Chapter Eleven

Management as transformation: leadership in the higher academy

Empowerment.

> My role as *manager* is to provide a rich environment that empowers *my team* to find and express their own voice.

Authenticity

> I am only prepared to act through (my core) beliefs, rather than through desire for power, status, recognition, or fashion. I regard my own authenticity as acting always in congruence with these beliefs , and wherever they are compromised or threatened I will seek repair and resolution, however hard-earned these might be.
> .

Chapter Ten explored redundancy from the perspective of an employee, and considered ways in which 'strong' critical incidents of this kind lead to transformation and development. Chapter Eleven explores the ways in which this development nourished and informed my practice as Head of Applied Linguistics, a post to which I was promoted in 2004 after 2 ½ years at Oxford Brookes University. I consider 'transformation' from the perspective of generating a new culture of empowerment within an academic group, informed by my recent experience of crisis. In 'making something new' for my team, and of the management role, I am driven by core values: a belief in the educational imperative of **empowerment** both for teacher and learner/teacher as learner; and a belief in **authenticity**: being congruous with my core beliefs even where these are at risk or in a climate of dis-ease. Interviews with five members of my team are drawn on in order to explore the impact of change after one year. Chapter Eleven also addresses the question: how does this management story connect with those of the writer, educator and researcher as I move from personal to collective responsibility, from private to public transformation? How can insights from these multiple roles help to resolve the paradoxes which emerge in the experience of leadership in the academy?

11.1 Connecting leadership and management

In March 2004, the Centre for international students where I was employed, moved into the Institute of Education and became reconstituted as an Applied Linguistics academic group. The post of Head of Group was created, and advertised internally amongst my team and the Institute at large. The selection process was in two phases: a presentation to the team entitled "How I would manage change as Head of Group" followed by an interview with senior staff. I focused, in my presentation, on the importance of 'owning' change so that it genuinely enhanced practice and empowered individuals; also the importance of leadership with emotional intelligence and principled vision at its heart. The views of both the team and senior staff were thus involved in my appointment. It was with this mandate that I made the transition from colleague to line manager of my team.

The core difference between its first formation and the new one, was that the Centre was now embedded within the Institute of Education as a whole. Its systems would be no longer free-standing, but managed and monitored centrally within the Institute, and within a matrix structure which balanced the management of *people* by Heads of Group, and the management of *programmes* by Directors. Specific examples of change we were about to experience, included: research targets, appraisal cycles, centralised workload plans and expansion of teaching profile into other areas of the Institute. Typical of other Heads of Department (as in Ramsden 1998, Sarros et al 1997a and b), my challenge would include both micro-management of complexity - small and local tasks intrinsic to the daily management of the group - and macro-management of the change process (Kotter 2001). Gosling and Mintzberg point out that leadership and management roles need to be closely interwoven in order to be effective: "the separation of management from leadership is dangerous. Just as management without leadership encourages an uninspired style which deadens activities, leadership without management encourages a disconnected style which promotes hubris". (Gosling and Mintzberg 2003: 34) So I as team leader wished to connect the local complexities of Institute-based systems - *where we are now* - with the larger vision of empowering and professionalizing the team - *where we wish to go*.

Senge adds to our concept of the 'learning organisation' the notion of two kinds of learning: 'survival learning' which is the capacity of an organisation to adapt and respond to the present, and 'generative learning' - "learning that enhances our capacity to create" (Senge 1990: 14). In his notion of 'capacity to create' Senge is clear that "organisations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs". (Senge 1990: 139). These concepts of 'survival/adaptive' versus 'generative' learning offer me in this section, a framework not only for the evolution of a team, but for my own individual/personal evolution as a manager.

Managing complexity

Moving overnight from employee to manager meant that I needed to respond rapidly and reactively in a mode of 'survival learning', to multiple new systems and challenges. The challenges required rapid understanding of basic employment law, equal opportunity and age discrimination, national frameworks such as HERA (Higher Education Role Analysis) and TRAC, international standards such as British Council benchmarks for qualified teacher status, local systems such as workload planning tariffs, procedures for managing underperformance, selection and recruitment, complaint and grievance. Sarros et al's research suggests that my experience of "learning on the job" is typical of Head of Department 'preparation': "indeed, learning on the job has as many, if not more, benefits as bringing to it previous experience that may be outdated" (Sarros et al 1997b: 291). Specific examples of tasks addressed within the first week to first year of my new role, were:

- Advising and supporting staff deemed to fall short of British Council teacher qualification benchmarks (in spite of many years of successful teaching experience) in anticipation of external audits
- Regularising and equalising more than 25 staff contracts on a wide number of contract types: permanent senior lecturers, fractional contracts from 0.25 to 0.75, hourly paid lecturers with workloads ranging from 3 to 18 weekly teaching hours, short-term contracts and teaching-only contracts

