007, p. 9)

Another useful way to explore the theme of nurturing is to relate it to collaboration. The provisional conceptual framework for this study was based upon Connor and Hirsh's (2008) research into university and business engagement, where they proposed a collaborative model

based on open dialogue. Collaboration has been an important strand of research conducted by the Advanced Institute for Management Research. The Institute was established to bring leading UK management academics together, to address issues of management effectiveness in relation to UK business productivity, an area pertinent to this study. For example, Huxham (2003) explored the notion of collaborative advantage and synergy. She concluded that one critical factor in making collaborations work is the requirement to nurture the relationship, suggesting that "the nurturing process must be continuous and permanent" (Huxham, 2003, p. 414) . Rosabeth Moss Kanter's, earlier work on collaborative relationships came to similar conclusions. In developing her argument, Moss Kanter contends that collaborations need to do three things: generate more possibilities beyond the original reason for partnering; add value beyond the traditional customer/supplier exchange; and finally they need to be nurtured. In fact, Moss Kanter argues that relationships across organizational boundaries should be regarded as key business assets, implying that "knowing how to nurture them is an essential managerial skill." (Kanter, 1994, p. 108)

Springboard to new opportunities: Sustainable future

The 'springboard to new opportunities' story (Appendix 7.7 and 9.7) provides an example of how an engagement can result in continuing benefits, and in particular can enable clients to do things they were not able to do before. It illustrates some potential areas for discussion in relation to sustainable client-provider relationships. The client in this story recognized the value of working with the provider, in order to enhance the wider capabilities of their organization.

The notion of sustainable relationships brings together strands from other inter-related themes in this section. For example, the idea of client-specific knowledge, emphasized by client managers. CM3a recognised that a long-term relationship means that the provider has begun to develop a deeper understanding of the client organization. This manager felt that it was critical for a provider to have this deeper understanding of both the client organization and the context in which it operates. Interestingly, the client manager also noted how this interaction with the client was an excellent way for the provider to "keep up-to-speed". This argument resonates with relationship-building, where the length of time invested in the

relationships builds understanding of the client. It also indicates that providers need to bring more to the engagement than just general knowledge. What really seemed to count was specific knowledge of the organisation and its context.

This notion fits well with the credibility theme (in relation to expertise), but it also emphasizes an important distinction: that the client values specific expertise. This argument is supported by Stumpf and Longman (2000) who advocate two ways to encourage a sustained relationship. Firstly, they make a similar point about the need to gain sufficient knowledge about the organization in order to identify where value can be added. Secondly, they make a point that relates to the concept of benevolence, as discussed earlier in relation to credibility. They argue that a provider needs to foster the client's belief that they are committed to the organization's interests, and in developing them further.

A final factor in developing sustainable relationships arises from the senior client manager's discussion of continuing engagement between interventions. The senior client manager acknowledged an inevitable aspect of client interventions: "there will always be cycles unless the product offer goes beyond the cycle." He called for both client and provider to identify opportunities for other interventions, and to find ways of connecting in-between interventions. The traditional consultancy model would tend to suggest that the end of an intervention leads to a termination to the consultancy. However, from a sustainable future perspective, a different view needs to be adopted. Interestingly, Sieg, Fischer and Wallin (2012), within the context of professional services, propose a continuing client dialogue between projects. For this to be effective they advocate a dialogue that stimulates with "important, interesting, challenging, or even entertaining problems" (Sieg, Fischer, & Wallin, 2012, p. 256). This strategy fits well with the earlier discussion of academics presenting their latest thinking to practitioners. Indeed, it is these very activities in which a business school might be seen to have a distinct advantage over other potential competitors. It also addresses part of what may be considered the wider remit of an engaged business school's mission. Such a perspective also resonates with the nurturing theme, with its emphasis on maintaining and growing relationships even when there may not be an immediate return on the activity.

Skills and systems

The 'necessary skill set story' (Appendix 7.6) presents a dilemma between intent and reality. It captures the tensions between the business word and the world of academia, with the main point of the story arguing for a shift of balance. The story points to an important consideration of both the skills and capabilities needed by universities to engage with businesses, and of the processes required to manage client programmes. One tension evident in this story relates to different time dimensions between academia and business, in a similar way to that which Bartunek and Rynes (2014), identify longer timespans as a tension in relation to research. According to this story, longer timespans are also a wider issue than just in the domain of research, they are also reflected in the length of education programmes, and in the time taken to validate a new programme. Then there is also a tension between more traditional academic teaching approaches and teaching and learning styles appropriate for business. The story supports the need for different teaching approaches (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013), and the difficulties in finding staff with the right mix of academic and business skills (Kewin, et al., 2011). The story also suggests that relevance and rigour may not just be an issue related to research, but also applies to teaching, and to the way programmes are validated, since accelerating the validation process may well be considered as potentially compromising the rigour and therefore quality of the process.

Client and business school managers all acknowledged that the skills and capabilities to engage with business were different to traditional academic teaching. The picture emerges of teaching that broadens thinking with academic insights, informs practice with relevant research, but that also facilitates discussion to learn from the experiences and insights of the delegates on the programme. The study indicated that there appear to be too few academics with the skill or the inclination to engage in this kind of executive/practitioner teaching, a view that supports findings from wider research (Kewin, et al., 2011). An interesting perspective on the different skills required is proposed by Piercy. In a provocative article where he challenges some traditional views of the role of academics, Piercy advocates the need for a more engaged academic which he describes as a "talented individual who can span high academic achievement and yet still operate effectively in the practical world of business, as consultants, trainers or applied research" (Piercy, 1999, p. 703). Piercy calls this

kind of academic a chameleon, and interestingly recognizes that they are increasingly pulled between the tension of academic achievement and the world of business. This is a state which Piercy characterizes as resulting in "compromise and tension" (Piercy, 1999, p. 704). The tension described resonates with the discussion to date, with Piercy's 'chameleon' representing the kind of academic who might effectively reframe the tension, as opposed to continually compromising.

A second possibility is to view the academic as a catalyst, which according to Thomas (2003) is a rounded role, engaging externally and contributing to knowledge development in their field. A third perspective is to think of academics as thought leaders. According to Lorange (2005), research will always need to push boundaries and explore, but alongside this more fundamental research a different emphasis will become increasingly critical. He refers to this as thought leadership, by which he means research that is closer to business, "where the test will be whether the new insights have an impact" (Lorange, 2005, p. 785). Lorange draws two important implications from the idea of thought leadership. The first is that this kind of research needs to be "disseminated more quickly, to ensure that it remains cutting edge" (Lorange, 2005, p. 785). Secondly, expressing a view supportive of Weick's (1996) teaching as a scholarship of integration, Lorange advocates that thought leaders should learn while teaching, and effectively research while teaching. Chameleon's, catalysts and thought leaders of course are not the sole answer to meeting the demands of engagement.

The participants in this study expressed the need for a wider range of client engagement roles, which was a feature of the cases discussed in this study. As one client manager stressed: "you need people with client-facing skills which are not necessarily the same as academic/teacher skills." These include unfamiliar roles such as project management, client management and consultancy, as well as more familiar roles such as programme management. They point to the need to manage not just the programme or course but also the client. Although problems were expressed in relation to finding academics with the right teaching skills, there may be an argument that these skills can be developed (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013), whereas "good client managers and not the teachers are the limiting resource for many schools" (Cockerill, 1994)

The final aspect of this theme relates to the supporting systems to enable engagement. The issues revolve around a tension of different time-frames between business and academia, but they also reflect that in clients, universities are dealing with a different kind of customer. University systems are set-up around the individual student, not to cope with the needs of an employer organisation. As the senior university leader commented: "If you're not prepared to set up a system then life becomes difficult." One significant system issue illustrated how tensions (such as relevance and rigour) can apply to the validation of accredited, tailored, programmes. In this example, relevance means a customized programme, approved in a timely manner. Whereas, rigour refers to the proper scrutiny of a new programme before being approved by the university. This tension was resolved by the existence of an existing, robust framework which enabled timely accreditation which still fulfilled the university's quality criteria.

Conceptualising engagement

So far in this study, provisional second order themes (researcher interpretations) have been developed from the first order participant themes, in order to indicate a more conceptual framework. The provisional themes were: demand dilemma; relational engagement; new competencies; client management processes and springboard to new opportunities. The information at this point (see Table 3 p119) is what Clark, Gioia, Ketchen, Jr., and Thomas (2010) refer to as static data and crucially does not capture the interelationship between themes. In order to make these connections, the analysis made in this chapter so far needs to be reflected in the conceptual themes. Up to this point, the preliminary ideas have been expanded and explored in more depth using stories, tensions and a detailed engagement with literatures. As a result the preliminary conceptual themes need to change to reflect this further analysis. Then in order to progress beyond the static data, a dynamic conceptual model is developed, recognising the relationships between the themes and their interconnections.

Revision of the preliminary conceptual themes involves reflection on the analysis in this chapter. There was a clear implied tension expressed in the preliminary theme of 'demand dilemma', which suggested that there is conflict between meeting client needs and being

demand-led, and pursuing research to lead demand. However, the analysis from the study data suggests an alternative approach, one proposing that the two contrasting perspectives (of being demand-led or leading demand) are actually mutually beneficial. This points to a need for the theme to recognise that the two poles of the tension work together rather than against each other, so the term 'demand dilemma' is replaced by the term 'contingent demand'. In so doing the theme now captures the idea that a flexible approach recognises the value of both, and adopts a position of complementarity. Secondly, 'relational engagement' has emerged as a term which continues to capture the core findings from the research, so the term is maintained as the conceptual theme. Thirdly, the preliminary themes, 'new competencies' and 'client management process' have been joined together. Both themes are closely related with the first emphasising the new skills required to engage with employers, and the second, stressing the necessary systems and processes. These themes have now been labelled 'skills and systems'. And finally, the 'spring board to opportunity' theme brought together ideas about generating opportunity and creating value. The theme is about sustaining a future relationship, and has been renamed 'sustainable future'.

However, as noted earlier, the themes at present do not provide any indication of possible patterns between them and therefore how they might be connected. Thus Clark et al's (2010) suggestion that the ideas emerging from the more static data representation can be represented as a dynamic conceptual model are applied. It has become apparent in this chapter that some of the relationships between factors can be deemed as processual whilst others are cyclical or iterative. The dynamic conceptual model attempts to position the factors which make up the themes within a collaborative and relational context. So the diagram is framed with the university represented on one side and the employer on the other. Between them is a sphere of influence and activity represented as a central oval circle of collaborative engagement.

This study is about the relationship between a university and employer organisations. At the heart of the model is a tension between demand-led and leading demand approaches. It is a tension that resonates with the relevance-rigour tension experienced more widely within the business school context. The model represents a method for re-defining the tension,

rather than reliance on pole selection, or on attempts to separate the two, or indeed on compromise. Re-definition is effected by adopting Seo et al's (2004) 'connecting' strategy and by viewing the two poles as mutually enhancing. This is an important relationship to capture and is positioned at the top of the diagram, with 'demand-led' emerging from the employer side and being interpreted through a consultative approach to inform the research and teaching. The 'leading demand' activity arises from the university side and through a research-led approach, interacts with the consultancy and teaching. The connection is represented by a venn diagram at the centre of the model, depicting the inter-relationship between consultancy, research and teaching.

The model envisages a role for business schools that is responsive to demand, but also helps to create and shape that demand. This study shows that clients are often unsure of their needs (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003), which typically results in solutions that are specific to the individual workplace (Brennan & Little, 2006). This suggests a need for a consultative process to identify needs and an emerging role for academic staff to act as consultants (Nixon, Smith, Stafford, & Camm, 2006), interpreting needs and applying latest thinking to meet them. This brings into play the other pole of the tension because latest thinking requires a leading-demand approach. With this model, the interplay between the two poles enriches each other, ensuring that the needs of the client are addressed with latest thinking, and that the research agenda is informed by a consultative process interpreting needs and client issues.

The second major theme emerging from the study is relational engagement. The model depicts the factors that inform this theme, with 'credibility' bridging from the HE provider towards a collaborative engagement and similarly 'relationship building' connecting the employer to the university. Research, teaching and consultancy form the critical core expertise of the business school, which together with a track record, reputation and trust begins to develop the school's credibility. Therefore, as already indicated, the interconnection between research, teaching, and consultancy is portrayed at the centre of the relational diagram, with its focus on improving practice. A 'demand-led' approach flows into the consultancy sphere, interpreting employer needs, whereas 'leading demand' informs

the research domain to help shape, create and lead demand. Academic staff with the right attributes, along with accumulated insights and experiences from engagement with the business world (Connor, 2007), all combine to establish the credibility of the HE provider. The new skills and roles identified in this study, and the associated responsive systems, all underpin the capacity to build credibility and relationships and are shown as enablers from the university side of the diagram. In parallel to 'credibility' is the critical activity of relationship-building. It is through their credibility that academic staff can initiate exploratory conversations with clients, and build rapport. These two important themes are represented on the diagram with credibility emerging from the university side of the diagram, to enable collaboration with the employer, and relationship-building with the employer is similarly shown on the employer side of the diagram. The two themes form a bridge into the central collaborative area of the diagram, signaling their crucial, dynamic role in the process.

The model so far has incorporated two factors associated with relational engagement. Firstly, relationship-building through investment of time, networking connections across levels, and progression through stages of development, each enables the HE provider to capitalize on its credibility. Credibility provides an entrance to the client, developed through reputation, expertise, building trust and confidence. Staff then need to build on that start, connecting with the needs of the organization, listening and demonstrating understanding. However, to sustain a relationship a third factor is incorporated: the idea of nurturing. This is proposed to help providers capture the breadth, depth and continual vigilance necessary for sustaining relational engagement. Nurturing is more than rapport-building and networking, though (according to this model) both are important in a nurturing approach. Therefore nurturing is not a linear activity, happening at certain stages of the relationship development process. Nurturing is a continuing activity creating the conditions for a sustained relationship (Huxham, 2003). This all-embracing relation to the other themes is depicted through the image of 'nurturing' encircling the collaborative sphere between the university and the employer.
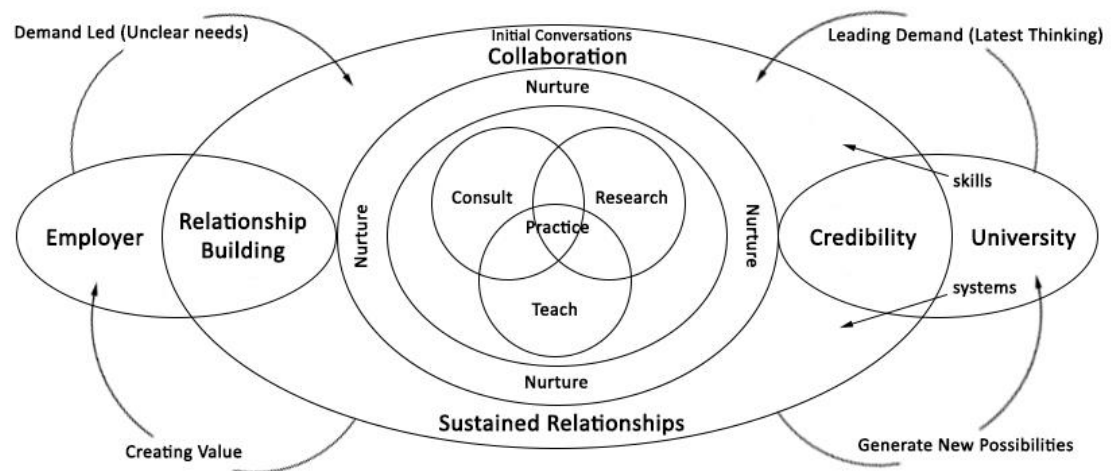
Figure 3.0: Purposeful engagement model

The relational engagement process, of establishing credibility, building relationships and sustaining them through nurturing behaviours, is developed within a wider collaborative context. As a result, this ensures Kanter's (1994) three principles of effective collaborative relationships are applied: generating possibilities; creating extra value; and nurturing. This focus on relational engagement and on meeting the client's needs can then develop towards a stage of enrichment, in which value is added (Stumpf & Longman, 2000), as captured in the theme; 'sustainable future'. The idea of creating value for the employer is represented at the bottom of the diagram, emerging from the collaboration sphere but signaling movement back to the employer. Similarly, the theme relating to new possibilities emerging for the university is indicated at the bottom of the diagram, returning to the university from those same collaborative activities.

The model captures the relationship between important theme and concepts, representing the mutual benefit of inter-relationship between the themes. The model emphasizes circular, cyclical and iterative relationships which emerged from the research as being crucial to the development of an effective relationship. The multi-faceted nature of the model helps to address the limitations of more one-dimensional processual models, which may overlook or obfuscate patterns that are crucial to sustaining relationships. However, the

model does indicate a progression from initiation of a relationship towards the creation of a sustained relationship, which is of mutual benefit to both client and provider. The model clearly shows how value is added to the client, with broader capabilities developed, whilst at the same time HE providers learn and transfer the enhanced credibility and experience towards generating new possibilities and research opportunities. Therefore, a processual element is evident down the central spine of the model, indicating progression towards achieving outcomes from the relationship. This mutually beneficial relationship has been labelled 'purposeful engagement' (figure 3.0), a title which has been adapted from a phrase used by one of the participants in the study.

Chapter 6   Conclusion and Implications

This chapter draws together conclusions and some implications from the study. Before doing so, there will be a brief discussion of the limitations of the study. Then secondly, the main conclusions will be discussed in relation to the research questions. This chapter will also discuss the claims of contribution to knowledge within the constraints of the study limitations already addressed.   Finally, implications for practice will be addressed, both in general and personal terms, followed by a discussion of proposed areas of future research based on this study. Given the personal nature of interpretation and extrapolation in relation to the study, a more effective discussion will be possible through use of a first person narrative for the remainder of the thesis.

Limitations of the research

Inevitably, with research that comprises of a single, embedded case study, there are concerns about the extent to which the findings can be generalized. One primary purpose of the study was to enable understanding of a particular case and to share that new understanding more widely. That said, I do hope that such understanding can offer opportunities for wider impact and in doing so, I adopted Tsoukas's strategy of focusing on the particular, to refine and draw distinction with the general (Tsoukas, 2009). Consequently, a level of detail is presented in the study which will allow readers to make connections and consider the extent to which the findings resonate with their own experience. In that respect, presenting some of the key stories told by participants can help readers to gain a rounded picture of interviewees who were "'making sense' out of experience" (Elliot, 2005, p. 24). The overall approach is based on a 'common-sense' view of generalizability, as argued by Campbell (1975) and by Stake (1994), who contend that readers of case research will find value if the material resonates with their experience. Readers are therefore left to make up their own minds (Elliot, 2005), an approach which Tsoukas implies may be particularly relevant for a practitioner audience. As Tsoukas concludes, "practitioners are invited to reformulate distinctions relevant to reported cases to take account of their own experience and thus make even more refined distinctions" (Tsoukas, 2009, p. 299).

The study was relatively small scale and as a consequence, might also be open to claims of bias in selection of the sample. For example, the study investigated three employer (client) organisations, all of which were only from the UK public sector. Nonetheless, these organisations were intentionally selected as a purposive sample because of their potential to provide information-rich cases for study, a central principle of purposive sampling. (Patton, 2002). I have also considered Ragin's distinction between quantitative and qualitative research which centres on whether the research intends to "understand specific cases or to document general patterns characterizing a population" (Ragin, 1999, p. 1138). The former requires a deliberate selection, the latter needs to demonstrate representation. In particular, Ragin captures what I felt to be a critical motivator for my research: "… whenever a compelling motivation exists to make the facts of a case or a small number of related cases understandable,a case-oriented research strategy is essential" (Ragin, 1999, p. 1139).

A particular tension with qualitative case study research is balancing the need to present findings in a concise yet comprehensive manner (Baxter & Jack, 2008). That was a constant tension with this study. On reflection, one way to mitigate this issue may have been to present the key stories first and then use them as the basis of the initial theme setting. This may have helped structure the volume of data early in the study. However in this study the focus on stories emerged as part of the analysis.

