

MONITORING CHANGE IN EDUCATION



# ENGAGING AND CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH BROKERAGE



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## Chapter 1

# Introduction to Brokering in Higher Education

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### Synopsis

This chapter introduces the idea of brokering in UK Higher Education (HE) as a means of promoting and facilitating complex learning and change. In the educational environment organizational brokering is an intentional act in which the broker seeks to work in collaborative and creative ways with people, ideas, knowledge and resources to develop something new or change something. Brokering is an important process for developing and facilitating the use of knowledge in a large, complex, diverse HE system. It is also key to creating new innovative capacities involving partnerships that are required of socially attuned and continuously adaptive mass HE systems.

The case is made that organization-led systemic brokerage is facilitating a more balanced and creative combination of accountability, development and research-led approaches to change agency in UK HE. This offers exciting possibilities for advancing higher education and gaining competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

### What is Brokerage?

The central theme of this book is that brokerage and brokering are important and necessary processes that facilitate change in the UK HE system (and as chapter 10 shows in other HE systems also). Perhaps brokering is like religion, it's something we have to create to make complex societies work. Many people who promote and support change in HE institutions and departments engage in brokerage, although they may not think about and describe what they do in this way. The main focus of this book is on UK-wide organizations that use, or have used, brokerage to promote learning and change across our higher education system. But the concepts and principles that are developed are relevant to anyone with a change agency role working within an institution or community of practitioners.

Brokerage is a tool for *engaging* socially complex communities. The idea of engagement extends from drawing someone into conversation to encourage them o

think about something, to systematically drawing many people or an entire community into discussion and perhaps action. It is fundamental to change where there are lots of different interests involved and complex negotiations are required in order to share perspectives and advance thinking about what needs to be done.

There is no simple definition of brokerage because perceptions of meaning are context dependent. For example:

- ❑ in business, a broker is an agent, promoter, dealer, fixer, trader, someone who buys and sells;
- ❑ in politics, a broker is a diplomat, mediator, go-between, negotiator;
- ❑ in the information world, a broker is someone who knows how to access or acquire information and who provides a gateway to information resources;
- ❑ in education, a broker is a proactive facilitator who connects people, networks, organizations and resources and establishes the conditions to create something new or add value to something that already exists.

Brokers may also fulfil a regulatory function by setting standards for products, service delivery or processes. All these dimensions of brokerage are relevant to the HE context and this chapter examines these in more detail in order to grow the idea for higher education.

### **Example of Brokerage**

Many of the key features of the brokering process can be illustrated with reference to the creation and production of this book, which conceptually might be thought of as a brokered process to develop new knowledge about brokerage. Acting as the broker I had a *vision* – to develop new knowledge and understanding about brokerage. I envisaged the *process* – the steps and interactions necessary to develop the knowledge, and the *product* – the book that will help *diffuse the knowledge* so that other people can use it.

To achieve my goal (creating and diffusing new knowledge about brokerage), I had to *persuade* a publisher that there was a *market* for this knowledge. Acting as broker I *created the conditions* (through a book proposal and my first chapter that set out the intellectual case for brokerage) to enable others (the series editor, publisher, peers and potential contributors) to judge the worth of the idea and my ability to deliver it. I *identified potential sources of knowledge and expertise* effectively creating a *knowledge network*. I had to *persuade* each potential contributor to join the project. Each enquiry was personalized to appeal to the interests of each individual and the details of the contribution were subject to negotiation. Having secured the publisher's backing I tried to *facilitate the process of knowledge production* by encouraging contributors to think about brokerage through the intellectual framework I had set out in my introductory chapter. Through their writing, participants in the project made their own knowledge explicit and through the process of sharing and discussion our individual and collective knowledge and understanding changed.

So when viewed from the perspective of a brokered process the production of the book involved:

- ❑ a vision – the growth of new knowledge about brokerage;
- ❑ a product – a book to diffuse the knowledge;
- ❑ visualizing a process – what needed to be done to turn the vision into a reality;
- ❑ creating the conditions to enable the vision to be realized;
- ❑ networking – identifying and persuading the people with the necessary knowledge/experience and resources to work together to achieve the objective;
- ❑ facilitating the process of collaborative knowledge production and the validation of knowledge produced;
- ❑ codifying personal knowledge and sharing this between participants;
- ❑ and hopefully adding value as the broker by ensuring that that the whole is more than the sum of the individually created parts.

This is the essence of brokering and we can elaborate these ideas in a working definition that can be evaluated through the examples given in this book. The professional actions included in this definition are elaborated towards the end of the chapter.

**Working definition** – Brokerage is an intentional act in which the broker seeks to work in collaborative and creative ways with people, ideas, knowledge and resources to develop or change something. The professional actions typically include:

- ❑ envisioning the change(s) to be made;
- ❑ creating the conditions to enable change to be made;
- ❑ engaging people/organizations in debate/consultation/negotiation to help shape the nature of the change and facilitate the process of change;
- ❑ creating the infrastructures and processes to facilitate development and support change;
- ❑ facilitating the development, diffusion and use of knowledge for change;
- ❑ behaving honestly and ethically.

### **Origins of Organizational Brokerage in UK HE**

Histories are important because they demonstrate that ideas are often longed lived and what appears to be a new idea is really an old idea wearing new clothes. Common sense would suggest that brokering has been integral to relationships and interactions within higher education – as long as there has been higher education. But much of this will have gone unrecorded and unrecognized as such. I would like to begin this story of organizational brokering in UK HE with the work of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Under the theme of

*Networking and Brokering*, Crispin and Weeks (1988) describe a set of activities linked to the strategic use of a Project Development Fund between 1985-1988. The fund (£0.54 million p.a.) was used to support educational development initiatives in polytechnics and colleges that were intended to lead to improvements in the standards of courses. Nearly 600 project proposals were submitted and these were incorporated into a database from which priority themes were identified based on generic development needs and issues. The CNAA then formulated outline project briefs against its organizational priorities and tendered these to institutions. The key feature of the process was the interactive and collaborative way that CNAA officers worked with project teams and committees. With an eventual database of 850 proposals CNAA was well placed to act as a networking agency and also to broker with other bodies to create additional funds for development. For example, a project aimed at promoting the teaching of design in undergraduate business studies courses was jointly funded by CNAA and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and brought together seven HE institutions.

Crispin and Weeks recognized that brokerage involved negotiation, entrepreneurship and proactiveness as well as collaboration and networking and the contracting model that was developed ensured a level of participation that was deemed to be in the interests of the project. The results of project work were disseminated through published reports and good practice guidelines. Social dissemination was via workshops, conferences, seminars and support for special interest groups. The CNAA also realized that to effect systemic change the outcomes of project work had to be connected to levers that could drive change more systematically, *it is desirable to link projects and their outcomes to the work of the CNAA committees responsible for validation, review and subject development. It is this linkage that holds the greatest promise to introducing and implementing change where necessary.* This interesting report concluded with the rather pessimistic words, *whether the CNAA system (development funding) will be replicated exactly elsewhere is debatable given the uniqueness of some of its features, in particular the collaborative networking and brokerage functions adopted by CNAA committee members and link officers.* It took UK HE another 12 years to invent a brokerage organization that did adopt the networking and brokerage functions of the CNAA!

### **Brokerage in Contemporary HE**

So although the idea of brokerage is not new to UK HE the recent growth in organizations that exploit the idea as a mode of working is. In the period 2000 to 2002 four new organizations have been created, the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), University for Industry (UfI), the e-university (eU) and the National Health Service University (NHSU). These organizations provide, or will provide, communication infrastructures and capacities to create new opportunities and support for learning. They have been created to make new things happen and extend the capacity of existing infrastructures for HE learning in a cost-effective way. They are about promoting change and often challenge current

thinking and practice in order to open up new possibilities and ways of doing things.

### **View from the Chalk Face**

But of course things might look very different if you are a higher education teacher grappling with new quality assurance procedures, substantial growth in the number and diversity of students and a departmental policy that wants you to put your course into the virtual learning environment. You are more likely to be saying, 'Well hang on a minute, I've got more than enough change to cope with at the moment thank you.' In these circumstances brokering can promote collaborative working across HE institutional communities and facilitate the sharing and exchange of ideas and practices that are relevant to the particular pressures that individual academics are facing.

Similarly, institutional managers grappling with political agendas like widening participation and improving retention, new external requirements for regulation, and the implementation of complex and comprehensive learning and teaching strategies, will be looking for cost-effective ways of changing and minimizing adverse impacts and unforeseen consequences. Brokerage can reduce the costs of searching for the knowledge by facilitating the pooling of know how, expertise, wisdom and creativity of individuals across institutions so that the costs of working out how to change, and the potential risks of making the wrong changes, are minimized.

On the whole we are not too bad at identifying practice that is worthy of wider application i.e. that which works in a particular context. What we are less good at is transferring and embedding such practice in a context that is different to the one in which it was grown. The diffusion of knowledge in a way that influences thinking across a community of practitioners and facilitates wider usage is an important dimension of the brokerage function. It constitutes the major practical and intellectual challenge for brokers and brokering organizations.

### **Brokerage and the New Public Management**

Reshaping and enhancing a large complex and developed higher education system with much history and tradition is not a simple task. It requires sustained political determination and a panoply of actions and interventions over a period of decades. These interventions take many forms, for example in the UK:

- ❑ legislation (e.g. conversion of polytechnics to universities);
- ❑ state funding policies that drive wholesale or targeted expansion;
- ❑ requirements on institutions for explicit missions, strategic plans against such missions and systematic review against goals and targets: a more managerialistic top down approach;

- ❑ national research projects that lead to new insights about the nature of the system;
- ❑ national reviews that advocate change;
- ❑ the introduction of a regulatory framework and policies that causes HE institutions to comply with certain expectations;
- ❑ state sponsored organizations that cause, promote or support change;
- ❑ a substantial commitment of public funds to the business of evaluating system performance.

This package of interventions and on-going practices is part of an approach to the management of public services in social/political environments that embrace the 'new public management' (Kettl, 1997; Dill, 1998). In many countries the application of this approach to public policy in higher education has resulted in reforms in which *Governments act as monopsonistic purchasers, developing explicit performance contracts with HE institutions for teaching and research* (Dill, 1998 p. 363). The idea of the 'evaluative state' is central to this strategy (Henkel, 1991; Dill, 1998) and the state needs information on which to judge whether performance contracts are being delivered. This approach to the management of public policy may also be coupled to the funding and contractual policies that promote competition in the public service environment as a way of improving value for money and returns on the public investment (see Olssen, Chapter 10). Thus, the assessment of performance, through self-appraisal or external review, becomes integral to the application of the new public management (Dill, 1998). The progressive emphasis on performance measurement (through Performance Indicators), the growth in external review and institutional self-evaluation and the expansion of benchmarking in UK HE (Jackson and Lund, 2000) are manifestations of this approach to the management of public policy and the evaluative state.

The emergence of state-sponsored brokers has grown out of this context. It might denote disillusionment with existing mechanisms for promoting and supporting change. It might also reflect a growing awareness that managerial control mechanisms and too much emphasis on accountability and 'hard' performance assessment (Lund and Jackson, 2000) can result in a level of compliance that inhibits adaptation, creativity and innovation and therefore erodes the overall vitality and capability of the system.

Brokerage requires an agent (an individual, work team or organization/association) to create the conditions that enable people, organizations, and networks to collaborate to learn and achieve desired goals. This principle of collaboration, partnership and cooperation is a fundamental characteristic of brokering in the HE system and it differs markedly in its values base from the more authoritarian, directive and top-down forms of change agency. It appeals to traditional collegiate behaviours that most academics still value. Beyond these shared value systems there are a number of incentives, both positive and negative to encourage participation in brokered actions (Chapter 3).

Organized state-sponsored brokerage in the UK might be positioned as an attempt to adjust the balance in the public management model from one dominated



by planning and accountability-focused review driven by external performance assessment to one in which development, experimentation and innovation through collaborative working is more prominent. Brokerage is fundamentally entrepreneurial in its outlook.

### **Essential Capacity for Systemic Change**

Since the end of the 1980s the UK education system has been reshaped by governments (through funding mechanisms, regulatory controls and various funded initiatives and incentives) and society (in framing expectations and behaving as a market for the educational and training opportunities provided). The situation is particularly interesting in the UK because of the synergistic effects of government interventions and market forces in reshaping the system. The rapid expansion and increased diversity of higher level education and training opportunities during the 1990s was driven by state funding strategies and market forces. But the reshaping of the education system, in terms of the nature of the educational and training opportunities provided, the expectations of what the system will deliver and the very purpose of the system itself, has been effected through a continuum of review, policy and project-driven initiatives. Organizational brokerage has played an important role in each of these areas.

During the 1990s we created a number of organizations<sup>1</sup> for promoting top-down change through policy, strategy and regulation (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Building organizational capacity to support bottom-up development through collaborative working has been rather less systematic. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the Employment Department (ED) through its Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) initiative was a major force for development. This was succeeded by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) Innovations project-based funding. The Higher Education Funding Council England also sponsored development-led change at subject level through the project-based Fund for the Development of Learning and Teaching (FDLT) which fostered development at subject level. This initiative will be completed in 2005. The subject-focused development function of the CNAAs was carried forward into HEQC's Quality Enhancement Group but this was converted to a policy development group in 1997 when the organization was absorbed by the newly formed QAA.

More recently HEFCE, with support from the other HE funding councils, established a professional body for teachers (the Institute for Learning and Teaching) and the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) to facilitate a more coordinated approach to the enhancement of teaching and learning, primarily by working with disciplinary communities. HEFCE also established the National Coordination Team (NCT) to support the development of institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies. In addition, over £10 million is being allocated by the Economic and Social Research Council under the Teaching and Learning Research

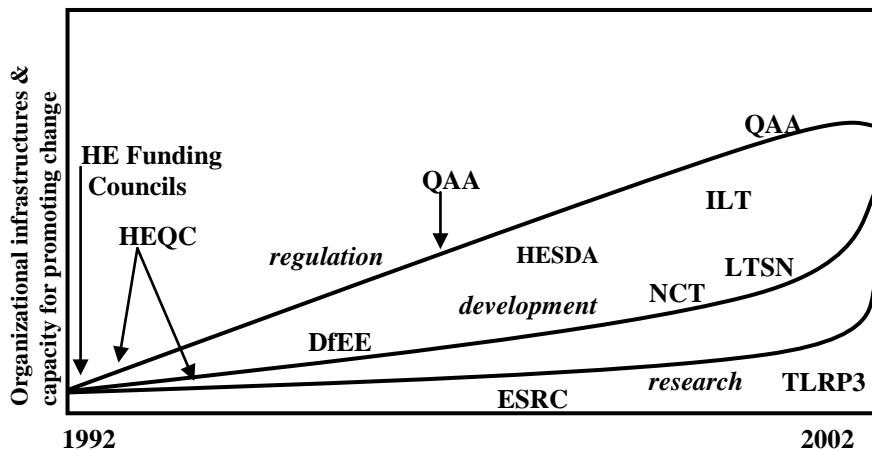
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<sup>1</sup> Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales (1992 to present); Higher Education Quality Council (1992-1997); Quality Assurance Agency (1997 to present).

Programme, to support research into higher education and build capacity for rigorous educational research. Taken together, these developments indicate that the UK is trying to enhance and balance its capacities for promoting and supporting change through the mechanisms of policy and strategy, regulation, development and research (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1 Infrastructure for assuring and improving quality and standards in UK HE**

Organizational agents and programmes: HEQC – Higher Education Quality Council, DfEE – Department for Education and Employment (now DfES Department for Education and Skills), QAA – Quality Assurance Agency, HESDA – Higher Education Staff Development Agency, NCT – National Coordination Team, ILT – Institute of Learning and Teaching, LTSN – Learning and Teaching Support Network, ESRC – Economic and Social Research Council with its TLRP – Teaching and Learning Research Programme.



**Brokerage for Learning and Innovation**

In her analysis of innovative organizations, Kanter (1992) suggested that the most successful are flexible and adaptive and are able to marshal resources quickly to deal with issues, new requirements and exploit emergent opportunities. Such organizations have a host of sensing mechanisms for recognizing emergent changes and understanding their implications. Her diagnosis of the organizational environment in the early 1990s was that the balance between planning – which reduces the need for effective reaction, and flexibility, which increases the capacity for effective reaction – needs to shift towards the latter (Chapter 3). Kanter coined

the term *change masters* to describe the people and organizations adept at the art of anticipating the need for, and of leading, productive change.

The organizational brokers we are creating in the UK should aspire to becoming organizations of this type and brokerage should be viewed as an attempt to promote and support a more innovative and enterprising culture within the HE system. It has the potential to improve the intelligence gathering capacity of the HE system about emergent change and enhance its capacity to react and respond to change by sharing information quickly and pooling knowledge, understanding and expertise to facilitate effective and productive change. When brokerage is used to build new infrastructure like the UfI and e-university projects (Chapters 8 and 9), it has the power to create new markets for learning and stimulate providers and producers to innovate.

By systematizing the brokerage function we are trying to improve the conditions and our capacity for systemic learning. We can anticipate what these conditions might be with reference to the conditions for a 'learning organization' – *organizations skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights* (Gavin, 1993). New ideas are the life-blood of such organizations but ideas alone are insufficient, they must trigger improvement and lead to changes in behaviour. Kells (1995) provides one of the best descriptions of what an academic learning organization would look like.

Such an institution actively seeks to understand and improve its performance and the conditions for teaching, learning and research. It mobilizes the talent in the organization to respond to the challenges it faces, rather than waiting to receive instructions and limitations from government. It is proactive rather than reactive. It seeks to understand its markets, strengths, problems and opportunities, and devises strategies to fulfil its clearly understood purposes and goals. It actively discusses expectations for its professionals, programmes and services, and evaluates its progress in achieving those expectations. It develops the capacities of its systems and its staff so that this type of self-regulated existence can be realized (Kells, 1995).

In 1993 Gavin ruled out most universities as learning organizations on the grounds that they did not have the necessary cultures or systems for systematically creating and acquiring new knowledge to improve their core processes of teaching and learning. But much has changed in the last decade. In North America and elsewhere (notably Australia) there has been a substantial growth in Institutional Research (Howard, 2001) motivated by a desire to generate knowledge about the impacts of an institution's work processes on its performance. The desire to learn in order to improve lies at the heart of this enterprise. While UK HE institutions undoubtedly engage in IR, it is not systematized and underpinned by the systemic and management cultures that prevail in North America. Rather, the UK has invested heavily in quality assurance and quality systems. Dill (1999), reflecting on the worldwide growth of national quality systems, argues that this had caused universities to gather the information that enabled them to evaluate the quality and standards of their core teaching and learning processes. But learning cultures that

are dominated by accountability gear their knowledge development to the needs of accountability processes and these may inhibit important learning that does not align to the accountability enterprise. Biggs (2001) recognizes the difficulty of creating a favourable environment for transformative learning when institutional quality assurance systems are primarily led by concerns for accountability. He argued for the idea of 'reflective institutions' (based on the model of the reflective practitioner) in which prospective quality assurance for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching and learning is underpinned by:

- ❑ an explicit theory of teaching;
- ❑ a commitment to continual improvement in which staff development is central;
- ❑ removing impediments to good teaching (e.g. institutional priorities and policies that conflict with this goal).

During the last decade UK universities have invested heavily in quality assurance infrastructure in response to increasing expectations and requirements by Government and society (Lund and Jackson 2000 provide a useful summary of the history of performance assessment in UK HE). There is no doubt that quality assurance processes create information about teaching and learning practices and the outcomes of student learning. Furthermore, the QAA policy-driven encouragement to adopt an outcomes model of learning in higher education (Jackson, 1999) contains within it the assumption that academic subject specialists will be engaging more systematically with an educational approach to learning in which the curriculum, teaching and assessment methods are more closely aligned. The involvement of disciplinary communities in the production of Subject Benchmark statements (Jackson, 2002) provides another important QA-driver that focuses attention on student learning. We have been quick to knock our regulatory framework because of the costs and bureaucracy associated with the review process. But few would contest the idea that quality assurance and external review have forced HEIs to develop their capacity for gathering information on their core teaching and learning activities. Current developments like subject benchmarking and programme specification are raising the level of awareness in all subject communities of the learning that HE programmes are intending to promote. These are important conditions to support reflective learning communities and organizations that are committed to continual improvement.

While accountability has caused HE communities to consider how they evaluate their core processes for teaching and learning, and demonstrated that such information does lead to incremental improvement there are limits to what can be learned and improved through these mechanisms. If we want to promote more and deeper learning we have to change the emphasis from quality assurance for accountability towards quality assurance for development, transformation and innovation (Biggs, 2001). So while the national quality assurance project encourages a more systematic self-appraisal of the core functions of teaching and designs for learning, the conditions that are likely to be supportive of a culture for

organizational learning or reflectivity are unlikely to be achieved by this enterprise alone.