- Dealing with pay claims and complaints about contractual arrangements and working conditions
- Negotiating 25 job descriptions for clarification of role scales by the HERA panel (2005).
- Developing 25 workload plans using a system of multipliers and tariffs, and collating these in order to be equivalent to cross-Institute staff workplans
- Collecting and collating detailed data on staff actual work versus predicted/planned work, and accounting for the difference between the two (TRAC)
- Resolving unfinished and evolving grievance, complaint and underperformance issues within course teams

It was essential, to be authentic to my own publicly stated values, that I should contain these management complexities, and not allow them to be prioritised over leadership vision: *where are we going*. Yet the tasks, and the knowledge areas attached to them, were the most new, the most paradoxical, and the most time-heavy for me. I was aware of functioning reactively and using 'survival/adaptive' intelligence to do so (Senge 1990). Staff themselves, in recent research on their views of the role of their Head, cite as the most important functions "serving as an advocate of the department" and "developing long-range plans" (Middlehurst 1993:135) . To be the 'manager without leadership' described by Gosling and Mintzberg (2003), would have been a disappointment not only to myself, but importantly to my team too. Sarros et al suggest my experience was not uncommon: "female HoDs placed significantly more importance on (the management role) than their male counterparts" (Sarros et al 1997b: 288), they write. This "could in part be associated with the need to develop a profile in the role of department head that in many cases is assumed to be a male-dominated position" (ibid). Whilst this may in part have been a factor in my case, in the main I was more conscious of the drive to be a force of good within the system, and to prove my capacity to be so rapidly and seamlessly in order to maintain the trust of my colleagues. Yet it was not in these minutiae that a 'force of good' might be clearly experienced, and resolutions to the issues listed above were quickly forgotten before new ones emerged, hydra-like and relentless.

Leading change: Individual learning leads to team learning:

It was in the broader, more all-embracing vision of the future and leadership of change, that a force of good might be truly experienced. Here, my goals had been explicit from the first presentation:

- Resolving and transforming a culture of division and individualism, so colleagues would experience the accumulative value of individual learning as part of whole-team learning
- Providing a climate of wellbeing and health in which both individuals, and group-as-organism might grow: what Lewin describes as "a stream of ease" (Lewin 2001).
- Generating staff engagement with and excitement about personal professional development, so as to be better placed within an institution aiming for research visibility.

The sections below will explore the specific ways in which I addressed these broader goals, and the impact they had on the team as a whole, and individuals within it.

11.2 Joining up individual and team learning: managing transformation

Models of continuing professional development suggest a process that connects the practitioner's sense of self-worth with his/her growth within and with the team. (Zuber-Skerrit 1996, Peel 2005). Zuber-Skerrit suggests a model in which the team progresses from individual research interests towards a collective notion of professionalism; whilst Edge (1993, 2002) and Johnson and Johnson (1991) offer engagement with the team as a starting point for self-development. In the case of my own academic group, each colleague had a strong sense of professional pride; the challenge was to grow from this a sense of self as researcher as well as educator. In addition, notions of 'professional' and 'research' needed to be deconstructed. How far did we as a team share an understanding of these terms? And how far were we subscribing to the definitions valued within the institution?

Research, for the majority of my colleagues, was the process of interaction with students, learning from this, and refining teaching materials and curriculum as a result. The institution, in contrast, was highly focused on RAE submissable outcomes: publication in refereed journals, presentation at international conferences, and visibility within the scholarly community. Similarly, professionalism in our new workplace was closely monitored, with checklists of quality, expected qualifications and the requirement of evidence through peer observations and professional portfolios; whilst the notion of professionalism which emerged in team discussions emphasised: collegiality, concern for the quality experience and care of the student, respect for one another and for the highest standards of teaching and fairness. We were aware that *recording evidence* of 'professionalism', and *living/practising* it, may be very different things.

To fulfil the goals outlined in Section 11.1 above, I planned, set up, managed and evaluated the portfolio of opportunities listed below. In some cases, the events described were linear and sequential, one process triggering the next: individual meetings at 2) and 3), for example, stimulated a raft of ideas for development at 4); and these in turn, generated new targets and priorities described at 5). Yet the process was also circular and concurrent, with my own learning about individuals feeding back into team activities, and vice versa in an ever-moving cycle. The process also involved individual learning and team learning, in continuous cycles of mutual nourishment.

1) As a first team activity, I planned a full day at the Institute venue 5 miles from our usual workplace, in order to draw up shared principles and values that underpinned our practice. I hoped through this, to prioritise vision and values above the local and the complex which had been the source of division and mistrust in the past. The day achieved what I had hoped for, and the team arrived at a collective statement of values to take us forward into the next phase. This Code of Practice was agreed by everyone in the team, and was posted in every office as a permanent statement of good practice.