The research questions

The aim of the study was to explore UK employer and HE provider engagement in the context of the Leitch report. This was done by addressing four research questions.

1. Why does an employer engage with an HE provider?
2. What factors support and facilitate HE provider and employer engagement?
3. What are the implications for the capabilities needed in business schools?
4. How can relationships be built and sustained between HE provider and employer organisations?

Firstly the conclusions of the study will be explored in relation to the context shaped by the Leitch review, and then the four research questions will be explored in turn.

So what has been learned about responses to Leitch from the work in this study? Key aspects of the Leitch review are still prominent in Government policy, particularly related to demand-led provision of skills with employers, which is the setting of this study (Grant, Maxwell, & Ogden, 2014). In the literature review I argued that there was a more nuanced context to consider than the demand-led focus of Leitch which primarily frames the issue as a problem of supply. This study confirms that employers needs are indeed complex, often unclear, and interestingly that employers have an expectation that providers will work with them to identify those needs. Therefore the study questions the assumption, implicit in recent policy, that it is possible to generate generic needs from employers. But the study suggests something more - from the evidence addressed it proposes that employers are seeking providers who can give that support. They are also, from the evidence of this study, searching for the latest thinking. A number of commentators have argued that that there are a range of factors which, when combined, can enhance the effective use of skills and performance in an organization (Warhurst & Findlay, 2012) (Payne & Keep, 2011). These factors include, for example: improving leadership and management; improving work practices and organization (Payne & Keep, 2011); and developing strategic thinking (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003). All are areas in which a business school can make a significant contribution. Therefore it's clear that there is potential for business schools to play a role navigating this landscape. On the one hand, responding to demand but on the other, the possibility of creating, shaping and informing demand.

1 - Why does an employer engage with an HE provider?

The answer to this question was clearly conveyed by the client managers and supported by responses from the business school managers. However, the question has been answered in two parts. The first relates to criteria used by clients when deciding whether or not to engage with another provider, while the second relates to reasons underpinning choice of a HE provider. The selection story is an effective way to sum up the client manager responses. The factors underpinning choice of a given provider revolved around: credibility; expertise; flexibility; reputation; tailored solutions; partnering abilities; willingness to listen; and price. These reasons formed a critical base upon which clients seemed to make their decision. It

also seems that central to these criteria was recognition by all client managers that their needs were unclear, and that they required an organisation which would listen to, and work with them, to clarify those needs. Secondly, the client managers articulated reasons that specifically related to HE providers. In addition they valued theory when applied to experience, whilst recognizing the importance of research which informs practice (though also appreciating the importance of practice being refreshed by research). They also respected ideas that broadened thinking but valued experience. Their expectation was for latest thinking, not yesterday's skills, and they noted that all too often this seemed to be deficient in the courses offered by some providers. I think it was clear from this research that the qualities of academia were appreciated and valued by clients but, crucially, only when applied and made relevant to the client's operating context. And notably, when ideas inform practice and have an impact, or when the world of academia is effectively blended with the world of business. What was also apparent was the potentially advantageous position occupied by HE providers, even though the evidence from this study suggests that they often do not realize this.

2 - What factors support and facilitate HE provider and employer engagement?

This question seeks to understand more about what is needed to create the conditions for effective engagement. The response to this question by client managers was emphatic: it was all about the quality of the relationship. I had anticipated that the value of relationships would feature in the findings, but the level of confirmation and affirmation of this theme led to an analysis of the factors that inform this strategic approach to relationships. I have called this: relational engagement. Relationships clearly mattered to the participants in the study, but perhaps equally so to universities. In the U.K., businesses repeatedly identified poor relationships with universities as a source of weakness and a recurring frustration (Lambert, 2003) (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013) (Wedgwood M. , 2007). Within that context, the three strands of relational engagement derived from the study, credibility, relationship building and nurturing all pose important questions for HE providers. Are you credible? Can you build relationships? And can you sustain them?

This study also suggests how relational engagement can be achieved, proposing the range of factors that can support and facilitate engagement. Within this analysis, four aspects illustrate the depth and breadth of the relationship activity. They also indicate a nuanced perspective on important features that can be easily missed or lost, when generalising. The first of these, the need to establishing credibility, is based on the provider's ability to demonstrate knowledge and expertise, but not just general knowledge. Crucially, most value was placed on specific knowledge about the organisation and its context. Secondly, the study indicated that individual relationships seemed to be particularly important, even though in the literature, relationships are often discussed in terms of organisational relationships. In this study, credibility and relationship-building were effective because of key individuals, suggesting that the right people were critical to success, and reinforcing the importance of inter-personal, as well as inter-organisational relationships. The third aspect reflected the importance of networks. There was striking evidence in the study of how the individual managers already discussed forged a wide network of relationships with key managers, across a range of organizational levels. The fourth aspect grew in importance as the analysis progressed. Engaging with a client to successfully deliver an intervention/contract is difficult enough, but building on and sustaining that relationship requires more than credibility and relationship-building techniques. Sustaining the client/provider relationship requires behaviours which I have labelled as nurturing behaviours. The 'nurturing story', told by the senior business school manager, offered an understanding of how long-term relationships can be more fully developed. Nurturing was an on-going feature of this story, implying much greater breadth and depth of relationship-building than the more simplistic building of rapport or establishment of networks. As illustrated by the senior manager, nurturing requires integrity and a genuine interest and concern for the client, but this is always clearly defined by an underpinning aim: to be in a better position to help the client.

3 - What are the implications for the capabilities needed in business schools?

There was clear agreement that providers needed different skills and different roles if they were to work effectively with clients. There was also agreement from the business school managers that these client-facing skills were in short supply, something which is

generally seen as problematic for business schools (Kewin, et al., 2011) (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013). These skills and roles were needed in order to bridge the gap between business and academia. And to help achieve a better balance between the business and academic worlds through use of more appropriate teaching styles that challenge thinking, whilst being contextualized to practitioner's experiences. The broader issue here is worth reiterating: that there are "too few academic staff with a full balance of understanding of commercial context, and with the skills to effectively conduct executive-education programmes that will satisfy experienced managers" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 56). The business school managers interviewed had attempted to resolve these issues by identifying associates who did have the skills to address the need. There seems broad agreement that different skills and roles are needed and that they are a priority area of focus if business schools are to engage effectively with employers.

4 - How can relationships be built and sustained between HE provider and employer organisations?

The 'springboard to new things' story provided an interesting perspective on the value of continuing relationships. The main point made in this story was that good relationships result in the partners developing new capabilities, which are mutually beneficial. This closely reflects the benefits that Moss Kanter (1994) argues should be evident in a collaboration: the generation of possibilities and the creation of extra value. In good relationships, value is added to the client along with the development of broader capabilities, whilst learning is shared and transferred in the organization. Similarly, the HE provider benefits by using the enhanced credibility and experience it gets from the relationship (an important aspect for reputation-building) for the generation of new possibilities. These possibilities can be with new clients or in the extension of the existing relationship, evidenced by the business school in this study which gained new work with the client.

However, sustained relationships are demanding and the findings from the study indicate that nurturing behaviours are crucial to achieving long term relationships. Such behaviours focus on supporting the client so that the relationship continues to grow and develop, even when there may not be an immediate return on the activity. One particularly interesting

idea, voiced by the senior client manager, addresses the issue arising from the end of a client project or programme. A natural response may well be to presume that the relationship has simply concluded. However, the indication from this study is that the desire to continue the relationship may well be still evident, outside of any immediate next contract. Activities that maintain a continuing dialogue between projects are seen as an important way to keep adding value (Sieg, Fischer, & Wallin, 2012) and also allows the provider to demonstrate a deeper knowledge and understanding of the organization (Stumpf & Longman, 2000). Such continued dialogue should resonate with the wider remit of a business school, with its potential for a distinctive approach to up-dating skills and knowledge, and for wider networking and research opportunities.

Contribution to knowledge

An analysis of the literature relevant to employer engagement indicates two significant issues. Firstly, that there are knowledge gaps in the literature, and secondly the literature indicates that the relationship between business and universities is problematical. Engagement between HE and employers is clearly challenging. Firstly, in terms of problems, there is evidence that businesses place a lower value to HE provision than they do to provision from the private sector (Connor & Hirsh, 2008). There are concerns over programmes that lack relevance and practical application (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013), demonstrating poor levels of understanding (Lambert, 2003) (The Royal Society, 2008), resulting in a shortage of "good relationships" (Thorpe & Rawlinson, 2013, p. 10). As worrying as these client/provider engagement problems may be, there is concern about the shortage of research which explores the employer perspective (Connor & Hirsh, 2008), with Bartunek and Rynes (2014) expressing surprise that, amongst so much debate on engagement and relevance, there is a significant lack of the practitioner perspective.

In itself, the specific problem of poor relationships justifies a claim for contribution to knowledge, given that the study effectively investigates the factors that support a 'good' relationship. But the study also crucially gives voice to the employer's perspective. In addition, this study also fits into a national agenda where there is growing concern that the current policies on skills need to reflect a more nuanced and complex landscape. The

relevance of the study is emphasised by a parallel and related debate about the the role of business schools in relation to the business community. The study confirms the limitations of a skills dominated strategy, and proposes a role for business schools which provides two complimentary strategies. Firstly, responding to complex and unclear demand ,and secondly, exploring ways in which to provide leadership of demand. I suggest this demands a consultative and relationship led approach, that is both responsive in identifying and meeting need, and able to lead demand by introducing ideas that start to create future demand.

Therefore, the main contribution to knowledge in this study is the conceptualisation of a relational model of engagement. I argue that this needs a collaborative and consultative theoretical framework, with relational engagement as central to the process. The importance of relational engagement is pervasive throughout the model. This illustrates its importance as a key determinant of success in client/provider engagement, and reflects the prominence placed on such an approach by the practitioners and academics consulted in this study.

The study also proposes approaches to more effectively combine the inter-relationship between consulting, researching, teaching and practice. It responds to the assertion by Burke and Rau (2010) that there needs to be a better understanding of the role played by teaching and research in bridging the relevance gap, and more tangible ways to make this happen. But perhaps more importantly, this study extends their conception of this issue by introducing a more significant role for consultative approaches. It proposes that academia's contribution to business improvement will be enhanced by combining consulting with the more traditional academic methods of teaching and research.

Finally, this study informs the concerns of Bartunek and Rynes (2014), regarding the lack of employer perspective in the debate on academic relevance to business needs. This study specifically sought employer views and in doing so concluded that the demand-led/leading-demand tension, as expressed in much of the existing literature, needs to be reframed. The employers in this study indicated they valued latest thinking *and* wanted their specific needs to be met, suggesting the two positions of the tension could be mutually enhancing rather than a polar opposites approach to academic relevance.

Implications for practice

This study was inspired by my desire to resolve a frustration. This was caused by my perception that the relationship between business schools and employers offered so much potential for mutual benefit, yet seemed to be so fraught with tensions and difficulties. For me this left a prevailing and pervading sense of underachievement and of unfulfilled potential with the relationship. My own frustration was echoed in the question posed by the senior client manager: "how does academia provide to business its greatest strength?" What is particularly interesting is that the employers in this study indicated that, what they valued most from their relationship with a business school, was access to the 'latest thinking'. Yet by implication, this latest thinking was actually a business need for both parties. Latest academic or research thinking to improve business, and latest business thinking and practice to improve business teaching. Business is in need of the latest thinking, but is too busy 'doing' to find time to think, but business schools can and should be able to address this. They have the opportunity to develop, apply and integrate latest thinking with employers, in a collaborative, mutually beneficial, relational context.

Both business school and employer appear to be in a position where each would value the way forward that I have proposed: business school delivery of a dual demand-led/leading-demand approach. The relational engagement model provides a way for business schools and businesses to consider how they can work together for mutual benefit. However, the challenge is to think of the research process as ongoing, since it "only remains meaningful to the extent that it is used, and the likelihood of its being used in managerial life is increased if it concentrates on the problems being experienced by managers and their organizations" (Thorpe, 2011)

Implications for my own practice: reflections on thinking and practice

As discussed in the methodology, it is important to consider the tension evident in my dual roles throughout this project. Namely, that of a manager directly involved in the organisation being studied, and of being the researcher conducting the study. This tension is often expressed by thinking of the insider and outsider research perspectives as a continuum

(Greene, 2014). This is a position that can helpfully be described as cycling between insider and outsider research positions (Evered & Louis, 1981). An honest reflection would indicate that my own self-awareness of the implications of this tension was relatively low during the initial stages of the study. Therefore, this section seeks to reflect on aspects of that journey towards greater self-awareness, and to draw some implications and lessons for my practice.

During the early part of the investigation, my thoughts were more concerned with the content of the study, even though I had articulated my position as a practitioner-researcher. In doing so I also recognized that I was researching my own organisation and that my background therefore brought preferences and perspectives to my stance in the study. As I highlighted in the introduction to this study, before moving into academia I had worked for a large consultancy business, with well-developed client management processes, so my understanding of the context was influenced by this experience. Probably just as importantly, my successful engagement with employers whilst working with the Business School also reinforced my perceptions. Of course, such positions are not necessarily problematic, more positively offering possibilities for insights which may only be afforded by my closeness to the study. However, the practitioner-researcher dynamic does necessitate an on-going evaluation and reflection on the nature of my own involvement, and not simply a focus on analysis of data (Hodkinson, 2005), (King, 2004, p. 20). In addition, another, closely related aspect emerged in the study. Not only was there a need to consider my own involvement and the content of the study, there was a need to reflect on the actual research process. My personal reflections and how I interpret them, what Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) refer to as reflexivity, will thus be illustrated using these three related aspects of the study: the nature of my involvement; the way participants views are interpreted; and finally an ever-watchful, on-going review of the research process. Interestingly, according to Mauthner and Doucet (2003), these three aspects of a research endeavour (the researcher, the data and the method), should be considered as interrelated and reflexively connected.

My awareness of the dilemma posed by the nature of my involvement grew over the course of the study, and can be illustrated through a reflection on two areas. Firstly with respect to some aspects of the research process, which with hindsight were instrumental in

awakening my need to reflect on my role, and secondly relating to a practical issue which arose during the study, involving a change in my circumstances. A core aspect of the research process was the semi-structured interviews of key players in the relationship between the Business School and the employer. Because the interviews were across organisations (interviewing client managers and my own colleagues, the Business School managers), this study does not exactly fit the conventional understanding of an insider researcher's position of researching within your own organisation. The client organisations, which were a main part of the study, could be considered as some way between an insider and outsider perspective. I was not a part of those organisations and so in that sense was an outsider researcher. Yet the client managers were obviously a part of the relationship between the two organisations, which was the focus of the study. Importantly, these client managers were not in the same organisation, which in itself provided a different perspective, one which I had decided to position as a primary aspect of the research since I, first and foremost, wanted to understand better the client/employer view. Looking back on the research process, the fact that views were sourced from within and outside my own organisation was helpful to me, ensuring I heard and paid attention to this range of different perspectives. By default, the interview selections positioned me between the Business School and the client, and provided a natural framework encouraging me to move along the insider/outsider continuum. Of itself this did not mean that I was initially aware of such a transition, but it did provide the means by which I gradually became more aware of the distinction. Here the interconnection between my role in the study and the research process prompts some lessons for the future. Seeking differing perspectives and viewpoints, especially if some of those views are outside of the organisation, and building them into the research process, can therefore be instrumental in encouraging an on-going reflection of my position across the insider/outsider continuum. There is considerable value in viewing the research process/method as a way of building processes that enable this to happen, emphasising the argument made by Green that "there is much to be gained from being close to one's research, as there is much to be gained from keeping one's distance and having and outside perspective" (Greene, 2014, p. 10).

The second area of interest came from a change in my circumstances. As I have already discussed, my change of job part-way through the study brought an unplanned separation and

distance from all organisations in the project. As a consequence, the majority of the interviews were conducted after I had left the Business School, lessening the likelihood of role duality being an issue. The tangible separation facilitated by moving out of that organisation enabled me to more clearly reflect upon my knowledge, having previously been immersed in the case, and to gain the advantage of reflection by distancing myself to more objectively consider the emerging findings. This separation by distance from the role, was also supported by a separation of time. The events, which were the focus of the study, had occurred at least three years earlier in all the sub-cases, allowing a clearer separation away from my role in the sub-cases as a manager, and my role during the interviews as researcher. This second distancing of time is what Hodkinson (2005) identifies as a valuable way of helping insider researchers to step back. Although Hodkinson recognises that it is not always possible to do this, and so advocates thinking in ways that can also help provide this separation. For example, he suggests that research activities such as: making field notes; engaging with literatures; and using theoretical research questions to reconcile and grapple with research findings can encourage a fluid movement from insider to outsider perspectives.

In carrying out this study I feel I was fortunate to have some clear steps of separation. This perhaps suggests it may be worthwhile seeking such opportunities in other research projects, in order to build or capitalise on the benefits of such separation or distancing events/activities. One way to reflect upon this may be to consider approaches used in this study to analyse tensions, which may equally help with the tension expressed in the insider/outsider positions. It is apparent, from both my reflection on the research process and my role in the study, that there are three means of addressing the tension evident. The first two, temporal and spatial separation are advocated by Poole and Van de Ven (1989). Both were evident in this project as time elapsed after the events, and I was spatially separated from the organisations through my job change, both of which reduced the tension between the insider/outsider dynamic. The third way to address evident tensions captures Hodkinson's suggestion of using research activities, and is related to a processual approach whereby order and structure in the research process encourage the flexible movement between the two positions. In my future research I would therefore seek naturally occurring opportunities which might enable interaction between insider/outsider research perspectives,

and build them into the research process. Whilst employing each of these methods, there is also the need to be continually reflective, and to be mindful of the need to use the elements of the research process as a means to move fluidly between the two positions.

The next reflection explores how the analysis of data leads to a consideration of the interconnection with the researcher and the research process. I have already addressed this incident earlier in the methodology chapter, in my discussion of how the 'nurturing' theme developed. This was a significant stage in the research, coming when one of the senior managers whom I had interviewed towards the end of the process told a powerful story. As I listened to that story I realized that there was something important about it. However, it is only on reflection that I recognized my response to the data from the participant was in fact the adoption of a reflexive approach. This reflexive response is evident in both the interpretation of the data and in the resultant changes which I made to the research process. Firstly, the story resonated with my own experience and sense of what needs to happen when engaging with a client. However, whilst the story captured the experience of the senior manager in building a rapport with a client, I felt that it did more than that. Given my background in working with clients, I would readily recognize the value of building rapport. My stance therefore at this point was to be close to the research as an insider researcher. However, the realisation that there was more to be understood from the story led me to step back in order to consider relevant literature and attempt to gain a broader sense from what the senior manager was trying to explain in recounting the story. It was a combination of thinking about the story-message as a whole, together with reading relevant literatures, which led me to develop the much more over-arching theme of 'nurturing'. Without pausing and stepping back, it would have been easy to have settled for the theme of 'building rapport'. Undoubtedly this is a vital element, but one which is generally relevant in the initial stages of relationship-building. Interestingly, this more reflective analysis not only resulted in the theme of 'nurturing' but, with further consideration, it also helped me distinguish between the processual nature of 'building rapport' (something that happens at the start of a relationship) and the circular, iterative nature of 'nurturing', which is on-going at all points of the relationship.