Fortunately the changes indicated in Figure 1.1, combined with QA reforms (HEFCE, 2001; QAA, 2002), suggest that we are now moving towards a more balanced environment within which accountability-, development- and research-led activities can work together to improve teaching and learning. Systemic brokering is key to promoting and harnessing the learning potential of this environment and to opening up the exciting possibility of a learning system populated by organizations, communities and people whose learning is facilitated through the activities of organizational and institutional brokers.

**Figure 1.2 Framework for characterizing the many system-wide organizations, associations and networks in UK HE which impact on teaching and learning.**

<b>Funding, planning and policy-led</b>	<b>Regulatory and standards-focused</b>	<b>Developmental through action-research, brokerage, network building</b>	<b>Research-led</b>
<b>DFES</b> <b>Funding Bodies</b> (England, Scotland, Wales and N Ireland). <b>UUK</b> <b>SCOP</b>	<b>QAA</b> TTA/OFSTED Statutory Regulatory Bodies Professional Bodies <b>ILTHE</b> (professional standards) Other Awarding Bodies HESDA <b>UFI &amp; eUniversity</b>	<b>LTSN</b> NCT managed FDTL, ILT (R&D) <b>HESDA</b> SEDA Ufi & eUniversity Subject Associations & networks Prof. Bodies JISC Committees ALT	Research Councils <b>ESRC</b> SRHE JISC committees ALT LTSN ILT SEDA

The main focus of organizations that span more than one field is indicated by the bold lettering

### Who are the Brokers?

The organizational studies in this book show that bodies such as the HEQC, QAA, Ufi, LTSN and the eUniversity have used brokerage to:

- ❑ undertake systemic enquiry (HEQC, LTSN);
- ❑ develop QA policy and guidance (QAA, HEQC);
- ❑ create new infrastructure and capacity for learning, create new markets and stimulate producers (LTSN, Ufi, eUniversity);
- ❑ engage in knowledge development to support change and improvement of teaching and students' learning (HEQC, LTSN).

One explanation for the growth of brokerage in the 1990s is that it provides a means of facilitating a more coordinated and connected approach to development and transformation by encouraging organizations with different functions to work together. In entering a brokered alliance the organizations are able to develop a better shared understanding about what it is they are trying to achieve and a better appreciation of the implications and ramifications of setting a change process in motion. By working together organizations are able to be more effective in influencing the diverse communities that comprise the HE system.

There are many organizations with a system-wide remit that impacts on teaching and learning. Figure 1.2 tries to classify them according to their principal functions. Organizations can be grouped into one of four functional categories: political and policy making; regulatory; development-led and research-led. Some bodies have remits that span more than one of these functional groups. Traditionally, there has been relatively little overt collaboration in the planning and coordination of activities between different national bodies. Brokerage offers the possibility of creating a cultural environment that is more supportive of the idea of collaborative working and some of the case studies in this book provide good examples of this. One of the roles of the LTSN (Chapter 7) is to broker across this framework.

### **Perspectives on Brokerage**

Brokering is undertaken in commercial and political environments as well as public service environments and we can gain a better appreciation of the role of the broker in the HE environment by considering brokering in other contexts.

#### *Broker as Trader*

Brokerage is a feature of trading environments in which a dealer or trader brings together people-ideas-finance to create new products and exploit new markets. Brokers may operate in a reactive way by offering and marketing a competitive brokerage service to enable clients to obtain information, goods or access to resources or expertise. Clients are willing to pay for this service because it is the most cost-effective way of obtaining these things. Brokers may also act in a proactive way to create new markets and/or envision new products (selling ideas to others, obtaining backers and persuading producers to make/adapt new things and/or sell into new markets).

The brokerage role in HE shares some of the features of the commercial trader but the not-for-profit collegial environment exerts a strong influence on the transactions that are made. There are examples where HEIs purchase services (e.g. infrastructure and marketing capacity) from the broker. For example in the case of Ufi the broker markets a scheme for work-based learning and HEIs in the scheme can draw down funding for students. Ufi recovers 10% of the total student fee from the HEI and in return students gain access to an on-line support and guidance system, written support materials and a telephone advice centre (Chapter 8). There

are also examples (like LTSN), where HE communities do not directly purchase services and products from the broker. Rather it is the state, through its Funding Councils, that is purchasing the brokerage service on behalf of HE communities. The Funding Councils, as paymasters, may not be interested in the specific services and products resulting from the activities of organizational brokers. Their primary concerns relate to the overall impact and effectiveness of the service: does it give value for the investment made? how well does the broker promote the priorities of the state? The main users and beneficiaries of the LTSN brokerage services are HE communities. They are effectively *user clients* (clients because they contribute to defining and producing the products) and the real test of value of this brokerage service is the extent to which HE communities access, use and contribute to the development of services and products.

The main commodities being traded by HE organizational brokers are information and knowledge. But the trading role differs from that seen in commercial environments because state funded brokers, operating in a public service, are normally working for the benefit of the system as a whole. This creates a set of conditions for the 'trading' of information in which the brokerage transaction may involve purchasing information or products (e.g. via commissioning someone to write something or negotiation of copyright access). But it also involves the free exchange of information on the understanding that the information is for the benefit of others. This must be a fundamental principle for the development and diffusion of knowledge through brokerage. Similarly, information obtained through brokerage is rarely sold because it has already been purchased by the state. The only possible reason for selling information, e.g. through a publication, is to offset the costs of knowledge production so that state funding can be reinvested elsewhere.

Another, less altruistic motive for trading information is where a client is willing to exchange one lot of information for another: a process that happens all the time in both research and business communities.

A significant difference between the commercial and not-for-profit brokerage environment is that end users invest in their own brokerage service by committing their time and intellectual resources to the broker, i.e. they are clients as well as consumers. There are a number of possible reasons for this.

- ❑ *Commitment to public service values.* HE teachers care deeply about the quality of the education they provide. Most HE teachers believe that it is an important aspect of being a professional in a public service to contribute freely to activities that fundamentally are about improving their services to students and society. Brokerage extends the opportunities for collegiate behaviour and provides an important counterbalance to the erosion of public service values in a more market-driven HE economy.
- ❑ *Commitment to personal and professional development.* People contribute to brokerage activities and projects because they believe that they will learn and develop through the process of sharing their knowledge with like-minded

people. Brokerage extends the opportunities for research and developmentally focused activities that will provide a catalyst for personal development.

- ❑ *Opportunity to shape and influence.* Participation in brokerage activities can provide a platform for individuals to influence thinking, policy and practice.
- ❑ *Maintaining competitiveness.* HEIs, departments and individuals participate in brokerage activities in order to keep up to date with new developments and maintain their competitiveness.

One analogy with commercial brokerage is that some public sector brokerage roles require the broker to create new markets and/or envision new products (selling ideas to others, obtaining backers/champions and persuading providers of education to create new things). This type of activity moves brokerage from the domain of enhancing existing things to the domain of facilitating or causing transformation.

#### *Political and Diplomatic Brokerage*

Brokerage, particularly at the strategic level, is a political activity in the sense that it might be overtly addressing priorities and necessities for development and change brought about by Government policies and interventions. The brokerage role may involve gaining the support of influential partners e.g. policy making bodies and funding bodies, regulatory bodies or student and employer representative bodies. Creating the conditions where political and non-political partners can work together on overtly political topics requires great sensitivity, skill and diplomacy. Indeed, there are many analogies between diplomatic activities and the activities associated with brokering. Diplomacy is the means, through formal and informal representation, by which the state promotes and protects its own and wider interests. The diplomacy function comprises (Barston, 1997 p. 2):

- ❑ *Representation* – explaining policy, actions or views.
- ❑ *Acting as a listening post* – gathering information on emergent issues/changes to inform policy: feeding back timely warning of adverse developments.
- ❑ *Creating the conditions* – Preparing the way for new policy or initiatives so that conditions are favourable.
- ❑ *Conflict resolution* – reducing friction through negotiation
- ❑ *'Managing' change* – contributing to the maintenance of order and orderly change.
- ❑ *Participating in rule making/negotiating agreements* – that provide frameworks for relationships, behaviour, trade activities etc. connected to the management of change.

Brokerage perhaps lies at the more dynamic and dramatic end of the diplomatic spectrum of the diplomatic function. Recent history is littered with high profile



peace brokers who have sought through interventionist strategies to resolve conflict between warring factions in the Middle East, Balkans, Northern Ireland to name but three. Brokerage in such circumstances may involve trading one set of interests against another, persuading through concessions and open threats. This dimension of brokerage is not a feature of any of the case studies described in this book. But organizational brokerage is a political activity and all the roles found within the diplomatic function could be featured in brokering within the HE context. It might even be argued that the growth of systemic brokerage reflects the need for a diplomatic capacity where the state is trying to persuade a HE system to change. In such circumstances the broker acts as mediator, on behalf of the system, as well as an agent of change for the state. The trick is to balance these so that both the system and state are broadly satisfied.

#### *Information and Knowledge Brokerage*

Information brokerage as a sustainable and successful activity has a very precise motivational and economic justification. Insurance brokers, stock brokers, travel agents (brokers), estate agents etc. are middlemen whose services are required because of the high cost of searching for knowledge/information in the relevant information markets. Middlemen institutions emerge over time in markets where products are what economists term ‘experience goods’ – the quality of which cannot readily be judged in advance of consumption (usually as a result of complexity of a high degree of specificity). Middlemen arise because consumers are willing to pay a premium for their services to save the costs of finding information and determining the quality of the information for themselves (e.g. by personal recommendations, research, shopping around, trial and error).

The Harrods Librarian Glossary defines an information broker as a gateway that provides access to information or data from a range of sources and presents them in a coordinated manner. The information brokerage role requires the capacity to search for and find information for a particular topic or aspect of practice. The process involves:

- ❑ *Hunting for and gathering information* – searching, surveying, mapping existing information and resources.
- ❑ *Processing the information* – analyzing and evaluating it.
- ❑ *Organizing it* – creating searchable databases and creating navigational aids/roadmaps.
- ❑ *Making it useable and accessible* – customizing it for different audiences, providing it through a variety of media.
- ❑ *Connecting information* – so that a user is able to easily locate other information that is relevant.
- ❑ *Identifying gaps and deficiencies* – working to fill these gaps.
- ❑ *In some instances offering impartial and informed advice on the quality of the information* – so that users may judge its worth.

Information brokerage is not about creating new information *per se* but about enabling people to find existing information. A key aspect of the function is to translate existing paper based resources into resources that are accessible and searchable on-line. The broker has to continually make decisions about:

- ❑ what information to gather or knowledge to acquire, how to acquire it and who to involve in the process;
- ❑ what information/knowledge to make accessible, how to present it and to whom and when.

Information brokers who are operating on inclusive principles have to make information available to everyone. This has implications for customization for different audiences – not just the vehicles for dissemination but also the language and conceptual vocabulary used, the level of detail and the way it is presented.

Knowledge brokerage is a process of active facilitation to promote the exchange, sharing, further development and creation of new knowledge. The process leads to the creation of new information. Knowledge brokerage requires the capacity to:

- ❑ identify what needs to be known;
- ❑ identify the people or organizations with the knowledge and expertise;
- ❑ create the conditions to enable knowledge to be shared and grown;
- ❑ facilitate the process of sharing/growing;
- ❑ enable the participants in knowledge development to learn and develop through the process;
- ❑ capture the learning and make it accessible and intelligible to others.

Our capacity to use information wisely and effectively is outstripped by its availability. Much useful knowledge is dispersed and mixed with other knowledge that is perhaps less useful. Brokers reduce the costs of searching for information and they add value to the provision of information by facilitating its use for example by filtering out unwanted information, by simplifying and distilling complex information, by translating and customizing information, by packaging and connecting disparate information. They can also create processes and provide services that will help people to use information in their own contexts, e.g. through conferences, workshops, on-line discussions and special networks. In organizations, information and knowledge brokerage can be systematized through structured knowledge management (KM) whose business is to ‘get the right knowledge to the right person at the right time’ (Schwartz et al, 2000). Internet technologies provide the means of gathering, describing, organizing, tagging and making knowledge and information available. Much of this already exists and the broker’s role is to identify and make accessible that which is worth making available. But technology combined with the appropriate infrastructure and cultures can also be used to support the real-time growth of knowledge. In the corporate world the building of organizational memory in this way is a powerful aid to learning and to maximizing opportunities for real-time development and

improvement (Schwartz et al, 2000). Organizational knowledge management involves developing new communication infrastructures that connect people within the organization and with the external world. It also requires the development of new attitudes and behaviours that encourage people to collaborate and share their knowledge in a systematic and structured way. These infrastructures, capacities and behaviours are combined in the idea of knowledge networking or the 'networked knowledge economy' (Skyrme, 1999). Many real and virtual commercial organizations are investing heavily in developing the capacity, cultures and behaviours for knowledge management in order to gain competitive advantage.

UK HE is now taking the first steps to build capacity for systemic knowledge management through the subject-based infrastructure of the LTSN (Chapter 7). This is the first time that any national HE system has attempted to acquire systemic memories in this way and if it can be made to work it offers exciting possibilities and a means of gaining competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

#### *Brokers as Regulators*

Brokers may also exert a regulatory function, or put another way, regulators might use brokerage as part of their regulatory mechanisms. Professional Bodies may fall into this category as does the QAA (Chapter 6). Some organizational brokers have been established to regulate the systems they have created through brokerage, for example Ufi (Chapter 8) and eUniversity (Chapter 9). Even a body like LTSN (Chapter 7) which does not have a regulatory function, regulation is implicit in some of its work practices: for example, in the setting of standards and use of frameworks to control knowledge production and knowledge giving through the web site.

#### **Unpacking the Working Definition**

The working definition for brokerage in a higher education context given on page 5 was grown from personal experience and evaluated and refined in the light of the organizational case studies. We can now examine in more detail each of the dimensions of the role.

#### *Envisioning Change*

Brokers have to provide a clear rationale for what they are trying to do and why they are trying to do it. It is the starting point for the process of persuasion required to convince people to buy into the change. The rationale for brokering may derive from political agendas, or national policies and or from the perceived needs of communities.

Such rationale should be accompanied or led by a vision. *A vision defines an enterprise's purpose. It should present an attractive and clear view of the future that can be shared* (Sir John Harvey Jones). The vision reduces the complex ideas within a set of rationale or terms of reference to simple truths, values and beliefs

that can be shared. Ultimately, it is the buying into values and beliefs that really influences thinking and behaviour in the long term. The act of brokering, if it is undertaken sensitively and takes account of the views of participants, will continually refine the vision, and the end point may be somewhat different to the starting point. Selling the vision, particularly if it requires radical changes in thinking and behaviour, is not an easy task and in some projects it will require a major investment in time and emotional energy by the broker. This is an even more complicated and sensitive process when the change affects many different audiences. Different audiences have different interests and all have built in preferences, prejudices and resistances. In such circumstances it is little wonder that the broker falls back on simple beliefs and values to sell the idea across such a complex constituency.

There will also be times when brokering is used without a clear idea of where it is leading. The HEQC Graduate Standards Project (Chapter 5) provides a good example of a complex, multi-dimensional process involving many brokered interventions over nearly three years. The rationale for the project was set out in the commissioning brief given to HEQC by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, but those involved with creating the project had little idea at the start as to where the project would take them. Knowledge of what to do and how to do it emerged slowly through engagement with the problem. The vision that was the package of changes recommended in the final report only really emerged towards the end of the project as the learning from the various strands were pulled together.

#### *Creating the Conditions to Enable Change*

Organizational brokering is a political activity in the constructive sense of campaigning, persuading and arguing for the need to change something or seeking to create the conditions that will enable change to take place. In many areas in which brokerage is applied at a system level the reasons for change will be contested as will the ideas on what changes should be made. For this reason a key role of the broker is to create the political alliances that will provide the power base and authority to pursue the goals that have been set. At the system level this may require persuading key bodies (or rather the individuals with the relevant policy remit) like Universities UK and SCOP of the desirability of the envisioned change and the objectives of the brokered process. At subject level this may involve persuading Statutory or Professional Bodies, Subject Associations or Heads of Departments to back the project. Such alliances may also involve the representative bodies of functional groups (like for example Staff and Educational Developers, Registrars, Careers Guidance personnel and Trade Unions).

Simply persuading such bodies of the desirability of change is often not enough. They will have to be involved in the evolution of thinking relating to the change process for example through participation in steering or advisory groups or regular briefings and discussion. Neither is it sufficient that such alliances exist. They have to be seen to exist by the constituencies affected by change.

Large-scale brokered activity will often create advisory groups that contain representatives of the communities that are affected by the intended changes. In this way, communities help shape the focus and form of brokered process and help validate the outcomes.

### *Engaging People and Organizations in Debate*

Creating the conditions for debate is often the first step in what may be a complicated process of engagement with the people who need to be involved in shaping any change. There are many ways of engineering such debates and each change process will need to create a unique strategy reflecting such matters as the nature of the problem or issue, the complexity of the audiences and communities affected by the change and the contexts for problem working. The brokered policy development work on the Progress File (Chapter 6) involved ten national conferences, regional or institutional events and two focus groups in the six months prior to the preparation of a consultation paper. Such public exposure and the listening, reflections and follow-up conversations that take place around such events have a considerable influence on the way proposals for change are formulated. While the content of such debates cannot be predicted they tend to follow the pattern of:

- ❑ raising awareness of problems or issues, contexts and reasons for change;
- ❑ increasing levels of understanding of the nature of the problem leading to the identification and clarification of underlying issues, and clearer definition of the nature of the problem(s);
- ❑ and the sharing of ideas on how issues and problems might be addressed including the growing of knowledge of existing practice and an appreciation of the implications and costs of change.

By creating the right political environment and conditions for debate, brokers and brokering processes can deal with contentious political agendas, like for example the development of new quality assurance policies which make higher education more accountable (Chapter 6). Brokering, with its participatory collaborative methodologies, is a productive way of addressing and accommodating such agendas within the practice and value systems of different HE cultures and contexts. While politicians may view such processes as subversive they are an effective way of refining expectations and clarifying what is possible/not possible and worth/not worth changing. In this sense brokers fulfil an important mediating role.

### *Creating the Infrastructures to Enable Change*

In order to change we often need to develop new infrastructure to enable change to happen. By infrastructure I mean the physical resources, policy/regulatory/guidance frameworks, administrative structures and communication networks and capacities that support and develop practice in the area of change. Some major changes in practice, notably the modularization of the HE curriculum during the first half of the 1990s (Jackson, 1999) occurred in many institutions with little concern to develop the infrastructure and capacity to support the change. A thinking and learning HE system would not behave in this way and brokerage is a way of working collaboratively to share ideas and pool resources on what these infrastructures and capacities should be to support major change.

Clearly, the nature and amount of infrastructure building will vary enormously depending on the change being promoted and there will be a complex interplay between existing infrastructures in institutions and HE communities. The examples of brokerage given in this volume vary in the scale of infrastructure building from the creation of new organizations like UfI, eUniversity and the LTSN, to the creation of guidance frameworks, provision of information and the development of new networks.

Network building is a strong feature of all brokerage enterprises. Networks come together because fundamentally people want to participate in projects, they want to learn and improve themselves and the organizations they work for, they also feel that they need to be informed and brokering is often about pushing back some of the frontiers. Fundamentally, brokering processes do give people a chance to express their views and contribute to national developments. It is one of the main reasons why people contribute willingly to such processes.

#### *Facilitating the Development, Diffusion and Use of Knowledge*

Any knowledge production enterprise needs to understand the types of knowledge it is working with. Conceptions of knowledge that might be useful when working with HE communities include:

- ❑ the knowledge hierarchy developed by Amidon (1997);
- ❑ the know how/who classification of Savage (1996);
- ❑ knowledge as unconscious or conscious competency (Howell, 1982);
- ❑ the idea of propositional and process knowledge in professional working (Eraut, 1994);
- ❑ the tacit and explicit view of knowledge developed by Polanyi (1969) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995);
- ❑ the Mode 1 and 2 framework for knowledge production created by Gibbons et al. (1994).

