From Alignment to Emergent Academic: the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the development of academic staff in a post-1992 university

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From Alignment to Emergent Academic: the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the development of academic staff in a post-1992 university

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ABSTRACT

This research developed a qualitative Case Study to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy. The study employed documentary data, interviews and a questionnaire to examine a four year period of a seven year change programme at a University in Southern England. Documents provide background to the case. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen leaders, two external coaches and eleven internal mentors. A questionnaire completed by thirty six academics preceded six semi-structured interviews with academic staff. Participant perceptions of alignment and their experiences of coaching and mentoring were analysed using a data coding approach influenced by Grounded Theory. As a result of this study, the researcher developed a Model for Improving Credibility in Insider Research to demonstrate how they dealt with the challenges of being an employee of the organisation in which the research was completed.

The study shows how a new Strategic Plan impacted on academic staff roles. In responding to the changes, academics were faced with career, role, time and psychological challenges. The findings indicate that the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy does not need to be a tension, but that it can provide opportunities for both organisation and individual if they can identify and focus on ways to fill the gap between them. The Individual and Organisation Alignment Map, developed from this study, demonstrates a new understanding of alignment of the individual within the organisational context.

Coaching and mentoring helped academics to respond to the challenges by providing support for a focus on the future and forward momentum, as well as role implementation and psychological support. A new model showing how The Transitional Space Provided by Coaching and Mentoring can provide support for outer and inner world challenges has been developed as a result of this research. In addition, the new definition of 'Emerging Academics' developed during this study provides a different starting point for considering the career development of academic staff.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher Education (HE) institutions are operating under significant pressure. For example, in Englanddemographic changes, a volatile international student market and the introduction of variable fees (Denham,2008) mean that universities have an even greater need to compete to attract and retain satisfied students. The government requires universities to increase the quantity and quality of senior research staff (Leitch,2006), to build stronger links with business (DEFS,2003) and the professions (Langlands,2005), to improve and reward excellent teaching (Higher Education Academy, 2006), to enhance the relationship between research and teaching (Research Forum,2004) and to respond to the evolving expectations of students and their educational experience (Higher Education Academy,2008).   Changes in HE have therefore brought about changes to the ways in which universities are managed and this is changing the nature of academic staffroles.

The Education Reform Act (1988) indicates that 'freedom' is afundamental principle of academia:

> ... academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions.

In this respect it seems that the individual academic working within an institutional context should have a certain amount of freedom distinct from institutional constraints. Governance and decision making processes in universities have, historically, been established on decentralised models from the 1960s and 1970s, but this means that they have not been set up to respond to current challenges such as competition and financial stress (Kezar & Eckel,2004). Increased external pressures and competition in knowledge creation from other institutions within society have brought challenges to the 'coherence and viability of the traditional academic role' (Locke,2007:6) and institutions can no longer afford, intellectually or financially, for 'a loose confederation of individuals to do as they please' (Tierney,1999:33). The need for universities to focus on strategy, measures and accountability is necessary because the success of a university has a direct impact on its resource base (Shattock,2003). A strong resource base is essential if they are to have the capacity to compete in a competitive market.

Such managerial disciplines have been said to curtail the freedom enjoyed by academics (Deem et al,2008;Barnett,2000). Deem et al (2008:42) set out how contemporary UK academics are different from other public service professionals, suggesting that they retain a good deal of autonomy, are significantly engaged in knowledge creation through research and teaching, can be challenging to manage and undertake much of their work as individuals rather than as part of a collective. Studies of four UK institutions responding to the challenges for universities in 2001-2005 indicated that each university was 'treading a tightrope between the need for strong, authoritative central direction and a desire for devolved responsibilities and incentives'(Taylor,2006:272) and the tensions between institutional autonomy and individual academic freedom are reported to be stronger in the UK than in other countries (Locke,2007).Nevertheless, whilst some claim that a more managerial context for HE presents risks to collegiality and originality, it has been noted that there has been a lack of resistance to a more managerial context for HE (Cohen,2010).

The literature also indicates how the changing academic context in the UK and globally has affected the nature of the academic role, with staff needing to both increase the quality of their work and to contribute to a wider portfolio of activities than perhaps they are used to. For example, in New Zealand the research funding model is now based on the research performance of individual members of staff (Billot,2011) and all staff are required to engage in research and to undertake post-graduate qualifications (Fielden and Malcolm,2005).Globally,universities are recognising the benefits of recruiting more staff from the professions, but these staff find the transition to academia challenging (Boyd, 2010; Griffiths et al,2010;Bandow et al,2007;La Rocco and Bruns,2006;Coleman et al, 2006). In the UK staff are expected to be more entrepreneurial and are required to be more accountable in areas such as teaching and research quality, finance and student returns (PA Consulting Group,2000). Other staff who are challenged by developing their academic identity include 'early career researchers',a term used in connection with the development of research staff and post-graduate researchers (Times Higher Awards, 2012;Vitae,2012).Also in the UK, 25% of staff were employed on teaching-only contracts, reportedly due to a redesign of roles for those staff who were not performing sufficiently for the Research Assessment Exercise, which measures the quality of research and dictates the amount of funding an institution will receive from funding research councils (Locke,2007).

It seems therefore that alignment of academic staff to the changing demands of HE is a complex but topical issue. The freedom of the academic role in terms of intellectual

pursuit, freedom of speech and the ways in which they organise their work has meant that academics have not necessarily needed to align or conform with an institutional strategy per se. Becher's (1989) earlier work proposed their first allegiance was often to their academic unit or discipline rather than to the university. Although Henkel & Vabo's (2000) work suggested that the process of change was happening at national policy level and only partially happening at disciplinary, department and individual level, Henkel's (2002) later work suggested some changes in the traditional dynamics between individuals, disciplines, departments and institutions, and that, whilst the traditional academic identity had not been abandoned, academic autonomy over agendas had become something that needed to be modified within a context of competing agendas (Henkel,2005).

Thus academics today are subject to managerial intervention. They have cognitive and operational challenges related to engaging in a range of academic activities and they need to deliver a service to fee-paying students. All of these activities challenge the frameworks by which academics have previously understood the world and present them with the kind of 'supercomplexity' that can challenge self-understanding and self-identity (Barnett,2000:6).However, Locke and Bennion (2007) claimed that it is difficult to implement strategic decisions at institutional level without the co-operation of a significant proportion of academic staff and have questioned whether existing development and career opportunities are adequate. A real challenge for universities therefore is not only the need to align academic staff andorganisational strategy, but to discover and establish both the environment and the enablers for it to happen.

In the last decade the notion of alignment in organisations in general has become topical. Organisations appear to be improving at aligning structures, processes and systems, but although they often talk of the importance of aligning employees to the vision and purpose of the organisation (Kaplan and Norton,2006), there is very little research-based evidence of how that happens. One of the keys to this conundrum may be for Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD)professionals to take up this challenge, with an increasing need to examine and improve their own professional practice in order to both support the organisation and to make the most of their employees, including creating opportunities for them to enjoy satisfying and interesting careers. Research has shown that HR practitioners within HE need to both improve on, and research, their own practice (Strike and Taylor,2009; Guest and Clinton,2007; Blackmore and Blackwell,2006).

1.1 THE CASE ORGANISATION

The aim of this study is toanswer the research question: 'What is the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy?'

This researchuses a case study approach toexplore how coaching and mentoring have been used by one HE institution to unravel some of the tensions around aligning academic staff and a new and ambitious organisational strategy, which is affecting not only the processes and systems by which academic staff achieve their work, but has set new expectations of their roles and implemented a new academic career structure. Coaching and mentoring have been utilised on a staff development programme by the case organisation and this study explores in particular the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting academic staff in responding to the new agenda.

It is in the context of the complex political policy agenda that this institution, granted University status in 1992 and hereafter referred to as Southern University (SU), set out its vision and strategy from 2006 to 2012, which included a move to being academically-led, financially robust and an environment where studentswere'learning from those who were themselves learning'.   SU had previously focused on the delivery of professionally focused subjects which meant that a significant number of staff had been recruited for their 'professional', rather than their academic, experience and their performance had previously been measured in teaching inputs and outputs.The new vision was for an academically-led University where four areas of academic practice: education, research, enterprise, and professional practice, were equal partners.

The Corporate Plan (Document reference:D1) and Strategic Plan (D2) for SUset out an ambitious plan to change the academic staff base, including goals relating to the transition of 40% of those who had been identified as being 'teachers' (c.80 staff) to becoming 'academics'. The measure of an academic would be someone who contributed in three out of four areas of academic practice and an associated reward structure for those who were contributing to the required standards included a new pay progression scheme, new academic career structure and annual promotion round. In addition the University aimed to increase the number of core academic staff with doctorates to 60% through recruitment and staff development.   Two voluntary severance schemes and significant recruitment

had served to change the staff base to some extent. However, the institutional expectationsof the remaining academic staff base were that they would align with the new strategy. The University introduced a significant programme of change associated with Key Performance Indicators in the Strategic Plan, consisting of nearly 40 inter-linked and inter-dependent change projects, including an academic staff development programme that included coaching and mentoring; this programme of change represented a significant cultural shift for the institution.