Not only did reflexivity enhance the analysis of the data, it also led to a re-assessment of the research method. At this point in the study I had questions about my research approach which, though I had not articulated them, were in the background. These centred around a lack of clarity about how I would carry out a direct interpretive analysis. Inevitably, as the data collection phase progressed, the questions of analysis become more urgent. I recognized from the senior manager's use of story, both its potential to inform the study, and a realization that I had actually heard many stories during the interviews, without initially thinking of them in that way. This prompted a check of the transcripts and did indeed reveal that participants had used stories to convey their perceptions. This process has similarities with Schon's reflection-in-action, where he argues that surprise often triggers reflection during the course of an event or experience (Schon, 1995). He further proposes the need for a process of "reflecting on reflection-in-action" (Schon, 1995, p. 30), which occurs after the event in an attempt to make explicit what may have been implicit at the time of reflecting in the action. Thus, the stepping back to a more objective position (the outsider research perspective), was prompted firstly by being close to and immersed in the case, which then resulted in a reflexive assessment of both data and research method. Asking questions about the data, and then about the research process, suggests the need for an "on-going reflexive" (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 146) attitude. This reflection also illustrates the potential to note a signal to pause, for example when data is striking or when questions are raised. Such incidents should prompt a deliberate stepping back and a reflexive response, and may also suggest a need to review the research process and not just the research content.

A final reflection returns to the nature of my role in the study. As I indicated in the introduction, my background and experience suggested at the beginning of this research process that I favoured an engaged approach to working with organisations, advocating a consultative engaged approach. My early position and assumptions would lead me to conclude that there is a need to re-dress the balance, moving towards a more relational, engaged approach that is close to client and practitioners, whilst being listening and responsive. Given my original perspective, there was a risk that my analysis of the data would demonstrate a bias towards views that supported this position. Indeed, I would argue that there was much to support my assumptions. But on reflection, what is interesting is the gradual development of

my views. My appreciation and recognition of the value of a more dispassionate evaluation of latest thinking, that can lead demand, grew over the duration of the study.

Pivotal to this changing perspective was listening to participants who pointed towards valuing both approaches, responsive demand-led, and latest thinking. Stepping back and reading more widely in the literatures then prompted me to re-assess the implicit assumptions behind my view. In particular, a different perspective emerged in contrast to the tendency to see either/or approaches. This different view positioned the merits of being close and responsive to practitioners alongside a more removed, objective, scholarly pursuit of knowledge. Bringing the literatures together with the data allowed me to recognize that both are needed and that they should be viewed from a position of complementarity: the one enhances and improves the other. On reflection, this was not part of what I had expected to find. Interestingly, the position that I have developed as a result of the study is one of holding the apparent tension between two contrasting positions, and of reframing the issue. This is not dissimilar to the treatment of the insider/outsider tension, resisting the polarisation between 'going native' or 'going academic', and instead seeing the benefits of cycling between the two (Hodkinson, 2005), (Evered & Louis, 1981).

F*uture areas for research*

There a number of aspects of this research that offer opportunities for further research. Firstly, there is the direct extension of the current research, and development of mechanisms which will facilitate more effective impact of research on practice. It would seem appropriate that, given the discussion of relevance or how practitioners are engaged with new ideas about practice, a study on engagement should lead to a further study of application, and review the ideas in practice.

Secondly, there is a significant and interesting area in relation to business school strategies, and how these might relate to an approach to engagement. Within an uncertain landscape it is interesting to note ideas which present a range of different futures for business schools. One possible framework attempts to balance some of the critical tensions characterized in the debate (such as tensions between teaching and research) on one axis,

with organisational impact and scholarly impact on the other (Ivory, Miskell, Neely, & White, 2007). The four models proposed by Ivory et al, may be a helpful initial framework for consideration of possible different futures in this respect (O'Mahoney & Adams, 2011).

A third area for possible future research emerged in the analysis, which might consititute a promising progression of the current research. In the analysis I proposed that it is worth reconsidering Warhurst and Findlay's argument. They argued that too much research (in the context of their work) tended to be dispassionate critique, whereas too little has been engaged with trying to improve practice (Warhurst & Findlay, 2012). I suggested that one approach might consider a cycle in which academics first step back to reflect and consider, and then step forward to engage. Indeed, Hughes et al argue that there is a pressing need for more research in this area, expressing surprise that "there has been little research into the actual ways in which knowledge passes between academics and practitioners in the management field" (Hughes, Bence, Grisoni, O'Regan, & Wornham, 2011). With respect to this study, both Vermeulen (2007)and Tranfield and Starkey (1998) explored possible models to facilitate engagement between research and practice. These clearly have some resonance with the demand-led/leading demand developed in this study.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, there is clearly both opportunity and cause for business schools to combine listening to business need (a demand led approach) with application of the latest research, which will lead demand. Client/provider engagement should be a collaborative process, whereby business schools can help business by engaging in a thought leadership (Lorange, 2005) which helps to lead demand. The challenge and the opportunity for business schools may well be to develop both "demand-led" and "leading demand" approaches.

It is apparent that business schools which are unclear about either view-point will leave them in a kind of limbo. They risk being neither responsive to the needs of business, nor the source of insightful, fresh thinking to lead and help shape demand in the future. This would seem to result in Seo et al's "middle of the road" (2004, p. 76) compromise.

To what extent is a business school able to do both? The engagement of business with a business school is an opportunity, and the two worlds do have distinctive things they can offer each other. What makes them different is what makes engagement so valuable. Grey's (2001) argument about universities being different and distinctive is important, yet difference does not have to mean separation, as he implies. As I have argued, a business school can be distinctive but can still maintain a mutually beneficial focus on being responsive to demand, whilst creating and disseminating the latest thinking that leads demand.

That said, the promise of a distinctive, mutually beneficial relationship between business schools and business is unlikely to be realized without effective relational engagement or, as a participant in this study concluded, "it's all about the relationship".

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Previous critical literature review

Demanding skills; engaging business

A review of the implication of the Leitch Review of Skills to Business Schools

Doctorate in Education (Post-compulsory education)

Assignment 1

Contents

Demanding skills; engaging business.

This paper reviews the government's focus on skills to deliver increased productivity (HM Government, 2007), and its emphasis on a demand-led provision and a culture of engagement, based on the Government commissioned, influential Leitch report (2006) to review the place of skills in increasing productivity. The aim is to investigate the assumptions made and the implications to higher education and particularly Business Schools. In doing, so the central place of skills will be scrutinized, especially the assumed close relationship with productivity (Leitch, 2006).

The issues raised are of particular interest to me in my role as an Executive Education Manager, within a relatively new and small Business School with a growing focus on engaging with business. I work closely with organizations, developing client programmes, and building relationships with those organizations, and am interested in exploring the implications of the Government policy for higher level skills in the workplace. In particular I intend to assess the potential for Business Schools to provide a lead in supporting organizations in higher level skills development. My position is supportive towards engagement with organizations to encourage higher level skills development. However, I am concerned to understand more fully the issues and tensions that exist in the underlying assumptions behind some of the assertions made in the Leitch report (2006) and in the debate within Business school's as to their role and level of engagement with a demand-led approach to higher level skills.

To explore these areas this paper will review relevant literature to address three research questions. Firstly, is the Leitch agenda demanding too much of skills, should skills be the main focus of Government policy to raise productivity? Secondly, what is the evidence that a demand-led approach as advocated by the Leitch report is appropriate? Thirdly to then assess

the Leitch agenda in the context of Higher Education, asking what are the implications for Business Schools?

Two assertions made within the Leitch report (2006) are particularly important in relation to the research questions. Firstly there is the core assertion that raising the level of skills is the main driver of productivity, and secondly that a demand-led system is needed, where employer demands are prominent. The research methodology used will be to start with these assertions, in particular to examine the sources and literature used by the Leitch report (2006)from which the assertions have been developed, especially the core claim that increasing skills increases productivity. This assertion is based largely on a single source, a report from the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) (O'Mahony & de Boer, 2002). The NIESR report will be assessed, to determine if there is sufficient evidence to support the claim made in the Leitch report (2006) and to examine if there are alternative claims which could be made. Source references used by the Leitch report (2006) provide the initial selection of literature to establish to what extent they support the claims made in the report.

Beyond the initial documents referenced to support the claims in the report, the literature search will then review wider Government papers, broadly fitting two strands, one of independent reports commissioned by the Government and a second strand of government documents designed to inform policy, to explore the development of the ideas expressed in the Leitch report (2006) . Independent research groups have then been selected, with particular emphasis on groups with skills, economic and productivity remits, to analyse aspects of the Leitch report (2006) . A third strand of papers articulates a different approach and emphasis adopted in Scotland to that of England. Fourthly there are literatures from interested groups which either contributed their views to the Leitch report and/or then generated further research in response to the Leitch recommendations. Finally the issues emerging from the literature review are applied to the context of Higher education considering literature about the suitability of Business Schools to address them.

Having outlined the general approach to the literature review, now the rational for the critical reading of the literatures need to be outlined. This is based on using different

literature sources to assess the validity of the claims made in the Leitch report (2006).

Central to this is the critical assumption in the Leitch report (2006)of the suggested link between skills and productivity. This assumption, as already suggested, is largely based on an interpretation of research conducted by the independent research institute NIESR, which has research programmes in the field of economic modeling and education, training and employment. The findings of the original NIESR research paper by O'Mahony and de Boer (2002) are reviewed, and contrasting interpretations from other literature of the same NIESR source are compared with that of the assumptions made in the Leitch report (2006).

Then the Government papers are reviewed to trace the development of ideas and the process of their translation towards policy are investigated, firstly from Government papers which more closely reflect policy and include the Leitch report (2006), the government reponse to Leitch (HM Government, 2007) and the white paper on skills (Department for Education and Skills, Department for Trade and Industry, H.M. treasury, and Department for Work and Pensions., 2003) . Secondly the Leitch review is an independent report in response to a government remit, and follows two related independent reports, one report by Porter and Ketels (2003) was commissioned by the government to review and report on the state of UK competitiveness. This report formed the backdrop to the Leitch reports' emphasis on skills and productivity (Leitch, 2006), and also uses the same NIESR research to support linking skills to productivity. A second report in the Higher Education (HE) sector by Lambert (2003) provided an assessment of University and business engagement. Leitch acknowledges and builds on aspects of both of these reports. A final strand of government papers cover policy informing documents from within government which provide an indication of earlier views and ideas particularly from the cabinet office (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2001) and HM treasury (HM Treasury, 2000) in relation to skills and productivity.

The focus of the critique of the literature review now broadens. Having investigated source literature used by the Leitch report, and Government literature to chart the development of the ideas, changes and differences as policy building progressed to actual policy; a wider independent literature is drawn upon to critique the emerging issues and contentions in the Leitch report. In particular, as the government and Leitch place skills within an economic

productive context, it is fruitful to consider independent literature from this area. In responding to the perceived economic value of skills, the London School of Economics' (LSE) centre for economic performance[8] (CEP) has an emerging research agenda to investigate business performance, productivity and skills. Some of their research has been developed with major consulting partners such as McKinsey's.

Additionally, an academic body of writing based around vocational and education and training (VET) has developed, providing an independent and often critical view of government policy in England. The Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE)[9] and its Assistant Director Professor Ewart Keep provide a prominent strand of research in the field. Keep and colleagues in the centre have particularly critiqued the government stance based on the Leitch report (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006). It is interesting to note that Professor Ewart Keep, an influential thinker in the field of vocational education, has been asked to provide a number of papers to help inform the Scottish Government policy. This emerging literature associated with Scotland and its different approach to skills and productivity forms alternative interpretations from similar source economic data to that used in the Leitch report.

The findings from the critique of the assumptions and assertions made in the Leitch report are then reviewed in relation to literature specifically from the context of Business Schools within Higher Education. There is an on-going debate in business Schools about their place within the wider academy and their relevance to business organizations (Starkey & Tempest, The future of the business school: knowledge challenges and opportunities, 2005). The Governments policy on skills, particularly higher level skills, has the potential to increase the intensity of this debate, particularly when claims are made suggesting that structures in higher education will not be able to cope with the policy implementation (Leitch, 2006). Therefore, the finally group of literature, from both the US and Europe, begins to

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[8] The Centre for Economic Performance has two relevant research programmes, one focuses on the impact of management and organisation performance, which it argues is an under researched area, and secondly its productivity and innovation programme, set up to address the research question: why is UK productivity lagging behind its main competitors. (Centre for Economic Performance, 2009)

[9] The aim of SKOPE is to examine the links between the acquisition and sue of skills and performance, it is an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded independent research group. (The Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance, 2009)

characterize some of the issues in University Business Schools. The UK and a wider European perspective are examined from the viewpoint of papers by the Dean's of several European Business Schools, providing an indication of how strategy might be forming in Business Schools. A second forward looking view is captured from a recent ESRC funded research project into Business Schools and the dynamics of knowledge production[10]. Emerging from this literature review is a range of implications for Business Schools within the context of the policy initiative of raising higher level skills in the economy.

Competitiveness and productivity

The government's response to the Leitch review was the first major document to be produced by the new Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DUIS). World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch review of skills in England (HM Government, 2007) uses language which suggests significant change. It asserts that a "skills revolution" is needed to "close the skills gaps at all levels, right across the nation, by 2020", "to deliver a step-change in the nation's attitude towards education and skills." (HM Government, 2007, p. 5) The world class skills agenda could be seen as a corner stone policy of the new department, as reflected in its reason for being established: to "bring together the key drivers of a successful, knowledge-based economy, and leading work to ensure that the nation has the skilled workforce it needs to compete." (HM Government, 2007, p. 5).

The Government established the Leitch review of skills in 2004 to consider what the long term intent should be for developing skills which "maximise economic prosperity, productivity and improves social justice." (Leitch, 2006, p. 1). The treasury-sponsored inquiry published in 2006 articulated a challenging agenda for the development of world class skills in the UK by 2020. Leitch investigated the UK skill base as a whole, from basic to intermediate and higher levels, and whilst it placed its main emphasis on basic skills and skills up to level three, there are far reaching proposals for higher education. The report strongly suggested that current structures in Universities will not be able to cope with the needs of the proposed demand-led

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[10] The ESRC funded research programme (The Dynamics of Knowledge Production in the Business School: A Comparative Study) contains reports specifically exploring the future role of Business Schools. (Economic and Social Research Council, 2009)

agenda (Leitch, 2006). Increased engagement between Universities and business will be needed, if the report's proposals can be addressed.

The need for Skills

Leitch affirms that "skills is the most important lever within our control to create wealth and to reduce social deprivation." (Leitch, 2006, p. 2). In his interim report Leitch painted a stark picture. The UK "is the fourth largest economy in the world and has the highest employment rate in the G7 group of industrialised nations." (leitch, 2005, p. 4). Yet over one third of adults do not have a basic school-leaving qualification - double the proportion of Canada and Germany. Five million have no qualification at all, and one in six do not have the literacy skills expected of an eleven year old (Leitch, 2006). There is also an over representation of low skilled people in the UK when compared to other developed countries with OECD figures suggesting "that the proportion of low-skilled people in the UK is three times higher than in the United States, and almost double the proportions in Germany and Japan." (Centre for Economic Policy, 2007, p. 3) It is argued that this is reflected in a significantly lower proportion of intermediate skills in the UK workforce. Perhaps more concerning, according to Layard, McIntosh and Vignoles (2001) is that young adults entering the labour market in the UK are no more numerate than older people. It would appear that at lower skill levels there are concerns both about current and future literacy and numeracy levels.

The skills picture seems to vary with different countries. Porter (2003) argues that skill levels in the UK lag behind the US at higher skill levels, and with France and Germany at low and intermediate skill levels. Porter concludes that the main gap the UK has in skills, is not so much with the skills entering the labour market but rather "the current stock of employees". (Porter & Ketels, 2003, p. 12). The Leitch review (2006) pointedly notes that 70% of the employable population likely to be in work in 2020 has already completed their compulsory education. So dealing with Porter's "current stock of employees" (Porter & Ketels, 2003, p. 12) will mean approaches other than conventional courses for school leavers will be needed; approaches which engage with the workplace.

There does seem to be a skills gap and it is supported by the evidence, although there are some difficulties with the evidence. Most research uses proxies for skill. The most often used proxy for skills is qualifications. Leitch uses data which mainly is supported by qualifications as a proxy for skills (Leitch, 2006). Keep Mayhew and Corney (2002) argue that there is a danger of missing the informal and on-the-job training that happens in organizations. For example the UK also has a disproportionate bias towards small and medium sized (SME) enterprises compared to Germany and the US (Leadership and Management Advisory Panel, 2006)[11] that are far more likely to engage in informal, on-the-job training. Keep et al (2002) point out that this may account for the bulk of training in many organizations and yet it remains unrecognized in many of the official figures.

That there is a problem with skills in the UK and especially with basic low level skills, is a concern and an enigma for a leading world economy. The level of skill deficit varies with different nations, with low and intermediate skills accounting for differences with some continental European countries, and differences in higher levels skills are more significant with the US.

Economically valuable skills

The prominence of the argument for skills in government policy lies in the government's aim to both increase the productivity and competitiveness of the UK. Skills are seen as a way of shaping the nature of business that the government thinks the UK needs to create to be competitive. Significant emphasis is placed on skills being "the" lever to prosperity rather than "a" lever (Leitch, 2006, p. 3). It therefore places skills centre stage in government policy to improve UK productivity and competitiveness.

The productivity and competitiveness agenda has been a main strand of government research to inform policy. In 2002 Professor Michael Porter, internationally recognised for his work on competitiveness, was commissioned by the DTI to provide a report on the competitiveness of the UK. His study reviewed the existing evidence available; no new

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[11] The Leadership and Management Advisory Panel was set up by the DfES and DTI in 2005 from the Council for Excellence in leadership and Management, which had previously been established to report to government on the state of leadership and management in the UK. The advisory panel submitted evidence to the Leitch review.

research was carried out. The first government strand to understand in relation to skills is competitiveness, which follows Porters (2003) argument that the UK is in transition from a low skill, low economic value economy to a high skill, unique value economy, competing on unique value. Transition requires higher level skills to achieve the innovation needed to compete on unique products/services and processes. The argument then follows that skilled workers are more able to adapt to new technologies and market opportunities, and higher level skills are needed to innovate, facilitate investment and improve leadership and management (Leitch, 2006).

The secondly strand; productivity, can be achieved in a variety of ways. The quantity of labour can be increased; or alternatively the quality of labour could be increased. The Centre for Economic Policy (2007) suggests that the UK has grown due to the former rather than the latter. Thus with the UK labour utlilisation (quantity of labour) already at a high level, other means of increasing labour productivity such as higher skilled labour units (quality of labour), or higher capital intensity or higher total factor productivity (an economic measure of technology employed and of how well skills and resources are utilized) would therefore be needed (Porter & Ketels, 2003). An emphasis on skills as proposed by Leitch would suggest that, of the three factors of labour skills, capital intensity and total factor productivity (TFP), that higher labour skills would have the greatest impact on improving productivity.

The Leitch review argues this emphasis on skills with evidence that shows "one fifth or more of the UK's productivity gap with countries such as France and Germany results from the UK's relatively poor skills." (Leitch, 2006, p. 7). However, stressing that one fifth or more of the UK's productivity deficit results from poor skills raises the question as to what explains the other four fifths of the productivity deficit. Interestingly, in their review of government policy on skills in the UK, Keep, Mayhew and Payne (2006) cite the evidence used by Leitch in a very different manner. For Keep et al (2006) *only* between one eighth and one fifth of the UK's productivity deficit with Germany and France can be attributed to skills deficiency. Keep et al ask the question about the significance of the other factors which contribute to the 81% of the deficit with Germany, 88% with France and 99% with the US respectively. In fact

improving UK skills, according to the data, will have negligible effect on the productivity difference with the US.

To investigate the other factors which account for the four fifths, it is useful to review the source data for the Leitch figures, which are based on analysis by O'Mahony and de Boer (2002) from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. According to these figures 19% of UK productivity when compared with Germany is due to skills, and 12% with France, however with the US only 1% is due to skills deficits. In summary, the data shows that in the time it takes for a UK worker to produce 100 units, a German worker will have produced 117, and a US worker would have produced 130.

This analysis is for the economy as a whole (public and private sectors), if you take the market economy on its own then the deficit compared with the US is worse, at almost 40%, and London School of Economics professor John Van Reenan points out that on these figures "John Doe in the US could take Thursday and Friday off and still produce as much as poor John Bull in the UK toiling away throughout the working week." (Van Reenan, Working Better, 2004, p. 4).