Gibbons et al. (1994) recognize two different forms of knowledge production which they termed Mode 1 and 2. Mode 1 is essentially the scientific form of knowledge production. Traditionally such knowledge has been developed within a disciplinary, primarily cognitive context. The term embodies the cognitive and social norms and processes that must be followed in the production, legitimation

and diffusion of knowledge of this kind. In contrast, Mode 2 knowledge is created in trans-disciplinary, social and economic contexts and it is organized around a particular application. Such knowledge has to be useful to someone and fulfil a particular purpose and this imperative is central to the enterprise. Mode 2 knowledge is produced through a process of continuous negotiation. The consensus as to the appropriate cognitive and social practice in its production is derived from a heterogeneous constituency. But new knowledge produced in this way may not sit easily within the particular disciplines that contributed to its production. Processes of knowledge production lead to the creation of distinctive and continually evolving frameworks and theories to guide problem working. Such frameworks are generated and sustained in the context of application and knowledge growth by those engaged in knowledge production rather than (as in Mode 1) being developed first and later applied to a context by a different group of people. Trans-disciplinarity is dynamic: it is problem working capability on the move. Mode 2 is characterized by knowledge production in a continuous succession of transient and emergent problem working contexts and situations. In Mode 2, flexibility and response time are crucial factors and because of this new types of organizations have emerged to accommodate this form of knowledge production. The LTSN is a good example of an organization established to engage in Mode 2 knowledge production with the HE system. Social accountability permeates the Mode 2 knowledge production processes. This is reflected in the consensus building that underlies knowledge production, the definition of problems and the way in which results are interpreted, evaluated, validated and diffused. Emerging from such considerations is the idea that brokerage is an essential tool for Mode 2 knowledge working.

Mode 2 knowledge production does not rely on the existence of codified knowledge to solve current and emergent problems that are heavily contextualized. Rather, it seeks to harness the know-how embodied in practice and emergent practice residing in working communities and the markets where such knowledge will be used. The tacit/explicit knowledge typology developed by Polanyi (1969) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) is of particular interest in the development of new knowledge from knowledge residing in professional communities. Explicit knowledge is that which can be expressed in words, numbers and pictures that can be easily communicated and shared in the form of hard data, scientific formulae, procedures and principles. Tacit knowledge is highly personal and hard to formalize; subjective insights, intuition and hunches fall into this category. This knowledge is strongly influenced by value and belief systems and personal psychologies.

Tacit knowledge is often the most important knowledge that an organization or system has to enable it to function, perform, solve problems, change and innovate but it can be very difficult to capture this knowledge. It is also complex knowledge. Stevenson (2002) used de Jong and Feruson-Hessler's (1996) matrix of five qualities and four types of knowledge to map the dimensions of tacit knowledge. While Boisot (1998) used a three fold schema:

- ❑ Things that are not said because everyone understands them and takes them for granted. Knowledge is highly internalized. It could be codified but it isn't because it is not considered necessary to do so.
- ❑ Things that are said because nobody fully understands them. They remain illusive and inarticulate, e.g. the attempt in higher education to make academic standards more explicit.
- ❑ Things that are not said because while some people understand them there is a significant cost in articulating them.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) define four process for converting tacit knowledge to and from explicit knowledge.

- ❑ *Tacit to tacit (socialization)* – where individuals acquire new knowledge from others through observation and dialogue. Brokerage aimed at transferring tacit information directly (without intermediate codification) can be achieved through face to face conversation, interactive 1:1 or 1 to small group consultancy, workshops, networks, special interest groups, mentoring, telephone conversations, on-line discussions and so on. These mechanisms facilitate *socialization* of teaching and learning practices, conventions, customs and culture. They are unavoidably 1:1 or small-group based and consequently costly, however there are many things that can only be accumulated in this way.
- ❑ *Tacit to explicit (externalization)* – the expression of knowledge in tangible forms (e.g. text, data, images and graphical representations) through discussion and documentation. Brokerage aimed at the codification and dissemination of tacit knowledge can be achieved through written responses to open-ended questions, telephone or face-to-face-interviews that result in an agreed transcript, case-studies, project reports, research and development projects, self-evaluation reports or on-line discussion.
- ❑ *Explicit to explicit (combination)* – where different forms of explicit knowledge are combined such as that found in institutional documents, national policies, reports, books, articles, web pages or databases. This is an important brokerage role but an intermediate one. It involves combining existing codified knowledge from different sources. This may result in new perspectives/knowledge or better capacity to assimilate and make sense of dispersed information, or permit the application of the ideas in a new context. It may also include commentary and analysis that facilitate interpretation and therefore utilization of knowledge. It relates to the brokerage function of leading and stimulating thinking.
- ❑ *Explicit to tacit (internalization)* – such as learning by doing or using where individuals internalize knowledge from documents into their own body of experience. Individual consumers of knowledge have to take responsibility for



internalizing explicit knowledge – by acquiring deep understanding, by inventing their own wheels, by experimenting, reflecting on and evaluating results. A knowledge broker can help by packaging codified knowledge in a way that can be more easily used. Brokerage can feed selective codified knowledge to individual practitioners or networks and encourage them to discuss, reflect, apply, and evaluate. Brokerage organizations can support the people who facilitate this transformation process, e.g. staff and educational developers and QA personnel by supporting networks and providing opportunities for developing knowledge that is specific and useful to them. Brokerage can also identify and support consultants who can work directly with the information users to facilitate the conversion process. It can further aid the process by adding new information to aid interpretation.

Another key concept in understanding knowledge development as a process for individual and collective learning is that it is a negotiated process (Baillie, 2002). In teaching for example, there may be many ways to achieve particular learning objectives. Some may be more appropriate than others for particular contexts but appropriateness is a matter of professional judgement that involves understanding context and practice and its effects. That is why the very notion of ‘best practice’ is contested in higher education, and why discussions aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of cause and effect require the consideration of different views and perspectives. The absence of negotiation in trans-disciplinary contexts like teaching is the primary reason why it is so difficult to transfer so called good practice from one context to another. Such innate resistance is partly overcome by customizing knowledge developed through trans-disciplinary knowledge development processes and suffusing it through disciplinary communication structures (this is the strategy adopted by the LTSN Chapter 7). Any brokered knowledge development process therefore has to be mindful of the necessity and opportunity for negotiation.

The knowledge broker has an important role to play in facilitating the use of knowledge by different audiences. This function enables people to understand and interpret information, extract from it what they need, give it meaning in their own work contexts, and convert generalized codified knowledge into their own tacit knowledge. Examples of the way that this is achieved include:

- ❑ providing insights to contexts;
- ❑ connecting information and adding commentary and explanation;
- ❑ condensing information to permit easier transmission and assimilation;
- ❑ interpreting information and customizing it for specific audiences;
- ❑ providing examples of how information might be interpreted and operationalized.

The successful utilization of tacit knowledge is fundamentally influenced by the extent to which the contexts in which it was developed and applied can also be captured. The components of context are defined by Agostini et al. (1996) as:

- ❑ the history behind a work process;
- ❑ the actors/participants involved;
- ❑ the form of a work process;
- ❑ the owners and markets;
- ❑ the form of the applied procedures;
- ❑ the network of cooperation;
- ❑ the relations to other processes.

*Codification, Abstraction and Diffusion of Knowledge*

Codification, abstraction and diffusion of knowledge are the core processes of knowledge brokerage. Effectively they convert and combine data, information and tacit knowledge into new useable knowledge that has the potential to be converted back into tacit knowledge (Boisot, 1998). Academic communities are familiar with all these processes because they are core to knowledge production through discipline-based research. However, as the earlier discussion showed systemic knowledge production through brokerage is often trans-disciplinary in nature and its production is governed by different norms.

*Codification* – Gives form to phenomena or to experience either perceptual or conceptual. In reality it is a mixture of both since our prior conceptual understandings modify our perceptions of phenomena or experiences. Effective codification is a matter of both observational and intellectual skill. The ability to articulate and make sense of phenomena and experience. The more complex these are, the more problematic codification becomes. Codifying knowledge about teaching and learning is a complex process because of the number of variables, contexts and personal interpretations involved.

*Abstraction* – The process of discerning the structures or principles that underlie the forms. It allows us to select the information that is most relevant to a particular context. It requires an appreciation of cause and effects of particular relationships. It is a form of reductionism to enable complex information to be assimilated. Abstraction can be envisaged as occupying a scale. At one end we are dealing with highly concrete experiences in which the knowledge produced will be highly perceptual and local. The descriptions will be rich and heavily contextualized and the underlying structures and principles may not be easy to discern. At the other end of the scale the knowledge is abstract and highly conceptual and generalizable to many contexts.

*Diffusion* – Codification and abstraction work together to facilitate the communication and diffusion of information. In human interaction systems we must discern between the physical diffusibility of information and the actual uptake of information by individuals and populations of individuals. Information may be widely diffused or potentially accessible to a wide audience of potential users, but remain unused. There might be many reasons for this, e.g. people may not be aware of its existence; its significance and potential may not be recognized; its use might entail too much investment of time and energy; it might be insufficiently customized for the audience in its primary form. Diffusion may be scaled to reflect the proportion of a given population that might be reached with information of different levels of codification and abstraction. Such a population can be made up of individuals, groups of individuals e.g. teaching teams, departments, communities of practice, institutions or agencies.

The presentation of information in the language and form that can be assimilated and used by particular communities (audiences or markets) is an

important dimension of diffusion. Target audiences, the particular information needs of these audiences and the most appropriate forms and language for conveying the information are important considerations in any diffusion strategy. Information that is intended to produce an effect must also be compatible with the values, attitudes and motivations of the people or organizations receiving the information.

#### *Honest and Ethical Behaviours*

The term 'honest broker' has significant meaning in the world of brokerage and good brokers will go to great lengths to demonstrate the integrity of their work and protect their reputation for honesty. People who care about higher education will only participate in a brokered process if they feel that they are not being manipulated and there is no hidden agenda.

Brokering objectives and the process to achieve the objectives has to be transparent. This is not always easy in complex processes that are trying to work with diverse communities and interests. It is also important to demonstrate that the contributions individuals or institutions make to brokered processes are valued and are used.

The public presentation of ideas within brokerage processes, particularly if they are radical and confront difficult issues, are a real test for brokers. Presentation of difficult and complex issues is aided by building arguments on a basic set of values and beliefs that are difficult to contest so it provides a starting point for building consensual agreement. Having done this the onus is on the broker to follow through with actions and rhetoric that is consistent with such truths.

The brokerage role is not passive. The broker has to connect the world in ways that make sense to him/herself that can be justified to others and ultimately demonstrated through beneficial products or outcomes. Brokerage is a creative capacity to bring people together, to make connections, grow new knowledge and understanding and make things happen at a strategic level that would not happen any other way. Brokers normally have considerable autonomy over the decisions they make about how they connect the world and how they facilitate communication within this world. The brokerage role is not neutral. It is trying to achieve a goal through the interventions in the process. An individual's perspective on the process will be influenced by their views on the context, the value of the process and the way it is being facilitated. There is an onus on the broker to behave with honesty and integrity (true to self) in order for people to believe in the process itself. At times this can bring a broker's personal beliefs into conflict with their organization's beliefs and actions.

#### **Towards a Better Understanding of Organizational Brokerage**

The purpose of this book is to systematically examine the idea of brokerage as an agent for change in higher education. This introductory chapter sets out the case for brokerage and attempts to provide a framework for the evaluation of the idea. The

context for brokerage is the continuous and emergent process of change that characterizes large, complex open systems such as a higher education system or institution. Theories of change relating to whole systems, organizations and communities of practice need to recognize brokerage as a substantial process of change agency.

While brokering is a pragmatic, and for the most part intuitive activity, brokers need to explain their theories of change in order to reveal the assumptions on which practice is based and to enable the impact of their actions to be evaluated. Chapter 2 provides an overview of change theory and how such theory might be applied to HE institutions as a basis for understanding the actions of brokers and the effects of brokerage. HE institutions are complex multicultural organizations within which change initiatives are received, understood, interpreted and enacted in different ways in different contexts. Observations, empirical research and theories imply models of change in academic organizations that combine technical-rational thinking and actions with human activity systems that are organic, unpredictable and complex. This proposition forms the basis for a working model of change that brokers and their evaluators might utilize.

Chapter 3 examines the professional role of the broker. Practice has grown in an ad hoc manner within a number of organizations in response to different imperatives and circumstances. Brokers have worked intuitively and brokering is an art form in the sense that individuals interpret and apply a complex and poorly defined body of knowledge, skills, meta-competencies and behaviours within different brokering contexts. Chapter 3 begins to codify the dimensions of the professional role drawing on the change agency literature and the contexts and practices demonstrated in the organizational case studies.

If brokers have a difficult role to play then their evaluators also struggle to develop methodologies that will untangle the cause and effects of specific interventions from the myriad of effects of other change processes and change agents. In Chapter 4 Peter Knight argues for a collaborative relationship between the evaluator and broker in order to maximize the potential for learning on both sides. Part II provides a series of organizational case studies in which brokerage has been, or is, a core work process. Chapters 5 to 9 describe how brokerage has been used to:

- ❑ research complex and fuzzy problems, e.g. the nature of academic standards in a rapidly expanding and changing HE system;
- ❑ develop policy to assure quality and standards across an HE system;
- ❑ support the enhancement of teaching and student learning;
- ❑ create new opportunities for learning;
- ❑ and enhance the capacity of UK higher education to compete in the global e-learning market.

The final chapter provides perspectives on brokerage from other HE systems. While different systems recognize brokerage in different ways it is universally recognized as a force for engaging and changing higher education.

The emergence of organizational brokers as a developmental tool for UK higher education should be seen as a force founded on good intentions and exciting possibilities. Only time will tell whether these intentions are realized.

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## Chapter 2

# The Complexity and Messiness of Change

*Norman Jackson*

### Synopsis

Systemic brokering is a form of change agency for an infinitely complex and unpredictable world. It follows that brokers must develop a realistic appreciation of the nature of change. Brokers, like other change agents, make assumptions about how the world works and how it changes. They must understand their theories of change if they are to understand the likely consequences of their work. HE institutions are complex multicultural organizations within which change initiatives, whether initiated from the top, side or bottom, are received, understood, interpreted and enacted in many different ways. In the academic organizational world every HE teacher is a change agent capable of interpreting and enacting change in his/her own way with varying degrees of freedom to do so.

Empirical research and theories of change favour models of change in higher education institutions that combine the technical-rational thinking and behaviours of the managerial world with human activity systems that respond organically and unpredictably to change. Complexity theory provides the most useful insights into the behaviours of complex institutional social systems. Interpretations of the meaning of change are made at all levels by many individuals but actual changes in practice are constructed and enacted at the micro level by each individual operating in one of many department or sub-department cultures and social groupings. Individual academics are the fundamental change agents in the HE system and they have considerable autonomy in determining both the detail and the overall effects of change. The personal psychology of individuals has a strong influence on individual attitudes to, and engagement with, change and change processes.

Brokerage aimed at promoting and supporting change in teaching and learning practices must address this world of complexity. It must work with both the technical-rational managerial world and the more organic social/cultural discipline-based worlds in which academics practice.

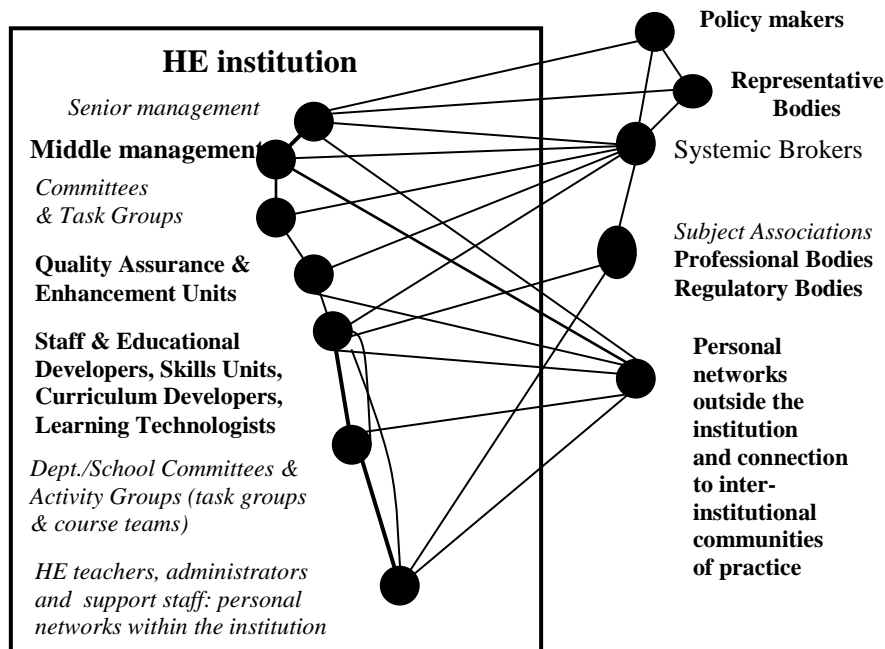


## Introduction

The central thesis of this book is that the process of brokering is an important vehicle for promoting and supporting change in higher education. In doing so it helps HE communities to work with and take advantage of change. Brokers are *agents for change* (people/organizations who promote change through their thinking and actions). If the HE system is to achieve the maximum benefits from brokerage, they need also to become *masters of change* – *the people and organizations adept at the art of anticipating the need for, and of leading productive change* (Kanter, 1992). The ultimate aim of brokering is to create new worlds and new possibilities. These worlds need to be envisioned, conceptualized and argued for and then created by the people on the ground who enact change.

I define change agency as being self-conscious about the nature of change and the change process. The individual educator is a critical starting point because the leverage for change can be greater through the efforts of individuals, and each educator has some control over...what he or she does, because it is one's own motives or skills that are in question...every educator must strive to be an effective change agent (Fullan, 1993 p. 12).

Figure 2.1 Representation of an idealized networked community of change agents and change agency in an HE system



If systemic brokers are to engage with this fundamental level of change agency they must develop the communication networks and relationships that reach into each of the change environments they seek to influence and support (Figure 2.1). But Stacey et al. (2000 p.106) warn us that: *A complex adaptive system consists of a large number of agents, each of which behaves according to its own principles of local interaction. No individual agent, or group of agents, determines the patterns of behaviour that the system as a whole displays, or how these patterns evolve, and neither does anything outside the system.* In organizing networks, relationships and processes, systemic brokers (and their evaluators!) have to be mindful of this principle.

### **Change and Changing**

Education systems are complex and dynamic. They continually adapt and change in complex and unpredictable ways in response to many internal and external pressures and stimuli. Systemic brokerage fosters collaborative working in order to help the system cope with, mediate and exploit change.

Whether intuitively (implicit self theory) or through the application of a particular theory of change, brokers need to appreciate the complexity of change if they are to understand the effects and potential consequences of their interventions and how they themselves can facilitate or hinder systemic learning and change. This chapter considers a range of conceptions and theories of change to inform discussion about the systemic brokerage function.

Throughout human history societies have devised ways to achieve wholesale change. Sometimes these have been evolutionary and democratic, on other occasions they have been precipitated by revolution, conflict or driven by authoritarian rule. But at the level of the individual we recognize that the changes we make to our work practice and behaviour are either the result of purposeful action by other people or a conscious decision that we ourselves make.

Dictionary definitions of change contain the process ideas of: making something different (transformation or conversion); replacement or exchange or becoming different. Our perceptions of change are often bound up with the process of changing and becoming different. Such perceptions are influenced by factors such as:

- ❑ the reasons for change – whether it is imposed or self-determined;
- ❑ the scale of change – quantity/amount of difference;
- ❑ the complexity of change – our ability to understand what is happening;
- ❑ quality of change – the characteristics of difference;
- ❑ the speed of change – rate at which a difference is created;
- ❑ and nature of the process – whether change is incremental or radical.

So one notion of change which brings together effect and process might be: making something quantitatively or qualitatively different by some predetermined action(s) undertaken within a recognizable time frame achieved in a particular way.

This notion is all very well if the subject of change is self-contained and easy to define. It is not so easy to apply when change is happening in many different ways, for different reasons, in different contexts, at different rates, over different time scales and when the effects in one area start modifying practice, behaviour or thinking in another. Physical and behavioural changes are usually easy to spot but changes in thinking, attitudes and beliefs which may result in future behavioural changes may be difficult to recognize and quantify. When personal factors are also taken into consideration like self-awareness of the effects of change, personal experience and interpretations of cause and effect, it is not surprising that perceptions of change are unique to each individual experiencing or observing it.

Gaining a *truthful* picture of change in such circumstances, one that matches the perceived reality of many individuals, is well nigh impossible.

It is hard to tell the truth about organizational changes and thus to learn what really makes them happen. I am not referring to something that mundane and mechanical like the limits of participant perception and memory, but to rather more profound systematic forces built into the nature of organizational change itself. In understanding why change accounts are often distorted, we understand some important things about the architecture of change itself (Kanter, 1992).

If this is true at an organizational level then it must be impossible to give an accurate account of change at the level of a whole higher education system. The reader will be conscious that the accounts given in this volume are written from the perspectives of people engaged in the act of brokering and truthfulness will be constructed only from his/her perspective of what truth is. *Where different people perceive the same thing differently it is not a matter of one being right and the other wrong, since right and wrong have no meaning independent of the context in which they are used* (Becher, 1994 p. 57).