Applied Linguistics Team: Code of Practice

- **We agree that members of the team should work in a spirit of support and trust of one another.**
- **We agree that members of the team should work on the assumption that colleagues are competent and professional, and are doing the best job they can.**
- **We agree that problems and concerns about other colleagues should be resolved with the colleague him/herself, internally, non-confrontationally, and in a spirit of safety and mutual respect.**
- **We agree that gossip and rumour, and undermining of colleagues, should not be tolerated or encouraged**
- **We agree that the contribution of each member of the team, to discussion and course development, should be valued**
- **We agree that decisions and processes should be made transparent and fair, and that information of relevance to staff should be made public and accessible**

Formulated June 25th 2004

2) In the first six weeks of appointment, I met each member of staff, fractional, fulltime and hourly paid, to talk through their current work conditions, their goals and aspirations, the areas in which they were and were not expressed fully by their working lives. From these interviews, I derived a set of staff development ideas which I felt would meet their needs: celebrating strengths and successes, dealing with 'gaps' and insecurities, providing opportunity for shared problem-solving, providing clearer channels of communication aid information-sharing, and offering opportunities and stimulus for growth.

3) After these initial discussions, I set up specific ones focused on each individual developing an area of research interest. My challenge was to open, for colleagues new to research, the notion that research could emanate from their own practice; that

'research' involved reformulating these experiences as enquiries and addressing them systematically; and that doing so could authentically energise their experience as educators. In addition, by identifying questions in this way, it was possible through my overview, to connect colleagues with common enquiries. Thus, over the year colleagues gradually formed pairs and small groups to answer a series of common questions: how students use library resources, how they respond to written feedback, how to assess participation in groupwork, how to encourage interaction between British and International students (and why this does not happen automatically) .

4) These meetings suggested to me a raft of opportunities to join up individual learning, personal aspirations, and the health and growth of the team as a whole :

From individual learning and mentoring to team learning

- individual support for e-learning questions, on a tutorial/surgery basis:
- Mentoring and feedback of written articles and papers being submitted for journals
- 'critical friend' observations of problem classes to offer support and feedback
- 'dry runs' for colleagues giving conference papers to trial their paper and receive supportive feedback
- topic-based discussion circles for colleagues with specialist interests: an IELTS (International English Language Testing Service) special interest group
- visiting speakers on topics of specialist interest where we would like to gather or expand our knowledge: dyslexia, formulating research bids, using statistics to interpret student results
- a reading circle to read and discuss cutting edge papers and articles in our field
- workshops to work through on our own terms issues and directives from the University: for example, making sense of peer observation, dealing with plagiarism, standardising assessment feedback

- termly group newsletter, *Talking Shop*, in which we shared news both personal and professional, including pictures, poems and professional updates
- celebration of successes such as: replaying for colleagues successful conference papers; showcasing examples of excellent teaching, talking about and launching book and chapter publications, celebrating a PhD success
- termly good practice awaydays to share work in progress, evolve team action plans, share outcomes of good practice

5) From the more formal Personal Development Reviews emerged a set of action points, leading to effective change for each individual. In broad terms, these interviews allowed me to perceive where each individual might find catalysts for change along the spectrum from discomfort to delight (as described in Chapter Nine): discomfort in being the areas of lack, gap or insecurity, in contrast to stimuli that could reconnect teachers with delight in their profession. The discomfort sources generated for me as manager a very large caseload: contractual issues, finding responsibilities for those who felt undervalued, offloading responsibilities from those who felt over worked: and all the time keeping a firm eye on overall sustainability, equity of opportunity and load, as well as my own judgements about where people's strengths lay, where their weaknesses were and how far these were amenable to change. Most of all, the challenge was to transform the 'discomfort' into delight/excitement by connecting it with meaningful new learning, collaboration, resources and opportunities.

11.3 Has transformation really happened?

External indicators suggested that transformation had happened after one year. Three colleagues gave conference papers nationally and internationally for the first time; and seven colleagues who had been on hourly paid contrasts were upgraded to permanent 0.5 posts. An active researcher in the group won an ESRC research grant and two research assistants were appointed to join the team who offered living testimony to the value of research. One year earlier, we had evolved our Code of Practice, and generated a set of

action points which had all been implemented and had run for one year. All of these had happened, and been successful. The British Council external audit highly commended Staff Development in the team, and the overall quality contributed to the Institute Investors in People status. Yet how did my team themselves experience the changes of the year? If these had been successful, then what next and where now?

Team responses one year on

To answer these questions, as part of our Awayday I arranged a long lunch in the University gardens with salmon and strawberries; and gave questions to colleagues to discuss in small clusters under trees in the late June sunshine. The notes and summaries below were those collected concurrent with the event, both during or straight afterwards.

During the lunch break, ask at least 3 colleagues your question. Check which parts of their response they are happy to share with others, and make a note of these so you can report back at the end of the day.

Do you have a specific strength or interest which we as a team should know more about? (personal or professional: you choose) What is this, and what would you like us to know about it?