Skills do have an important contribution in helping to improve productivity and UK competitiveness, but there are other significant reasons proposed besides skills to explain the productivity gap. O'Mahony and De Bere, the original source used both by Leitch and Porter, explain their findings in a more measured statement: "The results on balance indicate a greater role for higher levels of total capital in explaining Britain's labour productivity deficit with France and Germany, whereas total factor productivity (TFP) is relatively more important with the US" (O'Mahony & de Boer, 2002, p. 16). Contrast this with the Leitch emphasis on skills which stresses that "Skills were once *a* key lever for prosperity and fairness. Skills are increasingly *the* key lever." (Leitch, 2006, p. 3) (Italics are as expressed in the Leitch report). The original NIESR report's own interpretation of their findings does not mention skills as being significant, and independent research groups such as Keep Mayhew and Payne, part of the research center SKOPE, also provide a very different interpretation. Given the differences in interpretation of the findings from the NIESR report it is worth investigating alternative interpretations by reviewing the other factors outlined in O'Mahony

and De Bere's report (2002), which help explain four fifths of the productivity difference justify further exploration.

Economists break the productivity gap into two parts, the first is the quantity of inputs and the second is how they are used. There are two types of input, one relates to capital, giving workers more and better equipment to use, which should then result in more output per hour. The second relates to skills. Increasing the supply of skills should raise productivity. However this does not account for all the productivity difference, how they are then used needs to be factored in such as "Differences in the ways of working, for example through better ways of organizing firms or using better technology" (Van Reenan, 2004, p. 6). This is referred to as "total factor productivity" (TFP). TFP helps explain what is done with the physical capital and human capital: how they are utlised.

Explaining the productivity deficit with France and Germany and the United States

From the work carried out by O'Mahony and de Boer (2002) investment in physical capital will have the most impact on productivity performance with Germany and France. This conclusion is supported by an earlier HM Treasury report, acknowledging that the UK investment in infrastructure has been well below comparative countries. "This short fall has been part of the explanation for the relatively poor UK productivity, and reflects years of low investment in both the public and private sectors." (HM Treasury, 2001, p. 53). Thus according to the Treasury the main factor for the productivity deficit with France and Germany appears to be government spending on infrastructure. Skills will have an impact and an important one, but not as much as investing in the public infrastructure. Years of low investment in infrastructure, though, cannot be easily or quickly rectified by Government intervention. Skills without doubt is an easier route to take.

For the US physical capital accounts for around 50% of the deficit, however, skills only accounts for 1%. So as with France and Germany capital investment is significant in explaining the deficit. The interesting factor with the US is total factor productivity (TFP) which accounts for 48% of the difference. TFP helps explain how well the physical and human resources are utilised. An important aspect of this is the effectiveness of business and

management practice. Porter suggests that "lower levels of TFP reflect low levels of innovation, broadly defined, and less effective use of technology" (2003, p. 13). This he argues is a particular issue for an advanced economy like the UK.

The factors discussed are not independent, and skills, particularly business and management skills are an integral part of getting the best out of physical capital and human capital. The Centre for Economic Policy links the need for skills to improvement practices. They conclude that "skills are among the most important factors behind the adoption of product and process innovations, this deficit (in skills) is likely to bear important consequences in terms of productivity. In the long term, education has to be the solution here and although there have been improvements, major problems remain." (2007, p. 3) Even with capital investment some argue that skill levels impact on the level of investment. Where the skills are low then businesses are less prepared to invest in equipment, because the capability to make the most of the new resources is limited (Layard, McIntosh, & Vignoles, 2001).

An alternative interpretation of the NIESR report stresses the interrelation of the three factors, suggesting that interventions should integrate and build on the complementary aspects of each factor. Capital investment and TFP both account for more significant parts of the productivity deficit than do skills, but both capital and TFP have a relationship with skills, that potentially when combined could produce greater effects than if pursued independently.

Limitations of the analysis

There are some complications with the productivity comparison figures of O'Mahony and de Boer (2002). To begin with differences in data both in collection methods and in comparability from different countries is a constant source of difficulty and techniques such as total factor productivity use assumptions based on regression analysis that may carry fairly large margins of error (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006). The governments own paper explaining its approach to productivity cautions some of the assumptions needed to be made in TFP but recognizes that the findings of the method are instructive (HM Treasury, 2000).

Aside from issues of accuracy there are also some important alternative explanations to consider in explaining the productivity data. Firstly, it is suggested that new workers entering

the workforce are not as productive as those already there, with less experience and fewer skills (HM Treasury, 2001). The UK, with comparatively more of the population in work may possibly suffer with lower productivity in the short term. A second, and related explanation, has the potential for proposing a more significant reduction of the productivity gap. France and Germany get a much lower proportion of their working age people in to jobs than Britain or the US. "This means that most of the unskilled and least productive French and Germans are not even in the workforce. So there is a batting average effect: dropping all the tail enders from the cricket team boosts the average of the runs." (Van Reenan, 2007, p. 50) In addition, employment practices are more regulated in France and Germany with stronger unions and higher minimum wages leading to a tendency for businesses to use more machines per worker. Van Reenan (2007) concludes that taking these factors in to account Britain's productivity looks a lot closer to France and Germany's figures, although this does not explain the US gap.

The two factors; new inexperienced workers and the likelihood that UK has more of its unskilled and least productive workers in the workforce provide the scope for uncertainty in the size of the productivity gap with France and Germany. In combination with the alternative interpretations of the NIESR data that suggest skills are not as prominent in accounting for the productivity gap as inferred by the Leitch report (2006), there is a case to question the interpretation and emphasis placed on skills in the Leitch report. However they do not provide a basis for complacency. Rather, they point to the need to ensure that skills are developed and utilized effectively by organizations along with strategies to develop the other factors.

The leitch Reviews focus on skills

Leitch places an understandable emphasis on skills, but there is concern that the interrelation with the other factors will be lost or reduced as policy moves to implementation (Centre for Enterprise, 2007) . There is also surprise that skills are positioned as having overriding importance "given that existing research suggests that, at best, skills account for between one-fifth and one-eighth of our relative productivity gap" (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006, p. 542). Others argue more strongly, for example, the Chartered Institute of Personnel

and Development express concern that whilst the importance of improving working practices is referred to by various government documents, "how well people are managed only has a walk-on part in public policy debate" (2006, p. 5).

It may be that part of the answer to why there is such an overriding focus on skills in the Leitch report is found in Lord Leitch's foreword: "skills is the most important lever within our control to create wealth and to reduce social deprivation". (Leitch, 2006, p. 2) Skills are more "within our control" than other factors and therefore, because it is important, and is also easier to do something about, skills becomes the most important lever.

The implied direct link of skills to productivity though is a concern, especially given Scotland's experience. In Scotland, where historically investment in education has been higher than in the rest of the UK, the skill levels at intermediate and at graduate level are above the average in the rest of the UK, yet productivity is below average (Futureskills Scotland, 2005). A similar picture is reported when Canada is compared with the US. Canada has a higher skills profile than the US, but its productivity is lower (Centre for Enterprise, 2007).

The point is a crucial one; productivity is not improved by raising skill levels alone. Increasing the skills of the workforce needs to be accompanied with investment in equipment and infrastructure; the resources to do a job better, and employing work practices and effective management so that the best is made of the equipment and new skills. In short, the capital investment and total factor productivity elements. Scotland has experienced two major concerns, firstly the disparity between increased investment in skills without realising increases in productivity and secondly, "while Scotland has been successful in developing an ever more highly-qualified workforce, demand for such workers has not kept pace with this increased supply" (Felstead & Green, 2008, p. 7). The experience in Scotland raises two issues; is there demand for the increased skill levels, and will organizations make effective use of the new skills?

The Scottish government response has been to introduce a focus on skills utilisation. It is interesting to note the specific areas the Scottish government has emphasized in its action

plan. In its recent policy for skills for Scotland it states one of its priority actions is to improve the utilization of skills in the workplace, emphasizing better management and leadership and improving HR practices. It will also focus on improving job design to encourage autonomy and promote enterprise. Crucially, ensuring that skills and other drivers of productivity such as investment in technology and infrastructure are linked and requiring that skills are used in a way that immediately benefits the employer. (The Scottish Government, 2007) .

Utilisation and demand

Utilisation and demand, the two dilemmas experienced by the Scottish government, raise implied assumptions behind a skills focused strategy. Keep, Mayhew and Payne (2006) assert that the Leitch Review's interim report, by creating projections of increased targets for qualifications in order to improve competitiveness, explicitly assumes that "employers will make effective use of newly supplied qualifications." (2006, p. 547). The assumptions behind the Leitch review and now government policy in England is that raising skills is the priority. Of course a one in five improvement, if the figures are accurate is not inconsequential. Indeed it is more likely to be within government's ability to do something about it or as Leitch phrased it "the most important lever within our control" (Leitch, 2006, p. 2) . However, because it is in "our control" there is a risk that policy will be too focused on this element without drawing on the other levers which possibly can have more significant impacts on the UK productivity comparisons. It may be that the other levers which the Scottish Government have incorporated into their utilisation action plan are the elements needed to ensure that skills are used effectively.

The Leitch report does recognize and emphasize the importance of businesses being able to use skills effectively. Investing in skills without having the quality of managers to both promote skills development and then translate skills into improved performance will be ineffective. "It is managers who decide on product and service strategies, whether to invest in training and how to deploy the skills of their workers." (Leitch, 2006, p. 89). The government's response to Leitch on this issue appears to be more moderate in tone, and short on any detail about how to ensure that businesses effectively utilise skills. It affirms, though

briefly, that leadership and management skills have a vital role in increasing productivity and prosperity across the economy. Its recommended actions however could be considered weak. Firstly asking the Leadership and Management advisory panel to work with the Sector Skills Councils to develop continuing professional development modules, and secondly to continue "within the available budget the support of management and leadership skills for small to medium enterprises." (HM Government, 2007, p. 59).

As concerning as businesses not using skills effectively, is the possibility that they do not see the need for them. A core premise of the government's agenda is a demand-led system. Some (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006), (Centre for Enterprise, 2007) have argued that implicit in much of the policy is the proposition that if the correct skills were offered by suppliers then demand would rise. However the Scottish experience brings this into question. Business in the UK has a significant proportion of the economy operating on low skill, low value business and therefore does not have the need for further skills and higher level skills on the scale the government is proposing (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003). It is still a problem of demand, low demand. A recent report for futureskills Scotland (Centre for Enterprise, 2007) questions whether there is evidence of employer demand for higher level skills and argues that in Scotland the lack of demand is not due to lack of supply.

The issue of demand is a complex one. Debate in the UK has continued about whether too many parts of the economy exhibit what is referred to as a low skills equilibrium (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2001) , a downward circle of low productivity and low supply of skilled workers. This scenario suggests that once a low skill strategy is adopted managers find it difficult to change, especially "if a previous strategy based on low skills has been successful, management may be reluctant to develop new or enhanced strategies even if a skilled workforce is available (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2001, p. 33).

The significance of this tendency for managers to stay with what works raises serious questions about the strategy of adopting a demand-led approach to skills. Employers and individuals may not be best placed to determine what the demand for skills should be. "It would be a mistake to treat the current demands of employers and individuals for skills as coterminous with the needs of the economy" (National Skills Task Force, 1998 Cited by Keep,

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E (2005, p. 31)). This raises a problem for policy makers "while the individual organisations may be acting and investing rationally and thereby optimising their own situation, the outcome for society, particularly in terms of the emphasis that this implies on generating relatively lowly-skilled and low paying jobs, may be sub-optimal." (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003, p. xv).

Therefore a more closely targeted range of support which extends beyond skills supply and incorporates the wider business objectives and strategy or the businesses is advocated by Hogarth and Wilson (2003). The conclusion they draw for policy makers who they argue often advance policies which focus on skills and skills alone "that this (focusing on skills) may be a necessary but insufficient step along the road to a high skills, high wage, and high productivity economy." (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003, p. 76). The significance is that skills make sense to organizations only when they meet or address business needs. The demand for skills is based on need and those needs require more than just skills supply, the utilization of skills and the other enablers to take a business forward depend on the crucial role of managers. Crucially skills need to be understood in terms of how they support the business strategy, they are a demand derived from a business need.

Derived demand

Derived demand creates a very different emphasis to understanding demand. It suggests that businesses do not see the merits of skills in their own right. The nature of derived-demand has been recognized by the Government in earlier reports. Indeed the Government white paper on skills argues that "improving skills will not be sufficient on its own to drive greater productivity" (Department for Education and Skills, Department for Trade and Industry, H.M. treasury, and Department for Work and Pensions., 2003, pp. 17-18). Preceding the white paper the performance and Innovation[12] unit's report on work force development explicitly described skills as a derived-need (2001) because it is derived from a demand based on a business need. In a follow-up report produced by the Strategy unit [13] the Government sets out its approach to workforce development in the context of wider government policy

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[12] The Performance and Innovation Unit reported to the Prime Minister on strategic cross-cutting initiatives.
[13] The Strategy Unit was formed from the Performance and Innovation Unit merging with the Prime minister's Forward Strategy Unit and the Centre for Management and Policy Studies.

and articulates a demand-led system for skills. Both documents recognize the derived nature of skills demand and that "skills cannot be seen in isolation from a much wider agenda of promoting ambitious, innovative and successful businesses in the UK" (Strategy Unit, 2002, p. 19)

In contrast the Leitch review prefers to simply use "demand-led" and appears to have dropped the "derived demand" emphasis. That is not to say that Leitch does not reinforce the point that employers must see the benefits of further investment in skills will bring (Leitch, 2006, p. 89). However this is not as clear as recognizing that derived-demand comes from skills that deliver business objectives. The essence of the nature of the demand though is that it is derived (Centre for Enterprise, 2007) and therefore the more complex interactions of other factors should be considered and brought in to play in government policy.

A derived-demand emphasis introduces more complexity, but perhaps also can bring more clarity if the reason for the skills proposed is be defined in terms of a business need. Hogarth and Wilson (2003) suggest that even in the case of organizations operating in high value unique products/services skills often are only a third order consideration. Firstly comes consideration of the product strategy the business will pursue, followed by how this will be delivered, the production process, and only then do decisions about the skills that are needed feature. Hogarth and Wilson (2003) qualify this perception by recognizing that both the decisions about strategy and production process could themselves be constrained by skills. This raises the question about how much the organizational decisions are themselves influenced by the skills of those who make them.

To what extent does management matter?

The debate about management skills is one of relative importance in improving UK competitiveness. For Porter (2003), UK managers are constrained by the business environment in the UK, having little option but to work within these constraints, where the weaknesses in management practice may be a product of the environment. With the exception of adopting modern management techniques, which he raises as an issue, and lower intermediate manager qualifications, improving managers will not be sufficient to address UK competitiveness. Whilst he accepts there is room for improvement, Porter states

"management practices, then, are not at the core of the UK competitiveness challenge." (Porter & Ketels, 2003, p. 6). These conclusions, however, conflict with a more recent five year survey conducted by the London School of Economics (Centre for Economic policy, 2005)(LSE) with McKinsey's on the impact of management practices. The survey focused on manufacturing across Europe, the US and Asia. The researchers found that conservatively between 10 to 20% of the productivity difference between firms and nations could be accounted for by different management practices. Porter's conclusions seem to understate the possible impact of improving management practice on productivity. It should also be noted that Porter's (2003) remit was to review the existing evidence, and with management he acknowledged he was not able to find comparative data between nations or any conclusive evidence upon which to make clearer judgments.

As well as the detailed LSE/McKinsey research there are several surveys in the UK which provide wider supporting evidence. Investors in People commissioned a survey (Future Foundation Project, 2004) of senior managers, specifically to determine their views on the scale of Britain's productivity challenge. The survey[14] found that 56% of the sample felt that Britain's management skills and practices undermined its productivity. Hay group (Hay Group, 2007) provides other survey evidence which indicates a similar picture. Senior managers were highly critical of middle management capabilities. 62% cited a lack of management and leadership skills as a barrier to effective performance. Worse still 40% believe that middle management is the single greatest barrier to their organization achieving its objectives.

Perhaps more persuasively, the government's advisory panel for Leadership and Management, in their contribution to the Leitch review, put their proposition forward for the future emphasis on Leadership and Management. "Even if the evidence does not create a compelling case to act, relative to all the priorities that Lord Leitch faces, how certain are we that our leaders and managers are fit for the future? Are our leaders and managers, to quote Lord Leitch "world class"?" (Leadership and Management Advisory Panel, 2006, p. 5). Some most certainly are, the best businesses in the UK are among the best in the world (Porter & Ketels, 2003) and the UK have a significant number of businesses who demonstrate

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[14] Survey of 700 public/private organisations

the management practices which deliver productivity advantage (Centre for Economic policy, 2005). There is also nothing specific to the UK environment that prevents business and managers achieving the productivity benefit of applying these management practices (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2006). Moreover, as the best companies do compete with the best in the world, it suggests that if the lower performing businesses management practices could be raised UK performance would look very different. (Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy, & Van Reenan, 2007). Bloom et al suggest that "good management appears to be so strongly linked with good performance that it might be reasonable to expect all firms to make better practices a priority." (Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy, & Van Reenan, 2007, p. 8) Yet many firms remain poorly managed. Their research indicates that this may be due to a lack of self-awareness amongst managers and their organizations.

Concerns about deficiencies in the skills of managers are expressed by Hogarth and Wilson (2003) especially in relation to the strategic choices they make. In a wide ranging discussion on employee engagement in organisations Sissons (2005) echo's Porter's environment constraints stressing that the effect of government policies and institutions mean that "left to their own devices, most managers will find themselves under pressure to take not the "high road" but the "low road" – for that's the direction in which the present 'rules of the game' encourage them to go". (Sissons, 2005, p. 31). The "high road" is characterized by supportive employee practices, job design and work organization and the wider social development of employees, as opposed to a "low road" of command and control directive management.

It is difficult to see how ultilising skills, establishing work practices, realizing the benefit of resources, making decisions about strategy, encouraging innovation, and making investment decisions can be brought together without excellent management. It is also clear that the business environment needs to be created which will be conducive to managers being encouraged to make decisions that promote high skill, high value businesses.

The discussion of the importance of management and management practice offers a number of possibilities for action. Firstly, the LSE/McKinsey research raises a challenge to government to play a part in encouraging the spread of good management behaviour, "doing

so may be the single most cost-effective way of improving the performance of their economies." (Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy, & Van Reenan, 2007, p. 10).

Having previously questioned the risk of adopting a demand-led approach to skills, when employer demand does not reflect the future demands of the economy, there is the potential to encourage the UK's best employers to lead demand, when practice can help shape the future economy. This was one of the core recommendations of the Leadership and Management Advisory group to the Leitch review. They suggest that leading employers should drive the development of a UK wide programme that promotes leading practice in leadership and management development. They summarise the essence of the approach: "There is leadership and management practice in the UK that is the future for many; depressingly there is also leadership and management practice out there that persists from the past." (Leadership and Management Advisory Panel, 2006, p. 7)

Leadership and management matters and the UK has the exemplars to raise its performance. The business environment in which managers operate also matters. Promoting the conditions which create the right environment should be a priority for Government. It is already clear that there are a range of factors which improve productivity which have emerged as the discussion has progressed, for example physical capital and TFP: the work practices and better management that ensure physical and human capital are more productive. Keep et al (2006) point to a wide range of factors referred to in other government papers which impact on productivity including investment, innovation and new skill intensive product marketing strategy.

The government in developing its own strategy to increase productivity has identified five priority areas it refers to as the five drivers of productivity growth. They have been developed from a study of the literature and are summarised in a Treasury report (2000). The five drivers are; to increase investment in physical capita; improve skills and human capital; promote innovation and R & D, and strengthening competition and encouraging enterprise. These are echoed in the National skills in England research report (Learning and Skills Council, 2006).