Changes in practice and behaviour are brought about by a variety of methods. These methods were grouped by Kanter (1992) into: authoritarian (*managerial decisions, business contractual, external or internal regulation*); political and participatory (*collaborative*).

Brokerage is essentially a collaborative participatory activity for supporting change but the contexts in which it is often applied can be perceived as being overtly political and/or authoritarian. The organizational stories in Part II all have strong participatory elements to them, but in some cases the requirements for change have been driven by the state. Checkland (1999) identifies three types of change:

- ❑ changes in structures – organizational, functional responsibilities, reporting lines etc;
- ❑ changes in procedures (*or processes*) – dynamic elements of structures like planning processes, communication, record keeping, intelligence gathering;
- ❑ changes in attitudes – thinking, understanding, feelings, expectations, values and beliefs.

Changes to attitudes are the most difficult to accomplish especially in environments that value personal and institutional autonomy. While they can be accomplished directly they are normally encouraged by changes to structures and procedures. An example in higher education would be the use of policy (a procedural change) to promote Personal Development Planning which requires a significant change in attitudes, beliefs and practice to make it work. Brokerage was used to create policy (Chapter 6) and it is now being used to facilitate change in attitudes, beliefs and practice (Jackson, 2002a). Brokerage in HE tries to facilitate change by:

- ❑ working with and influencing directly individuals or groups of individuals networked by the broker, e.g. managers, academic practitioners, administrators, educational developers and other institutional change agents;
- ❑ working with individuals and groups of individuals through existing networked communities and associations;
- ❑ working through institutions and their structures, processes and change agents;
- ❑ providing accessible information and resources or the navigational aids to acquire such information.

There is much psychology and emotion in change and it is easy to see how an individual's state of mind can affect his attitude and response to change. An important influence on this state of mind is whether change is self-determined or imposed by someone else. If change is self-imposed an individual's response will reflect his ability to diagnose what he needs to learn and do to learn, to access information and advice, to create time to learn/develop and change and to acquire any other support necessary to implement change.

We know that some people engage more readily in change than others. Such positive attitudes to change are likely to be rooted in an individual's psychological view of the world. In particular, whether the person tends to reflect self-critically and learn from such reflections. It may also be bound up with personal values and beliefs. In HE such people are often driven by a deep commitment to their students and their teaching. Individual attitudes to change are also bound up with an individual's experience of change and their present role and ambitions. If change is imposed many other factors come into play for example:

- ❑ the role the individual is expected to play in the change process (managerial, administrative, technical, academic);
- ❑ the way change is being communicated and promoted;
- ❑ personal and peer attitudes to proposed change;
- ❑ the level of an individual's autonomy in determining responses;
- ❑ the extent to which the nature of change is negotiable;
- ❑ the nature of the managerial, administrative and/or regulatory strategies used to ensure change occurs;
- ❑ the scale and totality of change that an individual is being exposed to and the timeframes in which change is expected to occur;

- ❑ the support given (time and help) to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills to enable changes to be made and;
- ❑ the organizational cultures (particularly at departmental level) that create the cultural view about a particular change.

Change is a complicated and uniquely individual process. Given such complexity, scale, relationships to and influences on change, it is not surprising that the net effects of change on people in their working environments is difficult to understand, quantify, attribute and articulate. So from the outset we have to acknowledge that change and how we perceive it is a difficult concept to understand in both an abstract theoretical sense and a real sense (as experienced and perceived).

### **Moral Purposes for Change**

Systemic change that is promoted as part of a process of reform within a particular paradigm must be underpinned by an explicit moral purpose if it is to engage a whole HE system or organization (Fullan, 1999). This means that we have to appeal directly to the values of the community if we are to promote real change. Providing opportunities for people to develop themselves through the process of education is inherently a moral enterprise (unlike for profit businesses) and the potential source of an inspirational mandate (Fullan, 1999 p. 31).

At the micro-level moral purpose in education means making a difference to the life chances of students ...At the macro level, moral purpose is education's contribution to societal development and democracy (Fullan, 1999 p.1).

This view of the moral world is supported by Hannan and Silver (2000 p. 27) who found that the predominant reasons given by academics for changing their teaching practice is to improve student learning and to respond to changes in the student population. Another high level (moral) purpose that might appeal to many academics as a motivator for change is the desire to improve teaching arising from an individual's enthusiasm and passion for a subject and to see students learning and developing in the context of their subject (Ballantyne et al., 1999).

But the need to change is also motivated by external drivers. Jackson and Shaw (2002) identified eight major pressures for change in contemporary UK higher education:

- ❑ concern for academic standards;
- ❑ a more scientific and professional approach to teaching;
- ❑ creating opportunities for developing skills for the knowledge economy and improved employability;
- ❑ the use of communications and information technology in teaching and learning;
- ❑ creating opportunities to learn through life and develop self;

- ❑ responding to the market;
- ❑ democratizing/popularizing HE – social inclusion/increasing and widening participation in higher education;
- ❑ working more efficiently and effectively – doing more with less.

It is much harder for academic communities to accept the moral basis for change when the causes are driven by the Government and its agents. A key challenge for systemic brokers like LTSN is to champion the moral purpose for change at the same time as helping communities to make changes that may conflict with their own value systems.

Understanding change within our education system is complicated because we value and celebrate diversity. Diversity means respect for difference – cultures, purposes, structures, vocabularies, interests, ways of thinking and behaving, the list is endless. You cannot achieve moral purpose unless you develop mutual empathy and relationships across diverse groups. To achieve moral purpose in a diverse system *is to forge interaction and even mutual interest across groups* (Fullan, 1999 p. 2). Systemic brokerage offers a potential vehicle for achieving this goal in a large complex diverse system.

### **Change in Complex Systems**

A large, rapidly expanding, culturally diverse, multi-purpose HE system is by definition complex and traditional ways of managing change that were devised for more stable times and environments are inadequate. Complexity theory addresses the issue of learning and adapting (changing) in unstable and uncertain conditions.

The paradox of complexity is that it makes things exceedingly difficult, while the answer lies within its natural dynamics – dynamics which can be designed and stimulated in the right direction but can never be controlled (Fullan, 1999 p. 3).

Most textbooks focus heavily on techniques and procedures for long term planning, on the need for visions and missions, on the importance and the means of securing strongly shared cultures, on the equation of success with consensus, consistency, uniformity and order. However, in complex environments the real management task is that of coping with and even using unpredictability, clashing counter cultures, disensus, contention, conflict and inconsistency (Stacey, 1996a).

Complexity theory and evolutionary theory can help us make sense of change in an infinitely complex systemic environment. The essential features of complexity theory (Stacey, 1996a; Stacey et al., 2000) as applied to organizations are shown in Table 2.1 together with a commentary on the implications for and relationship to the systemic brokerage function.

The science of complexity studies the fundamental properties of nonlinear feedback networks and particularly of complex adaptive networks. Complex adaptive systems consist of a number of components or agents that interact with each other according to

sets of rules that require them to examine and respond to each other's behaviour in order to improve their behaviour and thus the behaviour of the system they comprise. In other words, such systems operate in a manner that constitutes learning. Because those learning systems operate in a manner that consists mainly of other learning systems, it follows that together they form a co-evolving suprasystem that in a sense creates and learns its way into the future (Stacey, 1996b p. 10).

Table 2.1 *The essential features of complexity theory*

<b>Propositions</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
All organizations are webs of non-linear feedback loops connected to other people and organizations (its environment) by webs of non-linear feedback loops.	Academic organizations are connected at many functional and cultural levels within HE system as a whole. A major function of brokerage is to create even greater connectivity within and across communities. The challenge for brokers will be to create just the right amount of connectivity to foster adaptation. Too much connectivity creates gridlock, while too little creates chaos (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998).
Such non-linear feedback systems are capable of operating in states of stable and unstable equilibrium, or in the borders between these states, that is far from equilibrium, in bounded instability at the edge of chaos.	The building of networks through brokering is intended to increase the sense of community and therefore improve the stability of feedback systems. Brokerage can support diverse ways of implementing change by gathering and disseminating information on different approaches to implementation, thus providing an important feedback loop into the system as a whole. Such feedback can then promote further responsive and adaptive change in the direction of those practices that are found to be most effective for particular contexts.
All organizations are paradoxes. They are powerfully pulled towards stability by the forces of integration, maintenance controls, human desires for security and certainty, and adaptation to the environment on the one hand and decentralization, human desires for excitement and innovation, and isolation from the environment	This is equally true of the HE system as a whole. Systemic brokerage has been used as both an agent to increase stability, e.g. through the creation of policy and regulatory frameworks that seek more consistent approaches across HEIs, and as a catalyst for adaptation to the environment through its support for innovation and experimentation. It is a powerful force for increasing connectivity with the wider environment and therefore an opponent of isolation.
If the organization gives in to the pull of stability it fails because it becomes ossified and cannot change easily. If it gives in to the pull of instability it	The same must be true at a whole system level. Perhaps systemic brokerage has a role to play in helping academic organizations (and the system as a whole) to maintain their

disintegrates. Success lies in sustaining an organization in the border between stability and instability. This is a state of chaos, a difficult-to-maintain dissipative structure.	position in the territory between stability and instability, i.e. working at the edge of chaos.
The dynamics of the successful organization are therefore those of irregular cycles and discontinuous trends, falling within qualitative patterns, fuzzy but recognizable categories taking the form of archetypes and templates.	Systemic brokerage should recognize that this is the reality of the organizational dynamic and support accordingly.
Because of its own internal dynamic, a successful organization faces completely unknowable specific futures.	Systemic brokerage has the potential to help academic organizations understand better such unknowable futures by coordinating, harnessing and disseminating the collective thinking of the system.
Agents within the system cannot be in control of its long-term future, nor can they install specific frameworks to make it successful, nor can they apply step-by-step analytical reasoning or planning to long term development. Agents within the system can only do these in relation to the short term.	This is a very important point of principle for systemic brokers to take on board. Brokerage will be most successful if it can anticipate, support and work with real time change and not aim to control change in the longer term.
Long-term development is a spontaneously self-organizing process from which new strategic directions may emerge. Spontaneous self-organization is political interaction and learning in groups.	Brokerage is about facilitating collective learning in an infinitely complex system. The key to successful brokerage will be developing capacity to react spontaneously to new circumstances, to engage the system in the political activity of learning and to then facilitate organizational change that is perceived to be appropriate. In a diverse system such change is also likely to be diverse but within agreed principles that define the direction for change.

**Sources of information:** *Stacey (1996a) and Fullan (1999 p. 4). A commentary and interpretation of theoretical propositions in the context of brokerage in UK higher education, is also given.*

Perhaps the best argument for creating the systemic brokering function is to help create and support a complex adaptive system by building cultures and facilitative mechanisms that help the system to ‘create and learn its way into the future.’ A powerful inspirational vision for any systemic broker!

Complexity refers to the condition of the universe which is integrated and yet too rich and varied for us to understand in simple common mechanistic or linear ways. We can understand many parts of the universe in these ways but the larger and more intricately related phenomena can only be understood by principles and patterns - not in detail.

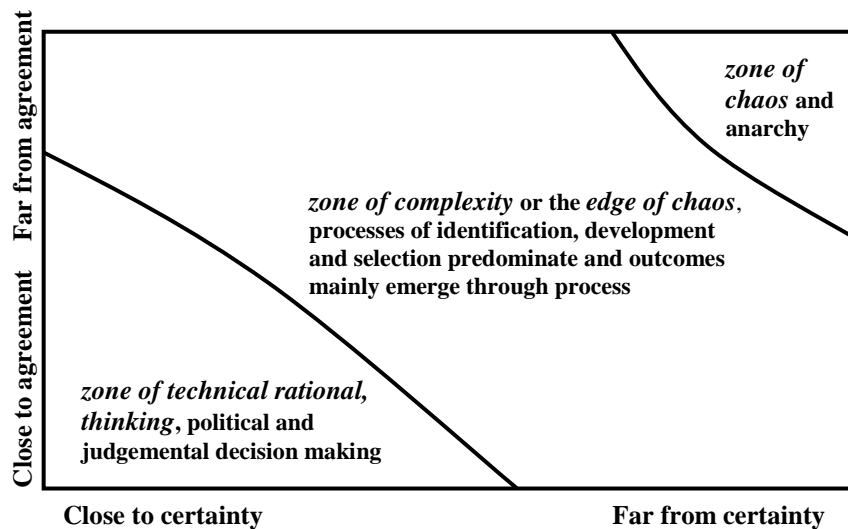


Complexity deals with the nature of emergence, innovation, learning and adaptation' (Santa Fé Group, 1996; cited in Battram, 1998 p. v).

Figure 2.2 uses the conceptual imagery of Stacey et al. (2000) to represent the domains of behaviour within complex adaptive systems. The imagery is useful in understanding the worlds of the systemic broker.

Complex human systems tend to organize themselves through traditional management practices and controls on behaviour. But they also contain within them interactions and behaviours that are best understood in terms of living and operating on the edge of chaos. These are conditions for high creativity, innovation and transformational learning, but they are also conditions where traditional management approaches are not very effective and where new forms of organization and interaction continuously and spontaneously emerge as people working within a system learn to self-organize. Sometimes these inherently unstable regions of behaviour become chaotic and practice disintegrates into anarchy. Tosey (2002) provides good examples of applying the thinking underlying complexity theory to evaluating and understanding his own teaching as he works on the edge of chaos!

**Figure 2.2 Conceptual framework for understanding complexity theory**



Source: Stacey et al., (2000).

The strength of the idea of brokerage is that people can work creatively within and across complex systems in ways that are sympathetic to these different dimensions of the system. This makes it a powerful tool for systemic learning and development. Systemic brokerage can be used to create new systems that seek to

occupy the zone of stability (e.g. the Ufl and eUniversity systems Chapters 8 and 9). But it can also be used to work with complexity on the edge of chaos to work with complicated fuzzy ‘problems’ in order to develop in ways that only emerge through the process of problem working and learning (e.g. Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

These conceptions of complex change raise the question of how people and the social systems they inhabit interact and collaborate to evolve over time: a matter which is addressed in the change literature by *evolutionary theory*. In behavioural terms the main difference between human activity systems and other natural systems is culture – ideas, knowledge, practices, beliefs and values, that enter the consciousness and can be passed on (Ridley, 1996 p. 179). Ridley contends that cooperative groups thrive and selfish ones do not. This is an implicit assumption that underlies systemic brokerage: by fostering the conditions for collaboration the organizational groups within it will prosper. The motivation to share and the opportunity to access information requires ongoing interaction. Interaction is also required for the development and internalization of higher order (moral) purposes (Fullan, 1999). We can consider moral purpose and complexity together within Goerner’s (1998) lessons of ‘dynamic evolution’ (Table 2.2).

#### **Table 2.2 The lessons of ‘dynamic evolution’**

**Learning** – surviving by changing one’s mind is a lot more efficient than surviving by changing one’s body. Learning is never done. It regularly requires that we reorganize what we know. (*Brokerage provides a tool for systemic learning. It enables us to organize our collective knowledge, learn what we already know, identify what we need to know and most difficult of all, learn what we need to unlearn!*).

**Collaboration** – learning is best done in groups. The greatest evolutionary leaps come from independent life forms that learn to work together. Commitment to the greater good is crucial to success (*This ideal underlies traditional collegiate behaviours but it is increasingly compromised as competition increases. Brokerage is a way of fostering collaboration in creative, adaptive and competitive learning enterprises*).

**Intricacy** – Underneath, the rules of dynamic evolution are still at work. Size, for instance pulls us apart. Failure to stay connected and flowing creates a world designed to crumble. Thus growth creates regular crisis points that will require we learn anew. (*Brokerage provides a vehicle for sustaining and improving connectivity to maintain the flow of ideas, information and knowledge that will hold the system together*).

Source: Goerner, 1998 cited in Fullan, 1999.

#### **Organizational Change**

In contrast to the messy, unpredictable, emergent and dynamic view of change embodied in complexity theory, organizational development (OD) views the world of change as a rational process that can be planned, managed and controlled. The end is knowable and change proceeds logically in an environment in which the

responses to change are predictable and manageable. The term technical-rational thinking is used to describe a conception of change in which all eventualities can be anticipated and planned for, actions are controllable and outcomes are predictable. *The approach emphasises efficient goal or vision directed change processes in organizations. Control is directed from the top and may operate through tight coupling, where strong lines of command are intended to ensure that what happens is a faithful replica of what has been planned* (Trowler and Knight, 2001).

There are hard and soft versions of this managerialist approach, the latter characterised by a looser coupled approach in which responsibility may be devolved to local organizational units (Kickert, 1991). Roles, responsibilities and tasks are clearly defined and progress towards intended outcomes is regularly monitored. The organization as a whole is assumed to act as a co-ordinated unit with an unproblematic conception of the objectives of policy and change initiatives (Trowler and Knight, 2001).

In *The Awakening Giant* Pettigrew (1985) and more recently Preece et al. (1999) and Blackwell and Preece (2001) criticise this technical-rational and reductionist view of the world. The world recognised by Pettigrew was messier, fuzzier, confusing, contradictory and unpredictable. Pettigrew focused on the complex *process of changing* or becoming, rather than the *planning for change* (a useful lesson for systemic brokers!). Organizational change is seen as an emergent, iterative, complex, contested, inherently political, continuous and discontinuous process of responses to changing internal and external contexts. It is these contexts that promote or condition the scope of human activity and we can only make sense of change, argued Pettigrew, when we can locate the systems where purposeful change is occurring, both temporally and contextually. His model of change, known as the Contextual-Processual (CP) framework, comprises three inter-related components (Table 2.3): contexts (the ‘why’ of change and its connectivity to the wider world); content (the ‘what’ of change) and process (the ‘how’ of change).

**Table 2.3 The components of the Contextual-Processual Framework for organizational change**

- ❑ **Contexts** refers to the external environment – such as social change, political intervention, economic imperatives, competition and market forces and increasingly global influences and the internal organizational environment – managerial, administrative and social cultures, belief and value systems, histories, structures and procedures, roles and functions and working practices.
- ❑ **Content** refers to the types of changes being made through purposeful action.
- ❑ **Process** refers to the purposeful actions that are enabling change, e.g. through top down managerial imposition, changes in contracts, bottom-up consultation and negotiation, participative and collaborative projects, training and education, benchmarking, regulation etc.

Source: Pettigrew (1985).

**Table 2.4 Contextualist-processual model of organizational change**

<b>Preconditions for contextual analysis Of organizational change</b>	<b>General applicability to systemic brokerage</b>
1. Contextual analyses are multi-level studies – behaviour is accounted for at the level of individual, group or unit, organization and the wider society. The levels of analysis must be connectable both theoretically and empirically so that a coherent analysis of these multi-levels may be developed.	The fact that the practice of an individual can be connected through structures and wider practices within a department/HE institution/HE communities to the external environment is an essential requirement for modelling change in brokered systems.
2. Contextual analyses favour an analytical approach which focuses on changing. The processual form of analysis considers organizations or any other social system as a continuing system with a past, a present and a future.	For every future that a brokered intervention is trying to create there is a past and a present. These histories and current positions will be unique in every HE institution and systemic conceptions of change must accommodate this.
3. A processual model of organizations/communities and changing requires an explicit model of humanity in which actors (humans) operate as choice-makers within bounded social processes.	This an appropriate model of humanity for academic communities in which there are high degrees of professional autonomy and personal choice which is exercised within bounded social contexts and processes.
4. The multi-level contextual form of analysis must be integrated with the processual horizontal analysis. This implies a view of context that overcomes the more limiting notion of environment. This recognizes that there are a complex set of relations and interactions between the horizontal and vertical lines of analysis.	This notion of complexity of human interactions at different levels, each of which may be embedded within a different process or slice of a process relating to a brokered activity, is a realistic if complicated view of change within a system. There will however be occasions where brokerage applied at a particular level, e.g. within subject communities, may have minimal engagement at other levels. Conversely, brokerage applied at a high strategic level could come back down through institutional structures and process into the subject and individual practitioner levels.

Source: Pettigrew (1985) and Collins (1998 p. 71).

For Pettigrew, change and continuity, process and structure, are inextricably linked. This holistic view of change requires all three aspects of change to be connected and worked with simultaneously. Pettigrew's model of an organization actively engaged in change initiatives implies that actors at all levels will be working with change. Some will be leading and promoting it, others will be mediating, facilitating and supporting it, while most will be involved in

implementation and changing their existing practice either voluntarily or because they have to. While brokerage strategies can never anticipate the complexity of responses, they should be informed by an appreciation of the interplay of multiple levels of actors, cultural communities, organizational structures, politics, diverse traditions and histories. Table 2.4 summarizes the key features of contextual/processional models of organizational change and provides a commentary on their applicability to the analysis of brokered interventions.