Many of us are locked into roles at work, which do not do justice to the rounded person we are. This dissertation has shown how important it is to me, that I am a creative writer synonymous with being an educator, and that the two inform one another in a fundamental way. A year on from Head of Applied Linguistics, I realise we have related to one another fundamentally from the roles that are visible at work. I am aware that one colleague is at core a painter as well as a teacher; another is an actor and musician, at the heart of his role of educator. These are colleagues whose 'other' cores are visible to me, because I share them, (I play music, for example, with the latter colleague). But what about others which are not visible? This question revealed the following:

- K is a photographer, and has been to Kathmandu to film the temples and Tibetan stupas. She has a sequence of photos of sherpas on walking routes through the Himalayas, and she shares these with students.
- H has returned to pottery after some years, and now has a wheel at home.
- S is a deep sea diver and has dived at the Great Barrier Reef.

- J has been collecting antiquarian books about Macau and Hong Kong for the past fifteen years
- R goes skating every Tuesday morning and runs a jazz dancing class, which she is opening up to the University.

Has being a part of the Applied Linguistics academic group made any difference to you in the past year and why/not? In what ways would you like it to make a difference in the future?

- sounds more respectable: the terminology equates with 'progress' and 'future'
- a new sense of security and identity
- more inclusive of all than previously
- it ***is*** an academic field
- more scaffolding of academic possibilities: eg. research groups
- I like getting emails beginning 'Dear Applied Linguists'
- it made Jane my line manager and allowed me to shift around in terms of what I can do. Future visions: a reputation for Applied Linguistics in future, on a par with other reputable institutions
- lunchtime presentations and talks, and insights into teaching and practice of colleagues. For the future, perhaps some more theory related research, an in house reading group.
- events such as today that afford professional/academic interchange (plus social!) have given us a clearer identity.

Is there one professional or academic problem/question/issue which you would like opened up with colleagues?

- a deeper understanding of English language itself; descriptions of English
- less about pedagogy and more about language itself
- scaffolding one's career: stages to go through for publishing

If you were asked to set up and run a workshop/discussion/presentation on any academic or professional issue in the next academic year, what would it be?

- more of a description of issues in linguistics rather than pedagogy
- more sharing of information about research areas
- how to become an active researcher to enhance our career prospects
- how to play the publishing game

I was surprised the extent to which the group as a whole were ready to move from professional and teaching related debate, to focused attention on career-related research outcomes - "playing the publishing game". I felt relieved I had 'taken the temperature' of the group at this stage, in order to test that; as I had not picked this feeling up 'in the air' and would otherwise have missed it. Another surprise, was the fact that a solid core in the group wished to return to our parent discipline, linguistics and description of language, and were tired of the emphasis on language **in education**. It is possible to trace these specific wishes to those with stable permanent contracts and responsibility roles. The Awayday feedback suggested that those members of the team were now thinking more proactively about their own visibility as researchers; others who contractually had felt, or still felt, vulnerable, were less interested in 'playing the game'. The new dynamic of the Applied Linguistics group had given them a stronger sense of identity, security and professional pride, but not necessarily increased the incentive to 'go the extra mile' for goals still seen as corporate and distant.

In response to this dual demography with its separating needs, the following year, teaching-related discussions were planned alongside research-specific activities such as: advice on generating research bids; staff talks on 'state of the art' fields in linguistics; and introductions to research active colleagues University-wide to form collaborative research bids.

Individual responses one year on

To explore more deeply what the changes had meant for individuals, I asked colleagues if they would be prepared to talk to me in a semi-structured interview about their

experiences of the year. Five colleagues were happy to do so and have given permission for their names and evidence to appear in this dissertation.

The conversations were organised within a busy working day, in our offices, using a digital camera fixed on the table. Although my colleagues were not asked to think about or prepare anything in advance, it could be that the Awayday process described above had involved them already in reflecting on the questions I was about to ask. My three broad questions were:

- Have you noticed any changes or developments for yourself personally during the first academic year in which we have been an Applied Linguistics group?
- If so, which were the particular mechanisms or activities which helped to bring about these changes?
- Do you have any ideas for going forward - continuing the good aspects and building on them?

Please see Audio-Visual Files: 4 Interviews with colleagues

Martin Clips 1 - 7

Martin is one of the longest standing members of Applied Linguistics who had experienced two other Schools of the University and worked under two earlier managements. In Clip 1 he says: "this is the best year I can remember". He is clear about the specific mechanisms for this: "different management structure", encouragement, support and help (Clip 2); a 'more consultative' management style (Clip 4) and the Awaydays (Clip 5). He applied for my post, and was happy to talk about this in our conversation. In Clip 3 he describes ways in which he might have handled my role differently, for example dealing more decisively with hourly paid staff and delineating his role more assertively. As an overview of changes for him after a year, he mentions the atmosphere of trust (Clip 6), and the different dynamic in the team: "it feels like a revolution" (Clip 5). His main regret is "wasted opportunity in the past" (Clip 7).

Richard Clips 8 - 10

Richard was the first person in the unit, when it consisted of four lecturers sharing a room in the Languages corridor. Like Martin, he has known the group under three different Schools and three different management structures. In clip 8, Richard explains the impact of the new structure on his work: he says the appraisal process (Personal Development Review or PDR) is one example of change. He valued the more focused and detailed review we had, and the fact that specific targets were set and followed through. Clip 9 says that he values the specific mechanisms of awaydays and meetings in which "we are looking at why we teach, how to improve" - issues which used to "get lost in the past". Specifically, in Clip 10 he explains how much he values "knowing what others are doing" and the Awaydays "which are wonderful".