Fundamental to the change in institutional culture was the alignment and engagement of staff to the organisational strategy with respect to research, enterprise and professional practice. Two groups of staff were key to the change agenda, the first being those on academic contracts who were not currently research or enterprise active but had the potential to become active. At SU these academicswere often mid-career, having entered from industry, or having been predominantly teachers (or researchers) up to this point. Some of these staff had doctorates, but were not research active and had limited academic outputs such as publications and successful funding grants.

The second group of staff who were key were members of the professoriate, a group of staff who had hitherto been engaged in their own research and enterprise agendas, but who had not necessarily been actively sharing their knowledge, experience and expertise with colleagues. The University launched its Releasing Research Enterprise Potential (RREP) Programme in 2006/7, which was targeted at both of the key groups and had three aims (D3).

1. To build staff confidence and competence in research and enterprise while empowering individuals to take control of their career through business-focused, individually-centred staff development.

2. To engage academic staff in dialogue during a period of significant change

3. To engage the professoriate in the leadership of the University by encouraging them to share their skills, expertise and experience

The Programme was 'the largest staff development initiative of its kind in the sector' (D4)and it was the first time that coaching and mentoring had been formally used on such

a scale by the University for an Organisational Development initiative affecting academic staff. The Programme achieved external recognition through a Regional Award under the National Training Award (NTA) Scheme in 2008 and the Staff Development Impact Award 2011 from the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) (D5/D6).

The programme had five components:

1. Personal and professional development planning with an external career coach

2. Mentoring to support the individual through and beyond the programme. Members of the professoriate and other senior academic staff with established academic portfolios were invited by the Vice Chancellor to act as mentors

3. Action learning provided opportunities for collaborative learning and reflection on personal and organisational challenges as well as opportunities to network across the institution

4. Workshops and master classes facilitated by members of the professoriate and other senior academic staff. Thirty five events took place each year, based on six key competences: grants and bids; publications; conferences and networking; balanced workloads; research team leadership; and research-informed teaching

5. A finale poster event gave staff the opportunity to showcase their research and enterprise interests and experiences on the programme

The success of the first cohort of the Programme in 2006/7 meant that a second cohort followed in 2007/8 and a sequel Enhancing Research, Enterprise and Professional Practice (EREPP) Programme for 'graduates' of the RREP Programmes followed in 2008-2010, which offered participants further opportunities to work with a mentor and an external career coach.

Thus SU provided an opportunity to explore how a university was supporting its academic staff in responding to the complex political agenda. The new strategy for SU made new demands on academic staff and in so doing changed the existing 'way of being' for individual academic staff in the institution. As SU had already put in place coaching and mentoring support in response to the new strategy, it provided an interesting context in which to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy.

A single career coaching session was offered by an independent, external career coach at the start of the RREP Programme in order that staff could consider the development of their future careers in the context of the University's strategic plans.   An expected outcome of the coaching was a Personal and Professional Development Plan (PPDP) that identified a research or enterprise output or goal for the Programme, along with any support that was required. The coaches were external consultants with experience of working in HE who worked for the institution at key stages along the four-year journey of the Programmes, including returning to SU to work with academic staff for up to three further coaching sessions each on the sequel EREPP Programme.

An outline of the Programmes and timings can be seen in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Releasing Research-Enterprise Potential Programme (RREP) Cohort 1 Academic Year 2006/7 Cohort 2 Academic Year 2007/8	Month1	Month2	Month3	Month4	Month5	Month6	Month7	Month8	Month9
Launch event: members and sponsors	▓								
Coaching workshop	▓								
Coaching Sessions and Preparation of PPDP		▓							
Mentor-matching		▓	▓						
Establish and maintain mentoring relationships				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Action Learning Sets				▓	▓	▓	▓		
Workshops, seminars and events				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Finale Event									▓
Feedback and evaluation									▓

Table 1.1 Releasing Research and Enterprise Potential Programme Timetable

Enhancing Research, Enterprise and Professional Practice Programme (EREPP) Sequel Programme February 2009 to March 2010	Feb09	Mar09	Apri09	May09	June09	July09	Aug09	Sept09	Oct09	Nov09	Dec09	Jan10	Feb10	Mar10
Launch event: members and sponsors	▓													
Mentoring opportunities	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Coaching sessions			▓	▓	▓	▓								
Summer School workshops and master-classes				▓										
EREPP Blog					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Winter School workshops and master-classes												▓	▓	
Action Learning Surgeries											▓	▓	▓	
Feedback and evaluation														▓

Table 1.2 Enhancing Research and Enterprise Potential Programme Timetable

All staff were given the opportunity to work with an internal mentor. Mentors had been selected from members of the professoriate and other senior academic staff who had been identified as making an excellent contribution in a number of areas of academic practice. Academics could identify their own mentor, or via 'speed mentoring' events set up as part of the RREP Programme. In a small number of cases a third party set upa matching/chemistry meeting between an academic and a prospective mentor.

This distinction between the purpose of coaching and mentoring at SU and the ways in which it was offered at different points in the programmes by different people meant that participants were able to separate their experiences of coaching from their experiences of mentoring; this provided the opportunity to collect and analyse data separately for the two interventions.

1.2   ALIGNMENT AND COACHING AND MENTORING

The concept of alignment has been described by BusinessDictionary.com (2010) as the:

> 'Linking of organisationalgoals with the employees' personal goals. Requires common understanding of purposes and goals of the organisation, and consistency between every objective and plan right down to the incentiveoffers.'

Lazar and Bergquist (2003) have discussed the benefit of 'alignment coaching' as a means to align personal and corporate values. The usefulness of coaching and mentoring as tools to support alignment in organisations has been recognised by Clutterbuck and Megginson (2007:6) where they suggest that they provide a means to bring together the agendas of individual and organisation:

> 'The process of strategic alignment ultimately leads to the alignment of individual and organisational ambitions and drives to succeed. Coaching and mentoring are two of the most powerful ways of helping people undertake the inner dialogue that brings these potentially conflicting dynamics together.'

Notwithstanding the suggestions for the use of coaching and mentoring in aligning individuals and organisations, there is no existing published research that specifically explores the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of individual and organisation. One of the reasons why there is a dearth of such research could be related to the lack of clarity around the definitions of coaching and mentoring, which could make it difficult to identify the role that they may have in supporting alignment within

organisations.Much attention has been given to the definitions of coaching and mentoring in the theoretical literature. Sometimes the terms are used together, almost implying 'interchange-ability' and sometimes they are separated in the debates on definitions. In the late 1990's Parsloe and Wray (1999:1) suggested that an 'intellectual revolution' was taking place as coaching and mentoring were moving from a marginal to mainstream activity in organisations and, whilst there was confusion over the definitions and language of the terms, their suggestion was that by the end of the next decade the definitions would be clearer and described simply as 'the way we do things round here'. One decade later and the distinctions between coaching and mentoring are still not clearly articulated, although the activities continue to grow apace within and without organisational contexts.Clutterbuck (2004) discusses the confusion, which has increased as the behavioural repertoire of each activity has developed over the last two decades, recognising that some of the existing definitions can be valid within specific contexts and can differ even between continents. It has been suggested that a mentor or coach may even shift between roles in response to the length of the relationship and the needs of the individual (Zeus & Skiffington,2005).Although there are claims that it is difficult to distinguish between coaching and mentoring and thus the definitions and boundaries are often blurred, more recently there has been recognition that they are difficult to define and distinguish from each other as their purposes are the same (Bachkirova et al,2010). Some have discouraged the attempt to define them, particularly as, in doing so, practitioners often wrestle to claim the facilitative end of the spectrum and place the other at the directive end, which undermines the credibility of both coaching and mentoring (Clutterbuck & Megginson,2007).

Another reason why there is a lack of research into alignment and coaching and mentoring in organisations could relate to the tensions between the organisational and individual agendas. When coaching and mentoring take place within an organisational context there are, potentially, competing agendas at stake – those of the organisation and those of the individual. Parsloe and Wray (1999:xiii) suggest that the purpose of both coaching and mentoring is 'helping people to become the person they want to be'. However, Garvey et al (2009) suggest that where an external coach or mentor is hired by an organisation it places a constraint on the coaching or mentoring helping relationship because the organisation remains the stakeholder of what takes place. Whilst the definitions of coaching and mentoring remain blurred and the tendency is to use the terms interchangeably, recent decades have seen a marked increase in theories and research about coaching (Cox et al,2010) and mentoring (Allen et al,2010) and there is a significant body of literature that separately describes coaching and mentoring in organisations, with

suggestions that coaching can help to engage the individual psyche as well as achieve results within organisational contexts, and mentoring can support employees in their role in organisations.

There have been pragmatic attempts to resolve the tension on definitions of coaching and mentoring. For example,Megginson and Clutterbuck (2006:4-5) provide an alternative to defining coaching and mentoring by suggesting that the most important issue is to establish clarity between the two parties involved in the developmental relationship, viewing 'coaching, mentoring and other developmental functions as occupying relatively flexible areas of developmental space'.SU had previously taken this pragmatic approach, with the terms often used interchangeably for dyadic work. However, it was deemed necessary to clearly articulate the difference when using the interventions as part of an organisational development programme. For the RREP and EREPP Programmes, coaching was set up for the following reasons (D7):

> 'To explore their own personal and professional development plans and goals and outputs relating to the RREP Programme.'