### **How People Respond to Change**

A purely technical-rational view of the world of change, within a complex social environment like a higher education institution, is at odds with a world that seems to make sense when viewed from the perspective of complexity theory. It bears little resemblance to the world seen from the perspective of the main actors and change agents, the academic staff and the people who are involved in helping staff to learn and develop.<sup>2</sup> Brokers need to develop an appreciation of how people actually change and work with change.

#### *Self-determined Change*

Like any population, academic practitioners will occupy a continuum from people who continually seek to improve and develop themselves and their practice to people who are content to remain as they are. That is not to necessarily imply that the latter need to improve their practice but to define an attitude to self-motivated change. Between these two extremes many academics will be self-motivated to improve an aspect of their practice if they are inspired to do so. So the key question here is what fires the imagination of such individuals?

It is perhaps easier to begin with people who are self-motivated. In a cross-disciplinary study of 'exemplary teachers' in one Australian research-led university Ballantyne et al. (1999) found that there was a widespread feeling that role expectations, high workloads and the lack of institutional support and encouragement combined to obstruct the development of high quality teaching practice. But in spite of these conditions such teachers continued to engage in change. So what drives these people? Ballantyne et al. suggest that the motivation to improve one's own teaching is personal and intrinsic arising from an individual's enthusiasm for a subject and a desire to see students learn and develop. This motivation derives from *a profound sense of commitment, excitement and enthusiasm and their intuitive ability to connect with student interests and ways of thinking*. Ballantyne et al. believed that these were the fundamental hallmarks of exemplary university teaching and perhaps supporting those who are committed to self-determined change constitutes a key moral purpose for brokering.

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<sup>2</sup> See Paul Trowler's work below on the responses of academics to the introduction of a modular curriculum.

Studies in the UK (Knight and Trowler, 2000) and Australia (Taylor et al. 1998) show that the massive changes to work contexts that resulted from systemic changes in the first half of the 1990s have created a generally unfavourable environment for self-motivated change. Knight and Trowler (2000) summarize the changes in HE environments that mitigate against self-motivated engagement in change processes to improve own work practice as:

- ❑ Intensification of work – longer hours, more marking, pressure to publish, increasing expectancy of service leading to reduced time and energy for improving own practice especially in a climate of work degradation.
- ❑ Managerialist environments – which produce a reduced sense of professionalism as a result of more management intervention in everyday work. Loss of trust and greater accountability and spending time on evidencing what is done through bureaucratic controls. New expectations for administration and fragmentation of work time.
- ❑ Reduced collegiality – no time to socialize, less time in the work place when not teaching because of interruptions, hard managerialism only lends itself to ‘contrived collegiality’. Opportunities to share/discuss practice reduced.
- ❑ Uncaring institutions – asking for more without caring for the impacts on staff.
- ❑ Weariness – aging, malaise and marginality, progressive loss of vitality, self-esteem and self-confidence as the environment changes and the energy and motivation to innovate decline.

However, there is also evidence that underlying what is a worsening set of conditions there is still a considerable residue of autonomy, enrichment and development (Trowler, 1998). Because academics have choice in their actions they can maximize opportunities for achieving satisfaction through work in spite of structural and attitudinal changes within the organization as a whole (these views accord well with the Pettigrew model of change). Knight and Trowler go on to argue that individuals are still amenable to changing their practice in local (departmental) contexts. ‘The key factor in the equation is the staff member’s perception of the context of academic work’ (Ramsden, 1998 p. 63 see also Hannan and Silver, 2000).

Knight and Trowler attempted to get at ‘perceptions of work contexts’ through a study of academics new to teaching. These academics:

- ❑ recognized that academic life still affords freedom and opportunity but that the architecture of the space they occupied (and perhaps the attitudes engendered by this freedom) also created a sense of isolation;
- ❑ felt uncertainty and unease arising from multi-tasking, tacit expectations and a lack of feedback and support;
- ❑ identified an absence of support to develop their teaching in the new context: have high aspirations for their teaching but find it hard to teach as they would wish;
- ❑ experienced stress induced by considerable pressure to be productive in research;

- ❑ believed that although workloads were heavy they were coping and enjoying it;
- ❑ experienced stress induced from the heavy investment of time required to complete work tasks and resultant conflicts/tensions arising from interference with home life;
- ❑ and had developed the view that doing a good job is not rewarded and that little is achieved by collective endeavour.

One interesting finding is that in spite of the rhetoric about discipline allegiance, many new staff perceived their discipline to be fragmented, sometimes feeling quite isolated within their department. The backgrounds and specialized interests of departmental colleagues actually keep staff from talking to each other. Such a perception provides evidence of discrete sub-communities of practitioners within a single department.

#### *Imposed Change*

Few of us like to be told to change, and at least initially our thoughts are likely to be antagonistic to managerial directives and instructions to change. All too often change requires us to be more accountable, it often involves more bureaucracy and leads to a greater investment in time in support of administration. At its most extreme it may also require a radical rethinking of our practice challenging many long held assumptions and beliefs.

There can have been few more inhospitable change environments than the one confronting many universities in the early mid-1990s when the system expanded rapidly and per capita funding decreased. One response to this massive expansion in many universities was to create a modular credit-based curriculum in the belief that it provided a more manageable environment for the efficient use of resources to support student learning. Many institutions also reformed the academic year creating two semesters from three terms and creating four interruption points rather than the previous three.

The combined impact of the rapid migration from a low to a high participation HE system, curriculum reform and reorganizing the academic year, make this the most complex and profound set of changes that HE communities in the UK have ever had to deal with. It provides a natural laboratory to study how academics respond to complex, profound, management-driven change on a massive scale.

Gregg (1996a, 1996b) interviewed 152 academic and administrative staff in 14 institutions across the UK seeking their views on the introduction of modularization. At no institution did staff feel that they had been adequately consulted and almost universally staff felt the decision to introduce a modular curriculum had been unilaterally imposed. She also concluded that most of the criticisms of modularization are not the effects of modularization per se but concomitant changes such as semesterization, having to teach more students with fewer resources, or the local politics surrounding implementation. While there were very few perceived benefits the list of reported adverse impacts is considerable, e.g.

- ❑ heavier administrative and academic workloads (expanding student numbers, increased personal tutoring and advising);
- ❑ semesterization (suspicions that it is the thin end of a wedge: that it will lead to a 12 month teaching calendar);
- ❑ increased assessment loads on students and staff (marking time/tight turnaround schedules: concomitant trend in UK HE to diversify assessment methods);
- ❑ peculiar institutional regulations;
- ❑ overly prescriptive and unnecessary standardization (size shape modules);
- ❑ teaching diverse student populations within the same module.

That academics responded negatively to this managerially driven radical reform in such a turbulent context is not surprising. Issues relate to both the organizational interpretation of the implementation of change and concerns that relate to the epistemology of the subject. In the latter case staff responses to modularization of the curriculum vary according to discipline. The less structured and less hierarchical a curriculum the greater the resistance. The clearer sense a discipline has about its knowledge base the less difficult it was to reorganize the curriculum. The more dependent a subject is on non-cognitive outcomes (e.g. law and art and design) the greater the hostility to modular reform. Gregg's study provides a good baseline survey for what academics felt about a radical transformative change while they were experiencing it. But it did not address the matter of how academics actually responded to such reform. This matter was addressed in a parallel study (Trowler, 1997) who examined the responses of academics to the developing mass model of higher education and the introduction and implementation of a credit-based modular curriculum framework in one post-1992 university. He recognized four types of response (summarized in Table 2.5) which were not mutually exclusive. Academics may move from one type of response to another, perhaps initially sinking then reconstructing in some areas and using coping strategies in others and even exploiting the environment in an innovative way when they have learnt to swim.

**Table 2.5 Academics' responses to change brought about by the introduction of credit-based modularization**

<b>Relation to environment</b>	<b>Accept status quo</b>	<b>Work around change or policy</b>
Content with their Working context	Swim	Reconstruct
Discontented with their working context	Sink	Cope

Source: Trowler (1997).



For academics in the 'swimming' category, modularization and the expanded higher education system created an environment in which they could thrive. Perhaps these are the natural innovators/enthusiasts who are pre-disposed to exploiting opportunities for change to promote their own and their students' interests. For example, through the *development of modules* to service another discipline, which accumulate to develop *new subjects* within the Combined Honours scheme and eventually lead to *whole degree schemes*. At a personal level those in this category have gained course leaderships, promotion and the prerogative of determining their own areas of teaching and research. Others in this category have exploited the change environment for more pragmatic reasons. For example, academics in disciplines in decline in terms of recruitment of students and in resources used the flexibility of the modular structure and the improved opportunities for marketing to develop new, attractive niche market programmes (with 'sexy' titles) which attract new resources and larger numbers of students.

By contrast, academics in the 'sinking' category are closest to those typically described in research that is critical of the impact of changes in higher education (e.g. Jary and Parker, 1995). Intensification in work-load, decline of resources, deskilling, increase in student numbers and general degradation of the work process as well as specific features of the credit-based system have led to weariness, disillusionment and even illness for these academics.

However, this fatalistic response was very much in the minority. Most staff had developed coping strategies and many had also developed policy reconstruction strategies. Examples of the former included using teaching materials from previous years in order to be able to cope with the administrative and other pressing demands they had. Some had started unofficially 'working to rule', for instance calculating the number of assignments they had to mark, the amount of official work-time they had available for it and then (in the words of one respondent) dealing with it by 'whamming through it'. Others had deliberately made themselves unapproachable and their teaching and assessments very difficult in order to reduce the intolerably great demands made upon them by the greatly increased number of students. Many had given up trying to follow the complex and changing regulatory rules of the system. Many had started to avoid meetings and generally refuse as a matter of course any invitations to become involved in special projects where once they would have accepted. Some had changed their pedagogic techniques in ways which they regretted but which they thought necessary in order to cope.

Trowler's *policy reconstructers*, by contrast, changed the spirit and sometimes the letter of the modular structure through their actions on the ground. Some had used their latitude for innovation to mount what Robertson (1994) calls 'regressive' strategies: ones which move away from the claimed flexibility and other advantages of the credit-based modular structure 'back' to a more traditional model. They reduced the number of optional modules available and 'tightened up' the co- and/or pre-requisites required to study any particular module. This had the effect of reducing the teaching workload but also of undermining the modular philosophy. Academics in general were unhappy with the clear specification of learning outcomes that modularization encouraged. Two responses to this were common. The first was to keep learning outcomes and other syllabus details as vague as possible and to develop

good arguments for this for use at validation events. The second was to use the traditional freedom of the teacher to control what actually happens inside the lecture and seminar room, allowing that to change and develop regardless of the outcomes stated. Some of the academics behaved extremely strategically with regard to the regulations. A final example of the reconstructive response was the conscious adoption of strategies that allow the academic to 'reprofessionalize' the teaching process.

The research studies of Patti Gregg and Paul Trowler suggest that no matter how radical imposed change is, there will always be a group of people who can exploit or come to terms with it. From a brokering perspective it is the copers and innovators who provide the experiential learning from which knowledge of *how to do it* can be grown and shared with those who, for whatever reason, find it difficult to adapt. But the real challenge for brokers is to create strategies that will reach and support those who are not coping particularly well with change.

### **Emotional Dimensions of Change**

But perhaps we also have to look beyond the overt reasons for personal responses to change. David Goleman's (1996) book on emotional intelligence depicts a world in which the capacity to cope with life is strongly dependent on attitudes of mind that have little to do with the thinking rational part of the brain and more to do with the emotional, non-rational and intuitive brain. Being asked to change something does trigger an emotional response and the way it is presented and discussed can be an important factor in the extent to which change is accepted or resisted. Perhaps dimensions of emotions like *anger* (resentment, annoyance, hostility and even outrage), *sadness* (dejection/depression, flatness, energyless, loneliness), *fear* (anxiety, misgiving, apprehension) and *enjoyment* (contentment, satisfaction, pride and even pleasure) have something to do with attitudes to imposed change. Psychological research cited by Goleman (1996 p. 48) suggests that people fall into one of three types in their capacity to deal with their emotions.

- ❑ *Self aware* people are aware of their moods as they are having them, these people understandably have some sophistication about their emotional lives. Their clarity about emotions may undergird other personality traits: they are autonomous and sure of their own boundaries, are in good psychological health, and tend to have a positive outlook on life. When they get into a bad mood they don't ruminate and obsess about it and they are able to get out of it sooner.
- ❑ *Engulfed* people often feel swamped by their emotions and helpless to escape them, as though their moods have taken charge. They are mecurial and not very aware of their feelings, so they are lost to them rather than having some perspective. As a result they do little to escape bad moods, feeling that they have no control over their emotional life. They often feel overwhelmed and emotionally out of control.

- *Accepting* people are often clear about what they are feeling. They also tend to be accepting of their moods, and so don't try to change them. There seem to be two branches of the accepting type: those who are usually in good moods and so have little motivation to change them, and people who, despite their clarity about their moods, are susceptible to bad ones but accept them with a laissez-faire attitude, doing nothing to change them despite their distress.

The general parallels with the attitudes and behaviours exhibited by academics in Paul Trowler's study suggest that there may well be an emotional dimension to attitudes and behaviours relating to imposed change.

### **Innovative Change**

Much change in higher education is framed around the idea of innovation. During the last decade UK HE has been induced to innovate its teaching and learning practices through many funded initiatives including Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE), Higher Education for Capability (HEC), the Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP), the Computers in Teaching Initiative (CTI), the Department for Education and Employment Innovations Fund, and the Fund for Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) to name six major publicly funded change initiatives.

The word innovation is synonymous with change and it has come to be associated with planned deliberate change directed towards, but not necessarily achieving, solving or mediating, a perceived problem (Hannan and Silver, 2000 p. 10). Engagement with the idea of innovation in *for profit* environments is often systematized – the purposeful and organized search for change to gain competitive advantage or deal with a crisis. It is generally a less systematic process in HE environments where traditionally innovation is done by individual enthusiasts or less commonly by sponsored groups or teams of individuals (e.g. the design of a new ground-breaking course).

At the level of the individual practitioner innovation is not normally conceived as original ground breaking change. Rather it is viewed in more modest terms: *what people do that is new in their circumstances* (Hannan and Silver, 2000). In their study of innovation in teaching and learning in UK HE these authors categorized innovations in terms of their sponsorship (individual, guided or directed) and their focus in terms of the area of teaching and learning practice to which it was directed (Table 2.6). In proposing this typology Hannan and Silver (2000 p. 139) concluded that it raised the question as to whether the concept of innovation had any real meaning beyond *what people do that is new in their circumstances*.

**Table 2.6 Types of innovative change framed around the teaching enterprise and the nature of the sponsorship**

- ❑ *Individual and group sponsored innovations*: classroom and course-related, a direct response to student needs and professional concerns.
- ❑ *Disciplinary sponsored initiatives*: sponsored or encouraged by subject associations or professional bodies, includes informal collaboration across institutions.
- ❑ *Innovations responding to the educational media*: exploiting new technologies and acquiring or developing new materials to support learning.
- ❑ *Curriculum prompted innovations*: to meet the needs of new modular and semester structures (including new assessment procedures) and in response to changing content of fields of study and interdisciplinary developments.
- ❑ *Institutional initiatives*: including policy decisions of many kinds (e.g. computer and information technology-based, work-based or resource-based learning).
- ❑ *Systemic initiatives*: including the creation of new institutions (like the Open University) and the funding of system-wide change (like Enterprise in Higher Education).
- ❑ *Systemic by-products*: resulting within institutions from system-wide policies like Quality Assessment and expanded student populations.

Source: Hannan and Silver (2000).

### **Disciplinary Cultures**

The cultural and intellectual dynamics of disciplines (Creswell and Roskens, 1981; Kolb, 1981; Becher, 1989 and 1994) provide an important context for the way academic communities respond to change. Tony Becher's (1989) influential work characterized the HE knowledge community into:

- ❑ the academic profession as a whole;
- ❑ the four intellectual clusters defined by Biglan (1973) and Kolb (1981);
- ❑ individual disciplinary and sub-disciplinary communities (bearing in mind that there are issues of boundary and temporality in the latter groupings).

Becher's assertion (1994 p. 153) that the cultural aspects of disciplines and their cognitive aspects are inseparably intertwined, is being born out not just in behaviours relating to research-based knowledge production, but in different pedagogic beliefs and behaviours (Braxton, 1995; Hativa and Marincovich, 1995; Smelby, 1996; Gregg, 1996a and b; Hativa, 1997; Gibbs, 2000; Neumann, 2001). Such beliefs also extend to student perceptions of their learning (Cashin and Downey, 1995). If brokerage is about promoting and facilitating change within academic communities then it needs to relate in a profound way to disciplinary cultures if it is to stand any chance of success (see below).

But the studies of Trowler (1998) and Knight and Trowler (2000) also show how important organizational contexts are in shaping thinking and behaviours. Trowler (1998) challenges some of the assertions made about disciplinary cultures

being the key determinant in the way academics view a whole range of issues. He concluded that ‘the attitudes and values among academic staff were much more subtly diverse and unpredictable than those portrayed in the existing literature’.

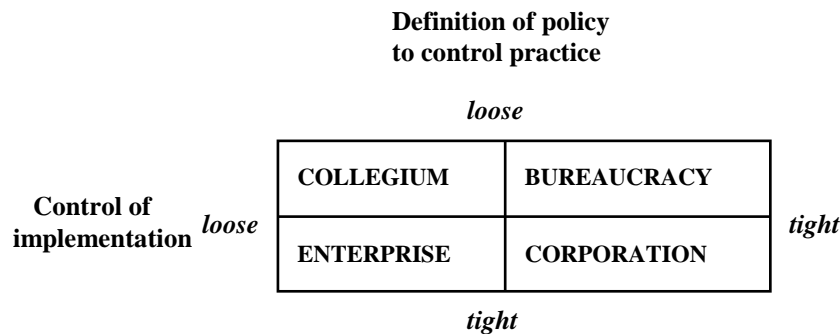
### Organizational Cultures

The institutional organizations themselves - the universities and colleges of higher education and further education hosting some HE, constitute another major cultural influence in higher education. Institutional cultures, which are as complex as disciplinary cultures, might be caricatured as ‘the way we do things around here’ (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

Organizational cultures derive from many factors, e.g. traditions, styles of leadership and management interventions, and structures and processes relating to governance and delivery. In organizations without a strong managerialist culture (as has been traditional in the pre-1992 universities) the culture emerges and develops in a haphazard fashion (Collins, 1998). However, during the last decade, under increasing and powerful external forces, HE institutions have been forced to become more managerialist and the net effect in many universities has been to create a generally managerialistic environment superimposed on a more democratic (or collegial) environment.

On the basis of empirical work, McNay (1995) and Dobson and McNay (1996) recognized four cultural conditions within UK Universities. These have substantial congruence with the generic organizational cultural models developed by Charles Handy (1993). Building on Weick’s (1976) concept of educational institutions as loosely coupled organizations, the dimensions of the model represented in Figure 2.3 relate to the extent of tightness or looseness in definition of policy and in control of practice – the implementation of policy. The four cultural conditions are termed: collegial academy; bureaucratic; corporation and enterprise. None of the conditions is exclusive. The styles of leadership and management (and therefore the environment for change) are different in each cultural context.

**Figure 2.3 Models of universities as organizations**



Source: Dopson and McNay (1996), McNay (1995)

Collegial academies are organizations of consent (Handy, 1983) in which the members of the institution have a right to be consulted and in which they can exercise considerable influence over proposals for change through their powers of veto. In such a cultural environment leadership and management are transactional activities and change is through personal persuasion and working through consensus and compromise.

In bureaucratic cultures the consent processes are formalized in committees – representative democracy – and procedural power becomes dominant. There may or may not be clear policy in any area but there are precedents against which to judge proposals for change and general principles which condition behaviour. Such cultures are good at saying no and rarely generate innovation from within. Leaders and managers need to command by rules and case law, the control of agendas, minutes and information flow.

In the corporation, the academics recapture the control that they may have lost in a plethora of committees that are replaced by more dynamic and flexible working groups and teams. Committees are slimmed down and dominated by managers. This is often a crisis mode of operating, with positional power and tight control of funding being used to promote conformity to corporate objectives. Key people scan the environment and position the institution in relation to perceived policy imperatives. Leaders are transformational, bringing new values and new visions which they evangelize with charismatic zeal.

The enterprise culture keeps awareness of the market to the fore. It relies on a clear mission statement with priorities and plans that link policy to practice (McNay, 1995). It relies on good market intelligence and good internal management information systems. It's enterprise is commercially focused and extrinsically motivated: values which do not attract most academics. The strength of this culture is that it may be good for innovation and bringing team members together from different cultural enclaves. But this may be ephemeral and novelty is valued more than sustaining quality. Dopson and McNay (1996) conclude their cultural tour of academic organizations by suggesting that the state, through the levers it controls, has progressively pushed HEIs towards the conditions that are most supportive of corporate enterprise.