Richard talks in the conversation, about his first research project, shared with a colleague Teresa, and emanating from a new module they are teaching. He talks of the satisfaction it has given him, to be gathering information in a new way. The first stage of his research has been to gather information through questionnaires, about how students use resources such as the library and electronic journals; and to correlate this with their grades in writing tasks.

Teresa Clips 11 - 12

Teresa is course manager of one of the principle programmes in the group, and during the year has been moved to permanent status. She starts by saying how much more secure she now feels as a result. Clip 11 explains that she does not regard herself as research active, so feels the year has not involved so much change for her, although she has benefited from others "growing towards the sun". In Clip 12, she talks about the project she shares with Richard, and begins tangibly to 'shine' when doing so.

Fred and Juliet Clips 13 - 22

Fred and Juliet are two 'young' researchers who presented their first conference papers during this academic year. Juliet was upgraded at the start of the year from hourly paid to 0.5 permanent instructor, and at this stage in the year was imminently to be offered a 0.5 Senior Lecturer role in addition.

My first question was: What has the year done for you? (Clip 13).
Juliet replies by saying "it's wonderful to do research". The year had shown her "the meaning of what research could be" (Clip 14). Fred continues by saying "It's the first year I've really felt I could try things out." The year had given him "confidence to look at other aspects of my work" (Clip 15).
I then asked "what were the mechanisms that made you feel more comfortable"? (Clip 16). Juliet mentioned the importance of the change of contractual status: "I'm in the academic world" and the value of a supportive line manager "though we probably take you for granted" (Clip 17). Fred says he feels that research is for the first time being taken seriously, and is also part of official documentation (Clip 18). In addition he valued initiatives such as our newsletter *Talking Shop* "which appears in everybody's pigeon hole" (Clip 22). The experience of the year had given them "a sense of identity as a group" (Clip 19), and a sense of "finding your voice" (Juliet in clip 20).

.
As a summary of their responses, all five suggested that transformation had indeed taken place in the course of the year, and that this had been positive, practical and palpable for them. The change lay both in atmosphere - of trust, security, identity - and in practice - involvement in research, focused appraisals, learning about one another's work at Awaydays. All were clear about specific mechanisms which had helped to achieve these changes: from the minute, such as circular emails from me addressed Dear Applied Linguists (Juliet), to the significant such as financial and academic support to give conference papers abroad (Fred). The 'management' issues described in section 11.2 which had really impacted, were those relating to contractual status: both Juliet and Teresa mention this as a first point of change from which many of the other changes emanated. It is possible to develop within the culture of perpetual change that Higher Education is, if one has a sense of belonging to that change. Several colleagues whose contractual status suggested to them a failure to belong (small fractions, hourly paid), did not opt into the cycles of development offered here; or if so, did so sporadically and uncertainly. Maslow (1943) suggests that security, stability and 'safety' are amongst the most fundamental in the hierarchy of needs; and these in turn lead to 'belonging' needs, the sense of community. From the management perspective, these core needs were at

risk for those with vulnerable contracts; and only once resolved, activated the many further layers leading towards a desire for fulfilment and self-actualisation.

The next section considers a critical incident which propelled the group into crisis, placing at risk in a fundamental way, core needs for stability and belonging.

11.4 From pothole to glass ceiling: learning from crisis

The critical incident described here is an 'exempla' of change in the early 21st century:

> The business (and academic) world has become more competitive and more volatile. ---- The net result is that doing what was done yesterday, or doing it 5% better, is no longer a formula for success. Major changes are more and more necessary to survive and compete effectively in this new environment. (Kotter 2001: 86).

In 2007, the group were asked to co-operate with a private company interested in forming a partnership with our centre. The partnership would involve the 'rebranding' of the group, and redrawn contracts separating teaching-only staff from executive directors. There were attractive incentives for the University, such as the promise of state-of-the art buildings funded by the company, and membership of a global marketing consortium. However, at the very least, it was likely that much of the advance we had made over three years as an Academic Group would be reversed, and staff would be predominantly members of a commercially driven unit outside the key mission statements of the university as an institution of higher education.

The team collectively were passionately in opposition to this plan and were empowered through this unified response, to act coherently and decisively, and with the strong support of the Union. In this context of crisis, those who had felt outside the sphere of belonging in the context of the group, became fully a part of it when in battle with the institution as a whole. Those who had remained aggrieved at their rights and working conditions within the academic group, began to fight for those rights in contrast to what the new partnership offered. The 'belonging' realigned itself along new fault lines: those in passionate opposition, and those who were not.

Chapter Ten described what was learnt from the redundancy experience, or 'falling down the pothole'. These insights formed, either consciously or subliminally, a focus for my response to this crisis as educator, team leader and human being.

1) I am aware of the difference between situations which are capable of restoration, and those which are not.