However although the government's five drivers provide a wider range of factors to improve productivity, it is argued that the drivers are still only partial and are an insufficient response (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006). For example the discussion of the previous section on management and management practice, does not figure in the drivers. In fact some suggest that needs to lose its "current fixation with boosting the supply of skills and integrate the promotion of productive people management" (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2006). Work organization, job design and how the employee relationship is managed and creating the conditions where employees motivation, autonomy and commitment are valued to benefit both the business and the individual are seen as crucial elements by many commentators (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006), (Sissons, 2005), but are not included in the governments drivers.

Having outlined the UK debate of the factors and drivers both government and commentators consider important to increasing UK productivity, it's instructive to be reminded of the Scottish focus on skills utilization. Scotland has taken a different approach to the rest of the UK in responding to the skills agenda raised in the Leitch review. To achieve skills utilisation they have set priority actions to emphasise better management and leadership and improving HR practices. A second area is to improve job design to encourage autonomy and promote enterprise. Scottish priority actions also address the UK governments drivers by ensuring that skills and other drivers of productivity such as investment in technology and infrastructure are linked and finally they require that skills are used in a way that immediately benefits the employer. (The Scottish Government, 2007) . It would seem that Scotland has taken a different approach, at least in policy, with a more comprehensive and integrated set of factors and drivers brought to bear on improving productivity.

A Supplier response, an agenda for Business School engagement with Business

The context and issues of the skills strategy, and more widely the range of factors which can contribute to raising the competitiveness and productivity of the UK lead to questions about how the supply side can meet these challenges. This paper now turns to focus on the implications for Business School.

Derived-demand requires that skills needs are identified based on the business strategy. There are a number of implications of a derived-demand approach. Firstly, the intervention needs to address the business needs. Secondly, to counter the danger that employers needs may not reflect those of the wider national economic need, a leading demand approach is desirable to compliment the demand-led emphasis. Thirdly, placing more emphasis on learning that delivers management development which focuses on improved productivity.

One of the difficulties with engaging with a demand-led approach is knowing what employers are demanding. Breenan and Little (2006) note that there are few general statements which hold for employers or sectors. Wedgwood supports this view which incidentally place as significant emphasis on consulting skills and activity to identify needs when she argued that "value is the critical factor for employers and employees, but it is rarely articulated well and the impacts on the bottom line of the intangible assets of employee education and training are far from clear." (2007, p. 5)

The need for a more differentiated and clearly targeted approach to skills development, which starts with the organisations business needs, its strategy and then sees skills as a source of its competitive advantage has been proposed by Ashton and Sung (2006). Hogarth and Wilson also advocate that closely targeted support is provided ensuring that the wider business needs are addressed. Such an approach would suggest wider services beyond providing skills development. Advice, guidance and broader organisational development support in the form of consultancy may become more prominent elements of what a Business School delivers. Added to this individualized focus, Breenan and Little (2006) also suggest that employer links are more productive at the level of individual workplace and individual academic department.

This emphasis on meeting individual business needs is borne out by a number of reports which identify employer needs as requiring customised solutions, (King, 2007), that are fit for purpose and demonstrate value (Wedgwood M. , 2007).

Before considering the challenge and some issues about the readiness of Business schools to respond, the meaning and nature of engagement should be explored.

What is meant by engagement?

Engagement is a stronger word than involvement or participation, it suggests commitment, and therefore an important aspect of engagement is establishing if engaging is worthwhile doing. Lambert raised a number of concerns of employers about the mis-match of needs with what Universities offer and that "businesses find it difficult to engage with universities to enter a strategic dialogue about skills." (Lambert, 2003).

In the government's response to Leitch (HM Government, 2007), engagement is expressed in what will make it worthwhile for suppliers and employers to become involved. To engage employers they intend to increase their say in shaping the skills and employment system. The government wants employers to more clearly articulate what their skills needs and priorities are, and to challenge providers to deliver high quality services. (HM Government, 2007).

Increasing the engagement of HE with employers implies culture change and that "all HE institutions need to grow their capacity in a way that meets the needs of employers and employees. 'Business facing' should be a description with which any higher education institute feels comfortable." (HM Government, 2007, p. 50). However, there is evidence to conclude for Business Schools that this is not necessarily the case.

Business School issues with engaging with Business

A number of recent reports have presented some challenging assessments of the relevance of business schools to business. For example, Starkey & Tempest (2005) conclude that research conducted in business schools has little significant impact upon management practice. Pfeffer and Fong (2002, p. 80) suggest business schools are "teaching the wrong things in the wrong way (and perhaps to the wrong people, or at least at the wrong time in their career)". These views echo those of Mintzberg and Goslings (2006) , namely that too much of business education is focused on the function of business rather than how management is practiced.

The Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership (CEML) (2001), formed by the government to investigate the state of management and leadership in the UK and its contribution to productivity and growth, argued strongly that business schools needed to

become experts in their core activity – management learning. It would appear from much of the recent debate that in this area of management learning, and specifically in relation to working with managers in business, that business schools are falling short. One view is that academics by not listening and engaging with business are actually "legitimating their own irrelevance and marginalisation" (Crowder & Carter, 2002, p. 275), and appeal to each other through a plethora of journals which are "utterly divorced from the challenges of everyday management" (Bailey & Ford, 1996, p. 8).

The agenda is challenging and for many institutions employer engagement as Prince (2004) concludes in new business schools is relatively underdeveloped. However, the Leitch Report will undoubtedly provide a renewed impetus for HE to develop its commercial activity.

What kind of business school's can respond to demand led contexts?

The changing emphasis to a demand-led, engaged approach starts with questions about what is the role of a business School. Osbaldeston (2006), Director of Cranfield School of Management, positioned the debate around the strategic issue of the type of business school being developed. Contrasting a research oriented academic institution where education funds research, or a practice-oriented teaching institution where research enriches education. Secondly he contrasts a specialised school with a full service school, a local/regional focus with an international/global outlook, and an undergraduate/post graduate emphasis as against a post experience. Clarity over these issues will certainly then highlight what sort of activities and roles are needed in the business school.

Peter Lorange, Dean at IMD, Lausanne suggests that professors will need to be educated to "also play a role as thought leaders through their research and teaching in a networked society." (Lorange, 2005, p. 785) This implies doing different types of research. He argues that relevance will be increasingly important to students of business schools.

For Howard Thomas, Dean at Warwick Business School, whilst acknowledging that there is no clear way forward, he suggests "the best advice would appear to be the proposition that business schools should engage in cutting-edge, rigorous academic research which informs the context and practical insights about management gained from engagement with management

issues and challenges." (Thomas, 2007, p. 20) In setting out such a view he recognises that there is a shortage of academic talent to meet this challenge. A view supported by Hawawini (2005), Dean at INSEAD.

Thomas asks, how can business schools both seek relevance and promote rigour? Or put another way, how can business schools serve the business and professional community without becoming its servant, a perspective emphasised by Cotton, McKenna, Van Auken, & Meuter (2001). Perhaps it is only when this balance is achieved that business schools can really serve their community.

When a demand-led emphasis listens to business and clients and a leading demand focus provides thought leadership and the challenge of a "critical friend". Lorange and Hawawini both discuss the differing academic roles in business schools in response to a more demand-led and a more demanding customer. Lorange's idea of academics becoming "thought leaders" balances this aspect of demand-led, with the notion of leading demand.

Conclusions and critical review of the literature

Skills it has been argued are a vital elements in the bid to raise UK competitiveness and productivity. The issue is not primarily with the government emphasis on skills, it is the risk that policy and more crucially, what is actually done, will be focused *too much* on skills. Government papers designed to inform policy (HM Treasury, 2001) (HM Treasury, 2000) (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2001), have often presented a considered view of skills in the context of a range of others factors which when integrated with skills might offer an effective response. However, it is concerning that this considered approach found in initial policy informing documents is lost in the Leitch report (2006) and replaced with an assertion that skills are the primary focus to improve productivity.

Crucially the same central source, the NIESR report, (O'Mahony & de Boer, 2002) is interpreted differently by early policy informing papers from the government, than in the Leitch report and the subsequent government response, which adopt a more selective approach to presenting the findings. Indeed O'Mahony and de Boer (2002) conclude that on balance total capital best explains the UK productivity deficit with France and Germany, and

Total factor Productivity the difference with the US, not skills. The NIESR research is a major update of data gathered by the research institute in 1999 on the UK's international competitiveness. O'Mahony and de Boer (2002) qualify their methods stressing that their labour force skills analysis relies on estimates in main from proxy measures of skills based on education and training outputs. They caution that "even these measures are deficient in that many skills may be acquired by informal on-the-job training and remain uncertified." (O'Mahony & de Boer, 2002, p. p56) Whilst there are more direct comparisons for Europe, the US data is not available in the same form. The analysis has therefore been constrained by using a mix of educational attainment and attendance data as a proxy for skills. In other words input data of attendance, which is far less secure as a proxy for skills than output data of completion of qualifications.

This raises further concern that the relative differences in productivity between UK and its competitors, central to the Leitch report, can be questioned in relation to confidence of the data, and as Van Reenan (2007) has suggested the differences can also be explained in a number of different ways, not least that Germany and France have lower employment and therefore less productivity elements of the population may well not be in the workforce when compared to the UK. Not only are the interpretations in Leitch of the data from the NIESR report questionable, but confidence in the accuracy of the data particularly in the area of skills adds further concern.

In contrast to the Leitch report, independent researchers with remits and research agendas and programmes in the area of productivity and skills, support the need to view a wider range of drivers (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006), (Centre for Economic Policy, 2007) in addition to skills.   Both of the papers referenced, that by Keep, Mayhew and Payne, (2006) and the Centre for Economic Policy (2007) are policy review papers, assessing a wide range of literature on productivity and skills, to critique policy progress.

The central place of skills claimed by Leitch (2006), especially the assumed close relationship with productivity is difficult to support even from the main NIESR source (O'Mahony & de Boer, 2002) used by Leitch to make the assertion. The importance of other factors should be stressed, including: how much capital is being invested by government in

infrastructure (HM Treasury, 2001); and by business in equipment and facilities; and how much of the productivity gap is due to the inability to capitalize on the physical, technological and human resources available (Centre for Economic Policy, 2007). As drivers of productivity, the weight of argument suggests that these other factors are just as significant as skills, if not more so. At the least they are complimentary to the skills agenda and yet are given little emphasis in the Leitch report (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006).

Secondly the assertion of a demand-led skills approach is a critical component of delivering skills in the government's policy. Demand for skills, however is a more complex concept than indicated in the Leitch report (2006). A demand-led skills system should really focus on *derived-demand,* (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2001) that is, demand derived from specific business needs (Hogarth & Wilson, 2003) and therefore only appropriate in so far as they meet that business need. The nature of derived-demand is often very specific to a particular organization, and therefore it is unlikely that a coherent voice of the employer is achievable (Brennan & Little, 2006). Brennan and Little at the Open University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI) were commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) to conduct research to explore workplace learning and the views of employers. They reviewed relevant literature and published reports, along with semi-structured interviews of stakeholders including sector skills councils to gain an employer perspective. Gaining the views of individual employers would have provided a more robust claim to the validity of their findings rather than the views of the sector skills councils; however other reports have provided similar findings. For example, the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) (King, 2007) reviewed the evidence on employer demand interviewing their business members and members of the CBI. Their findings also indicated that employers looked for specific business needs to be met.

Whilst the research reports by Brennan and Little (2006) and King (2007) provide an overview and breadth they do not necessarily give a detailed picture of particular needs. The DTI funded research by Hogarth and Wilson (2003), provides a more detailed assessment. They studied individual businesses to see the effects of the business strategy on the skills needed. Hogarth and Wilson (2003) questioned whether businesses that focus on lower value-

added strategies result in low demand for skills. This is an important issue to test in relation to the Leitch report (2006) assertion that a demand-led system will encourage higher level skills leading to increased productivity. They investigated the effect of product strategy on skills policy and organizational performance. The cases were limited to the Midlands area of England and covered a range of manufacturing and service sectors.

In combination with the broader reports of Brennan and Little (2006) and King (2007) reviewing literature and wider employer views, this research focused on specific cases, complementing the other research. Together they provide a consistent view of demand being derived, specific to particular needs, and that there may well be an issue with a lack of demand or demand that may not point towards higher level skills, if the business need is not seen. Taken together this group of research provides some confidence in the findings, but also suggests that further research is needed to gain more clarity on the nature of demand. For example the CIHE report (King, 2007) having reviewed the literature and published reports, suggest that little is known about demand, or potential demand or how best to increase employer demand. Conner (2007) in a separate report for CIHE on HE and workforce development expresses disappointment that there is very little evaluative work on what works well and why in workforce development, noting, in particular, a lack of research and a lack of sharing of practice.

The evidence from Scotland confirms the need to treat demand in a more sophisticated manner. Scotland has above average higher skill levels than the rest of the UK, yet lower productivity (Futureskills Scotland, 2005), and just as concerning the demand for higher level skills has not kept pace with supply (Felstead & Green, 2008).

To address the issue of utilization the paper has highlighted the role of managers. Neither the Porter and Ketels report nor the Leitch report placed great emphasis on the role of management. Yet if utilization of skills is important then management must play a prominent role. This position is contrasted by the work of the CEP in its research programme to investigate links between skills and productivity. Noticeably Porter and Ketels do not introduce any new research in their report and admit that there was not any conclusive evidence upon which to make clearer judgments, which perhaps accounts for the rather

unsatisfactory assessment. This however is surprising given that Porter was specifically asked to assess UK management and determine whether it was underperforming (Porter & Ketels, 2003). Tiratsoo and Tomlinson (2004) consider Porters assessment to be unconvincing, arguing that relatively few sources are used, and then proceeding to introduce several sources which were available to Porter which create a different picture. Indeed a government report (DTI, 2002) using information based on surveys by the CBI suggests that there is a more significant issue with UK managers. It may be that Porter, who argued from a macroeconomic context and placed the business environment as determining the behavior of managers rather than managers setting the context.

The research by the Centre for Economic Performance provided a much stronger case for good management resulting in improved performance. Their programme of research is aimed at addressing a research gap in linking management practices with performance and uses a survey tool to gain views on management practices across organizations (Bloom & Van Reenen, 2007 B). Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy and Van Reenen (2007) provide encouraging evidence supporting the importance of management in organizational performance, but to date have only worked with manufacturing organizations. There is therefore more research needed to confirm their findings more widely.

Linking skills to improving performance is a research issue wider than management development. The challenge of linking skills to performance is also addressed in a report by Ewart Keep and Ken Mayhew to the Scottish Government (2004), and in the work CEP (Bloom, Dorgan, Dowdy, & Van Reenan, 2007) is carrying out. Given the emphasis placed on skills to raise productivity in the Leitch report (2006) it is a concern that there is little evidence to support that claim, as Keep and Mayhew (2004) acknowledge there is insufficient evidence to establish a causal link.

In conclusion, the silence in the Leitch report of the derived nature of demand, and the complexity of other factors which impact on productivity is concerning. Although it may be that the report has focused on policy that is more easily within the control of the Government. There is also little evidence that the Leitch report has considered that business

may not be pursuing a high skill, high technology agenda and therefore will not "demand" the higher level skills.

It is argued that management skills and management practices should be given more prominence in enabling UK productivity to rise with government ensuring the policies are in place to provide a supportive business environment. The implications of these findings from the analysis of the assertions made in the Leitch report suggest a dual strategy of demand-led and leading demand, one to meet specific needs of organizations, the other to help create demand for organizations to move towards a high skills high productivity context. Possible difficulties with Business School responsiveness are discussed which leads to a discussion of the type of business schools needed for the future.

The paper prompts a number of research questions. Firstly around better understanding what management skills and practice improves productivity and secondly what kinds of management development will support improvements to UK productivity? A role in facilitating the spreading of best practice to a wider group of businesses seems particularly appropriate for Business Schools.

Secondly a demand-led and leading demand strategy is a radical change for many business schools. Research into a model and approach for engagement is needed. What structures would need to be developed to enable this approach, and what are the skills and roles to deliver a more responsive and needs-led Business School?

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Appendix 2 Earlier methodology section

Research Design

The research questions seek to better understand, explore and conceptualise the engagement of a University Business School with employer organisations in the natural context of the engagement. To do this an interpretative stance is taken in the research design. The methodology is a broadly inductive approach developing from an initial single case study in a previous paper (Sturgess M. A., 2009b) which will be expanded for the thesis to an embedded case study approach. In this section I will outline the research design, which draws on the approach tested in the previous paper of the single case study (Sturgess M. A., 2009b). The traditional contrast in research paradigms is between what is often referred to as the positivistic paradigm and the interpretative or phenomenological perspective (Goulding, 2002). The first affirming a basic belief about research that the world is objective to the researcher and that valid knowledge is that which is independently observable. In contrast the interpretative stance holds that the world is socially constructed and "understood by examining the perceptions of the human actors" (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p. 47). Given that the study will be centred in the context of the relationship developed by the University and the employer organisations and focuses on the main participants involved in establishing the relationship, a qualitative interpretative approach is adopted. The methodology seeks to best answer the how and why questions associated with an embedded case study.

Conceptual framework

Connor and Hirsh (2008) propose a model of employer engagement based on their definition of collaboration through mutual benefit (figure 1.0). They suggest that a "more complex model for successful engagement" (2008, p. 45) is needed than a simple customer-supplier model. The model they propose will be adapted to form an initial conceptual model for the research. Their model places collaboration at the centre between the employer and the HE provider with the employer having needs and the HE provider bringing capabilities and resources to meet those needs. They argue for a model where employers and HE providers enter into dialogue to understand each others' needs and capabilities and then see how they can make a partnership work.
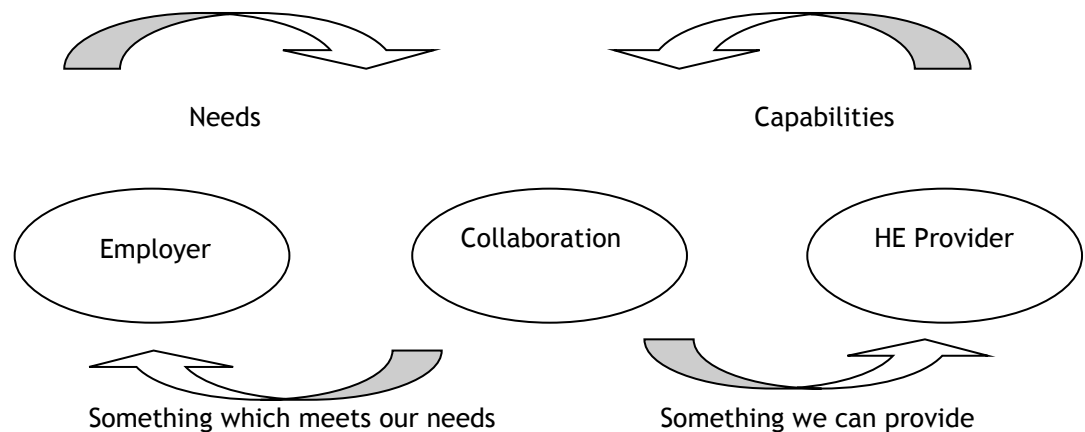
Figure 1.0 The Active Collaboration model for employer engagement in HE (Connor & Hirsh, 2008).

Research design outline

I will outline the research design in this section, and then explain the rational and methods behind the design in the following sections. The research design follows an interpretive methodology using an embedded case study. There are three phases in the research study.

Phase 1

The design begins with the selection of three employers, all from the public sector. A key manager involved in the engagement within the employer organisation is interviewed using a semi-structured interview. To present the provider perspective, a representative from the University Business School, with responsibility for the particular client will be interviewed using a similar semi-structured interview process. Document analysis of each organisations specification documents (their tender documents) for the interventions will be analysed using a coding method, providing a form of triangulation.

Based on the findings from this first phase of the study, an initial engagement model will be developed. A second set of interviews will then be conducted with each interviewee,

discussing the initial findings with each of the participants to check the initial validity, challenge any assumptions and suggest further improvements.