While there is a place for this type of cultural characterization, it can be criticized for being oversimplified and unrealistic (Trowler and Knight, 2001). Furthermore, it probably has little value in terms of providing a conceptual basis for brokering. Trowler and Knight view institutional organizations as 'protean and dynamic, not singular and static. Any university possesses a unique and dynamic multi-cultural configuration which renders depiction difficult and simple depictions wildly erroneous. So values, attitudes, assumptions and taken for granted recurrent practices may be as different from department to department or building to building in one HEI as they are between one university and the next'.

Trowler and Knight (2001) prefer to visualize academic organizations as networks of networks (Blackler et al, 2000) or constellations of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). In such a multicultural change context cross-institutional working groups provide an important socializing and multi cultural forum for

influencing change. The Hannan and Silver (2000) study of innovative practice in five UK universities supports this conceptual view of the academic organization.

Innovation [in teaching and learning] depends on a configuration of vital elements: how an institution's culture is interpreted by a range of constituents; the degree of conflict and consensus within it; the pattern of attitudes within which initiatives are received; the nature of and reasons for change and the ways in which it is managed; relationships between the centre and the periphery; and views of what needs to be sustained, adapted or abandoned in the historical moulding of an institution and its substructures. (Hannan and Silver, 2000 p. 95).

Staff perceptions in relation to institutional cultures and sub-cultures, of change and its causes and management are strongly influenced by age, length of service and experience of other institutions. Reinforcing the work of Knight and Trowler (2000) leadership and perceptions of leadership are important influences on staff perceptions of culture and attitudes to teaching and learning, and staff perceive that the department not the organization, which many feel alienated from, is the basic structural, social and cultural unit. *Departments are the real presence and filter of wider institutional behaviours and meanings* (Hannan and Silver, 2000 p. 95).

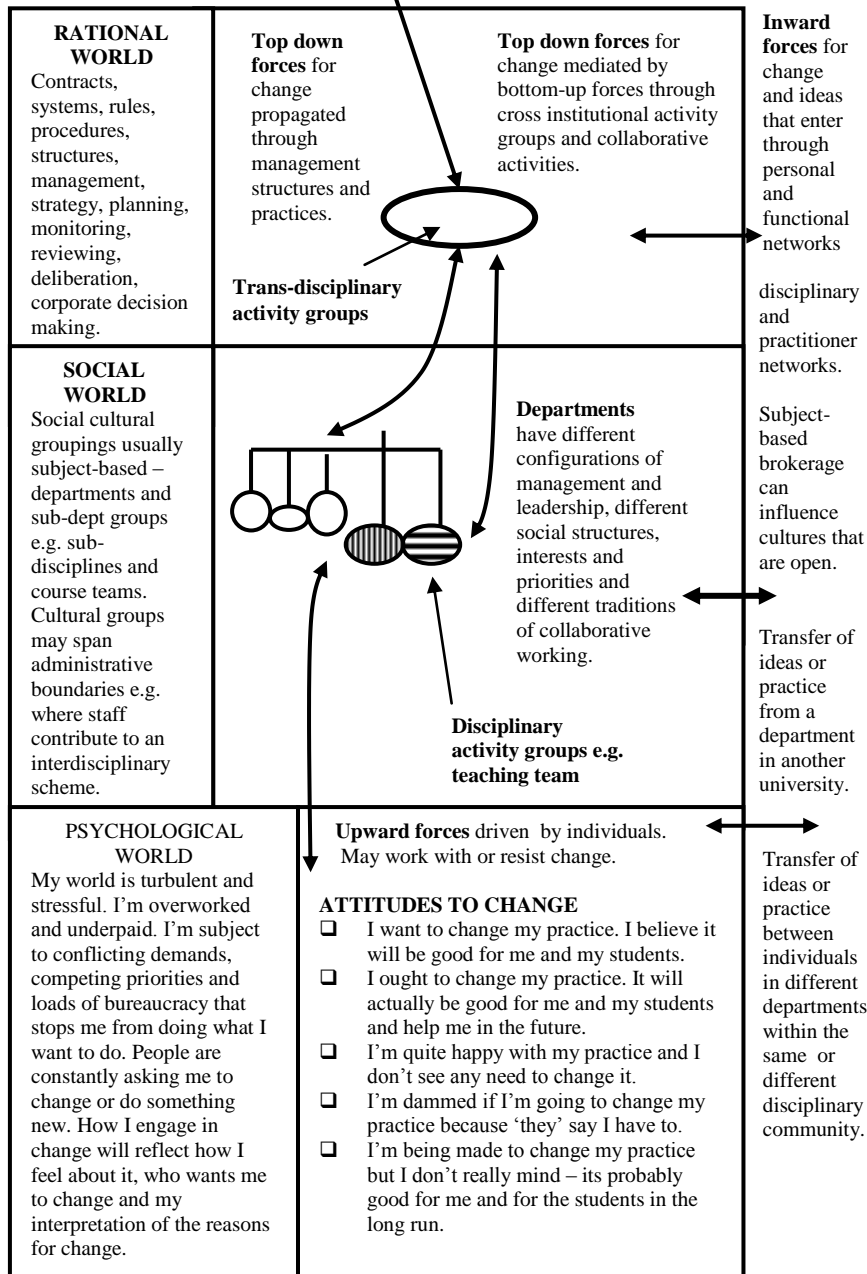
### **A Working Theory of Change to Aid Systemic Brokers**

This review of change literature paints a picture of infinite complexity that systemic brokers must appreciate, navigate and work with. The conception of academic organizations that Trowler and Knight (2001) embrace suggests that systemic brokers have to address the micro- macro- and meso-levels of change agency if they are to have a pervasive influence. But complexity theory tells us that brokered interventions can only be a stimulant for change, the enactment of which is ultimately determined by each individual acting within the complex multi-cultural and operational environment of an institution. Individuals are connected to personal and functional networks within and outside the institution and may be connected to associations, professional or representative bodies. These all have the potential to influence the people who are enacting change.

Theorizing only has practical value if it offers an explanation of phenomena that can then be used to formulate more effective approaches to working with the phenomena. Theoretical conceptions of how change happens in human activity systems are becoming increasingly dynamic and complicated and there is a danger that the very fact of recognizing such complexity deters further action. But brokers require working theories of change to guide their activities and actions if they are to provide effective support for practitioner communities engaged in change. Similarly, brokering organizations must have a realistic appreciation of the scale and scope of actions required to effect change. In the light of this review of the change literature, a working theory of change within institutions is proposed which combines technical-rational thinking and actions with theories of change in more organic and unpredictable human activity systems (Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.4 Representation of the dynamics of change in a typical UK HE institution**

**Top-down forces** created by policy making bodies, Funding Councils working to government agendas and systemic brokers acting as facilitators of change.





Many change initiatives in HE institutions are driven top down by technical-rational thinking and strategies at the macro (institutional) and meso levels (faculty or school and/or department). In England, substantial planned changes related to teaching and learning will be codified within the institution's Teaching and Learning Strategy. These documents promote a technical-rational view of the management of change and provide a blueprint for planned change across the whole institution that can be interpreted and customized by departments and schools.

Institutional change strategies are propagated through management and committee structures, procedural and regulatory frameworks. They may be supported formally by dedicated resources and expertise (e.g. by staff or educational development units) or staff may be left to 'get on with it' with little or no additional resources or professional support. Monitoring of implementation may be through regulatory processes (like curriculum review), management processes (like an annual School or Departmental review) or enquiry-based surveys and audits.

Institutions confronting substantial change often engage in collaborative working through cross-institutional working groups or discussion fora in order to build support for change and grow understanding of how change should be formulated and enacted in the different social-cultural contexts. The knowledge production activity of these trans-disciplinary work groups is consistent with the Mode 2 knowledge production of Gibbons et al. (1994) and with the way systemic brokerage engages in knowledge production. Such activity groups are particularly important where the intended change is radical, complex and contentious for the institutional setting. They are often inhabited by the enthusiastic practitioners with experience of the areas of practice being developed, but they may also deliberately include colleagues who are more sceptical and antagonistic. Trowler and Knight (2000) highlight the importance of such meso-level activity in subjecting proposed changes to the perspectives of multiple disciplinary cultures and practice communities and how they act as a powerful mediating force in creating proposals that can be reworked and adapted at ground level. These groups provide a ready market for the knowledge produced by brokers like the LTSN (Chapter 7).

Ideas for change are transmitted through management structures, policies, regulations, review and development processes and institutional change agents into departments. This is the organic world of change – it is complex and less predictable than the technical-rational world. It is characterized by stress and overwork, conflicting demands and competing priorities (research, teaching and administration) and limited resources. Individuals and groups of individuals often hold fragmentary knowledge about proposed changes, and information/misinformation is often acquired through personal networks. An important dimension of this organic world is the personal psychology (world views) of the inhabitants of each social grouping. Perceptions on the reasons for change and its management and leadership, together with personal beliefs, ambitions and attitudes to change are a major determinant of how change is enacted by each individual and practice community. Departments may use a range of strategies to promote change

(e.g. use of experienced and respected champions to lead, departmental task groups, curriculum review processes) or change may be left to happen by osmosis. These are the conditions that can be supported by systemic brokers like LTSN.

If this model has any validity then systemic brokerage involving HE institutions must address both the technical-rational and social-cultural contexts for change. Some of the ways in which this is achieved will be revealed in the case studies that follow.

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## **Chapter 3**

# **The Art of Brokering**

*Norman Jackson*

### **Synopsis**

Brokering in the field of education is a form of change agency spanning the political, business, information and educational dimensions of the brokerage function. Practice has grown in an ad hoc manner within a number of organizations in response to different imperatives and circumstances. So although the role of broker is a recognizable professional role there is no established propositional knowledge and skills base to which practice can be referenced. This chapter contributes to establishing this knowledge base. Brokers have worked intuitively and pragmatically to get results within available resources and time. The practice that has emerged reflects the creativity, personal qualities and professional backgrounds of individuals. While brokering may draw on scientific theories of learning and change, it is an art in the sense that individuals interpret and creatively apply their personal knowledge, skills and behaviours within the brokering contexts in which they work. This chapter examines some of the dimensions of this professional art, drawing on the change and innovation literature and the range of contexts and examples provided in the organizational case studies.

### **Introduction**

In Chapter 1 we examined the dimensions of brokerage from the perspectives of: 1) agent, trader, market maker; 2) diplomat, mediator, negotiator; 3) facilitator of learning and knowledge development and 4) a regulator of standards for products, service delivery or processes. The organizational capacities and personal qualities, skills and knowledge required to fulfil a brokerage role in higher education will vary according to the mix and priority of these dimensions within a particular brokerage role. The entrepreneurial skills of the agent, trader and market maker, and the skills of facilitation to create and enable use of new knowledge products are very different to the knowledge and skills required to enable the political dimension to be realized. Brokers may have to develop and maintain knowledge and skills in all these areas, but organizations that are involved in brokerage may have professionals who tend to work in one dimension more than others. For

example, senior managers may be heavily involved in the political dimension but have little to do with the delivery of the other dimensions.

Organizational brokering in higher education is a purposeful activity to achieve specific objectives or help create the conditions that will enable something to happen. Every brokered act is the result of a decision to engage in a particular way with a particular problem in a particular context or range of contexts. The reactions of individuals to a broker or a brokered process occupy the complete continuum from absolute indifference – or hostility and resistance – through thoughtful and purposeful engagement – to out-and-out enthusiasm. The systemic broker has to engage people, groups of people and whole communities in a common enterprise in a way that minimizes resistance, captures interest, harnesses the enthusiasts and builds ownership of the end results. While systemic brokers operate in a variety of contexts (e.g. Chapters 5 to 9) a number of professional actions and behaviours can be recognized that are common to most contexts (Table 3.1).

### **Creating the Conditions for Brokerage**

The first requirement for any broker is to establish the conditions that will enable brokerage to take place. In the publicly funded UK HE environment the first condition is legitimacy. Brokers and brokered activities will be more or less accepted by HE communities if the broker has authority. This is partly conveyed through the organizational remit but it is reinforced by key political agents like the Funding Councils, DfES and ministers or the universities and colleges representative bodies (Universities UK and SCOP). Legitimacy also comes from the recognition by HE communities of a mandate that can be justified. So any organizational broker has to be able to explain and justify its existence and the particular contributions it makes to the system as a whole.

The second condition is credibility. Systemic brokering is both an impersonal activity, in which organizations or work teams within them make decisions about actions and priorities, and an intensely personal activity involving the actions, decisions, creativity and emotional engagement of individuals (acting on behalf of the organizational broker). The acceptability of any brokered action will be dependent on both the credibility of the organization and the personal credibility of the individuals acting on behalf of the organization. Credibility has to be earned and it is a significant development issue for every new organization that is formed. Credibility can be inherited by transferring people from one body to another. For example, the Quality Assurance Agency was formed by merging the Higher Education Quality Council and the Quality Assessment Division of the Funding Council of England and Wales. Organizational credibility is also a scale and capacity issue. If the actions and outcomes do not match the claims being made then credibility is eroded.

Personal credibility, like organizational credibility, has to be earned and it is a substantial development issue for anyone taking on the role of a broker for the first time. It is particularly an issue for young relatively inexperienced people who are exposed in public debate to academic practitioners who can, on occasions, be quite

**Table 3.1 Examples of work activities and behaviours of systemic brokers****Politics of Brokerage**

- Establishing self-regulatory and accountability mechanisms and advisory infrastructure for brokerage activities.
- Mapping the work terrain (institutions and other organizations, departments, subject associations, networks, representative bodies etc.).
- Building and maintaining relationships with key people in organizations like national bodies, professional bodies, subject associations, institutions, departments, practitioner networks, project teams.
- Understanding the agendas/activities of key players/organizations and the implications of working with these agendas.
- Identifying ways of collaborating with key players/organizations to promote their interests and advance project objectives without alienating key constituencies.
- Creating political alliances.
- Recruiting respected and authoritative figures who will represent and champion the broker's objectives.

**Creating and Fostering the Conditions for Brokerage**

- Explaining the brokerage function.
- Being honest/transparent/ethical.
- Demonstrating commitment to the enterprise.
- Creating processes that enable people to collaborate and participate.
- Establishing and maintaining credibility.
- Understanding what people/organizations want/need and being sensitive to the political contexts of these wants/needs.
- Devising realistic, worthwhile and achievable objectives for specific brokered actions.
- Creating interesting and imaginative projects that people will want to participate in for their own development as well as for the improvement of their department or institution.
- Being aware of the implications and consequences of brokered actions.
- Providing resources and incentives that encourage people/departments/institutions to work with the broker.

**Facilitating the Development of Knowledge**

*Knowledge for problem working; policy and strategy; regulation; innovation and improvement; resolution of conflict.*

- Creating the infrastructure for knowledge development, e.g. knowledge networks, meetings and discussion fora, projects, survey tools, working papers, mail bases.
- Identifying relevant experts and practitioner interest groups.
- Expanding the intellectual resources available through knowledgeable associates.
- Establishing mechanisms and tools for gathering information.
- Creating opportunities for people to share knowledge, experience, practice.
- Establishing and maintaining systems for managing information.
- Commissioning reviews of existing relevant work/activities/knowledge.
- Growing new knowledge/understanding from tacit knowledge through a range of methodologies, e.g. circulation of development papers with tools for gaining feedback, e-discussion boards, workshops for experienced practitioners, transient networks and work groups that explore a particular issue, benchmarking groups.

- ❑ Developing motivational strategies and reward schemes to encourage people to share their knowledge and practice.
- ❑ Providing opportunities and processes to enable people to share their knowledge and contribute to further development.
- ❑ Finding out what research is being undertaken/where/by whom.
- ❑ Commissioning new research.
- ❑ Brokering bids for funding to national funding bodies.
- ❑ Supporting existing networks and facilitating the organic growth of new networks.

#### **Facilitating the Use of Knowledge**

- ❑ Creating strategies for the diffusion of knowledge.
- ❑ Understanding the marketplace and creating new markets.
- ❑ Marketing information and services effectively.
- ❑ Creating the infrastructure to facilitate knowledge utilization, e.g. identification and connecting to change agents in HEIs like educational developers, departmental contacts, academic consultant, external examiners.
- ❑ Establishing a range of information delivery mechanisms, e.g. through:
  - ❑ Institutional change agents, institutional policies and strategies.
  - ❑ Web.
  - ❑ Email.
  - ❑ Paper-based materials – briefing notes, working papers, newsletters, publications.
- ❑ Providing opportunities for people to learn how to use the knowledge developed through.
  - ❑ Conferences.
  - ❑ Workshops and seminars.
  - ❑ Discussion groups events.
  - ❑ Participation in departmental/institutional events.
  - ❑ Embedding in institutional processes for learning.
- ❑ Support for 1:1 consultancy or advisory activity.

Source: based primarily on the LTSN brokerage function (Chapter 7) and other case studies in this book.

difficult. On the other hand, once personal credibility has been secured it can in itself be a major factor in facilitating brokerage actions.

Closely related to credibility is trust. Because of the emergent nature of the products and outcomes of brokered actions participants have to trust that the broker will create processes from which good outcomes will emerge.

Regardless of purpose, participation in brokered activities is essentially voluntary so another aspect of condition setting is to create incentives for people and institutions to want to be involved. An essential skill of the broker and brokering agency is the capacity to persuade potential participants that it is in their interests to do so. Individuals, departments, institutions, networks or organizations engage in brokered activities for a range of reasons. For example because:

- ❑ participants are attracted by funding incentives (e.g. via projects, commissions and contracts, or support for events);
- ❑ projects and work contexts are interesting and stimulating;



- ❑ activities empower people and institutions to influence policy and decisions about change;
- ❑ participants acquire status or influence through association;
- ❑ participants are rewarded in some way, e.g. through publication, acknowledgements, support for promotion based on contributions to national projects;
- ❑ participants believe that involvement will give them an advantage;
- ❑ involvement will help an individual or organization solve a problem;
- ❑ people believe in sharing their knowledge for the collective good;
- ❑ people believe that by not participating they will in some way be disadvantaged;
- ❑ people are pressurized by their managers to be involved.

Understanding and knowing which incentives are most likely to achieve brokerage goals in any situation is an essential skill for the broker. This requires a good working knowledge of the incentives that are likely to appeal to particular individuals, communities or organizations. The capacity to persuade is a key skill for the broker and the ability to create incentives that will encourage voluntary participation is central to this capacity.

The list of reasons above contains some negative reasons, e.g. a fear of being disadvantaged if not involved. But participants are unlikely to be committed to the enterprise if these are the reasons why they are involved. The problem for brokers is that in some situations there may be a political imperative to involve people or institutions even though they know that they may not be committed to the enterprise. Being aware of the motives for participation in brokered actions is therefore quite important. In any brokered action, if a large number of participants are only motivated for negative reasons, there is a strong likelihood that the enterprise will not be successful.

### **Knowledge for Brokering**

Any claim that brokering constitutes a professional activity must be underpinned by a clear exposition of the professional actions, like those indicated in Table 3.1, and the knowledge and skills required to conduct these actions. This book represents an initial step in this process of exposition. Professional knowledge is constructed through the experience of doing and its nature depends on the cumulative acquisition, selection and interpretation of that experience (Eraut, 1994 p. 20). The scheme devised by Savage (1996, and Table 3.2) for classifying knowledge provides a convenient framework for analyzing the dimensions of the types of professional knowledge used by brokers.

**Table 3.2 Areas of professional knowledge used by brokers****Know what – facts, patterns, predictions**

- ❑ Knowledge of systems and how they work.
- ❑ Knowledge of communities within systems: how different communities think and behave.

**Know why – understanding and being able to explain the wider contexts**

- ❑ Understanding the wider contexts, backgrounds and histories to problems, developments or initiatives. Many brokered actions begin by examining and explaining the why as a way of justifying what is being done.

**Know who – who knows the answer or where might I find answers?**

- ❑ Knowledge of individuals within different communities who can support and contribute to the enterprise. Often the broker does not initially know the questions that need answering so knowledgeable people are involved in helping to define and implement brokerage actions.
- ❑ The know who also relates to the politics of brokerage. Who has to be involved in order to gain the necessary political support to make it work?

**Know how – skills, procedures, processes**

- ❑ Knowledge and skill in creating brokered processes. This requires knowledge of what is possible, an appreciation of what is practicable and what is likely to work in a particular context. Brokering is a pragmatic art. It requires the capacity to invent interesting and imaginative projects that people will want to participate in for their own enjoyment and personal development.
- ❑ Knowledge and skill to gather, grow and disseminate information and knowledge about an area of practice. Successful brokerage will consolidate or extend the primary knowledge field. This capacity has both disciplinary (subject-based) and trans-disciplinary (generic) dimensions.
- ❑ Knowledge and skill in helping people, groups of people and organizations to learn and change. A brokered process is often the start of change processes that will be implemented in diverse ways across the system. Brokers have responsibilities to facilitate learning and to help academic organizations to change.