> 'EREPP participants[have]the opportunity to work with a coach on issues such as career development, balancing time constraints and overcoming blocks and barriers.'

One of the coaches described the coaching process on the EREPP Programme website as (D8):

> 'Most of my coaching clients are looking to grow beyond their current "comfort zone" and do something new'.

The Guidelines on Staff Mentoringsay (D9):

> 'Mentoring is intended to be a process whereby a more experienced member of staff undertakes to help a member of staff develop in their role over a period of time.'

> 'The purpose of mentoring is to help staff to settle into their new roles or responsibilities as effectively and efficiently as possible by providing them with a

mentor who can offer support, encouragement, information and entry into a wide network of contacts within and beyond the University.'

Thus the underpinning distinctions between coaching and mentoring at SU were clearly described to participants on the RREP and EREPP Programmes andare similar to those by Grant (2001:6-7) who compares coaching and mentoring as follows:

'Coaching is a process in which the coach facilitates learning in the coachee. The coach need not be an expert in the coachee's area of learning. The coach need only have expertise in facilitating learning and performance enhancement.'

'Mentoring traditionally involves an individual with expert knowledge in a specific domain passing on this knowledge to an individual with less expertise.'

This thesis deals not only with the potentially conflicting dynamics of individual and organisation, but also with the potentially competing agendas of strategic alignment and coaching and mentoring (Garvey et al,2009). Organisational alignment appears to imply a more managerial discourse with a focus on structural elements such as aligning processes and procedures, paying only lip service to the alignment of people (Kaplan and Norton,2006). This means that alignment can be perceived as a top-down driver, rather than being something that is of benefit to the individual. Conversely, coaching and mentoring approaches are more likely to focus time and attention on supporting and developing individuals to reach their full potential, rather than the primary purpose being to develop organisational potential. There could therefore be risks in identifying coaching and mentoring as 'tools' for organisational alignment. If they were to become part of a structured approach to strategic alignment, then there is a very real possibility that the individually focused processes and relationships that provide foundations for effective individual coaching and mentoring could be in jeopardy. There could be a risk that they would lose some of the 'genuine and authentic intent' essential for coaching and mentoring in an organisational context, because such development is only achievable in a 'wholesome and honest environment' (Garvey,2010:351). Thus, whilst this study aimed to identify the ways in which coaching and mentoring could support the alignment of individual and organisation, it was done so with the intention of finding something that was good for both individual and organisation, rather than something that would benefit one over the other.

1.3   THE RESEARCHER PERSPECTIVE

There were several reasons why I chose to explore this topic. As someone who has worked in Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) for the majority of my career, I was familiar with the theoretical arguments and practical challenges of satisfying both the needs of the organisation and the needs of individual employees. I have been working in HE for fourteen years and have seen how the changing context for HE has in turn been changing the nature of academic staff roles. In addition an increasing focus on the 'bottom line' within organisations, and HE, runs the risk of focusing attention away from the needs of the employeeand I was interested in finding out more about how a balance could be struck between the needs of the organisation and the needs of individual employees.

Previous studies have identified the need for more research into how coaching supports personal and performance outcomes;however, there is a need for more evidence-based research into coaching in HE. In addition it has been highlighted that there is a need for more qualitative research into mentoring in organisations, including HE, in order to develop more in-depth understanding of the role that mentoring has within organisational contexts.

I chose to carry out a case study at SUas it was already four years into a seven-year change programme. A new Strategic Plan had placed different expectations on a large group of its academic staff and coaching and mentoring had been provided to support them in developing into their new roles. As Head of Organisational and Staff Development (HOSD), I knew from anecdotal evidence and observation that coaching and mentoring were providing some support.

This research study was inspired by my interest to explore if some of the tensions of integrating the individual in the organisation could be resolved through coaching and mentoring, and HE provided a challenging environment in which to explore this. Although discussion exists within the literature, there is no published research that explores the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of individual and organisation. Furthermore, as coaching and mentoring had already been provided as part of its change programme, SU provided an ideal place to undertake fieldwork to explorethe role of

coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy.

As an employee of the organisation in which the research would be undertaken, and a key stakeholder of the RREP and EREPP Staff Development Programmes, I was very aware of the challenges and dilemmas facing me as an insider-researcher. BERA (2009) and Bridges (2001) highlight a continuum from insider-researcher to outsider-researcher and it could be argued that I may be described as both. I hold a unique position in the organisation because my role as HOSD is balanced between supporting the implementation of the institutional strategy, and being grounded in an appreciation of what it is like in the 'real world' for staff working in the institution.   Whilst the organisation'sleaders have certain expectations of academic staff, academic staff may have their own motivations for working at the institution. My role is to provide a business-focused and individually-centred approach to developing staff and involves providing appropriate staff development solutions to support leaders, academics and professional and support staff in achieving the institution's strategy. As an employee of the institution I couldbe described as an 'insider-researcher', a role which carries risks as the research could be influenced by both my history and anticipated future with the organisation (Humphrey, 1995). However, as a member of the University's 'professional' staff, and therefore on a contract different to those who are the subject of the study (leaders and academics), I could be perceived as an 'outsider-researcher'. The risks associated with being an outsider-researcher include the potential for creating damaging frameworks of understanding as the outsider 're-presents' the views of the participants and this can potentially lead to a feeling of disempowerment for the participants in the research (Bridges,2001).   My methodological choices were therefore very much grounded in awareness of the risks associated with my roles as both researcher in and employee of the case organisation and an outsider to the participant groups.

In order to counter the charges of bias levelled at qualitative research, researchers are often encouraged to reflect on and articulate issues of reflexivity to help the research audience to understand the researcher and their work (Wellington et al,2005). Indeed interpretive researchers need to acknowledge the subjectivity that they bring to the research process and to show that they have taken steps to address the implications of their subjectivity (Weber,2004).I found during the study that I owned three roles, that of employee, researcher and sense-maker.   I developed insights during the research, from the research and from personal experience prior to or outside the research.   Glaser and Strauss (1967) say that generally researchers suppress these insights, or give them the

mere status of opinion, but suggest that these insights should be cultivated and looked at as springboards to systematic theorising. I found that the challenge for me as a researcher undertaking research within my own organisation was that it was not always easy to play out the three roles in isolation. Indeed the intersections between the three roles provided me with both challenges and opportunities and, ultimately, a framework for considering the credibility of the study. The ways in which I dealt with the challenges, risks and issues of credibility of the research will be explored in Chapter 3.

1.4   RESEARCH DESIGN

The research aimed to achieve a greater understanding of individual perspectives within an organisational context and therefore my philosophical position was to approach the study from the epistemological perspective of constructivism. I recognised that working at SU and coaching and mentoring would have been a personal experience for each individual leader, coach, mentor and academic; therefore I utilised a qualitative interpretive approach for collecting the data in order that those involved in thestudy would be able to tell me about their personal experiences from their individual perspectives, thereby allowing them to create their own meanings from their own experiences (Gray, 2004).

Case study was chosen as the methodological approach as it provides an opportunity to explore the situational uniqueness of a case (Stake,2006) and can help to build knowledge of the individual and the organisation as well as an understanding of any complex social phenomena (Yin,2003).   The range of approaches that can be used in case study fit with the interpretive approach (Lee et al, 2007) and allow for sensitivity to place and situation in the research (Cresswell and Miller,2000).   As the organisation was already well into its change programme, a case study approach provided opportunities for 'capturing the emergent and changing properties of life' in the organisation (Hartley,2004, p. 323-333), as well as helping to make links with micro-processes, such as coaching and mentoring, and macro-structures, such as the impact on the organisation (Willig,2010).

Thestudy uses documentary data, semi-structured interviews with senior leaders, coaches, mentors and academic staff, and a questionnaire with academic staff to identify, at a given point in the University's change programme, how the alignment of academic

staff and organisational strategy is perceived and their experiences of coaching and mentoring. Three sets of primary data and two sets of secondary data were collected for the qualitative case study as follows:

(i) Secondary data was collected fromGovernment and Higher Education policy papersto identifytopical issues facing HE that would set the wider context for the case study

(ii) Secondary data was also collected from institutional documentsat SU and these were explored for issuesrelating to the organisational strategy, the change agenda, and the support that was being provided for academic staff

(iii) Primary research was undertaken with 14 senior leaders. Semi-structured interviews were designed to explore their perspectives on alignment, the expectations of academic staffand the support provided for academic staff

(iv) Primary research was undertaken with 36 academic staff who had received coaching and mentoring on the RREP and EREPP Programmes. A questionnaire was used in order to find out about their perceptions of alignment and their experiences of coaching and mentoring

(v) Primary research was undertaken with coaches, mentors and academics involved in the RREP and EREPP Programmes to explore their perceptions of alignment and experiences of coaching and mentoring. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with two external coaches, 11internal mentors (including five in a group interview) and six academic staff who had received coaching and mentoring

The data was analysed using a grounded theory approach to coding and conceptualising the data. Data is presented in quotes and tables in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.5   A GUIDE TO THE CHAPTERS IN THE THESIS

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to explore, through the literature, the debates that have informed the study. The review of the literature aims to present perspectives on alignment, coaching and mentoring within HE and, because the concepts are not exclusive to HE, the literature in other organisational contexts is also explored. In order to understand more about alignment, coaching and mentoring, the review explores the published literature in relation to four questions:

（i）   What does the literature say about alignment of staff within organisational contexts?