A second wider analysis of documentation will be carried out using seven nationally released tender invitations from public sector organisations requesting providers to supply similar types of interventions to those requested in the three organisations forming the case studies. The tender documents of the three organisations will be included in this analysis. This phase of the study provides the opportunity to explore the possibility of some generalisability from the study more broadly in the public sector. The findings from the documentation will be analysed using data coding techniques and then will be compared to the findings from the three case studies and integrated with the initial engagement model.

Phase 2

The next phase of the study develops my own perspective as a participant researcher. It also enables case study 4, where the longest duration of relationship exists and the widest range of interventions have been carried out to be studied in more depth. A fourth employer from the public sector with whom the University Business School has had a similar engagement to the three other cases will be interviewed. A manager from the employer, and a manager from the University Business school will be interviewed separately using a semi-structured interview process as with the first three case studies. Based on the interviews and my own knowledge and involvement with the client, I will write a case study to bring their contributions and my own insight together. The case study will then be discussed with the employer manager and Business School manager to validate ideas and to challenge my own interpretations. Documentation from the employer and from the Business School will be analysed again using data coding analysis as part of writing the case study. This phase of the study is intended to surface more specifc aspects related to two of the research questions firstly the question that explores what approaches are likely to make employer engagement effective, and secondly to determine some of the implications for new roles in a business school.The initial model from phase 1 will then be refined combining the insight from the the second phase of the study.

Phase 3

A small number of experts with a regional and national perspective will be approached to test the model and to substantiate the findings and determine whether there is scope for a wider validation of the study. This phase of the study will be complimented by a review of literatures where studies have been carried out of employer engagement to compare the findings with a broader range of studies. The model for engagement will be reviewed and modified based on the responses from this part of the study.

Proposed Case Studies

The embedded case study investigates the engagement of one Business School with four employers, all from the public sector. The details of the case study sites and the University Business School are included in appendix 1. In summary the University Business School is a relatively new Business School part of a new University that has a teaching emphasis as opposed to a research-intensive University. The four employer organisations are all public sector organisations with similar interventions ranging from management, leadership and organisation development activities forming the reason for the engagement with the Business School.

Case Study Selection

The study aims to develop a model of employer and HE provider engagement, and to investigate more clearly the relationship between a HE provider and the employer organisation. This is achieved by investigating one Business School's relationship with public sector employer organisations. To do this it was important to select organisations where a relationship had existed over a reasonable period of time, so that evidence of an engagement that has been sustained can be explored. Each of the case studies was selected with a relationship of at least three years. Secondly key people were selected who had been significantly involved in the development of the relationship from both the employer and the University Business School perspective. Thirdly an attempt was made to ensure that the types of interventions had some similarity, in the field of management, leadership or Organisation development.

The employers were therefore selected purposively, based on the likelihood of the cases being able to illicit information to answer the research questions. Managers from case study 2 and case study 3 employer organisations were interviewed at the same time as the employer in the first case study, the interviews were taped and transcribed, and my field notes taken at the same time. The rational for interviewing two other cases at the same time as the first, was to ensure that the relevancy of the information is consistent; the interviewees are looking back over a similar period, the relationship is still current with the employers, and crucially it ensured that the interviews were carried out before people moved on to other areas or possibly other organizations.

The research design approach has similarities with an analytical inductive strategy (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003), seeking to build theory that is grounded in relevant cases. Johnson (2004, p. 165) defines analytical induction as "the intensive examination of a strategically selected number of cases so as to empirically establish the causes of a specific phenomenon." The research design adopts a similar process of selecting a case purposively and exploring other cases to "seek to test the explanation in other purposively selected cases to see whether it does indeed stand as a valid explanation." (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003, p. 398) Whilst the over arching approach is based on inductive strategies, in reality there is likely to be a move from inductive to more deductive approaches where the depth of a single case study inductively proposes a conceptual theory, and a deductive process then tests aspects of the theory (Cresswell, 2003).

To better capture my own experiences as an actor in the process, as indicated in the previous section, a case study will be written to help generate my own insight and understanding, based on a separate employer engagement case study. An employer manager and a manager form the University Business School will be interviewed and the case study written, with the employer and Business School manager's then providing a check to establish its validity and challengs my assupmtion and interprettaion. Carter and Little (2007, p. 1319) suggest that "writing and reporting in qualitative research are part of the analytical process" advocating writing as a means to developing a researcher's thinking and interpretation effectively using writing as a method of inquiry and thinking (Cresswell, 2003). Writing the

case will also enable my own perspective and understanding to be surfaced (Richardson &
Adams St Pierre, 2005) and expressed as a participant in the process of engagement.

The first three case studies, using semi-structured interviews ensure that the research
questions exploring what is meant by demand-led, and how the relationship between an
employer and HE provider develop are examined, by asking staff directly involved in
developing the relationship from both sides of the engagement. The research question "Why
does an employer engage with an HE provider?" can also be explored from both sides of the
relationship in the semi-structured interviews. Business School staff interviewed can not only
provide a means of confirming findings and interpretations from the employer, but they can
also inform an understanding of the provider perspective. The fourth case study is designed to
enable a deeper investigation into the research questions which seek to find out what
approaches are likely to make employer engagement effective, and to find out what the
implications might be for new roles in the business school. Document analysis in all the cases
provides a means of triangulation and a possible source of other findings.

Case Study Rational

The study is an embedded case study. It investigates one University Business School's
engagement with employers; this is the primary case study. The study is regarded as
embedded because it is based on one Business School and a study of its relationship with
several employers, rather than several Business School's and their relationship with
employers. An embedded case study often has sub-units (Scholz & Tietje, 2002); in this study,
four sub-cases of a particular employer and its relationship with the Business School helps to
build towards an overall picture of how the engagement process works with the Business
School and employers. An embedded case study is essentially a study of cases within a case.
(Anaf, Drummond, & Sheppard, 2007)The single Business School remains constant with the
embedded cases being the engagement between that business school and separate
employers.

The rational for using a case study is based on Yin's (2003) argument that it allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events; he highlights organizational and managerial processes as an example of such contexts. (Yin, 2003). The context of a Business School and its engagement with employer organizations, fit well within Yin's definition. For Yin a single case is appropriate for exploratory or for exemplary situations, multi-case methods more appropriate for explanatory or evaluative purposes, where the ability to generalise is more important (Yin, 2003). Indeed, Voss Tsikriktsis and Frohlkich (2002), argue that case research is helpful for theory building and provides an "excellent means to study emergent practices." (Voss, Tsikriktsis, & Frohlich, 2002, p. 199) This study represents a development process from a preliminary investigation of a single case (Sturgess M. A., 2009b) predominantly exploratory in nature towards an embedded case study which progresses towards addressing a more instrumental or explanatory purpose.

A tension exists with case studies between the internal need for contextual relevance and the external need for transferable and generalisable ideas (Stake, 2005). Stake distinguishes between intrinsic cases, where the purpose is associated with the intrinsic benefit of understanding one particular case and instrumental cases where the main focus is to provide insight into an issue. The difference between the two categories is not the case but the purpose of the case. Thirdly, collective case studies focus on gathering data from a number of cases to understand a particular phenomena or general condition, in this situation to better understand the phenomena of engagement. This study seeks to progress from one of intrinsic value to providing a more collective instrumental value. To do this, issues of triangulation and validity will be built into the research design. (Patton, 1999)

Position of the Researcher

My position in relation to the research is more appropriately seen as a participant researcher, similar to some aspects of the researchers role in an ethnographic study, where the role of the researcher's 'self' is important (Denscombe, 2003). In ethnography the researcher requires introspection to reflect upon the way that background factors associate with personal experiences. Patton (1999)also argues that because the researcher is the

instrument in a qualitative inquiry it is crucial to know their background and the influences on their thinking. The client engagement being investigated is based on activities which I initially led for the Business School. My role as an Executive Education Manager, within a relatively new and small Business School with a growing focus on engaging with business means I work closely with organizations, developing client programmes, and building relationships with those organizations. I am interested in exploring how more effective engagement can be developed between employers and Business Schools. My position is therefore supportive towards engagement with organizations. In each particular case in this research proposal I led the Business School team in the initial discussions with the employers; I developed the relationship and worked closely with all of the resulting programmes and interventions.

This raises the question how I might usefully incorporate my own experience into the research, and at the same time guard against potential difficulties of being actively involved in research in my own organisation. For example care needs to be taken about the assumptions and preconceptions I might have (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). This can be countered by remaining aware of the possibility and by ensuring that questions in the interview process are based on open questions allowing the participant to answer freely, and not assuming knowledge about a particular area. To do so requires balancing my perspectives with a structured process that is based on the actual words used by the other actors being interviewed. My interpretation of the comments should then be clear. Secondly the use of document analysis, particularly the invitations to tender for the employer organisations provide a check of the findings from the primary research method of the interviews with what was stated in writing by the organisation. A potential difficulty could have been in separating my role as a manager in the process, and that of researcher. However the interviews are clearly established as separate and the events and activities associated with starting up and building the relationship took place within a two to three year period so time provides a convenient separation.

Being a participant researcher also brings advantages, I intend to develop my insights and use my own experience as part of the process, as advocated by Glass and Strauss (1967), recognizing that "the root sources of all significant theorizing is the sensitive insight of the

observer" (p. 251) and that insight often comes from personal experiences. To mitigate the risk of possible bias from my perspective two main approaches will be taken. Firstly all my resulting interpretations from interviews will be checked with the interviewees. Secondly the experts consulted in phase 3 of the process will be able to assess whether they consider the model being developed has a wider application. They will thus be considering the findings within a wider context and application.

Analysis and interpretation of the information

Stake (2005) describes the tension between direct interpretive analysis, with themed or data coding analysis. Expressing the view that qualitative research often has both elements, but one or the other usually will carry the load of analysis. All interviews will be recorded, and a note taken of any reflections or initial striking observations made by the researcher during the interviews. Interviews will be listened to several times to build a sense of familiarity with the material. Direct interpretive analysis will be used to lead the research with the interviews supported by coding, whereas with the documents analysis a coding processed will be used. Coding provides a scaffolding to help build an interpretation of the research issue (Charmaz, 2005). Initial coding typically in grounded theory starts with defining the action, in the data statement. An iterative process is then adopted to cluster codes linking and suggesting relationships and then grouping them in to meaningful and more abstracted codes (Goulding, 2002). The document analysis will follow this iterative process. Stake, however, places the critical activity of being ever reflective in "pondering the impressions, deliberating on recollections and records" (Stake, 2005, p. 449).

In this study the emphasis will be placed on this deliberative reflection process rather than a very detailed coding. This is done in part to counter the concerns that coding can result in the fragmentation of qualitative data. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003) . Cresswell's encouragement to adopt an approach to coding which yields coding that a reader would expect to find, codes that are surprising and codes that address large theoretical perspective (Cresswell, 2003) will be adopted. The interpretative emphasis and engagement with the research case will be supported by listening on several occasions to the interviews to try and get a whole picture and build my interpretation through notes of observations and

connections, and notes taken to gather my reflections. The coding and grouping of meaningful data will be used to inform and compliment this process. This approach I consider to be more consistent with my own research role, and the engaged nature of my experience.

Sampling Issues

The selection of the case studies needed to be made on the basis that they were likely to provide the most information to inform the understanding of the phenomena being studied. The sample was purposive using my judgment to select cases based on how best they could answer the research questions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). In that respect, the selection tended towards a critical sampling approach, where the intent is to "pick the site that would yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge." (Patton, 2002, p. 236) This was particularly so with the first case study where two separate management development interventions were being delivered, enabling greater depth to be explored with the single employer. All four cases had successful on-going relationships between University and employer, and provided good opportunities for information-rich cases for study, a central principle of purposive sampling. (Patton, 2002)

Validation

The embedded case study design is intended to begin to provide instrumental value beyond the specific cases. To do this a number of stages have been included in the process. Firstly the internal triangulation of the case studies is ensured using documentation analysis to support findings from the interviews. Interviewing both employer and provider key staff will also help to corroborate findings (Patton, 2002). To improve triangulation and validity externally the features across each of the case studies will be compared. Participants will review the findings as a form of triangulation as advocated by Patton (2002). This it is argued helps to ensure the accuracy and fairness and perceived validity of the analysis. Secondly a small number of experts will be approached to review the findings and analysis and provide a wider validation of the research.

Both these approaches support what Patton (2002) refers to as substantive significance – a means by which the significance of qualitative research might be judged. Firstly participants and experts can help to assess how solid and coherent the evidence is in support of the

findings. Secondly, asking if the findings support other work, can provide confirmatory significance, this will be done using the wider literature and document analysis process in the research design. To begin to build a wider perspective the case study findings will be compared to wider research and specific documentary evidence from a range of organization tender documents where demands, needs and requirements have been articulated by specific employers.

Ethical considerations

The context for the research is within an organization, and therefore access to the organization would usually need to be negotiated. However the organizations are already clients of the Business School, so negotiation to interview the relevant managers is relatively straight forward which is often a benefit of participant research minimizing potential difficulties in negotiating access (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). There are potential difficulties in negotiating access, for example, there may be some reluctance to participate, or to share information about the organization. Participants have been approached and have agreed to participate, and factors such as anonymity, that potential benefits from the research will be shared, and that there is a good relationship with the organizations all contribute to overcoming any potential issues with access.

The study will be discussed initially over a telephone conversation with each manager, followed by an e-mail confirming the process, voluntary informed consent (British Educational Research Association, 2004) will be sought clarifying the background and purpose of the research and what will be expected of the participants. In introducing the semi-structured interview the purpose of the study will be confirmed, and the anonymity of the process affirmed. An introduction will provide the interviewee with the broad direction of the interview and questions will be sought and answered about the nature of the process. Potential benefits from the study to the managers will also be discussed and agreed that the research when complete could be reviewed by the participants (British Educational Research Association, 2004). Presenting the completed research back to participants will also be a source of further ideas for continued research and a form of participant validation.

Data Collection Plan

The data gathering plan is highlighted in appendix 2, with details of the activities, schedule and number of interviews planned. Phase 1 of the study is based on three case studies which will all be addressed in the same way. The data from the initial pilot case study (case study 1) will be used alongside the two other case studies. The semi-structured interviews at all three cases use the same broad structure and question areas, each interview is taped and the researcher's notes logged during the same period. This ensures that the employer managers at the three case study sites all discuss the context during a similar timeframe. Document evidence, particularly the tender documentation and documents which specify the requirements of the organization are used as confirmatory evidence, and coding techniques are used for analysis.

An initial engagement model is developed from the first three cases and a set of guiding questions to use with the participants. Confirmatory interviews are conducted with all the participants from the first three cases, where the model and findings are tested with each of the three cases. This first phase will explore the first four research questions, especially the employer and provider view of what is meant by demand-led provision, and views about how the relationship between an employer and an HE provider develop. Both sides will be asked why they think an employer engages with an HE provider, and from the interviews views will be sought of the approaches likely to make employer engagement effective. A wider document analysis will then be conducted using seven nationally released tender invitations from public sector organizations. The documents will be analysed using coding techniques.

Phase 2 involves writing a case study of one engagement. It follows the same data collection methods as the first three cases, with semi-structured interviews of the employer main contact and a University Business School representative involved in the engagement. The case study is being written as a means of capturing my interpretation of the engagement. Document evidence will be used to support the writing of the case, in a similar manner to the first three cases. There is also a set of documentation developed from a review of the client engagement that I conducted with the Business School team. The data gathered from this phase of the study is intended to provide more depth to answering the research questions,

especially the question related to approaches that are likely to make an employer engagement effective, and the implications for new roles in the Business School. The case study will then be reviewed with the participants to check validity and my interpretations. The engagement model from phase 1 will be refined using the findings from phase 2.

Phase 3 of the study is to discuss the emerging model with regional and national experts. It is anticipated that the there will be three experts selected, based on their ability to confirm and offer views about the extent to which they consider the findings have a wider and more general application.

Appendix 3: Case Study Background

Business school

ABC Business School is a relatively small and new unit in a new university, which received full university status in 2005, and research degree awarding powers some years later. The Business School is thus part of a teaching-led institution, which is not seen to be research intensive. Within this context I developed a client business engagement provision focused on executive education and client programmes from its formation through to an annual income stream of approximately one million pounds. This was achieved from a zero base, without the University Business School having a track record in client programmes, demonstrating the successful generation of client income, from preparing tender bids and leading a team to win the business, through to setting up new structures and processes and develop customised programmes for clients.

Within the University a separate development had been taking place which enabled the Business School to provide flexible responsive programmes for clients. A centre within the University had been set up to provide flexible work-based learning routes to higher education qualifications. In order to do this the centre had developed a flexible qualification and accreditation framework that allowed individuals and organisations to gain Higher Education (HE) level accreditation. The framework bridged the tension between fixed planning and committee cycles associated with University qualifications and the requirement for speed and flexibility demanded by organisations. There are now a number of work-based frameworks that have been developed in the UK (Rounce, Scarfe, & Garnett, 2007).

Although developed independently to the initiatives within the Business School, the framework was invaluable in enabling responsive and tailored programmes to be developed in each of the sub-cases in this study. The case studies demonstrate that, despite being relatively small and new, the Business School was able to successfully bid for competitive national tenders, against other larger and much more established business schools and universities. Three Business School Managers (BSM) were interviewed to offer the provider

perspective. They all were involved in all three of the sub-cases, although BSM1's main responsibility was case 1, whilst BSM 2 managed case 2 and BSM 3 managed case 3.

Case Study 1

The first case site is a large public sector metropolitan local authority. The Business School successfully won a nationally tendered contract for an organisation-wide, accredited corporate management programme with this client. The contract comprised a bespoke accredited management development programme at post graduate level with the facility to progress to an MBA. This indeed did take place, with the bespoke post graduate certificate programme, leading to the post graduate diploma stage of an in-company MBA. This enabled delegates to complete with a post graduate certificate or alternatively to progress onto an MBA pathway. The programme was sponsored by the chief executive of the organisation and comprised delegates from across the various departments of the authority. This encouraged a consistent development approach across the authority, and afforded the opportunity for leaders and managers from disparate parts of a large organisation to work together, network and share experience. As part of the programme projects were identified within the organisation for the delegates to complete. The outcomes of the projects were presented to senior managers, maintaining a focus on the importance of the interventions.

The contract and relationship was managed from within the HR department of the authority. Two client managers from this client were interviewed and designated CM1 and CM1A. Senior manager CM1 was pivotal in setting-up the programme and was the key relationship for the programme. CM1A was also a senior manager within the HR function. Both managers had responsibility for nominating candidates to attend the programme, and interestingly, both managers were also delegates on the first cohort of the programme.

During the early stages of this programme a second opportunity emerged from within the organisation. ABC university was approached by the Children's Services Department of the Local Authority, to provide a leadership development programme for managers and leaders engaged in children's services. The negotiations and the key contacts in the local authority were completely separate.

Case Study 2

The second case site began with the same public sector organisation. The Business School successfully won a separate contract for a multi-professional leadership programme with the Children's Services Department of the authority in case 1. The programme was part of the Departments response to address some of the issues emerging from Lord Laming's inquiry (2003)and the subsequent policy response from the Government with Every Child Matters (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). In particular the programme aimed to include professionals from different parts of the public services involved with children. This programme though initiated from within the particular local authority, became a regional initiative with funding from the North West Improvement Network. In doing so the programme developed more broadly to incorporate delegates from childrens services in six other authorities. The initial children's services department maintained the role of leading on the programme, and the initial contact at the authority became the key relationship for the on-going regional programme. In this case the contract was managed by the senior manager from within the local authories children services, who was interviewed as part of the research project designated CM2 . The second senior manager, CM2A, to be interviewed worked closely with the first senior manager and had responsibility for managing the partnership between the six authorities and with the university, providing a breadth of perspective to support the first senior managers insights. They therefore were key senior managers with both a breadth and depth of knowledge about the relationship with the university business school. Another distinctive feature of this case alongside the regional focus, was a collaboration between the Universities School of Education and Children's Services and its Business School. The Business School led on the relationship and contract, supported by expertise from the School of Education and Children's Services. In particular a key professor, with senior level expertise in local authority children's services was an important part of the universities client team.