Throughout the crisis, there was a further division between those who believed the decision had already been made by Senior Management and that all negotiation was merely cosmetic: and those who believed that the situation was indeed 'capable of restoration' and that negotiation was genuine. The latter approach carried us further, and made communication not 'game-like' but authentic. My own view was, that we should believe the situation 'capable of restoration' until there was clear evidence to the contrary; and in this latter case, move towards other strategies for survival, including walking away from the change, or 'making the best of it' by transforming it into something workable. All these options needed to remain ready for use, yet to be timed appropriately - neither too premature a sense of defeat, nor too late a letting go.

2) I am aware, from the first critical incident, of the danger of visibility too late – of not being known fully to decision-makers until the decision has been made.

I have learnt that, once a decision has been made, managers rarely lose face by changing this no matter how compelling the arguments. Collectively as a team and as a Union, we were aware of the need to delay the decision-making process, to insist on transparency and communication, to insist on this involving the whole department in dialogue with the whole Senior Management team so there was no opportunity for faceless paper-decisions which were irreversible.

During the crisis, I became aware that to some in the team, I did not belong to the 'passionately engaged' because my approach included 'talking to the other' in order to gather maximum information.

3) ***I am aware of the importance of information in being fully armed and supported through a critical incident.***

Through the six-week consultancy and decision-making process, the Union and its representatives in the group, sub-groups within the team, I as team leader maintained a persistent and regular stream of information between Senior Management and the team, moving in both directions. Two petition letters were drawn up collating information about the human resources, academic, financial and marketing impact of the plan, signed by each member of the team and delivered by hand by me to the Vice Chancellor's door.

In the course of March Senior Management agreed to meet us 4 times, twice with the Vice Chancellor. The following changes to the original action plan were agreed:

- Instead of a single business proposal being considered on March 26th, the Department are invited to present an alternative business proposal alongside this one, for comparison.
- Instead of a decision being scheduled within days of the proposal presentation, it is now agreed the decision-making will take another further 6 weeks, and will need to involve the Academic Board, Board of Governors, Human Resources, the International Office, and the Unions.
- Instead of this process being taken 'sub judice' the Senior Management Team have agreed to keep us informed at each stage of the process.

Whatever the impact of these exchanges, through this process the team became visible to Senior Management as a group of highly articulate, professionally committed individuals who insisted on being heard; and similarly, Senior Management became visible to us, in terms of their motives, goals, concerns, and the kind of information they were gathering to inform their decision.

4) I am aware of the importance of wellbeing as a mode of survival – all its components including physical wellbeing.

As a creative strategy, instead of rehearsing and 'writing large' the pain of the situation I found myself doing the opposite: writing from outside the crisis. In Vasilyuk's terms, it

is an example of the third and final way he describes for 'transformation' as a result of crisis: 'affirming, again in terms of real practice and sensory embodiment, the ideal to which the self has won through' (Vasilyuk 1991:140). I am not, this time, prepared to tolerate symbolic slamming of car doors against my skull, or falling down potholes, nor is there room within the campaign to feel paralysed by anxiety. Instead I focus my sensory/creative energies on aspects of the outside world which I value and which have remained unchanged through the crisis.

See Appendix reading 10 - poem written and published on the Oxford buses during this period.

5) Transformation of a critical incident (in the 'strong' sense) includes the capacity to learn from negativity whilst walking away from it.

Chapter Nine discussed the spectrum from delight to discomfort, as catalysts for change amongst teachers exploring their own practice. In this setting, I was able to reflect on what had been learnt, both negatively and positively, and use this understanding as a way of 'walking away' from it.

In terms of un-ease, I experienced the conflict of being perceived outside the fault line of 'passionate engagement'. My strategy of 'talking to the other' was misinterpreted by some, and sub-groups formed which adopted a different strategy. Whilst these all pulled together towards the ultimate cause, I experienced a degree of hurt at being mistrusted at a time of crucial change.

In terms of delight, I had seen that I was in a stronger position to influence events for the good than I had been in my earlier situation (Chapter Ten). I was also able to see the collective pride and identity which fuelled the campaign, and to believe that in some part I had had a role in forming this. I was also able to see the specific ways in which the team described and campaigned for their rights and conditions of service- those which I too had made a central plank of my management of the team. Thus, it became apparent that the collective voice had powerfully 'come of age'.