（ii）   What does the literature say about academic staff and the concept of alignment?

（iii） How are coaching and mentoring used within Higher Education?

（iv）   How are coaching and mentoring used within organisations?

In response to each question texts are introduced and the basic claims are compared, followed by a discussion of how the studies answer the four questions. Finally, conclusions are drawn about the extent to which the reviewed texts provide answers to the questions to inform the study, as well as seeking to identify the gaps in existing knowledge to be explored; a conceptual framework is then presented that forms the basis of the study.

A key focus of Chapter 3 is the way in which I dealt with the challenges, risks and issues relating to the credibility of the research. The chapter commences by acknowledging the challenges and risks associated with being an employee in the organisation where I was undertaking the research and the case is made for the chosen qualitative, interpretive approach utilising case study. The choice of participants is explained, including a reflection on the ways in which I dealt with the challenges associated with my prior knowledge of the participants, as well as the ethical dilemmas that this presented. An outline of the methods used in the study is given, together with a description of the types of data generated and a justification for the method of analysis. The ways in which my prior knowledge was woven into the sense-making stages of the data analysis are explained, together with details of the ways in which I checked my findings with others as another stage in establishing the credibility of the research.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from documentation and the four participant groups: leaders, coaches, mentors and academics in relation to their perceptions of alignment and explains the place of coaching and mentoring at SU.   The chapter sets out the findings in relation to the following themes:

（i）   The vision and direction for SU

（ii）   The support for academic staff to implement the vision

（iii） The expectations placed on academic staff

(iv)   The challenges for academic staff; these themes form the structure of the four sections in this chapter.

Chapter 5 presents the data on the experiences of coaching and mentoring from the perspectives of the coaches, mentors and academics. The chapter sets out the findings in relation to the following themes:

(i) The support provided by coaching and mentoring
(ii) The transitional space provided by coaching and mentoring
(iii) Transformation over time

In conclusion Chapter 6sets out a summary of what has been learned. It outlines the contribution that the study has made to theoretical, practical and methodologicalknowledge and identifies areas for further research, as well as outlining the limitations of the study. This chapter will emphasise any important and original points of the study that have emerged, either from the methodology or from the data. The findings will be linked to the wider political, organisational or theoretical context and will indicate how the study has provided an answer to the research question.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review existing literature and research studies and identify any gaps relevant to this study. There were six main areas of focus for the review and these form the structure of this chapter:

- Alignment of staff in organisations
- Alignment of academic staff in Higher Education
- Coaching in Higher Education
- Coaching in organisations
- Mentoring in Higher Education
- Mentoring in organisations

The scope of the review included relevant literature from management, organisational change, psychology, coaching, mentoring, Higher Education, and education. The review included a search of the scholarly databases and journals using broad terms such as alignment, coaching, mentoring, academic career and academic identity. Examples of the databases and journals that were useful for this study are highlighted in Table 2.1. Specialist websites were used to access conference papers and reports and library catalogues were also accessed. Due to the fast pace of change in HE and more recent developments in coaching and mentoring research, searches for these areas were usually focused on the last twelve years. However, due to the long history of the challenges in satisfying the needs of the individual and the organisation in business contexts, the review of the literature on organisations also covers literature from the last century.

	Coaching and Mentoring	Higher Education and Education	Organisations and Psychology
Databases	Emerald;Psyc Articles; Psyc Info;Academic Search Complete;British Education Index; Education Research Complete	HEER;CHERI;SRHE; ERIC;Psyc Articles; Academic Search Complete;Scopus; Web of Knowledge	Psyc Lit;Psyc Articles
Journals	Mentoring and Tutoring; International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring; International Coaching Psychology Review; Coaching:An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice	Studies in Higher Education;Higher Education Research and Development;Higher Education Management and Policy	Journal of Managerial Psychology;Journal of Applied Psychology; Journal of Individual Psychology; Administrative Science Quarterly;Career Development International

Table 2.1 Database and Journal Sources

2.1 ALIGNMENT OF STAFF IN ORGANISATIONS

Alignment is a term that has mostly been used within organisations during the last decade, but was not a term that was widely used to describe the relationship between organisations and their people during the last century. Thus this review looks first at the historical context for alignment of staff in organisations as set out in the theoretical literature from the last century and explores some of the widely held views on individuals and organisations which are, perhaps, antecedents of the current use of the term 'alignment' in organisations. The review then moves to consider views on alignment from the 21st century, along with the issues that organisations and individuals continue to wrestle with.

Taylor's (1911) scientific approach to managing organisations suggested the need to proactively manage employees to ensure they were productive, implying that they were not sufficiently motivated to achieve the most productive outcome for the organisation. In the 1960s McGregor (2006) suggested two types of employees: those who needed to be managed and threatened with punishment to achieve organisational objectives, and those who would apply self-control and self-direction to achieve objectives. Indeed the Adlerian view was that equilibrium internally and alignment externally was crucial to the health and survival of individuals and necessary for the functioning of society (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, 1967), which suggests that if this could be achieved then individuals and organisations could both benefit.

In the 1960's, Argyris (1964:3) described the integration of the individual and the organisation as the need for them 'both to give a little to profit from each other'. Whereas a conceptual scheme representing the individual, the organisation and the career suggested that depending on the stage an individual is at in their career, the power base can shift from the organisation's acculturisation and socialisation of individuals to the individual having power to influence or innovate within the organisation (Schein, 1988).

Over the following decade interest grew in the social and psychological aspects and processes of organisational life (Cooper and Miller, 1977), including strategies for 'humanising' the organisational environment to meet individual and group needs. Van Maanen (1977) suggested that organisations needed to ease and improve the handling of

career transitions as staff move through sociological and psychological challenges in which they must revise their self-image and move towards an attachment to their new work role.

The 1980's saw Deming's (2010;2000) drive to improve quality and production that led to the foundations of Total Quality Management. Whilst its ability to improve production and facilitate employee empowerment has been accepted, it has been criticised for its focus on increased control and performance requirements which are at the expense of the employee, and has been accused of being influenced by the earlier philosophy of Taylorism (Boje and Winsor,1993).

In the 1990's suggestions were made on how supporting individuals within organisations could reap rewards for the organisation. Handy (1991) suggested that all individuals have the capacity for enthusiasm and effort, but are insecure at heart and need to be positively stroked; he suggested that if organisations created opportunities where employees could be involved in the process of reflecting, testing and solving their own problems, the organisation could expect more from them. Senge et al (1996) also encouraged reflection to achieve personal mastery, to challenge mental models and to find ways to build shared vision. Argyris (1999) discussed ways to teach people how to learn by encouraging critical reflection on their own cognitive reasoning and behaviour and the ways in which they could contribute to organisational problems.

Nearly a century after Taylor's original proposals, Gilley (2001) suggested that leaders need to 'get out of the way' of their employees, as organisational systems can inhibit an organisation's effectiveness by discouraging employee creativity and innovation in solving organisational problems. Gilley advocates the use of HR development practices such as career development, coaching and mentoring schemes to support individuals, in order that the organisation can best benefit from their contribution.

The last decade has seen the individual and organisational challenge being described as 'alignment'. Kaplan and Norton's (2006) work on strategic alignment is focused on putting proactive methodologies in place which recognise the needs of the organisation and the individual by linking organisational strategy, processes and people; they particularly explore the need to align support functions to the strategic vision, including Human

Resources (HR). Holbeche (2009) discusses the need to align Human Resources with business strategy by developing functions that are both proactive and responsive to business needs and underpinned by humanistic values,in order to create developmental and motivating environments and career processes that build organisational capacity and capability.

A case study of the manufacturing sector in New Zealand explored how HR workplace development projects offered both strengths and limitations for alignment of people and organisation and highlighted six themes of alignment: cognitive, affective, behavioural, commercial, structural, and societal (Short,2008).   However, Short's work, whilst acknowledging that alignment can provide a framework for an alternative strategy on HR management, alsowarns against the dangers of structuring HR alignment in such a way that it is seen as a management ideology, as it brings it too close to compliance and control that might undermine other HR initiatives and cause cognitive dissonance, particularly with development aimed at promoting flexibility, innovation and employee ownership. A study by Chan (2002) also indicated that informal organisational structures played a more important role than formal structures designed for alignment (Chan,2002).

Some studies have shown that alignment is a rational activity, but insufficient without employee engagement (McCleod and Brady,2008).   The concept of employee engagement is challenging. Agency Theory assumes that employers and employees have different goals and act in a self-interested manner (Johnson and Droege,2004; Eisenhardt,1989) whilst Social Exchange Theory suggests that the resource only flows between organisation and individual if there is a contingent return (Emerson, 1976). Little empirical work has been done on the reciprocity between organisation and employee, although a series of recent studies has emphasised the importance of the alignment between personal and organisation goals and the need for commitment, trust and co-operation in the employer-employee relationship; these are outcomes that cannot be tackled through employment contracts and so transactions rely on more implicit interactions (Sanders and Schyns,2006).   However, Eisenberger et al's (2001) study with over 400 staff looked at the role of reciprocation in the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee affective commitment to the organisation and job performance and identified that there was a positive relationship between them.