Two client managers (CM) were interviewed from this organization designated CM2 and CM2A.

Case Study 3

The third case study relates to a local authority. This particular case is the longest relationship between any client and the Business School. The case also provides the widest range of interventions of the three cases, incorporating several bespoke accredited management and leadership programmes, at different levels in the organisation, in addition to a range of consultancy activities. The relationship began following a change in both political and executive leadership during a period when the organisation had received a number of critical audit reports. It described itself as a "bureaucratic, silo-based organisation delivering high cost, low quality services to residents". Its executive directors embarked on an ambitious strategy aimed at organisational change to deliver significantly improved performance. This strategy followed from analysis of a number of internal surveys which provided insights into the current culture and practices within the organisation.

Along with a number of initiatives focusing on cultural and structural change, the strategy identified the need to develop higher level skills amongst the organisation's senior managers. ABC business school won a tender (against two larger sub-regional universities) to provide an in-company MBA, aimed at developing managers who would also act as change agents at the top and the middle of the organisation. Although based on an MBA framework, the client's needs were clearly identified and explicitly addressed in the programme design and delivery, with tailored workshops, organization-specific projects and public sector focused content. ABC Business School then won a bid for a second series of developments, aimed at improving the performance of the client's middle managers. This new programme was totally bespoke, based on the vision and values of the organisation, and designed following close collaboration with the client's own learning and development team, and representative managers from the intended student body. Although fully tailor-made, in both structure and delivery, this programme was accredited as a postgraduate Diploma in Management utilising a work-based accreditation framework developed within the University.

A third development programme for front-line managers, team leaders and coaches was then initiated. This programme was the most bespoke of the interventions, and took collaboration between the Business school and its client to an even deeper level. Building on the strengths of both organisations, the programme was both co-designed and co-delivered, utilising blocks of conventional day release classroom teaching, delivered on the client's premises. These alternated with structured, work-based activity, to both reinforce learning outcomes and to demonstrate immediate performance improvements. Delivery was jointly provided by both the Business School and by the client, combining HE level theoretical input with the behavioural skills development delivered by the client's own introductory management course. As with the Diploma in Management, this programme was accredited using the flexible accreditation process, and graduates were awarded a Certificate in HE, with the option to continue as independent students on a full undergraduate degree

Client manager 3 was interviewed from this organisation. This client manager played a central role in the management of all the programmes and the overall contract. The second client manager (3A) interviewed from this sub-case was a senior manager at the Authority who nominated staff from his department to participate in all three of the programmes.

Appendix 4: Schedule of semi-structured interviews

Sub-case 1	Sub-case 2	Sub-case 3	Senior manager interviews
Local Authority corporate management programme	Children's Services department of the same Local Authority as case 1, expanded to a regional provision of multi-professional leadership programme	Local authority with longest relationship with the business school and widest range of interventions in leadership and management	
Initial (pilot) interview with Client manager CM1			
Initial (pilot) interview with Business School manager responsible for case 1, BSM1	Interview with client manager CM2		
Interview with second client manager CM1A	Interview with second client manager CM2A	Interview with first client manager CM3	
	Interview with Business school manager BSM2	Interview with second client manager CM 3A	
		Interview Business School manager BSM3	Interview senior Business School manager
			Interview senior client manager

Appendix 5: Client interview guide

What is important to you when you select a provider for education/training? What are the ideal qualities you are looking for?

What are some of your biggest challenges? What business needs do you have?

Why did you select the university to work with you?

What do you value about what we did?

What should the University be doing to sustain the relationship?

Ideally, what would the University/business School be doing to meet the needs of your organisation?

What business/organisational benefit would you expect from your investment with a University?

How would you assess the impact of the benefit?

What would make you select a University as opposed to another provider?

Possible prompts if needed (derived from an analysis of tenders):

- Customised solutions
- Elements of co-design
- Flexible accreditation and progression
- Strong transfer of learning focus
- Project management
- Track record and experience
- Partnership approach
- Innovation and "value added"
- Research applied, latest thinking, knowledge exchange
- Evaluation methodology focused on outcomes and impact.

Appendix 6: Modified interview guide for Business School/provider

What do you see as important to an employer when they select a provider for education/training? What are the ideal qualities they are looking for?

What do you think are some the biggest challenges employers have? What business needs do they have?

Why did the employer select the university to work with them?

What did they value about what we did?

What should the University be doing to sustain the relationship?

Ideally, what would the University/business School be doing to meet the needs of employers?

What business/organisational benefit would an employer expect from investment with a University on an intervention?

How would the employer assess the impact of the benefit?

What would make an employer select a University as opposed to another provider?

Possible prompts if needed (derived from an analysis of tenders):

- Customised solutions
- Elements of co-design
- Flexible accreditation and progression
- Strong transfer of learning focus
- Project management
- Track record and experience
- Partnership approach
- Innovation and "value added"
- Research applied, latest thinking, knowledge exchange
- Evaluation methodology focused on outcomes and impact

Appendix 7: Interview excerpts of participant's stories

7.1 Nurturing story

This story was told by the university senior manager.

The example I was talking about earlier is a rather strange one, they wanted a University as an accreditation partner, because they wanted to deliver the programme. They wanted to know if ABC (name of the university) would be the right place for them. How did they know that? We had several meetings where we discussed the framework that we would use for getting their programmes approved through the University. We had lunch together and talked about people's personal backgrounds much more informally. Then they came to ABC (name of the city) last week. They flew from New York, one I'd met twice before and one I hadn't met. Because they were fairly unfamiliar with the geography we met at Euston and travelled up together and chatted on the train. What really cinched the deal - the things that struck me that caused them to suddenly accepted us? One was I knew the Chief Executive was a staunch Roman Catholic. They were staying at (Hotel name). I said to him one of the things I do is I go to the Choral evening song at the Cathedral. His eyes lit it up and demeanor changed: he said he'd love to go. Then we had a very convivial dinner at the racecourse. We had a relaxed time. We did talk about business once or twice but we got to know each other. The next day they couldn't have been happier about the arrangements. Now it is something about personalities.

You can't do these things disingenuously, the connections have to be real. In some ways, you do have to like the people. Sometimes you do need to like people to see that it can work. I can think of plenty of people I have worked with that I didn't particularly like to work with, and you have to work hard at it. With one difficult client I worked at finding ways to connect and things we had in common. I found we had cricket in common. Sometimes it is about just finding a chink in the armour, the protectiveness some people wrap around themselves when they just want this to be a purely functional arrangement. I don't think that works. I'm not suggesting you cozy up to people, but I do think you have to establish a rapport with someone if it is going to work.

If you think about it you've got people coming from different workplace cultures, so you've got to bridge that gap somehow, because you don't understand their business enough and they don't understand yours. You've got to find another way in and that is usually by getting to know someone a little bit better and freeing up some of those areas where perhaps people wouldn't normally think of talking about unless they were in a mind to disclose more than they thought perhaps they would. When you get to know people they begin to open up about what the issues are in their business and how you might be able to help. I think it's quite a fragile area in some respects.

This hasn't been just a way of getting an entrée and contract. This is about an on-going relationship and I think people really value that. It's not just saying those words its actually living out the way you work and behave. Which is built on relationships. The Harvard professor who was here last week said the one thing he really found encouraging was the fact that my colleagues adopted a can-do approach.

This is one of the things when you are talking about capabilities and so on, it is very hard to pin things down but there is this sort of tacit awareness, we use it about the workplace. It is the knowledge that people don't know they possess. You and I would recognize it in colleagues or if they just haven't got it. I think there are a lot of people who probably don't have that. I don't know what it is, a sensitivity. A lot of academics may be so concerned with their own knowledge of their subject, and caught up in their subject that they are unaware of people.

It is about personalities, about striking the right note, about sensitivity. I guess those are some of the things you need in addition to what you know and what you think you can offer. Got to be balanced with some fairly solid inputs about how the things work.

7.2 The relationship story

This story was told by Client manager 3 from sub-case 3.

"It was a very easy relationship I think that was because of the personalities involved because they were on a business level it was easier to communicate and appreciate the needs. If we had issues, they were sorted in a very amicable way. The support in terms of some of the processes were appreciated there was no objection about doing the work. We were very much part of the programme, the measurement and evaluation and support. That meant that we were able to support the students. It didn't feel like (the client organisation name) were working with University. It felt like there was a corporate team in the middle that was running the programme. And I think it was lucky that the personalities got on, understood the remit and were all working to the same agenda. I think that was one of the most positive things that came out, there were no barriers.

Even when harsh conversations were had, but the understanding was taken in the right manner. Some things weren't always pleasant but I knew that I'd get 'what can we do to overcome that', I think that was really good. The other major benefit was the delivery with the delegates I think they were respected. On the leadership programme - YYY (name of Business school academic) and ZZZ (name of another Business School academic), their approach to the delegates was so easy going. They got the best out of people. When they facilitated feedback sessions, they just had that right manner to deal with it. It is sad now that that has ended. In the DMS (Post Graduate Diploma in management Studies) you got the business/academia at the right mix. AAA (name of business school academic), yourself and BBB (another Business School academic) delivering the MBA got the level right and done in a manner that didn't intimidate people. When you look back now the only people who didn't complete were in very unfortunate circumstances. I don't think anybody said I don't like it. That's a credit to the delivery of the programme.

The university had fantastic relationship with key managers in the organization. We've got yourself in and BBB (name of Business School academic) as well. So it wasn't just about the quality of the programmes.

(client manager then discussed some other areas, such as her team and other providers before returning to discussing the relationship)

There was a lot of good work to provide support. Wider support came out of the growth of programme as a whole, but the relationship we had as a University and an Authority where we trusted each other enough to say it might work, shall we just try that and it grew out of these ideas in a collaborative way.

It's all about that relationship. If we didn't have the relationship we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we did. You have got to have that easy flow, to trust somebody, feel comfortable with somebody. You've got to have the belief that they are able to deliver on the agenda you have given them, and you've got to have the confidence that when they stand in front of a group of your professionals they are going to get a "class" experience and walk out with some really good outcomes. Hard to judge really, from first initial conversations. The confidence to know that if it doesn't quite go right first time to have those constructive conversations to put it right. Going on a learning journey together.

7.3   Contrasting university story

Story told by client manager 2, sub-case 2

We put together a tender. It was probably one of the most bizarre tenders ever because it said: we don't know what we want, we know what the end result has got to be, but we don't know what we want or how to get there. So we put the tender out, and what is fascinating is the quality of the responses to the tender did not reflect the quality of the organizations as it turned out. Which I think is really interesting, normally I've had a strong theory when, some people who are very good at presenting themselves and can do everything so convincingly – the bullshit factor - which I normally have a very good nose for. In this case, I didn't have a good nose for it, which is interesting to me. When we had the day, AAA (name of another university) presented something that was astonishingly good. They brought a team of 7 people, and they did a presentation which had as its biggest selling features that it would be entirely flexible, it would be tailored and bespoke to us. There was a persuasive speaker who I never saw again, he was a senior bloke, he had all these people who put different bits of the picture together. They made a big thing of their social services department. That was the area where we knew was our weakness as an education department, just before we became a children services department. Me and (name of director of services) were strong educationalist's not social services. They presented a very strong case and we gave them the tender. XXX (name of another university) did a typical entrepreneurial approach. He problem solved it with us. He gave 40 mins of problem solving which actually was quite brilliant. And ABC (name of the university to which ABC Business School belongs) sent along their professor from the Education Department and it was disastrous, and because of our relationship with ABC university we did agree to see them again which probably wasn't the right thing. The second time in you remember you were there.

It was a completely different ball game. We decided on the spot of the second interview to go with you, and we were I have to say terribly impressed with you and what the ABC Business School had done. What you had done with YYY Authority (name of another nearby Local authority). We heard from AAA University (mentioned above) about their bespokeness, but we knew from you that

you had done it. We also knew you were working with our corporate section (sub-case 1), and it was a good link from our point of view making the links with corporate has always been difficult for us. So that's why we thought its absolutely obvious to go with the Business school and because of what you have done with senior managers, we knew we had to do something at several levels. With you, you were so strong, it was bowling over and of course we had had that ridiculous thing from your education department, which was irrelevant, and you [in contrast] just knew what the game was, so it was your experience. Now if we move on from there, just really how it was, what became very apparent was that the 'bespokeness' of AAA university was a total illusion, there was nothing bespoke. I came out of a meeting [with AAA university] literally banging my head against the wall. Asking do I get rid of them, and we did get near to where we were ready to ditch AAA university. Because I couldn't take the stress and the feeling that I got nowhere. What they did wrong is they sold us a pup, and I just don't believe you should do this, it is bad business practice. It's like in an interview saying what you think should be said, it will be a disaster and it was a disaster. Did not match the delivery, with the intent. We were given a department of social services, which was very narrow, and all they wanted was to make some slight amendments to their existing course, which they could then sell as multi professional programme. It took us, I suppose, two years of total sweat and blood, with arguments and disagreements, and them refusing to have my people who I had sent in there to do work with them. In the end it got to a point where I appointed other people who could take it all from me, I'd got too belligerent to the point that I put other people in because I had got to the end.

They constantly told me and us that the University couldn't do it like that, they couldn't do it like that. It wouldn't be accepted and it couldn't be taken forward like that. All the old bollocks that were reasons why people outside Universities often, Anthony, I have to say, don't want to work with them, because they are totally bloody inflexible and what's more umm: its always been done like, that our boards won't accept this, or won't accept the other. So they were constantly doing that. The second thing that drove me mad, was they actually had no experience in multi professional working, they were learning off us. The whole time, they were denigrating the experience of one of my key people, a very talented women, CCC (name of the person). They

treated CCC as a YTS person. CCC had an MSc and direct experience of multi professional working with the BIP. It got to the point I had to take myself off the development of it and be more strategic. I used to hammer them at board type meetings. They all hated me, but in the end FFF (name of manager from AAA university) and I kissed and made up because in the end he said you made us do it. I only persisted because I am proud and I wasn't going to have something I started going belly up, but it took huge effort. And we had people who gave and gave. GGG (name of manager who managed the relationships – client manager CM 2A) worked his socks off to get that through. I have always had colleagues who are very good and deliver the goods. That's what I would say it's about, its delivering the goods, and I think that AAA university, we delivered the goods and we dragged the university along with us kicking and screaming. I'm sure they would say that's an outrageous thing to say, but it wouldn't have happened without us. In many ways you as an institution think: so it doesn't matter it's what you client thinks that matters. I would never work with AAA university again.

So those were the things fundamentally, and in a way what you have done at ABC business School has been the opposite to that, it's as simple as that, you have done everything the reverse. So one of the key assets, I mean you were a key asset yourself, HHH (name of academic from ABC university – brought in with senior local authority education experience) is the other key asset. Now JJJ (name of Business school manager 2 – BSM2 in this sub-case) came in later and has been a delight. Working with you and HHH over the last few years, now HHH knew us and our issues, his level of expertise his level in our field and in your field. It's also HHH as a person as well as his experience. You wouldn't have got the expertise which straddled the two. You wouldn't have had the same breadth. He has been a huge asset. But the fundamental issue was how you worked with us. How you worked with us was completely different. It was all from the simple things you'd say to anybody. You had a 'can-do' approach; AAA University had a 'can't-do' approach. Really, you can't do that in a university, whereas your approach was: this is hugely exciting and a problem, how can we help and how can we make it match the needs of this particular group of people (the bespoke part). And you designed the way it was done the mix and match of tutorials and action learning sets visiting each other. The whole thing was done so that it suited their professional need.

7.4 The selection story

This story was told by client manager 1 from sub-case 1

The client manager was explaining what the organisation valued in a provider.

Flexibility in terms of ability to respond to any potential changes that we may want to make from the first proposal, the reason for that is based on previous providers who have been relatively rigid, and have stuck to a clause and even the letter of the clause. Subject knowledge and track-record are important. In this organisation that I work with at the moment, it is important that there is a track record or precedent that's been set, in terms of who they have worked with in the past. This then enables an informed basis on which to make a decision with relevant orgs to base the decision on. Responsiveness and communication are important and I think some knowledge of real world scenarios. I hesitate to say that, especially if you are paying a business school, you want the bit that's theoretical but you want the theoretical bit with a suggested impact or exemplars drawn from experience. I think you want the two really. Those are important for me. The obvious one that everyone will say is keenness of price and or value, with the understanding you could pay a high price but get a high return.

(the client manager discussed other issues but returned to the point made above, later in the interview)

In all fairness it's what I said [referring to the earlier conversation above]. Everybody was keen to say they were responsive. In all honesty, you couldn't have changed more, but the relationship is the same. The knowledge of other work elsewhere with other people, so track record was important. We tried with this programme to satisfy what I said at the start, together with the price. Each one was placed into a matrix to select providers. Objectively ABC University scored highest. Repute, price flexibility, ability to actually listen. You'd be surprised how many organizations ignored completely our invitation to tender. Some acknowledged (our requirements) and then proceeded to tell us what they thought we wanted. They didn't respond to what Wirral had asked, some said we know what you want.

We value it being Local. Local enough but outside of work was a basic and practical thing, but quite important. I think resourcing, support, contact have been pretty good. Quality of input have been fine. There hasn't been anything particularly negative. The strength has been an on-going relationship really. That for me has been a big selling point to be honest.

7.5   The greatest strength story

This is a story told by the client senior manager (CSM).

The CSM made the initial point about a universities greatest strength early in the interview and then expanded on the point a bit later in the interview. The early point that the CSM made was:

So on reflection both parties should have worked harder at that and I think ABC university probably should have been more innovative coming to us and saying we can lay on a seminar 3 times a year as a part of our relationship. We'll come in to your organisation at lunch time, you lay on the sandwiches and well lay on the person who will challenge people in the organisation about new ways of working and thinking or new ideas. That would have been a way to go beyond the MBA and we didn't do that. I think that is what ABC University are trying to do now with that sort of approach. There was a guy from MIT who was doing a piece of work about Machiavellian approaches to business - we like to come and talk to you about (such things) – that's about the networking and building updates into the process. But then coming back to your organisation and doing a 2-hour slot in the organisation. One of the powerful things about a University is the latest thinking. But, often the courses they deliver isn't the latest thinking!

(The CSM then returned to story and main point after short discussion of some other issues.)

It's the clash of cultures. Its' academia but it's not academia isn't it. I think it is about maybe we're trying to create something that you can't create you can't bend "academic" to what you want so maybe you have to accept there are two academia. That you bend (academia) as much as you can to fit, but you also accept that there is second thing about how does academia provide to an organisation it's greatest strength which is current thinking. Current thinking is what an organisation doesn't have because it is too busy doing. There is time in a university for people to step back and think. What probably doesn't happen in a university is people actually 'doing' a bit more. Even if they do not 'do' a bit more, even if they share their thinking and bring in the practitioner, the expert can say this is what we're doing this is what we're thinking. Then you can

let the practitioner decide: does this work? The practitioner is thinking: how can we bring that thinking in to my business problem? How can we move from X to Y.

7.6   The necessary skill set story

This is a story told by Business School manager 3 with specific references to sub-case 3, the most complex delivery of the three sub-cases.

Getting finance and invoices was a nightmare trying to get the University people and procedures to fit what a commercial client needed. They expect invoicing and bills being paid, and yet University systems were all student focused and had to be for the individual students not individual clients. I think that is one example of where HE [higher education] wasn't supporting commercial clients. Commercial clients want to move fast, expect a response. Universities work in year cycles. So, the speed of clients and universities do not fit at all. Unless you've got people in HE who understand the commercial world and know how to work with it then you're asking for trouble. It's a nightmare.

ABC Business School was one of 3 or 4 universities with a flexible framework which allowed you to fit it in with the client timescales. Even that was not without difficulty to get boards to sit and paperwork in place.