The decision was good news: the business plan was rejected, largely because the plan itself was fundamentally flawed, and we were assured that there would be no more similar threats to deal with in future years, as private companies in search of University partnerships continued to make their claims. Before the senior team had made their decision, I had planned an Awayday in which we as a group could reflect on the crisis and what we had learnt from it. This became a celebratory event, tempered by different interpretations of our success: those who believed we had a direct and positive influence on its outcome, versus those who felt Senior Management had only conferred with us by way of appeasement and had made a decision irrespective of our input. In spite of these differences, it was important again to 'walk away' with an understanding of what had been learnt. As a result of our day, we drew up the following collective statement:

> We the Applied Linguistics team, identified examples of good/preferred practice in our communications during the consultation process, and would like the following to be part of our practice in the future.
>
> - Effective use of the full mailing list to involve everyone in processes
> - Rapid, proactive response to challenges
> - Everyone taking responsibility and assuming ownership of the process
> - Individual strengths and complementary skills pulling together for the collective good : everyone contributing, and each contribution seen as valuable
> - Multiple opportunities for dialogue: face to face meetings more effective than virtual meetings
> - Mutual trust: working with an understanding that each individual within the team is working towards the collective good
> - Prompt communication of decisions and plans that may affect the team
> - Boundaries, roles and hierarchies flattened and broken down:'dissolving the *them and us* culture'

what is so much more important about your presence in the department is what you represent to everyone there - which is a beacon of integrity and humanity in an otherwise inhuman and miserable environment.

11.5 Joining up stories: music as metaphor

If *knowledge transformation* is to be meaningful as a concept of learning, it needs to be demonstrated through many learning settings and subject disciplines. Much of what I describe in this dissertation refers to roles expressed through language – written, spoken and metalinguistic. But here I would like to test its validity and insights through my experience as part of a musical ensemble, which forms a living metaphor for the struggles, resolutions and compromises of the team leader/manager.

> Music is at bottom an expressive art, analogous to language, though it does not speak in concepts or specifics. Rather, in a semi-mystical sense, "music tends toward pure naming, the absolute unity of object and sign. (Adorno 2002:4)

Yet music does not offer only a metaphor for language. A musical ensemble (as this is) is also a microcosm of the dynamics of the team, with all its jostling for power, for voice, dichotomies between assertion and giving space to others. Importantly, too, in my own personal history, music is a major source of wellbeing. For me, it is a place where I can experience both connection and empathy. To be a musician in a world of other musicians, is to manifest these principles through sound; to learn continually from interaction with other musicians; to learn constantly to attune and sensitise one's capacity to hear others, and yet to know and remain firmly within one's own 'part' or musical voice. It is in this spirit that I conclude this chapter with the Two Timing project, performed by myself and eight other colleagues at Oxford Brookes University July 2006.

Two Timing: Cultural Criminals project, Oxford Brookes University: July 2006
(This section is to be read in conjunction with the Audio-Visual Files, 5 Music, Clip 1 – In C: Two Timing project).

This project was initiated by a group of two visual artists who joined Oxford Brookes for one year to explore the theme of time through multiple media. The culminating event of the year, was to be a multi-media musical/visual installation: a life-sized video recording on a transparent canvas, of an ensemble of musicians playing Terry Riley's *In C;* with a 'live' performance taking place as a 'ghostly echo, behind the canvas and in a-synchrony. The musical ensemble was drawn from staff and students, self-selected and thus disparate

in experience and unusual as a musical combination: flute, violin (myself), viola, guitar, two electric keyboards, harp, triangle, and drums.

We are at first a disparate group with the same enquiry: what kind of sound can we make together? Will I commit to the project, and if so, who is in with me? If I fail to commit, what am I missing? We are all team and not sure of our leader. The leader/conductor is a musical democrat. At first we believe his role is that of time-keeper only, around which we swill and move at our ease. Amongst our group are jazz players, comfortable with the practice of improvisation and playing through interaction with others, but unused to working tightly with notation, and classical musicians for whom the opposite is the case, closely committed to the composer's script and focused on freedom through discipline. We must work together but we are not sure towards which final cause. In fact, it is us that must determine what this final sound is.
Terry Riley's *In C* was written as a set of 53 musical patterns, designed for any number or combination of instruments. Each pattern consists of beats as with conventional music, the difference being that every musician chooses how many times he/she repeats the pattern, based on a sense of where the swell of sound is and whether he/she will join this or change it. Every pattern has its own unique number of beats, and each beat lasts exactly a second. Our sound, therefore, is an eruption orchestrated around the tick of a clock or beat of a heart.

We generate from this a spontaneous surge of sound based on a combination of trance within our own unit of sound (minimalist repetition of patterns), and interaction with others around us. The musical 'learning' involves:

- changing the notion of counting, from bars with an equal number of beats in each, to counting of short patterns, each of a different length, and with an infinite number of repetitions. Thus, while being in a 'trance' of repetition one must also be rigorously counting seconds, beats and patterns, in an 'unlearning' of classical training

- having no musical 'anchor' to determine whether one is 'right' or 'wrong' and having to interpret this musically for oneself and by reading the evolving choices made by others

This, in performance, is 'mindfulness' manifested in sound: a joining of high alertness to other and profound journey into self, of self discovered through other. That this communicated itself is illustrated by the comments of the audience after performance: they described the chant-like, mesmerising quality of the final sound; the sense of incantation and prayer; the sense of being transported to another inner/outer place.