Employee engagement is a term that has not been clearly defined in the literature, but definitions that do exist include the employee being psychologically and physically present, emotional and intellectual commitment, discretionary effort, and a passion for work (Kular et al,2008). A study of 35,000 employees in American companies indicated that in order for staff to be engaged they needed to be able and willing to contribute to the organisation's success, motivated and prepared to give discretionary effort in terms of brainpower and energy, and to have opportunities for development and advancement; the use of highly engaged role models is recommended to help build the environment and work experience that engages more employees (Towers Perrin,2003).

This summary of ideas over the last 100 years shows that the views on the need for the integration of the individual within the organisation remains a topical issue. Kyriakidu and Ozbilgin (2004) have argued that instead of considering the organisation and individual as separate entities, more attention should be paid to the interdependencies of the individual within the organisational environment and the relational processes that occur at the intersection of people and organisations. Montuori and Purser (2001) note that whilst the 1960's saw a growth in interest in humanistically orientated values as the core of organisational development and practice, the changing context of the socio-economic environment of recent decades has diluted the core humanistic values in organisations as they have become focused on improving the 'bottom line'.Whilst culture change in organisations is inevitable, Schein (2004) makes a case for reducing learning anxiety for individuals during culture change by increasing their psychological safety through creating a compelling vision and then providing support for employees to adapt and learn within the new culture. Whitmore (2004) suggests that the human psycho-spiritual evolution that helps to understand human drives and meaning has only just begun and is not visible through the narrow spectacle of business. However, he proposes that if business leaders understood the power of people to perform, be creative and use their initiative they would build their business structures, ethics, products and management style on a different ethos, including challenging employees with their inner obstacles to help overcome fear or lack of self-belief.

Literature (Kleiner,1996; Schein,1988; Taylor,1911;) on organisational alignment over the last century seems to focus on the issue of whether the power lies with the organisation or with the individual. More recent literature (Wei and Lau, 2010; Whitmore,2004; Montuori and Purser,2001; Gilley,2001;) appears to focus on the need to 'humanise' the work environment in ways that are more likely to benefit both individual and organisation.

Thus more recently the concept of employee engagement has helped to identify the ways in which employees are able to participate in and contribute more to the development of the organisation, together with ideas on the ways in which participation can happen at an individual level. This perhaps provides more of a balanced lens through which to consider individual and organisational alignment, rather than the managerial discourse that is evident in the literature that focuses on the strategic alignment of structures and processes (Burnes and Cooke,2012; Kular et al,2008; Towers Perrin,2003).

Thus the literature on alignment of individuals within organisational contexts indicates that satisfying the needs of both the individual and organisation is a challenge that has been the subject of a long debate. The literature is clear that organisations need to align their processes and their people to organisational strategy. However, there is more evidence on how organisations have aligned their structures and their processes and less empirical evidence on the approaches that have been used in organisations to successfully support the alignment of individual members of staff.

2.2   ALIGNMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the late 1990s Gordon (1999) suggested that 'alignment' may become the next 'buzzword' in HE and, although this has not transpired, a review of the literature has highlighted some studies where the issue of alignment has been considered. In order to understand the concept of alignment within an HE context, the review explored the published literature in the UK and beyond in relation to the question: 'How is alignment conceptualised in HE?'

The review commences with a definition of academics and is followed by an account of how changes in HE have impacted on academic staff.   The need for alignment in universities is highlighted, along with some examples of the ways in which alignment is currently being managed; attention is drawn to where there is a need for more work to be done.

The work of an academic has been described as scholarship by Boyer (1990),who suggested that the work of an academic was to undertake scholarship through discovery,

integration, application and teaching. This was endorsed by a debate between academics who agreed that HE teaching could be improved by moving from a focus on teaching skills to one that acknowledges that passion for knowledge is the heart of learning and teaching (Rowland et al,1998).   More recently the benefits of academic work have been described as engaging in discovery through research which helps academics to develop themselves personally and establish themselves in their field (Akerlind,2008), with the research-education nexus bringing benefits to students who both learn from research and have the opportunity to be engaged in research (Visser-Wijnveena,2010). Engaging in enterprise activities enables academics to share knowledge between science and industry. It has also been shown to be important for academics to engage with their disciplinary body (James,2005), disciplinary networks (Healey,2000) and to engage in community-based scholarship (Calleson et al,2005).   A study of HE institutions in England and Ireland indicated that academic staff are attracted to working in the HE sector for intellectual challenge, love of their subject area, research opportunities and the benefits of working with a wide academic portfolio (LFHE,2010), which helps to achieve the aim of academics to bring benefit to society (Quigley,2011).

However, changes in HE policy and practice have served to challenge academic staff and there appear to be two viewpoints on the changing environment for HE; the first focuses on the ways in which the changes threaten the existing way of being for academic staff, and the second focuses on the ways in which the changes are being tolerated as they also present opportunities for academic career development, including for those who are new to academia. The results of an international study on the academic profession identified that in most developing countries HE was facing difficult changes that would impact on academics(Enders,1999). Soon afterwards Watty (2002;2001) argued that changes in an Australian University were politically motivated with senior leaders demonstrating compliance to public sector management, and its focus on targets, quality systems and accountability left little time to focus on core academic activities. Indeed a later study of UK universities also indicated that they were increasingly being managed as businesses (Deem et al,2008). Such changes led Doring (2002) to suggest that academics were at risk of becoming the victims, rather than the agents,of change.

However, nearly a decade after Enders' work, a summary of the UK part of an international study indicated that whilst the drivers of change challenged the traditional notions, customs and practices of academics, they also created new opportunities for interdisciplinary work, engagement with industry, research, teaching and knowledge exchange, as well as opportunities to develop careers in leadership and management

(Locke & Bennion,2007). Kolsaker's (2008) study of English universities suggested a willingness to tolerate managerial modes of governance, providing autonomous niches could be protected, and argues that the literature on change in HE is overly negative and that managerialism and being a professional academic are more likely interdependencies than dichotomous concepts. Other studies in UK universities (Marshall,2007) indicate that, whilst new models of governance might challenge traditional ways of being for academic staff, there was some value in more structured approaches. Taylor (2006) supports this view suggesting that such approaches can work provided they are handled sensitively and academics are able to hold onto standards and values that they believe in.

The literature draws attention to two groups of academic staff who are particularly challenged by the changes in HE. The first are representative of a more traditional view of academics. For example, two long-term empirical investigations across academic disciplines in the 1980's and 1990's suggested that their allegiance was to their own disciplines (Becher,1994); the study was later referred to by Healey (2000) who suggested that their sense of themselves at an institution was secondary. Updates to this work and more recent research suggest that, whilst academic identity is still very embedded in their discipline and the need for autonomy and freedom is still strong, academics now work in environments where interaction across disciplinary boundaries is more necessary (Becher & Trowler,2001; Henkel & Vabø,2000; Henkel,2005), for example to attract funding (British Library,2010; BIS,2009).

The second group of academics is representative of a new type of professional being attracted to work in academia. A study by Locke and Bennion (2007) indicated an increase in the number of staff entering academia who had already pursued a career in another profession; bringing benefits to universities including their experience of professional engagement with business, which are also highlighted in a number of other studies (Boyd,2010; La Rocco and Bruns,2006). Studies have shown a number of challenges for academic staff making the transition from industry (Bandow et al,2007) and new academics often struggle with developing their academic identities (McAlpine and Amundson,2009), needing to challenge themselves in terms of their own personal development and self actualisation. For those entering from other professions it is sometimes easier to hold on to their prior identity than it is to embrace their new one (Boyd,2010). Thus universities are facing a number of challenges in responding to external demands, but also in managing an academic staff base that has different experiences, with academics from more traditional backgrounds needing to respond to a new culture of organisational management and those joining from other professions

needing to adapt to a new organisation, but also needing to develop their academic identities and careers.

A study into the changing academic profession in the UK and 20 other countries (Locke and Bennion,2007) indicated that it is difficult to implement strategic decisions at institutional level without the co-operation of a significant proportion of academic staff. It has been suggested that in universities there can sometimes be a disconnect between organisational and individual equilibrium and that university leaders need to address both the structural and cultural inhibitors of change by integrating systems, processes and reward structures to ensure that there is both individual and collective will to sustain change (Billot,2011; Middlehurst,2004). It appears in the literature that in institutions that have taken steps to align strategy and people that the two main approaches that have been used are (i) to articulate measures that can be used to communicate what staff need to do to align (Papenhausen and Einstein,2006; Secundo et al,2010), and (ii) to support staff to align.

A study at Warwick University (Tapninos et al,2005) showed how performance measures could be used to communicate institutional direction to facilitate the alignment of staff, although there were concerns that the measures were more focused on financial performance than the benefit of the university on society. An automated version of the Balanced Scorecard was used by a Malaysian University to achieve top-down alignment of organisational objectives by planning the alignment of individual goals for academics, to measure their performance and to take corrective action where necessary (Leen Yu et al, 2009). Some universities have also taken steps to align people to their strategies through staff development. Changes in government policies that affected a department at the University of Hong Kong identified the need to align internal capabilities with market competition and prompted the development of a model that aims to build internal capability by establishing learning attitudes and teamwork (Wong,2005). Similarly, at the University of Strathclyde Gordon (1999) reports on the ways in which the institution aimed to translate institutional objectives into action by focusing on ways to align staff. Initiatives included steps to achieve Investors in People recognition, a staff survey, a revised appraisal scheme and staff development provision. In New Zealand, academic staff were required to undertake post-graduate qualifications to support institutional alignment as their teaching-only university was seeking university status (Fielden and Malcolm,2005).