**Know when – sense of timing and rhythm**

- ❑ Decisions have to be made about when to broker. Such decisions may be embedded in a long term strategy but they may also be responding to an opportunity which suddenly presents itself. Seizing the moment is important and responding quickly to opportunities is generally more likely to mobilize others than when there is a delay in following something up.
- ❑ Many acts of brokerage are undertaken at a particular point in time for a particular reason. In recent years, major acts of brokering can be related to political developments.

**Know where – sense of place/space**

- ❑ The constituent parts of the UK-wide system or particular communities within it, or particular types of HE institution may be more or less amenable to a brokerage action at a particular point in time.

Source: based on the scheme proposed by Savage (1996)

### Knowledge of Systems

Systemic brokers need to think about the systems in which they are operating (see also Peter Knight in Chapter 4). HE systems are a complex assembly of organizations (HE institutions, policy making bodies, funding bodies, representative bodies, regulatory and development bodies), people working in many different types of social and functional groupings and processes (e.g. educational, research, administrative). People, communities and organizations within the system are connected by: management structures and practices; communications networks; enterprises; values and beliefs; cultures and traditions; policies and written and unwritten rules. Something as large and complex as a HE system is really a super system containing many different systems. Each system has its own sets of interacting components, structures, cultures, processes and people – *the complexity of human affairs is always a complexity of interacting multiple relationships* (Checkland, 1999).

Socially constructed systems are not static at any scale. You only have to look at a few basic statistics for the UK HE system to appreciate the scale of change over the last decade and the impact this must have had on every person, organization and community within it. The HE system is also open to new ideas from the world outside education.

The examples of brokerage described in this book were designed to promote change by influencing the thinking and behaviour of people and organizations within the HE system. It stands to reason that to be an effective broker requires understanding of what a system is and how it works. People who engage in brokerage roles probably understand this at an intuitive level. They have been part of a system or systems and they have a good understanding of its dimensions and how it works. Professionalization of the brokerage role however requires a more deliberate approach to the appreciation of the systems within which the act of brokerage is taking place.

So what is a system? Social definitions of the word system contain within them the ideas of:

- ❑ a holistic view of a collection of interrelated, interdependent or interacting components and processes that form a recognizable entity (could be organic or inorganic);
- ❑ the infrastructures/controls that organize and regulate complex societies and their interactions;
- ❑ communications, transportation and distribution networks (taken more generally the processes that characteristically underlie the functions and behaviours of the system).

Any systemic brokerage action will be making certain assumptions about the configurations of these parameters in order to ultimately change them in some way.

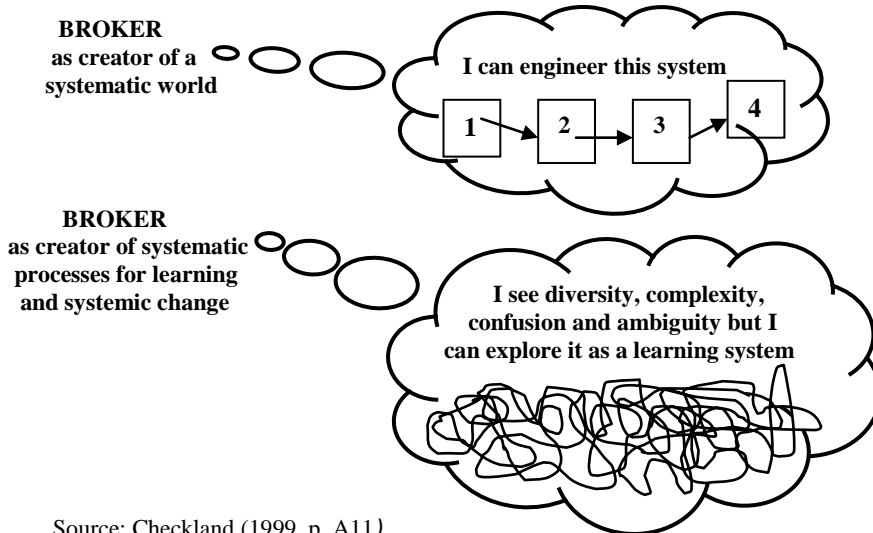
While we convey something to others when we use the term higher education system everyone will have a different conception of its meaning. It is not easy to capture and convey the meanings of such terms. Drawing a picture or map of the

system and the key processes that brokerage will engage with is one of the most effective ways of conveying information about the composition and dynamics of a system. Checkland (1999) described systems from two different perspectives. The first perspective is an engineered system in which the entities and the way they function can be designed and predicted with accuracy. Checkland used the term *hard system* to characterize the thinking that is applied to the analysis, definition and understanding of the functioning of such systems. A hard systems approach to problem solving attempts to analyze and resolve problems within a conceptual framework that relies on and seeks to create a highly ordered real world.

But in socially constructed systems the very nature and complexity of human activity and interactions defies such a rational and logical approach to the definition of the system and its performance. Checkland used the term *soft system* to describe this type of situation. A ‘soft systems’ view of the world accepts confusion, diversity and complexity and uses this as a resource and a source of inspiration to orchestrate enquiry and grow new learning. These two views of the two types of systems that brokers operate in are captured in Figure 3.1. Checkland’s action research resulted in the identification of two different types of problem that systems thinking might be used to resolve (Checkland, 1999, p. 154).

- ❑ Structured problems that can be explicitly defined in a form that implies a theory might be developed to enable them to be resolved. These are amenable to hard systems thinking.
- ❑ Unstructured problems that manifest themselves in a feeling of unease but which cannot be explicitly stated without appearing to oversimplify the situation. These are more amenable to soft-systems thinking.

**Figure 3.1 Two views of systems**



Source: Checkland (1999, p. A11)

Many of the accounts of brokerage in this book address large scale, complex unstructured 'problems' in which the point of departure for brokering is the recognition of problem situations. Brokers can create processes to engage HE communities in thinking and talking about fuzzy problems in order to understand the dimensions of such problems. Such processes can also be used to identify lots of possible solutions grown from existing practice.

The case studies indicate that brokerage for enquiry and the development and use of knowledge for improving the practice of teaching essentially operate in the world of soft systems thinking. But transformational brokering strategies (e.g. Ufi and eUniversity) are also influenced by hard systems thinking to create engineered systems. However, even these are configured within soft system social contexts.

### **Knowledge of Communities**

But systems are populated by people who create social structures and practices around their work interests. Such communities of practice represent the social structure for the ownership and creation of knowledge. They accumulate collective learning and embed this in social practices (Wenger, 1998). They are the major repositories of knowledge and expertise: the primary resource for the knowledge broker.

The notion of community contains a number of ideas (Lesser and Prusak, 2000). Firstly, 'community' highlights the personal way in which relationships are constructed: relationships that are not constrained by place or organizational structures but are determined by common tasks, contexts and interests. The word 'practice' implies 'knowledge in action', i.e. the way people actually perform their jobs on a day to day basis. It also reflects the dynamic process through which people actually learn to do their jobs as a result of doing them and interacting with other people. Communities are therefore composed of people who interact on a regular basis, who have common or overlapping work interests and who address similar ongoing and emergent issues and problems. Individuals participate in the community through sharing experiences and knowledge, pooling resources and building and maintaining relationships. While communities often share the same work environment, communities of practice span different work environments and this boundary spanning is an important consideration in brokerage.

While project teams or work groups are formally constituted for a definite purpose, communities have informal memberships that are often fluid and they are self-organizing. Participation in community actions is usually voluntary with individuals opting to play different roles with varying levels of intensity at different times. It is human nature for people to want to feel that they are part of one or more communities and the broker can achieve much by connecting to and working with the communication networks, relationships and cultures of voluntary participation within existing communities. Alternatively, the broker can try and create a sense of community (but not a community of practice) around an area of common interest in order to fulfil a brokering objective.

Systemic brokers need to be able to combine systems thinking with community thinking to create the infrastructure for new social learning systems (Lesser and Prusak, 2000) within which the interests and needs of participants for learning blur the relationship between competition and collaboration. So knowledge of communities of practice and how to build a sense of community are important in brokerage and all the case studies in this book show different ways in which brokers have engaged with different communities of practitioners.

Academic communities are notorious for their tribal and territorial tendencies (Becher, 1989). In such communities the credibility of the broker is enhanced if he/she not only shares the broad understandings and values of being a teacher scholar/researcher but also speaks the same language. So brokering seeks to involve people who speak the language of the community and who understand and empathize with the way academics think and behave in that community. But brokers are typically generalists with a good working knowledge of higher education but often little or no direct experience and knowledge of the area of practice they are working to develop. It follows that brokers have to be effective learners with the capacity to develop knowledge of different areas of practice so that they can engage with HE communities in a credible and authoritative manner. The knowledge of the broker will differ from the practitioner in being derived mainly from observation and from the shared experiences of others rather than grown from direct personal experience. The continuous creation of this type of knowledge is dependent on process knowledge (see below).

### **Knowledge of People**

Knowing who is often as important as knowing what. In systemic brokering, much effort goes into creating and maintaining good personal relationships in order to develop and maintain the conditions for brokering.

Knowing who is necessary to deal with the politics of brokerage. The first step in many brokerage actions is to consider the question, who do I need to involve? This question might be framed in terms of ministerial advisors or civil servants, policy advisors or senior officers of national agencies, prominent people within a Subject Association, senior officers of Professional or Statutory Regulatory Bodies, people leading practitioner networks or the senior managers of institutions and departments. An interesting feature of the knowing people dimension is the observation that influential individuals circulate between different national bodies over 10 or 15 years. So that personal relationships between brokers and such individuals are constructed over a long period of time, and knowledge of who spans different working contexts.

Engaging, persuading and enabling people who have relevant knowledge to share it is core to most brokerage processes where knowledge development is concerned. The broker may not know who has the relevant knowledge so the knowledge and ability to find out is also important.

Knowing who is also necessary to establishing a new system through brokerage. The Ufi Learning through Work scheme (Chapter 8) is effectively a

new system to support work-based learning. Engaging key practitioners in the development of the process model, regulatory framework and support and guidance infrastructure was essential to the process.

### **Knowledge of Processes**

Process knowledge (Erault, 1994, p. 107) is concerned with knowing how to conduct the various processes that contribute to the professional action. This includes knowing how to access and make good use of propositional knowledge. It is the complex process by which propositional knowledge (that which is codified) and tacit knowledge (derived from personal and cultural experience) are actually used and it is generally regarded as the foundation for competency in professional contexts. Professional competency is more than the application of specifiable knowledge, rather it involves a process of selecting from alternatives, of interpreting situations as relevant to a particular context and deciding on what is appropriate to apply. It also involves managing propositional and tacit knowledge (Winter and Maisch, 1995). Process knowledge can be related to the theoretical framework for process knowledge proposed by Erault (1994) and outlined below (my ordering and conflation).

#### *Deliberative Processes*

Deliberative processes include: planning and designing project briefs; making decisions; prioritizing; reviewing and evaluating progress and adjusting processes and actions in response to self-evaluation and feedback; responding to new opportunities as they arise and creating new opportunities. They are central to the professional actions of brokers.

Deliberative processes occur before, during and after any brokered process. They begin with the capacities to visualize and conceptualize a problem or area for action and imagine a process or processes to engage with the problem or action. At this stage what will emerge from the process may not be fully comprehended: what is stated as an intention will only be part of what will emerge. The broker's primary concern is to create processes that will enable a variety of outcomes to emerge. He needs to know for example how to create and manage: a consultation exercise; facilitate learning through a task group or network and undertake a survey of an area of practice. Brokers are required to apply their thinking at strategic and operational levels and thinking must relate to systems and communities of practice because processes have to connect to the actors and the academic organizations and contexts within the system.

#### *Acquiring Knowledge and Giving Information*

Processes for acquiring information involve the use of recognized methods of inquiry, both rigorous research methodologies and less formal information growing and gathering strategies. Processes for giving information involve skills in

presentation for different audiences, the use of various communication strategies, media and technologies appropriate to reach defined audiences. The types of enabling knowledge that a broker might be expected to have (adapted from Eraut, 1994 p. 108) might include:

- ❑ knowledge of the area of practice in which information is being acquired (including the people in it who constitute the knowledgeable practitioners and the potential users of such knowledge);
- ❑ some kind of conceptual framework to guide enquiry;
- ❑ skills in collecting, processing (also a deliberative process), presenting, customizing and distributing information;
- ❑ knowledge of how information might usefully be transferred to other audiences.

#### *Skilled Behaviour and Meta-processes for Self-regulation*

In the professional working context, Eraut (1994, p. 111) defines skilled behaviour as a *complex sequence of actions which has become so routine through practice and experience that it is performed almost automatically*. This type of behaviour is intuitive rather than deliberative as decisions are taken quickly during engagement in professional activity. Some examples of skilled behaviour relating to brokerage are given in Table 3.2.

Eraut (1994, p. 115) used the term meta-process for the thinking that an individual uses to direct and control their engagement with the professional process. Jackson (1998) used the term self-regulation to embrace a similar all embracing capacity within the professional action. Its central features are self-awareness and self-management and it includes such things as the management of time and resources, self-motivation, selection and prioritizing activities, management of own learning and development and an evaluative/reflective approach that conditions behaviour and seeks to continually learn from experience and act on this learning. These behaviours and cognitive processes have been connected within a theory of self-regulated learning Zimmerman (2000): a theory that is very useful in explaining brokerage as a collaborative process of learning.

#### **Meta-skills and Qualities for Leading and Engaging HE Communities**

The brokerage conception of leadership is not about the imposition of views and directions on a community. It has everything to do with trying to inspire, and encourage people to think and behave in certain ways and show communities new ways of doing things. Middlehurst and Jackson (Chapter 5) argue that this is an important but subtle cognitive lever in the promotion of systemic change. While it might be embodied in the idea of vision, it involves a combination of ‘concept’, ‘language’ and ‘rhetoric’ and the construction of believable ‘stories’. In the context of encouraging system-wide improvement in teaching and learning, such stories



are designed to improve understanding and motivate people and institutions in ways that lead to innovations and beneficial changes in practice.

This notion of leading HE communities includes:

- ❑ Being able to envision or imagine what needs to be done – this may be little more than a sense of direction but brokers should be able to grow a stronger vision from what emerges through engagement with a problem or issue. Imagining the processes for developing and facilitating the use of knowledge is also part of this visioning capability.
- ❑ Integrity – people have to trust the broker. Brokers through their actions have to demonstrate integrity and ethical behaviour.
- ❑ Intellectual capability – to lead thinking and debate and sustain it.
- ❑ Courage – it is not always easy to lead debate and sometimes the broker has to say things that may not be what people want to hear.
- ❑ Energy and enthusiasm – to motivate, engage and inspire people, institutions and communities.

Brokers and their organizations are not necessary experts or knowledgeable in many of the things that they broker. But they know how to identify and access the people who are knowledgeable and the ways in which they can encourage them to share their knowledge. Their skill in leadership is the capacity to imagine and to think ahead, to see patterns and make connections, to harness intellectual and physical resources, and to motivate people, progress ideas through rational, political or emotional argument and appeal to values and ideals. The form of leadership required by brokers involves behaving ethically and with integrity and standing up for what is inherently right.

Such proactive aspects of the brokerage role which attempt to lead thinking, open up debate and perhaps challenge traditions and conventions, might be embodied in the idea of engagement. The word has a variety of meanings. At the simplest level it means to draw someone into conversation. But this idea could be extended to systematically drawing many people into discussion (see for example the debate on quality enhancement described in Chapter 7 or engaging an entire education system in debate, such as was done with HEQC's Graduate Standards Project, Chapter 5).

Engagement involves both intellectual (the thinking through and systematic examination of an unstructured or poorly defined problem or issue) and practical dimensions (the sharing of practical solutions). Engagements might also be emotional: people often hold passionate beliefs. They may also be political especially when dealing with national bodies, Funding Councils and Government.

It can be argued that brokerage in a higher education system is about engaging people more actively and systematically in professional dialogue about teaching, student learning, curriculum, assessment, self-regulation or any other topic. It is primarily through this process of active engagement that learning and change take place.

The meta-skill of being able to engage HE communities brings together the know what, how, who, why and when aspects of the role described above. It requires the capacity to visualize a process or processes at an appropriate scale. Such processes are often quite messy, they are difficult to plan and they require a tolerance in planning and the review of performance against initial plans to be able to respond to what emerges from the process. Plans are often no more than general processes and directions within which brokers try to work creatively.

At the start of a brokered process it is often not possible to predict what will emerge and once people are engaged in the process of knowledge development the products are negotiable. The information that emerges is not fixed and it will keep evolving. Unforeseen opportunities emerge to involve new people, to explore new dimensions, to create new knowledge products and to diffuse the information produced. Good brokerage is about creating the conditions that encourage such emergence and are flexible enough to exploit them when they arise.

### **Meta-Skills of Facilitation and Change Agency**

Closely allied to the meta-skill of being able to engage an HE community is the meta-skill of facilitation and change agency. The capacity to create the conditions that help people, groups of people or organizations to learn or to apply new knowledge is a particularly important skill for the broker. Most of the theoretical and applied work on facilitation has been at the levels of organizations, groups or individuals and little consideration has been given to the facilitation of learning and change agency at a whole system level. But as a starting point for considering the latter it is appropriate to consider facilitation at the level of organizations, work groups, networks and individuals. This knowledge is important for the systemic broker who ultimately relies on change agents within HE Institutions and communities to support change brought about by their own actions.

### **Table 3.3 Dimensions of facilitation in professional learning**

- ❑ *Planning* – the goal or vision oriented ends and means of facilitation.
- ❑ *Structuring* – this is the formal aspect of the facilitation to do with the methods of working and learning.
- ❑ *Meaning* – the cognitive aspects of facilitation to do with participants' understanding of what is going on, with their making sense of things and with their reasons for participation.
- ❑ *Confronting* – the challenge aspect of facilitation. Challenging practice and behaviour where it is warranted, raising awareness of barriers and resistances.
- ❑ *Feeling* – this is the sensitive aspect of facilitation to do with engagement and management of feelings and emotions.
- ❑ *Valuing* – this is the integrity aspect of facilitation to do with creating a supportive climate for engagement, debate and interaction.

Source Heron (1999 p. 6).

Brokerage within a higher education system draws on a similar set of skills, attitudes and behaviours required by change agents who facilitate organizational change (Heron, 1977, 1993, 1999; Hawkins and Winter, 1997). But most people engaged in brokering will not have undertaken training in change agency or have studied the theory of change. Their knowledge of change agency is primarily derived from their work experience. This is an important developmental issue for brokerage organizations.

Heron's (1999) humanistic and highly personalized approach to change agency identified six interrelated and mutually supporting dimensions of facilitation (Table 3.3). It may appear that brokers acting as facilitators of learning at a system level might be far removed from working in a personal way with individuals. The reality is that the system broker will work at all levels including 1:1, small groups as well as larger and less coherent groups, networks of people and communities of practice which span organizations. The framework provided by John Heron therefore provides a reasonable starting point for exploring the dimensions of facilitation with respect to system-level brokerage.

**Table 3.4 Examples of skills, capacities, behaviours and qualities that relate to change agency within the brokerage function**

Skills and capacities required at start of a process	Skills, capacities and behaviours required throughout a process
Capacity and ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> think strategically and conceptually</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> create flexible plans</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> define and articulating problems and imagine solutions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> test and develop ideas</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> build creative and imaginative processes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> find out what is needed and draw others into the process</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> create new networks or utilize existing networks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> understand the political contexts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> argue and justify positions and strategies within and outside the organization</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> communicate with different audiences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> persuade and negotiate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> commission and contract</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> learn quickly in new areas</li> </ul>	Capacity and ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> manage the project</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> coordinate inputs and processes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> stimulate and enthuse self and others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> support those engaged in related work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> rework and rethink plans</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> recognize and solve problems and remove blocks to progress as they emerge</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> respond to emergent ideas and new opportunities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> recognize and exploit new opportunities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> communicate for different purposes with audiences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> persuade, listen and negotiate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> reflect and learn through experience</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> communicate results and successes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> humility</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> determination and perseverance</li> </ul>

Source: adapted from Hawkins and Winter (1997).

In reviewing the Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) initiative Hawkins and Winter (1997, p.11) identified a number of skills (Table 3.4) involved in institutional change agency relating to innovation in teaching and learning. Most of these skills can be recognized within the role of systemic broker. Hawkins and Winter (1997, p. 47) also identified seven characteristics of successful institutional change agents. With some minor modifications and additions, these are also

characteristics of successful systemic brokers (Table 3.5, adapted from Hawkins and Winter 1997 p. 47).