(BSM3 then gave an example from sub-case 3, a programme referred to as 'the academy' which was actually a certificate of Higher Education)

The academy had 4 starts in the year, kicked off in November, so to suddenly resource it once the academic year had started was difficult. Client site delivery, all day delivery several days at a time, just doesn't fit a standard academic pattern which is normally organized in one or two hours blocks. This was foreign to the way anyone had worked. Which raises a question about if staff could actually relate to and teach this kind of business. This was a key area because resourcing involved all three programmes.

[To clarify, there were three programmes with this client, an MBA, a post graduate diploma referred to as DMS and certificate of higher education referred to as the academy]

I would say that only 30% of the resource at the Business School at that time were capable and had the **necessary skill set** at that time to deliver and with a style that the client understood. In fact, where we did think there might be an opportunity to try someone, the client was very quick to point out if they weren't suitable. We had to take them off the programme. There were several people who just didn't fit and again that links back to why some businesses won't engage with universoties. It's because they are so far off on a subject or so aloof that they can't relate back to the business world. This is something we struggled with, had to balance out in the end, and led us to recruiting associated lecturers to blend with the full time staff. And that worked every well and I still think that model is key to the success of any business school.

(The Business School manager then went on to discuss detail and specifics of some of the delivery, before returning to the necessary skill set)

New posts were created, but it took too long and was too late. You're too mad busy 'doing' that you can't think about the next client. Initially we were relying on existing staff, then appointed new staff to focus on client work. It took us a while. It was ages before we got our associate lecturer bank in place. It's something that I would say needs setting up at the start so you've got dedicated people who are good. It's something you need to have in place. Facilitation skills, understanding corporate needs and how you teach corporately not academically. I would say it's more about practical application of theory rather than theory with an intent to apply. It's a shift of balance.

7.7   The springboard to new opportunities story

We were funded to run dissemination events. We invited people from the sub-region and across the northwest to express how we felt we'd had an impact at a leadership and practitioner level. The event was well attended and feedback was very positive. Issues of partnership with Universities was important.

Subsequently we worked again with the ABC university because of the success of working with them the first time. This time with the 'step up to social work' programme. Had we not had the initial experience of being able to demonstrate how good partnership working with the university worked, then we would not have been successful in our bid for 'step up to social work' (SUTSW). The brief of SUTSW required you to have had experience of working in collaboration with Universities within a very tight timescale. Because of the work we had done, we were able to clearly demonstrate that we had the structures, set up and the experience of working with two Universities, which would enable us to deliver the programme. As a result of that we delivered the largest programme for any region nationally, and that would not have happened if we hadn't been able to evidence our work.

I think to have a better understanding of the way in which universities work from a client point of view and to have experience of working on the development of programmes and also having trained our own facilitators for the other programmes which we did and delivered successfully. The combination of those factors gave us experience which couldn't be replicated anywhere else nationally.

What it (the partnership) did was developed a dynamic, it was a combination of circumstances and people. The issue for me is about people who from an educational point of view got on well together and then got on well with the external people that they dealt with. It was that combination, which developed the dynamic that led us on. Had we not had the initial university stuff we would not have done a lot of the other stuff. I'm convinced about that. The most positive benefit is how managers and practitioners got a delivery programme that was second to none, and I

think it was. Unfortunately both ceased because of financial constraints, but the dynamic that evolved enabled the partnership to move forward in a number of areas which we wouldn't have previously done so. A springboard to a number of other activities.

Appendix 8: Stories analysis table

Story	Type	Messages	Tensions	Moral/punch line	Purpose
Selection story	Past problem	Justify approach taken, lessons learned from past experience.	Bespoke responsive vs proceeding to give what you thought they wanted	"Some acknowledged (our requirements) and then proceeded to tell us what they thought we wanted."	Reveal the selection factors that are important to a client
The relationship story	Success story Appreciation story	What made the project work so well: a very easy relationship.	No specific tension, but one can be implied when comparing with the contrasting university story	"It's all about that relationship. If we didn't have the relationship we would not have been able to achieve what we did. You have got to have that easy flow. To trust somebody, feel comfortable with somebody."	Recognise the central role that effective relationships had in the success of the contract. Collaborative: we, not us and them. Not done to, not done for, more done with and by
The contrasting universities story	Sense making. Contrasting good with bad	Reality didn't match rhetoric.	Responsive, listening and expertise vs, inflexibility, slow to respond, failure to listen	"In a way what you have done at [ABC University] has been the opposite to that, it's as simple as that, you have done everything in the reverse."	Emphasise dramatically what is wrong with some university provision (inflexible, slow to respond, not valuing client contributions and expertise). Contrasting with what was right – can-do attitude. Flexibility, responsive. In this to help. Valued expertise.
The greatest strength story	A dilemma to be resolved story	Lastest thinking is the University's biggest advantage, and latest thinking is business's greatest need. Yet too often it isn't what universities teach, and on the other hand businesses are too busy doing to find the time to explore the latest thinking.	Latest thinking vs less of yesterday's skills. Latest thinking but too busy	In essence the point being made was that you (the University) have it but you don't use it. We (business) need it but we're too busy to find it and then use it.	A challenge and an opportunity. Proposess a key question: How can academic provide it greatest strength to business?
The skill set story	Mismatch	Words and actions need to match.	Teaching for business vs teaching academically	The need for a "shift of balance", with more recognition of the commercial world within academia	The story was used to argue that many organisations didn't want to work with universities because of this lack of skills to engage with their employees. Differing skill requirements, mean there is a "shift of balance" needed, with more recognition of the commercial world within academia.
The nurturing story	Exemplar	Nurturing, getting alongside, finding and creating common experiences. Authenticity, rapport, integrity.	People who are credible in front of clients vs skills that not many academic possess	"The next day they couldn't have been happier about the arrangements. Now it is something about personalities. You can't do these things dis-ingenuously, the connections have to be real."	Present the Values and behaviours for helping organisations

The springboard story	A spring board	New opportunities created by the capability built within the organisations. Things they couldn't do before that they are now able to do.	Implicit – that organisatons may be too keen to move to the next project and missing potential benefits	If it hadn't been for the capacity building that happened through the project, then further new areas of work would not have been secured	Recognise the value that can be gained

Appendix 9 – Summaries of stories

Appendix 9.1: The nurturing story – an exemplar story

This story particularly emphasized the need to work closely with clients to build a relationship, and recognises that trust is a key factor in such activity. The Business School senior manager who told the story felt that a potential client "wanted to know if [ABC University] was the right place for them." What was particularly interesting in this story was the senior manager's reflection about what "struck me that caused them to suddenly accept us." He explained that, knowing the client was a Roman Catholic, he had suggested that "one thing I do is go to the choral evening song at the Cathedral." The senior manager commented about the client that "his eyes lit up and demeanor changed, he said he'd love to." Later that evening, they then had a convivial meal where the senior manager remembered "we did talk about business once or twice *but* we got to know each other." The result of that evening was significant as the senior manager recounted: "the next day they couldn't have been happier about the arrangements." However, the senior manager then cautioned "You can't do these things disingenuously; the connections have to be real." He talked about "finding a chink in the amour" of prospective clients to move towards a deeper relationship than one that is purely functional. "I'm not suggesting you cozy up to people, but I do think you have to establish a rapport with someone if it's going to work." Crucially the senior manager explained his motive behind this approach, which effectively is the moral or the story: "When you get to know people they begin to open up about what the issues are in their business and how you might be able to help." He then qualified the point of the story insisting that "this hasn't been just a way of getting an entrée and contract this is about an on-going relationship and I think people really value that."

Appendix 9.2: The relationship story – an exemplar of best practice

The second story is from Case 3. It is perhaps not surprising that a relationship story has emerged from the case involving the largest number of interventions, delivered over the longest period of time in any of the examples used. This story had a strong sense of collaboration, centred on the idea that: "we're in this together". It seems that this relationship felt like 'everybody was working for the same cause', with a high level of trust conveyed through what the manager described as a "very easy relationship" with "no barriers". In particular an ability to have difficult conversations was used to illustrate how the relationship worked to resolve problems "in the right manner". The client manager in this case attributed the quality of the organizational collaboration down to the way that individuals built effective relationships. A number of individuals from the Business School were praised in examples drawn from the manager's experience. The relationship story actually could have been drawn from any of the individual cases, as each manager was keen to express the importance and the quality of the relationships that developed. This was a story that reinforced what was appreciated and what was considered necessary for success. The client manager provided the key lesson to the story: "It's all about that relationship. If we didn't have the relationship we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we did. You have got to have that easy flow. To trust somebody, feel comfortable with somebody."

Appendix 9.3: The contrasting university story

One of the most powerful and unexpected stories to emerge was from Case 2, the contrasting University story. This story was told emotively and powerfully. It was also a surprising story, one that was not asked for or sought. Yet, a version of this kind of story was also told in the other cases. Client managers in all three cases had had poor experiences at some stage with other university providers. Each used a story about another university to contrast with ABC Business School. In this case, the story is used to paint a stark contrast, and in doing so emphasizes what the client organisation sought from the partnership. The client manager explained that the other university had begun the selection process with a persuasive speaker, whom (the story teller pointedly said) they never saw again. This clearly seemd to make the point that reality did not match rhetoric. The client felt they had been sold a "pup", as the university had promised flexibility, and yet proceeded to deliver the opposite. This poor performance was contrasted with the client's experience with ABC Business School, about which the manager commented "you just knew what the game was". They felt the experience and track record that could be evidenced was vital. The client manager described the difficulty in getting the other university to deliver in colourful terms: "we dragged the university along with us kicking and screaming. I'm sure they would say that's an outrageous thing to say, but it wouldn't have happened without us." The story ends with the client manager making the main point of the story, confirming that "in a way what you have done at [ABC University] has been the opposite of that, it's as simple as that, you have done everything in the reverse." The client manager then went on to highlight the key people and the quality of the relationship that had been developed. She emphasized the importance of expertise and credibility, and the attitude of a "can-do approach", which focused on meeting their needs.

Appendix 9.4: The selection story – a story of caution

The selection story emerged in Case 1. The client manager wanted to explain the reasons behind the choice to select the University. This story was important because of past experiences with organizations which had refused to be flexible, and stuck to the clause of the contract regardless of whether or not this was helping the client. The story starts with a previous negative experience and uses that experience to explain the contrast with what the client now wanted (partly as a result of that earlier experience). Credibility was crucial, but so was flexibility and a willingness to adapt, along with. reputation, flexibility, price and the ability to actually listen. The story is one where a problem in the past has resulted in the need for different behavior in the future. In the story, the client signaled a more cautious approach, recognizing that some organisations would say that they met the selection criteria, irrespective of whether they actually did. The story highlighted the difficulty that organisations can have in determining whether a potential provider does indeed have the expertise, and whether they have the right approach to meet the client's requirements, based only on a written bid-document and a follow-up interview.

As a result, this story indicates some critical areas which a business school would need to address in order to be considered competitive in such situations. Hence credibility, and importantly the evidence to support any claims made in the form of a reputation, are viewed by the client as very important. This story proved to be more than an isolated example, as other cases also included elements which questioned provider selection processes because of previous concerns about working with universities. The story ended with a moral and a cautionary note about potential providers: "Some acknowledged (our requirements) and then proceeded to tell us what they thought we wanted."

Appendix 9.5: The greatest strength story – a dilemma

This story has a dilemma at the heart of it. The client organization CEO began this story with a dilemma and with a challenge. He provocatively suggested that universities have access to the latest thinking yet too often that thinking is not in the courses they offer. Then, as if to balance the argument, the CEO stated that businesses need the latest thinking, but are too busy 'doing' to find the time to think. In essence, the point being made was that universities have what business want but they do not use it. Whilst businesses are too busy to find what they want and then use it. The story ends with a suggested resolution to this dilemma. The CEO painted a picture of academic "experts" sharing their thinking with practitioners. The practitioners then assess how they can bring that thinking into their business, to determine whether they think it can work in their context. It captures a very interesting point. If indeed, as this CEO suggests, a university's greatest strength is also business's biggest need, then there should be a mutually beneficial way forward. The ideas in this story resonate with what many of the client managers emphasized as a requirement, namely that the content stretched thinking but could also be applied in practice.

Appendix 9.6: The necessary skills story - a problem story

This story began with an assessment of the problems of trying to deliver a client programme within a university context based on inappropriate processes and timescales. It is a story where competing demands and differing perspectives caused tensions. BSM3 went on to tell the story of the difficulties presented in trying to manage the delivery of a client programme, with many staff who were not familiar with the different skills demanded for such engagements. A resolution to one of the tensions was then presented, with the manager explaining how associate lecturers were employed with the right mix of complementary skills to address the lack of academic staff with the relevant capabilities. The story was used to make the argument that many organisations didn't want to work with universities because of this lack of skill in engaging with their employees. The manager returned to this story of differing skill requirements, referring to the need for a "shift of balance", with more recognition of the commercial world within academia.

Appendix 9.7: The springboard to new things story - a story of new beginnings.

This story is about how the client was able to explore and develop other work which, in the view of the manager, would not have been possible without their previous experience of working with the University. It also resulted in further work for the University with the client. The client manager telling this story was adamant that if it hadn't been for the capacity building that happened through the project, then further new areas of work would not have been secured. It is also worth noting that whilst the university did gain further work, the organisation also pursued other work independent of the University. This story provided evidence supporting the way in which the engagement had created new opportunities for the client. Other client managers also spoke of how they themselves had developed as individuals, how the individuals on the programme had improved and how the organization had benefited.

Appendix 10: summary themes from a comparison of the three sub-case documentation

Invitation to tender for the three sub-cases			Summary themes from the three cases
Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	
Bespoke/meeting specific needs. "Bespoke and structured corporate leadership development programme".	Bespoke for a cluster of local authorities	Bespoke – "how would you work with (the client) to design in-line with vision, aims, values and corporate plan?"	**Bespoke/ vison and values**
"only companies that have a proven track record of leadership development contracts of this size and complexity, probably for other Local Authorities, will be invited to tender." Track record and high quality and qualified tutors with "**extensive management development knowledge** and track record in the design and delivery of programmes in leadership and management."	Track record and credibility	**Experience and track record** with other clients. Relevant expertise of staff. "The city council is seeking an organisation, with the relevant expertise, track record and experience to develop and deliver the (Client organisations) management development programme.	**Track record and experience**
"**Project management**. Staff resources to the initial implementation and on-going account management (including technical support)"	Cluster of local authorities	**Partnership approach** with similar types of organisations. "Your approach to working in partnership with local authorities"	**Project management**
	Jointly planned, designed and implemented	Overall programme management	**Co-designed**
Flexibility to meet different managers needs		Flexibility. "The management development programme should be designed to allow (the client) the flexibility to determine the mix..for a particular year."	**Flexibility**
Flexible programme	Action learning sets, experiential learning,	Integrating client delivery with programme	
"The use of flexible learning methods including action learning sets to gain maximum learning transference to the workplace and which identify criteria for work-based projects including their agreed outcomes, support, monitoring arrangements and success factors."			**Flexible learning methods**
Maximising transfer of learning transfer of learning focus			**Transfer of learning**
Accreditation and progression routes			**Flexible progression**
Work-based projects with agreed outcomes			
Innovation in approach		Innovation ideas	**Innovation**
The application of research, latest thinking, knowledge exchange		"Knowledge management transfer is essential part of this development programme. Explain how you would disseminate examples of good practice."	**Knowledge and latest thinking**
"**An evaluative framework** and feedback mechanisms which demonstrate the impact of the programme"		Explain evaluation model for measuring outcomes	**Evaluation**
"**Network opportunities and knowledge sharing** to maximise learning opportunities and contribute to continued learning and outward looking organisational culture."	Building practitioner networks	**Support significant improvement** in performance and organisation wide culture change. "Explain your approach to change management to respond to improvements from either he customer (client organisation) or awarding bodies."	**Networking**

Appendix 11: Invitation to tender document analysis comparing eight documents

Tender 1	Tender 2	Tender 3	Tender 4	Tender 5	Tender 6	Tender 7	Tender 8
Bespoke – how would you work with client to design in-line with vision, values and corporate plan	How would you identify specific competences and target development accordingly?	Describe how you would involve the customer in design, delivery, monitoring and review of service	Organisational ability to deliver.	Bespoke, development and delivery	Bespoke senior manager programme, accredited change leader programme – bespoke. Develop tool kits for change		Bespoke for a cluster of Las all engaged with every child matters
Flexibility	Flexible programme to meet different needs of managers		Tailored process for the prioritisation of learning issues arising from the programme	Accredited programmes	Co-delivery – complimenting where CCC don't have skills	Considerable knowledge and expertise in accreditation and practical application in a business context	Jointly planned, designed and implemented
Incorporate existing LCC delivery of management workshops					Build on CCC's existing management development with broader range of resources, method of delivery as well as content		
	Flexible learning methods including action learning. Maximising transfer of learning to the workplace. Work-based projects. Outcomes agreed.			Build on existing competencies at the organisation	Give managers a consistent approach and methodology. Tool kit for change developed collaboratively		Action learning sets, multi-agency setting, experiential learning, building practitioner networks
				Learning approach, action learning an d the use of e-learning			
Overall programme management/ introducing new programmes/recruitment and selection, launch activities	Project management – experience of project manager and d project delivery team.		Successful project management including reports and communications mechanisms	Ideas to support internal selection process			

Tender 1	Tender 2	Tender 3	Tender 4	Tender 5	Tender 6	Tender 7	Tender 8
Relevant expertise of staff	High quality and qualified tutors with extensive management development knowledge						
Experience and track record with other clients. Companies worked with, contract value, size of companies, project summaries, outcomes, references	Track record in designing and delivering MD programmes	Experience and references, projects of similar size and type	Demonstrate experience in training and content development	Track record, examples of similar programmes in similar organisations.		Proven track record of accrediting skills and abilities. Experience and relevant skills	
			Demonstrates success in providing similar tailored management development to a national organisation				
Implementation and partnership Approach of your organisation particularly with similar types of project and organisations.		Approach to working in partnership – with relevant examples	Proposal ensures effective partnership, including clarifying what the customers has to do			Well-developed partnering behaviours	
Innovation ideas	Innovation in approach		Value added services			How will you add value to the learning and development offering	
Summarise approach to course design			Approach and programme outline				
Assessment methodologies				Assessment methods and how they can be related to work			
Knowledge transfer, dissemination of good practice					Latest research thinking, updated as CCC and partner work together	Access to relevant research on key business areas such as disability and accreditation	

Tender 1	Tender 2	Tender 3	Tender 4	Tender 5	Tender 6	Tender 7	Tender 8
Evaluation Timely, accurate reports. How do you monitor progress?	Evaluation framework and feedback mechanisms which demonstrate impact of programme	How would you evaluate the programme, what mngt info will be provided?	Effective quality assurance of all phases				
Evaluation model for measuring outcomes	Support monitoring and success factors		Action plan to support staff and evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme.			Quality assurance and monitoring service	
	Monitor learning progress and performance. Attendance, summary of projects and course work. Problems and issues,						
Explain approach to change management in response to improvements							
						Understand business drivers for accreditation	
	Accreditation and progression routes to masters level			Accreditation from degree level to post graduate with stepping off points	Quality assure the accreditation of learning, with as much as possible focused on work based learning		
	Network opportunities to share learning and support an outward looking organisation						
	Student support and guidance		Provide management development support and guidance	Tutor support methods			

Tender 1	Tender 2	Tender 3	Tender 4	Tender 5	Tender 6	Tender 7	Tender 8
		Organisational ethos and how you anticipate performing the contract					
				Issues: need for a coherent manager development programme. Significant change agenda, uncertain future, maximising career opportunities	Issues: lead change confidently, with ambitious organisational wide change programme "transforming Cheshire"	Understanding of disability issues	
				Local University to provide support			
Support significant improvement in performance, organisation wide culture change programme					Fit with organisational agenda – culture change strategy	Support culture development through the use of learning and development interventions	
						Overcoming cultural hurdles, which may impact accreditation	
						Understand wider contexts, business challenges faced	