Research in three different universities showed that where effective strategic planning processes exist, it is possible for change to occur in universities, providing that it is accompanied by internal facilitation and staff development (Hurley,2007). A study of early career faculty that involved interviews with 350 individuals and 40 focus groups in America, indicated that staff needed more institutional guidance and support in setting clear expectations with timely and honest feedback. A guide of principles of good practice for supporting early career faculty gave amongst its ten recommendations the need for more feedback, mentoring by senior faculty and career sponsorship in order to effectively support early career faculty (Rice et al,2000).

Notwithstanding these examples,there is a dearth of literature that shows how well individual academics are supported in achieving outcomes prescribed by external imperatives (Billot,2011). A study into the changing academic profession in the UK and 20 other countries (Locke and Bennion,2007) questioned whether existing development opportunities, career and reward structures are adequate to take advantage of the changing opportunities in HE to support academics in their careers; studies have also shown that universities do not always have the structures in place to support academics in making the transition from industry to academia (Bandow et al,2007). An investigation of Human Resources (HR) managers in UK Higher Education indicated that HR managers rated themselves low on overcoming resistance to change and saw no direct association between the measurement of HR activities and indicators of institutional performance (Guest and Clinton,2006). A later study also indicated that there was a disjuncture between national HR policy and the social reality of academics, with a focus on issues such as pay and bargaining, rather than focusing efforts on issues such as career planning and workload accountability issues which interest academics (Strike and Taylor,2009).

By 2009 it was recognised that staff development in the HE sector was strong with evidence of clear links between the alignment of enhancement strategies, HR strategies and the refocusing of academic staff (QAA,2009; 2008). However, it had also been identified that universities are very untheoretical about their own practice and academic staff developers are encouraged to have a deep understanding and connection with academic staff and applied research (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2006). This view was endorsed by HEFCE (2007) who identified that Organisational Developers need to bridge the gap between practitioner and research communities on policy and practice in HE.

2.3   COACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In reviewing the literature on coaching in HE, I sought to answer the following question:

How is coaching used within HE to support both the individual and the institution?

In recent times academic staff have been recruited to HE from a wider variety of backgrounds, such as those who are mid-career professionals recruited to add credibility to professionally based programmes, and this has brought the need for a more flexible and tailored response to academic development, more familiar to those from the professions, and thus development strategies are moving more towards formal coaching and mentoring (Gordon and Whitchurch,2007). Indeed a search of UK university staff development web-sites indicated that a number of UK universities offer coaching to their staff. For example, in June 2011 coaching support was advertised as being available to staff on university staff development websites at Bristol, Newcastle, Bath, Durham and York Universities, and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE,2011) promoted a Leadership Coaching Service. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to source published evidence-based research on coaching in UK universities.

It was necessary therefore to look outside the UK for coaching studies in HE and these were mainly sourced through undertaking a key word search of abstracts on databases specific to coaching and HE from the last ten years and through specific coaching journals. Less than 30 articles or resources on coaching in HE were identified and could be divided broadly into four categories of coaching support: (i) coaching to support research outputs (ii) coaching to support publication (iii) coaching to support the development of teaching practice and (iv) coaching in UK universities. Some limitations in these studies were identified. For example, there may have been the potential for 'dilution' of the interpretation where data was collected from mixed groups; McGrail et al (2006) explored a range of supporting mechanisms in addition to coaching and Visagie and Maritz (2009) conducted their study with both staff and students. In addition, whilst there has been considerable effort in this literature review to separate HE coaching and mentoring literature, in the studies on coaching in HE there was some confusion between the terms coaching and mentoring. For example, Frantz et al (2011) explored 'coaching as a mentoring technique' yet the model of coaching used was based on a 'mentoring

model' and Maddern's(2010) exploratory paper discussed a university's attempt to 'create a coaching culture' by instituting a 'formal mentoring scheme'. However, when considered collectively there were some themes worthy of consideration for this study, most notably: the purpose of the coaching; the results; the benefits and impact on behaviour; and coaching as a staff development intervention; these are now discussed.

There seemed to be two main purposes for coaching in the HE studies: generating outputs and improving practice. Where coaching had been used to support research development, the purpose was clearly focused on research output (Visagie and Maritz, 2009), to support staff in gaining doctorates (Geber,2010), and to support publishing activities (Geber,2010; McGrail et al,2006; Baldwin and Chandler,2002). However, where coaching had been used to support teaching activities, the emphasis was much more to improve or change practice, such as collaborative planning and learning from others (Showers and Joyce, 1996), for collaborative and reflective dialogue to support teaching development (McLeod and Steinert,2009; Scott and Miner,2008), or making a transition from classroom to technology-mediated and online courses (Trevitt,2005).

Where coaching had been focused on outputs, there were clear examples of results for individuals and for the organisation. In one study a calculation of the return on the investment showed potential academic earnings from publications from coaching participants were three times the initial investment in the programme and three participants had been promoted (Geber, 2010). Another study reported that nine participants submitted an article for publication following coaching and half of those participants had an article published the following year(Frantz, 2011). One of the participants in Scott and Miner's (2008) study had won a teaching award and the other had achieved professorial status.

McGrail et al (2006) reported an increase in average publication rates for participants and an increase in the quality of their work. When participants were asked to identify the return on investment in a coaching programme by identifying specific business benefits against a number of key business drivers (such as teaching and overseas income; quality of teaching and learning; Research Assessment Exercise; research and third strand income), they identified that an average annual spend of £50,000 on coaching yielded a return of £3.2 million for the university(Howlett et al,2009).

In addition to outputs, the benefits of coaching appeared to include behaviour change for the individual and the institution. For example, the supportive and encouraging environment provided by coaching helped writing to advance from a high priority and low behaviour activity to become an inner-directed and institutionally-supported activity (Baldwin and Chandler,2002).   In another study where coaching was used to gain knowledge and skills in publishing, there were psychosocial outcomes with academics exchanging ideas and energy, becoming more self critical and open to suggestions, as well as increasing self confidence and teamwork (McGrail et al,2006).   Others reported developing a sense of individual responsibility to undertake writing and to align their self-awareness with their goals and the overall organisational research agenda (Geber,2010).

Those with a coaching relationship practiced new teaching skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more appropriately, and for longer, than those who were not in a coaching relationship (Showers and Joyce,1996). McLeod and Steinert's (2009) results showed that participants had increased their confidence in teaching, been exposed to new ideas and had an improved sense of institutional support and collegiality, appreciating the opportunity to discuss and receive suggestions for improvement. Coaching supported leaders in universities by helping them to understand their own leadership styles,improve relationships with staff and stakeholders, reduce conflict and improve collaboration and teamwork (Howlett et al,2009).

Despite the benefits to individual and organisation in terms of outputs and behaviours, the challenge of integrating coaching as mainstream support for academic staff remains. The benefits of integrating coaching behaviours into staff development sessions and of integrating coaching into initiatives that can achieve organisational change, rather than as a stand-alone activity, were suggested as long ago as 1996 (Showers and Joyce, 1996). Yet fourteen years later, the findings from a study into coaching in HE indicate that staff are still requesting that coaching become a permanent part of the staff development strategy (Maddern,2010). In addition, the need for strong institutional commitment to coaching was highlighted when a 50% dropout on a coaching programme was attributed to absence of supervision of the activity and oversight by the programme directors (McLeod and Steinert,2009). Whilst a nurturing environment has been identified as necessary for generating research output, another study suggested that more research is needed on the effectiveness of coaching and the impact on research output (Visagie and Maritz,2009).

Thus it appears from the literature that coaching in HE is still in the nascent stages of implementation. Although there is some literature that describes the benefits of coaching for both the institution and academics in HE, the literature on the process of coaching is limited and this may impact on the readiness of HE institutions to invest in providing coaching for their staff. The literature on coaching in organisations is more developed however and this will be explored next.

2.4 COACHING IN ORGANISATIONS

In reviewing the literature on coaching in organisations I sought to answer two questions:

'What are the tensions between the organisation, the coach and the individual?'

'How is coaching used within organisations to support both the individual and the organisation?'

The literature relating to coaching in organisations includes both anecdotal practitioner and research-based studies. Coaching has become increasingly accepted as a learning and development strategy capable of enhancing the job performance of individuals within organisations (CIPD,2005). However, although 71% of organisations use coaching as a learning and development tool, efforts to develop coaching capability to support business goals are still in the early stages, with wide variations in practice (CIPD,2008). Nevertheless,the scholarly literature has shown a marked increase in publications since 1996 that relate to workplace and executive coaching and shows that coaching has the potential to contribute to organisational development (Grant and Cavanagh,2007). However, a comprehensive review of the literature indicates that most of the studies are about the characteristics of coaches, coachees and delivery services, rather than outcomes research exploring coaching as a methodology for creating individual or organisational change (Grant et al,2010).