In this role, I find myself:

- blending into a shared sound where my 'pattern' imitates others
- echoing sounds and finding 'ghost' versions of my own musical voice elsewhere in the ensemble
- wishing to 'breathe' a new musical direction into the music by introducing a new pattern
- wishing to fall back and be a 'follower' where others have introduced a new pattern or taken the floor
- staying on a single sound that acts as a thread of continuity as other patterns move around it
- needing to 'unlearn' former patterns of understanding, in order to embrace new ones

As I find myself analysing the musical relationship between violin and other instruments in the ensemble, I see the metaphor of the creative educator/manager emerging: blending, echoing, directing, introducing new patterns, following, providing continuity. All of these are specific and practical ways in which it is possible to empower:
I also see the process of learning made manifest through the 'new' sound we have created. Using Terry Riley's patterns as a 'scaffold', we have owned the forms in order to build something new that is entirely of the moment and owned by each of us in the ensemble. To illustrate how unique that moment is to itself, it is then juxtaposed against a second version of our performance. These two versions, the actual as performed on stage,

and the 'ghost' version projected against a transparent screen, both are and are not the same. They are the same in that the scaffold is still there, the same leadership; yet they are not the same, in that we are already different from the first 'selves' that were filmed a week earlier. We are already interpreting the patterns in our own, and new ways. We are listening both to one another, and to our 'other' selves, and in so doing, generating a third 'something new' – today's voice, yesterday's voice, talking to one another to form a third voice. We are hearing one another, ourselves, Terry Riley's patterns, and time itself differently and in new ways.

So I experienced the fluxes and tides of the team leadership experience, at one moment generating a collective voice based on professional growth, at another shifting to one of survival and territory-protection; at some times territory defined as the place where the whole team sits, at another confined to my own wellbeing inside an embattled setting. Survival was premised on the capacity to recognise this variety of options, and move between them with a sensitivity to their natural direction of flow. Through music as metaphor, it was possible to understand that deep learning transfers across the roles of manager/musician/educator. Where I as team leader blocked this learning, or resorted to those specific to leadership, I was thwarted and frustrated. Through 'playing' as learning, I found it possible to live these music-making decisions and skills as a manager too.

The management roles, through both health and crisis, required a precise sense of placement along the continua first described in Chapter One of this dissertation:

- ***justice versus caring***: As every writer must do, I give voice to characters who have been in conflict with my own sensibilities, in order to test and explore events fully. To provide 'information' from one perspective only would not only tell an incomplete story, but would not do justice to the roundedness and complexity of other viewpoints. During the 'critical incident' described above, there was a danger of this failing to read as 'passionate engagement' and falling on the wrong side of the 'solidarity' fault-line'. In this case, to be ***just*** to all parties was also to exercise ***caring*** for my own.

- ***impartiality versus emotional congruity and engagement.*** In other words, ***impartiality*** was read by some as a failure to be ***engaged***. As an educator/assessor, it was necessary to assess texts which were highly engaged but not always effectively communicated to the 'other' reader. To bring these two poles together is to say: by being impartial, I am being congruous with my own concerns for best practice and fairness.
- ***transparency versus discretion.*** As a writer, one must also identify what needs to be said, what implied or suggested, and what withheld for a later stage in the story. This same balance seemed to be in play throughout the management of the team and the critical incident which affected us. Mutual transparency of crucial information was a vital part of our success. Yet at the same time, I was party to much 'pseudo-information' - individual interpretations of events, speculation and hypotheses. Most of these could potentially have been dangerous in the mix of mistrust of other, and solidarity through 'passionate engagement'. Part of the act of discretion was to separate the 'wild cards' from the important information, and to make the latter known at every point.

All the roles explored in this dissertation, are thus connected through the experience of paradox and opposition. The management role presented new and more publicly discernable oppositions: the female manager in a male environment , the manager of minutiae whilst working towards the larger vision, the team leader balancing democracy with decision-making and judgement. In the leader: manager role, creative response is to allow the sense of paradox and confusion to lie closely underneath or alongside the experience of forward movement,

Throughout this dissertation I have been concerned to demonstrate my core values through the voices of others: students, colleagues, family. Only through their voices can I show that transformation and empowerment of others, which are my core values, are really taking place. The management role has involved the multiple challenges described in earlier sections, of:

- enacting my core values within an entirely new sphere of influence

- testing within this sphere my core methodologies for working with and empowering others
- finding ways of making my own voice more representative and more influential as a force of good within a larger system
- finding ways of empowering my colleagues within a larger system, so they experience the system as enhancing rather than silencing their delight in the profession

This chapter has considered the nature of knowledge derived from critical incident and from challenges to the familiar; the experience of paradox as a creative tension, and the strategies and blocks in empowering others and managing change. It also shows the potential of learning across roles and categories, and the way in which understanding in one context can offer insight into the critical and challenging in another. It forms the final 'story' in the account of self opening out from the secret landscape of childhood, into the public and accountable one of the academy, and the tensions and interweaving of these landscapes. Chapter Twelve attempts to bring all these 'stories' together to explore what has been learnt throughout these chapters about *knowledge transformation* as living and embodied theory, and what messages it can offer to the academy.