**Table 3.5 Characteristics of successful systemic brokers**

**1 SENSE OF PURPOSE AND BELIEF**

- Is fully aware of the need to change.
- Has a vision of what can be achieved and believes that it is worth the effort
- Can see the big picture and make connections that others cannot necessarily see
- Is realistic about the scale and time scale for change
- Understands change processes, the contexts for change takes place the capacities required to change
- Understands what incentives can be used to engage and motivate potential participants

**2 CAPABILITY TO ACT**

- Has leadership and interpersonal skills and is politically aware
- Has a means to promote change i.e. role, projects, resources, influence
- Has knowledge of the HE system and the subsystems and organizations within it
- Has knowledge of people who can help
- Is able to work with and across different communities
- Has a range of strategies to engage people, organizations, communities and networks

**3 BUILDS SUPPORTIVE AND FACILITATIVE STRUCTURES**

- Creates the necessary infrastructures to enable brokerage to take place
- Creates processes that interest and engage participants
- Supports participants with necessary physical, intellectual and emotional resources
- Engages participants in the shaping of goals and processes so they become stakeholders
- Builds in the necessary checks and balances through independent advisors and advisory groups

**4 STRATEGICALLY AND POLITICALLY CONNECTED**

- Is connected to sources of power and influence
- Builds a critical mass of support from champions and leaders
- Ensures these links last through the maintenance of good relationships
- Understands and tries to connect to the agendas of key political partners
- Connects strategy to operations
- Tries to engage political partners in aspects of the work and enables them to share in and take credit for success

**5 LEARNS AND HELPS OTHERS LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF DOING**

- Creates a non-threatening environment which encourages reflection
- Encourages self- and partner learning from the ongoing and retrospective analysis of the experience of doing
- Embeds critical reflection in all processes
- Promotes reflection at all levels personal, team, networks and systems
- Records and acts on important learning points

**6 REPRESENTS INTERESTS AND SELLS SUCCESSES**

- Communicates intentions and justifies and defends actions with different audiences
- Develops a clear communication strategy so that participants are kept informed
- Actively promotes brokered projects and processes
- Ensures that early and continuing successes are achieved and celebrated
- Creates effective mechanisms for the diffusion of results
- Acknowledges the contributions that people or organizations make to the enterprise and enable individuals and organizations to take credit for successes

**7 PROACTIVE AND OPPORTUNISTIC**

- Actively seeks new opportunities
- Creates the conditions where new opportunities will emerge through the process
- Predicts, uses and influences levers for change including political forces
- Makes use of available resources and secures new resources to promote the enterprise
- Encourages others to be proactive and demonstrates responsiveness to others

Source: adapted from Hawkins and Winter (1997 p. 47).

**Politics of Facilitation and Intervention**

Heron (1999) shows that the dimensions of engagement, facilitation and intervention can be managed in three different ways, which he termed the hierarchical, co-operative and autonomous modes.

In the hierarchical mode (author note – my preferred term is directive mode) the facilitator directs the process of engagement and learning. The facilitator determines the objectives and content of the engagement, interprets and defines meaning, challenges behaviour and resistances, controls feelings and emotions, provides structures for learning and takes full responsibility for all major decisions.

In the co-operative mode the facilitator shares his/her power over the process and enables those involved to become more self-directing in the learning process working with participants to decide on the work to be undertaken, sharing meanings and interpretations, jointly identifying and confronting issues and resistances. In this form of facilitation the facilitator's views are only one of many and processes and outcomes are always negotiated.

In the autonomous mode the facilitator respects the total autonomy of participants and simply provides a guiding hand giving them the freedom to move in whatever direction they choose. They evolve their objectives and programme of work, they create meaning for what is going on and find ways of confronting their own resistances. The facilitator does not abdicate responsibility but creates the conditions within which people determine their own processes and outcomes.

These three modes deal with the politics of facilitation and the exercise of power in the management and execution of the process. They are about the relative controls and influences within any facilitated process. Brokered processes are engineered and driven by the facilitator so at first sight they might appear to be framed in the hierarchical mode of facilitation. But although brokered processes are often set up in this way they must also engage in co-operative mode working if they are to grow knowledge and achieve any sense of purpose and ownership with the communities involved in the process.

Most large systemic brokering projects will involve all these modes of working. In general there will be a tendency to move from a directive mode (to get things moving) to a collaborative mode (to gain a stronger sense of ownership and commitment, more creative inputs and more or better outcomes) and incorporate some autonomous mode working. The latter is normally achieved through individuals who are commissioned against a design brief that they have been involved in creating. It is likely that different combinations of working modes will influence the outcomes of any brokered project.

**Overcoming Resistance**

Resisting change or any action that appears to be an intrusion or imposition is a natural human response. This is particularly so in professional communities that place high value on individual and collective autonomy. Even within practitioner communities that are interested and motivated to contribute to brokered processes

there may be scepticism or antagonism to what is being done because of particular interests or perspectives on something. Indeed some people may participate in order to change the brokered process from the inside. So an important initial and continuing task for the broker is to foster the conditions where the level of general acceptance for any action is considerably higher than the level of resistance. This might be a highly complicated activity, requiring many iterations undertaken over a substantial period of time.

The organizational case studies indicate that a range of tactics and strategies are used to overcome antagonism and resistance. For example:

- ❑ *HEQC* (research into the defining characteristics of graduates) – working with existing networks, communities, subject associations and commissioning them to undertake the work so enabling them to control the process and products.
- ❑ *QAA* (developing subject benchmarking) – creating subject benchmarking panels populated with people who were respected within their subject community, providing such groups with a minimal guidance framework that permitted great latitude in interpretation and engaging the wider community through consultation.
- ❑ *Ufi* (developing the Learning through Work scheme) – involving the practitioners who would implement the scheme in the development process, for example in the shaping of rules and codes of practice, in developing administration systems, contracts, commissioning content. All these things helped create a sense of ownership.
- ❑ *LTSN* (developing knowledge about the curriculum: imaginative curriculum project) – establishing a network with members representing diverse interests for the purpose of achieving brokered goals but enabling participants to debate and shape the project and contribute in ways that suited them.

Good brokerage processes create the conditions and processes that surface issues and potential sources of resistance and conflict in order to address or minimize them. In brokered policy making processes large scale public debate is an important vehicle for releasing such tensions and for testing ideas on how they might be addressed, although it can be a very uncomfortable process for the broker.

Negotiation is central to reducing resistance and gaining the cooperation of individuals or groups of individuals. It is the key point of contact between the conceptions, ideals, needs and intended actions of the broker and the needs and interests of participants. The broker has to persuade people of the value to them in participating in the enterprise, and one of the ways in which the broker can demonstrate a commitment to the needs and interests of participants is to negotiate inputs, processes and outcomes. The rules for overcoming resistance developed by Wynn and Mortenson (1998 and Table 3.6) are highly pertinent to brokering.

**Table 3.6 Some basic rules for overcoming resistance in systemic brokerage**

Resistance will be less if participants feel that:

- they have helped shape the process and intended products or results;
- the process is supported by key political bodies and well respected champions;
- the products and results will be of direct benefit to their communities;
- the work and the way it is conducted accords with their own values and ideals;
- the work is interesting, stimulating and challenging;
- the autonomy and security of colleagues in their communities will not be threatened.

Source: adapted from Wynn and Mortenson (1998)

### **The Entrepreneurial Dimension of Brokerage**

The concept of change masters – *the people and organizations adept at the art of anticipating the need for, and of leading productive change* (Kanter, 1992), is a powerful symbolic image that system brokers might use as an aspirational goal. The concept was grown from a comprehensive study of the characteristics of corporate entrepreneurs who are successful at leading innovation within their organizations. The parallels in the behaviours and strategies of corporate innovators and system brokers, as conceived and reported in this book, are striking.

The first step in change mastery is to understand how individuals exert leverage in an organization through their personal skills, and the strategies, power tools and power tactics they utilize. Innovators share an integrative mode of operating (Kanter, p. 212). *They see problems or opportunities not within limited categories but in terms larger than received wisdom; they make new connections, both intellectual and organizational, and they work across boundaries; they are good builders and users of teams.* Innovative change processes led by corporate entrepreneurs follow a consistent pattern involving three overlapping and iterative stages (Kanter, p. 217). The process documented by Kanter and described below is similar to the processes that systemic brokers construct.

The first stage involves problem definition – the acquisition and application of information to shape a project. Active listening and assimilation of the information is the first step towards an innovative accomplishment. Information, obtained from diverse sources, including sources outside the primary field of interest, is the first power tool. While gathering information the innovator also plants ideas which grow and float around the system from many sources. Understanding and airing conflicting views is important at this stage in order to define the problem(s) that need to be resolved and possibly identify early ideas on how such problems might be approached. Another type of information gathered at an early stage is of a ‘political’ nature to ensure that all those who need to be involved have a stake in the problem working exercise. A third type of information involves arguing for and demonstrating a need for the change. Having gathered such information, people leading innovative [change] processes use their intuition and self-belief to take imaginative leaps into unknown territory (Kanter p. 220). Above all,

entrepreneurial innovators are not afraid to take risks. They are visionaries often in single-minded pursuit of a clearly articulated vision (Kanter, p. 239).

The second stage involves coalition building – the development of a network of backers and supporters who provide resources and other inputs. Having defined the project, people leading innovative change need to gain the support and resources to make it work. Innovators have to be team creators as well as team users. A key message here (Kanter, p. 223) is that support or legitimacy for a change process only has currency when it comes from the right sources: the people who control/regulate the territory likely to be affected by innovative change. One of the important consequences of coalition building is that checks and balances can be brought into play that otherwise would not be there. Another feature to emerge from the study was the way in which innovators of change processes approached their collaborators individually: the rule was that each person had to be made to feel that their contribution was essential to the success of the project.

The third stage of activity in innovative change processes involves mobilization – to convert the idea through action into a reality. Many more individuals may be brought into the process at this stage and the role of the leader of the change process may be one of overall orchestration – maintaining the integrity of the project, providing encouragement and maintaining momentum – rather than the micro-management of, and contribution to, specific tasks.

### **Collaboration in Innovative Change Processes**

The central message from Kanter's important study is that making innovative changes within a corporate environment requires the active participation and collaboration of many people through a well-led and facilitated process. Although the term broker is not used by Kanter, the dimensions and dynamics of innovation-led change processes are similar to those created by brokers (see summary of the professional actions of brokers and HE change agents Tables 3.1 and 3.5).

Corporate entrepreneurial innovators have to work in a participatory/collaborative, persuasive and flexible way because others control the information, resources and support necessary to achieve their objectives. Key characteristics of behaviour include:

- persuading much more than ordering;
- negotiating process, products and outcomes;
- being able to make effective use of the intellectual resources of a team;
- seeking inputs from people outside the team;
- demonstrating political sensitivity;
- and a willingness to share rewards and recognition.

Above and beyond this they are prepared to take risks and make the necessary imaginative leaps into new territory in the belief that *what is uncertain in the minds of others is possible*. This visionary conception of the innovator is also valid for the



systemic broker and it connects in a fundamental way to the idea that brokerage is a creative and belief-led process: a personal art rather than a disciplinary science.

### **Creativity and Imagination**

The idea of creativity and imagination as being important to effective brokerage is embedded in the complexity and emergent nature of the work processes that systemic brokers initiate and develop. Brokerage requires imagination and a range of creative qualities and abilities to work with ideas, people and resources to create new things and new ways of thinking that ultimately might result in changes in thinking and behaviour (the key outcomes for brokered actions). There are many definitions of creativity (see for example Dewulf and Baillie, 1999, p. 4). These authors define creativity as ‘shared imagination’ and brokerage can be conceptualized as a process to facilitate the sharing and expansion of imaginations in order to achieve a goal (bearing in mind that this goal may be no more than an idea or a sense of direction). The definition of Rogers (1959) is also pertinent to brokerage – *the creative process is the emergence in action of a novel product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand and the materials, events, people and/or circumstances on the other.*

The idea of novelty seems to be central to many definitions of creativity: novelty that is useful, practically, aesthetically, theoretically or in general terms is adaptive (Stein, 1974 p. 6). But novel products can come about by accident so for a product to be considered the result of a creative act it must be the novel result of goal directed activity (Weisberg, 1993). That does not mean that ideas might not happen by accident but the process of turning the idea into a product or evolved idea is a creative act. A novel product may be entirely new or new combinations of existing ideas and things. Most novel products are combinations of existing ideas with something new. Novelty is a relative term at one extreme we have uniqueness, something that is new to mankind, at the other, something that is new to an individual practitioner. In this way novelty can be linked to a scale of impact and influence. Few products of brokerage will fall into the latter category. Most will be the product of connecting ideas, people, processes, products in novel ways. But the way novelty is achieved is through creative engagement with ideas and people.

### **Characteristics of Creative People**

Earlier we considered some of the attributes of effective change agency which brokers might be expected to possess. We might extend these personal qualities into the area of creativity by considering the general qualities, attributes and behaviours of people who are creative. These attributes provide clues to the types of processes in which creativity takes place. Turner (1991) and Table 3.7 summarizes a number of such lists.

**Table 3.7 Characteristics of creative people****Rogers (1959)** Creative people –

- ❑ are open to experiencing things as they are, simply accepting the uniqueness of that set of stimuli at that second in time. This includes a willingness to tolerate ambiguity, strangeness and mystery;
- ❑ possess an internal locus of evaluation – the value of what is created is established by the individual, not by reference to what people outside think;
- ❑ have the ability to toy with the elements and concepts, play around freely and not think by artificial rules.

**Guilford (1959)** Creative people –

- ❑ are motivated by feelings that things could be different;
- ❑ have fluency in words – can play about with associations;
- ❑ have spontaneous flexibility- are able to produce a great variety of ideas given any stimuli;
- ❑ have adaptive flexibility – are able to generate unusual responses to specific problems;
- ❑ have originality – they make associations or connections seemingly remote from the stimulus;
- ❑ continually redefine – give up easily one framework of thinking and reassemble the parts into a new frameworks;
- ❑ are able to elaborate – take very bare facts and develop from them;
- ❑ are tolerant – of ambiguity and contradiction;
- ❑ are comfortable with risk taking.

**Elliot Kemp (1959)** Creative people –

- ❑ have self-confidence – freedom from anxiety self doubt. Prepared to take risks and let things happen;
- ❑ possess emotional spontaneity – are able to integrate emotion and thought;
- ❑ have flexibility in problem solving;
- ❑ have the will and commitment – they persevere in exploration and development particularly when things seemed confused.

Source: Turner (1991)

**Characteristics of Creative Processes**

Dewolf and Baillie (1999, p. 17) review the literature on creative processes and identify four overlapping and interactive stages which they call preparation, generation, incubation and verification. These are combined below and in Figure 3.2 with the characterization of creative processes developed by Fritz (1991) in a way that can be related to many brokered processes.

*Conceptualization* – A concept is simultaneously the representation of a reality and the expression of an intention, a generalization from experience and a hypothesis from which future experience might be predicted (Bolton, 1977). In the context of creativity, conceptualization involves a number of overlapping and interacting processes (1-4 below). Although much conceptualization takes place at the front

end of the process it should be thought of as a continuous process rather than a single event and the ideas that result in new products or practices may be quite different to the initial ideas.

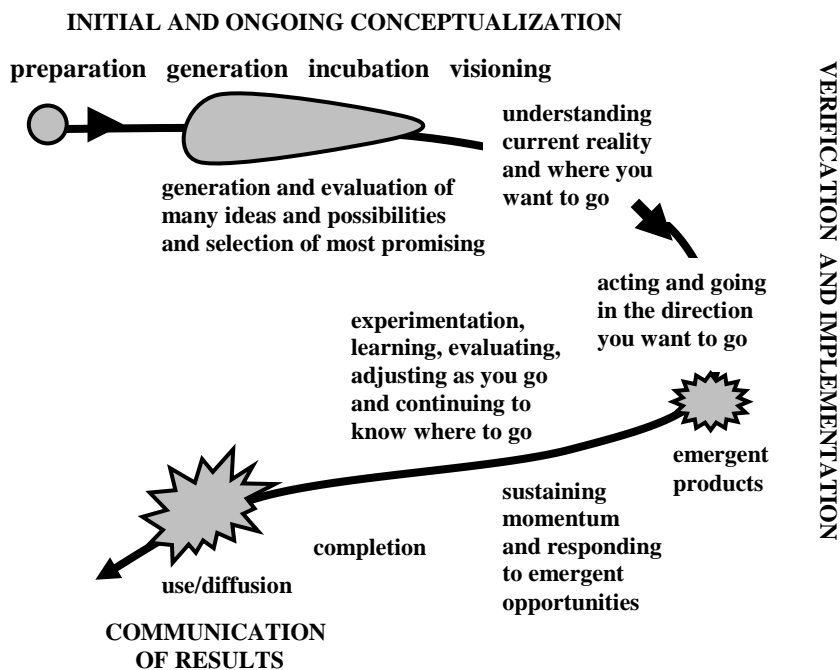
1. *Preparation* – during this stage the problem, question or idea is considered through a process of definition, deliberation and reformulation.

2. *Generation* – During this stage lots of ideas are considered and many are rejected. A few will survive and be refined. Negotiation with others may be a critical part of the process of testing ideas and clarifying the where to go and why questions. The generative process can be aided by a number of techniques for the generation of ideas.

3. *Incubation* – ideas may suddenly emerge simply because of immersion in a problem or idea or they may be triggered by a new connection that is made.

4. *Visioning* – over a period of time there is a general movement from a general notion of what is to be created to a more concrete idea about the end result. From many possibilities that might be created the creator settles on one. The end result is specific and tangible. This does not mean that the idea does not change. Far from it, the idea will normally continue to develop and change through the process.

Figure 3.2 Stages in a creative process



Source: Fritz (1991), Dewolf and Baillie (1999).

*Verification and Implementation* – Even at the conceptualization stage we assume some of the qualities and characteristics we want in the end result by the way we define the problem or idea. The end result must be understood in terms of an awareness of the current situation. This might be of a general nature, e.g. dissatisfaction with a particular situation or be focused on something specific that needs to be changed. This discrepancy creates the tension that motivates and energizes the processes. Knowing the starting point and end result (at least roughly) enables the creator to see the actions necessary to achieve the result. The planning and actions of creators are often integrated and experimental – *what happens if I do this?* and responsive – *in that case I'll try this*. Creativity involves working with ideas and results as they emerge. The learning gained enables creators to continue to invent new ways to achieve their goals. Creation is often directed to invention rather than convention – the well-trodden path that others have already developed, used and routines. Verification and implementation involve a number of processes (5-7 below).

5. *Experimenting, evaluating, learning through doing and adjusting in response to results* – creating is a continuous process of learning what works and what doesn't. At the cognitive level, the creator observes the effects of actions and evaluates their effectiveness. But learning also takes place subconsciously. This is a particular form of learning how to learn. It results in instinctive knowledge of the actions and behaviours that work and do not work in particular contexts. This process of internalizing past experience so that it is a resource for current and future actions is an important aspect of developing the capacity to be creative. Being creative is accumulative the more you create the more you are capable of creating. Similarly being able to evaluate and learn from doing so as to adjust future actions is a parallel and connected capacity.

6. *Building and maintaining momentum* – Experienced creators know how to use their personal rhythms so that they always have the energy to accomplish a project. They are self-motivating and determined in pursuing their goals. The creative process is their source of energy. Setbacks are viewed as a stimulus and source of energy rather than being demotivating. They set targets and deadlines that act as organizers rather than pressure points to overcome. One powerful principle in the creative process is to keep moving. It ties into the experimental nature of the process. It's better to go somewhere than do nothing.

7. *Completion* – In the completion stages there is often an acceleration of energy and action as the final goals become a reality. There is also a coming to terms with the fact that this set of processes and actions are coming to an end which culminates in the declaration that goals have been reached.

*Communication* – Having created something it may be necessary to communicate this to an audience.

8. *Diffusion and use* – the ways in which ideas and products are spread and utilized may itself be a source of creativity. It is this process that ultimately determines the impact of a creative process.

### Concluding Remarks

Brokering within and across UK higher education is a form of creative social engagement operating in an infinitely complex and unpredictable world. This chapter represents an initial step in setting out the dimensions of the propositional knowledge, skills and behaviours underlying the systemic brokerage function.

Organizational brokers have worked intuitively and their primary concern has been pragmatic – to get results within available resources and time. More organized and systematic brokering is now leading to the professionalization of the brokerage role. It is also leading to the differentiation of brokerage roles within a single organization. But practice is, and will remain to a large extent, the product of the imaginations, creativity, knowledge and judgement of individuals. As such brokerage must be viewed as an art form rather than a science.

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