The concept of coaching and alignment within organisations does not appear explicitly in the scholarly literature, although three anecdotal papers point to the usefulness of aligning

individual and business goals through the management of a three cornered relationship between coachee, organisation and coach (Sherman and Freas,2004); alignment coaching to empower people to develop their own employability whilst ensuring that business goals are achieved (Bagshaw,1998); and as a means of aligning personal and corporate values (Lazar and Bergquist,2003).

At an individual level coaching can be a tool for unlocking a person's potential (Whitmore, 2003) and is a way of developing long-term performance, self-correction and self-generation (Flaherty,1999). Many coaches are focused on individual development in a confidential, client-centred approach and there can be a tension when coaches are commissioned to work in organisational contexts (Hawkins,2008), as there is a risk that the organisational stakeholder could put constraints upon the autonomy of the helper and the helped (Garvey et al,2009). This view is echoed by Nielson and Norreklit (2009) whose analysis of selected literature on management coaching takes a critical stance on organisational coaching and highlights potential tensions between management control models and the values and thoughts of individuals in organisations. Indeed Gelona's (2008) survey with 49 executives and managers explored what motivates coaching clients and demonstrated that they were more motivated by intrinsic motivators such as personal satisfaction, a challenging situation that appeals to them, and pursuit of goals connected with their own values, than by external motivators.

Notwithstanding the potential tensions between the organisation, the individual and the coaching, coaching has been described as a way to *'bring humanity back into the workplace'* (Downey,2003:x-xxi) and as a style of working that meets both a commitment to grow the organisation and a commitment to grow the staff by helping the individual to understand their own objectives, goals and purpose and to integrate them with the organisation's goals (Watt,2004).

The importance of working with the personal and psychological as well as practical has been stressed by Lee (2003), who suggests that it is possible to work with psychological issues whilst alsofocusing on goal improvement. The overlap between the personal and the professional is also highlighted by Cavanagh and Grant (2009) whose exploration of case studies and research in the peer reviewed empirical literature indicates that in order for executive coaching to be truly effective, coaches need to address the personal and professional in clients' lives, as individual psychological processes impact on all areas of

life. An analysis of research undertaken with 111 participants by the Institute of Executive Coaching showed that coaching is not just about producing improved results, peak performance and behaviour change, it is a 'cultural phenomenon in that it is capturing the psyche in a significant way, filling a deeply felt need in the unconscious lives of people in organisations' (Armstrong,2007). In such a supportive climate coaching benefits the individual and the organisation as it aids faster learning (Redshaw,2000) and the ability to adapt to change more effectively (Stober,2008).   These views are echoed by a mixed methods study with 24 managers at a borough council in the UK where coaching was perceived to enhance well-being and reduce stress, which impacted on individual performance and behaviour, which in turn benefited their teams and clients, although tangible returns for the organisation were not identified explicitly.

Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006) suggest that the outputs of coaching can have both 'tangible' and measurable outputs such as productivity and sales figures, and 'intangible' elements such as improved leadership or relationships. As it is not so easy to measure the impact of the latter on the bottom line, and impact can only be considered on an individual basis, it is essential to know what is being measured in the first place. Although research shows that organisations are making more effort to assess the impact of coaching against performance targets, goals and quality (CIPD,2005), Grant et al (2010) argue that this has limitations as a key benchmark of coaching effectiveness as it reduces the benefit of coaching to a monetary measure, rather than measuring the full impact of coaching effectiveness. Indeed Grant et al (2009) worked with 41 executives in a public health authority and identified that coaching can help people deal with uncertainty and challenges in organisational change, enhancing goal attainment as well as increasing self confidence and personal insight.

Notwithstanding the claims and evidence that coaching can support the individual and the organisation, a mixed methods study with organisational stakeholders, coaches and coachees identified that, although they believed that coaching supported personal and performance outcomes, more research is needed on determining the complex interplay of factors that affect the outcomes (Stewart et al,2008).

Thus it appears that implementing coaching in an organisational context can benefit the individual and the organisation, but the benefits could be lost if the process itself is at risk from the tensions generated by the 'three cornered contract' between the organisation, the

coach and the individual.   As a consequence more research needs to be undertaken to identify the ways in which the coaching process can support both the individual and the organisation simultaneously.

2.5   MENTORING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

There are a number of literature reviews that have investigated the research on mentoring in HE. Most research into mentoring in HE tends to be survey-based (Woodd,1997) and, although my more recent search revealed a range of approaches, there continues to be a predominance of survey research with large groups.   A review and comparison of over 300 research-based articles on mentoring published across education, business and medicine between the mid 1980's and 2000, identified that mentoring does indeed have the potential to bring about learning, personal growth and development (Ehrich et al,2004). However, a review undertaken by Hensley et al (2006) found a dearth of formal mentoring programmes at university level that provide new academics with the support they need to become successful in teaching, research, and service to the community. Knipplemeyer and Torraco (2007) agreed that very little is known about mentoring academic staff, with few mentoring programmes in existence. In undertaking my own review I focused mainly on the literature published over the last ten years. As the practice of mentoring in HE in Britain falls short of North America (Knight and Trowler,1999), I broadened my search to include literature beyond the UK.

The review of the literature sought to answer the following question:

‘How is mentoring used within HE to support both the individual and the institution?’

Thirty four articles were initiallyidentified as being relevant to this study, 22 of which were research based. The articles fell into three main categories: (i) mentoring to support teaching (ii) mentoring to support career development and (iii) mentoring to support socialisation. Some of the studies reported from a narrow viewpoint, for example only

female viewpoints were presented by Barkham (2005), and others from only one disciplinary perspective (Foote and Solem, 2009; Katz and Coleman,2001). However, the studies provided some useful themes that are relevant to this research, most notably mentoring that supported: socialisation into academic roles; productivity and career success; and suggestions on how to improve mentoring to make it more beneficial for both organisation and individual.

Some studies showed how mentoring fulfilled a socialisation role in supporting academics in adapting to new working environments. An in-depth study showed how mentoring assisted an individual new to academia by helping to establish relationships and to understand the organisation (Barkham,2005). Indeed working with a mentor helped academics to feel connected to the organisation, giving a sense of belonging in two further studies (Greene et al, 2008; Schrodt et al,2003). The most requested support in a study with 96 untenured staff was to be mentored by a senior member of staff who could help them with their research (Greene et al,2008). Working with a mentor as part of their induction helped 20 teachers to adapt to the research culture in their institution and assisted them in re-focusing their research goals to be closer to those of the institution (Katz and Coleman,2001).

Some studies showed how mentoring benefited both the individual and the organisation. For example, a study by 430 academics in two American institutions by Peluchette and Jeanquart (2000) compared academics who had received mentoring with those who had not. The results indicated that working with a mentor helped productivity and well-being and those who did not work with a mentor were at a disadvantage in terms of career success. In another study, academics who received mentoring were clearer on what was expected of them, felt more ownership, and were more likely to remain working for the organisation longer than those who had not received mentoring (Schrodt et al,2003). The work undertaken by Schrodt also showed that experiences of mentoring focusing on interpersonal and psychosocial functions of mentoring were the ones that most helped the connection between the organisation and individual. The relationship aspects of working with a mentor were also important in a study by Mullen and Kealy (2000), who reported that academics appreciated working with a mentor because they felt that their ideas and goals were being respected.

However, some studies indicated that there could be more opportunities to strengthen the mentoring experience so that it can benefit both the organisation and the individual. Zanting et al (2001) indicated that the interpersonal and supporting aspects of mentoring were appreciated, but not at the expense of being able to tap into the practical experience of their mentors, as their mentors sometimes overlooked that aspect of their role. The need for strong career-related information and a task focus within the mentoring was highlighted by Schrodt et al (2003) and academics in Foote and Solem's (2009) study with early career academics identified a need for more opportunities to address a broader range of professional and career issues within mentoring.

Whilst the process of mentoring has been seen as an investment in both staff and the evolving institution (Barkham,2005), tensions have arisen where good practices existed at a local, but not institutional, level (PA Consulting Group,2000) and where institutional imperatives were not passed on at a local level (Smith and Bath,2004). Althoughmentoring has been seen to support both the institution and the individual academic, it appears that the benefits are at risk when the mentors and the institution are not aligned and where the mentoring puts more emphasis on the relationship than developing academic work.

Thus a range of studies in HE has indicated how mentoring has supported the socialisation of academics into new working environments and undertaking new tasks. Notwithstanding these studies, the complexity of issues for mentoring in HE has shown a clear need for more research to obtain personal and in-depth understandings, rather than outcome oriented studies into mentoring in HE (Woodd,1997). More recent research undertaken by Monk et al (2010) indicates that there is a lack of mentoring for research and suggest the need for further study to better understand themagnitude and intricacies of mentoring new academics in the area of research. It also appears that there are possibilities to strengthen the mentoring approach to increase the likelihood of it providing benefits for both the organisation and the individual.

2.6   MENTORING IN ORGANISATIONS

The research literature on mentoring in organisations is mostly focused on outcome orientated studies (Garvey et al,2009; Gibson,2004) where data is largely collected through surveys, or a focus on the relationship between mentoring and other phenomena, such as career self-efficacy (Day and Allen, 2004),mentoring and leadership (Scandura

and Williams,2004), or between mentoring programme characteristics and outcomes, such as Allen et al (2006).Some studies have undertaken a meta-analysis of the literature on organisational mentoring (Ehrich et al,2004; Hansford et al,2002; and Hegstad,1999). These analyses are also largely reporting on the outcomes of mentoring and it has been difficult to source relevant studies that describe the feelings and experiences of those involved in organisational mentoring.   The concept of mentoring and alignment within organisations does not appear explicitly in the scholarly literature, although the benefits and process of aligning a mentoring programme to organisational strategy has been highlighted by Zachary (2005), and Watt (2004) mentions the need to align individual and organisational learning goals. Nevertheless, some interesting perspectives relevant to this study have emerged from the review of the organisational literature on mentoring which I include in this review: mentoring that benefits the organisation; mentoring that benefits the individual; mentoring that benefits both organisation and individual; and the mentoring relationship and role.   The review sought to answer the following question:

How is mentoring used to support both the individual and the organisation?

In a survey of 83 mentoring organisations Garvey (1999) identified that change was a common feature and challenged organisations to consider whether development should be seen as a way forward, or as a management tool where organisations achieve their own aims with people as the means.   Others have identified a need for more tangible impacts of mentoring, for example Oaklief (2009) recognises that a benefit of mentoring is in connecting people within organisations, but argues that the real benefit of mentoring cannot be known until the improved performance of mentored staff affects the 'bottom line'. Although Hegstad's (1999) study of mentoring articles indicated that there is a lack of research into the benefits of mentoring on the bottom line,Hansford et al (2002) reviewed fourteen years of mentoring articles and concluded that mentoring helps to improve productivity, increase the contribution to profit by employees and increased employee loyalty.

Studies of mentoring often cite two main functions that support individuals and their careers in organisations: 'career functions that enhance career advancement' and 'psychosocial that enhance a sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role', the two mentoring functions identified by Kram (1988:23), and these functions continue to be used in positivist studies thereby reinforcing these as functions of

mentoring. Two categories of career outcomes have been identified: objective career outcomes such as promotion and compensation and less tangible and subjective career outcomes, such as career and job satisfaction, commitment and turnover intentions (Hansford et al,2002; Hegstad,1999). Mentoring has also been shown to help women police officers to feel happier going to work and to increase confidence and motivation as well as supporting promotion-related development (Carson,2009).

A number of studies have shown how mentoring brings benefits to the organisation and the individual. However, the results of case studies in a range of organisational contexts led Deans et al (2006) to argue that mentoring (and coaching) can only work if there is a motive to change, suggesting that the individual must have the will to change and the organisation needs to provide the support. The reciprocal benefits of mentoring were discussed by Hegstad (1999) who studied mentoring articles and used Social Exchange Theory as a theoretical framework to interpret mentoring and its relationship to Human Resource Development, concluding that the benefits of mentoring included opportunities to relay organisational culture and philosophy, improved employee motivation, performance, commitment and retention. Indeed Murrell et al (2009) discussed how IBM uses mentoring to show how they value their staff and in a study of 264 employees and supervisors in the US, development and career mentoring were positively related to employees' perceptions of organisational support (Kraimer et al,2011).

It has been suggested that the balance of power in organisations has changed and argued that because organisations now have flatter structures, relationship-orientated leadership models and more empowered employees, there is a fundamental need for people to learn in more social ways as they respond to changing contexts (Clawson, 1996). Indeed Garvey and Galloway's (2002) research at the Halifax Building Society indicated that, because it is a natural human activity, people will engage in mentoring regardless of whether or not the organisation has provided it. The importance of relationship was endorsed by Ragins et al (2000) whose national random survey of 1,162 people in different professions indicated that it was satisfaction with the mentoring relationship that had a stronger impact on attitude rather than just having the opportunity to work with a mentor. Other research has shown that when employees have good relationships with their mentors it can raise employee attitude, motivation and commitment without actually raising their performance, at least in the short term. The role of the mentor can be a challenging one as they need to balance the role as a wise adviser with someone who nurtures potential and creativity (Standing,1999). Others have described mentoring as a friendship; for example Gardiner (1998) has suggested that within a formal

mentoring scheme the mentor can offer stability, professional objectivity and professional friendship through listening, trust and challenge, as well as undertaking the roles of sounding board or role model.

Thus the literature includes a range of perspectives on mentoring in organisations. From the organisational perspective some have argued for mentoring that can be measured in bottom line results, whilst others have demonstrated how mentoring can support individual careers. Whilst some studies have shown that it is also possible for mentoring to provide reciprocal benefits for both the individual and organisation, there is a shortage of research into formal mentoring programme characteristics and outcomes (Allen et al,2006) and more studies are needed to help develop in depth understanding of the meaning and nature of human experience in mentoring (Gibson,2004).

2.7 SUMMARY

The review of the literature has indicated that, whilst organisations and universities are mindful of the need to align people as well as structure and process to organisational strategy, there is little research-based evidence that demonstrates how individuals are supported in their alignment. It appears that universities do not always have structures in place to support academic staff early in their careers and there is a dearth of literature that shows how well academics are supported in responding to external imperatives. Whilst it has been demonstrated that coaching and mentoring can benefit both individual and organisation, there is no literature that describes coaching and mentoring as an approach that could be used to support individual alignment in organisational contexts . Montuori and Purser (2001) have suggested that it is now timely to fully explore the theoretical, philosophical and practical implications of the need to achieve the bottom line and the need for individuals to establish authenticity and identity as they struggle against social and cultural forces in organisations. They suggest this should be done through qualitative research methodologies that emphasise the value of individual experience and meaning making. The individual focus of interventions like coaching and mentoring also demand this kind of qualitative research approach. Indeed the literature on the process of coaching is limited and solutions have not been identified that can help to overcome the tension in the three-cornered contract between organisation, coach and coachee when the organisation has commissioned the coaching. Although extensive studies on mentoring within organisations exist, there is a need for more in-depth research on the

experience of mentoring and how it could support individual and organisational alignment. Thus this study uses a qualitative approach to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy.

The conceptual map that sets out the theoretical underpinning for this study is presented in Figure 2.1.

Alignment, Coaching and Mentoring

"The process of **strategic alignment** ultimately leads to the **alignment of individual and organisational ambitions and drives to succeed**. **Coaching and mentoring** are two of the most powerful ways of helping people undertake **the inner dialogue** that brings **these potentially conflicting dynamics together**." Clutterbuck and Megginson (2007, p.6)

Research Questions

• How do participants conceptualise alignment?

• How do participants experience coaching and mentoring?

• What is the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy?

Gaps in Literature in Relation to Research Topic

• Literature discusses need to align people, but most literature on alignment in organisations is focused on aligning structures (Kaplan and Norton, 2006; Holbeche, 2009)

• HR/OD/SD in HE need to be better at supporting and understanding academics and practitioners need to be more theoretical about own practice and undertake research (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2006)

• The need to explore the implications to achieve the bottom line and the need for individuals to establish authenticity and identity as they struggle against the social and cultural forces in organisations. This should be done through qualitative research methodologies that emphasise the value of individual experience and meaning making (Montuori and Purser, 2001)

• Coaching and Mentoring definitions blurred

• How to make it work in organisations if people don't understand what it is?

Challenges for People and Organisations

• Challenge to align people and organisations

• Need for humanistic approaches and not just a focus on the bottom line

Changes in Higher Education

• External pressures changing HE and the nature of academic staff roles

Coaching and Mentoring Literature

Coaching and Mentoring Definitions

• Definitions blurred

• How to make it work in organisations if people don't understand what it is

Coaching in HE

• Limited evidence-based research

Mentoring in HE

• Need for more research which obtains personal and in-depth understandings of mentoring in HE

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Map

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

This chapter sets out how the ontological and epistemological approaches to the study were influenced by my pre-existing knowledge and assumptions as an employee in the organisation where the research took place.   Qualitative research has sometimes been described as problematic because there can be a tension between the search for validity and truth and the ways in which the experience and identity of the researcher influence the design of the study and the findings (McLeod,2007). This study posed two challenges in respect of its credibility; firstly because case study has been mooted as a weak methodology open to challenge (Yin,2003) and secondly because case studies have been described as having an existence independent of the researcher's view or interpretation (Willig,2010:87). My understanding of the research context and role duality presented the risks that are inherent in insider-research (Coghlan,2003) and I therefore recognised that I had a responsibility to deal with the risks appropriately.

A number of ways to achieve credibility and dependability in qualitative research are suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which essentially seek to determine that the researcher is 'plausible and trustworthy' (McLeod,2007:188). The risks, dilemmas and decisions that I faced are explicitly discussed in order to meet the challenges to the credibility of such research (Gray,2004). This is also good practice in case study research where it is difficult to make generalisations from complex bodies of data (Queen,2006), and so it has been important to describe the context well, explain assumptions and provide rich descriptions that allow the reader to make the decision about the transferability of the study (Lincoln and Guba,1985).   The sections on the selection of research participants and data collection include reflections on the ways in I dealt with issues such as participant selection, ethics and participant distortion, which provided challenges because I knew the participants. The attempts to organise the data collection and analysis in a robust way are explained, together with the ways in which my pre-existing knowledge contributed to the sense-making process.

3.1 PRE-EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND ASSUMPTIONS

My pre-existing knowledge included knowledge of: the organisational context; coaching and mentoring; and the participants. This meant that I began the study with a set of assumptions that brought potential research risks to the study that needed to be surfaced at the start (Lincoln and Guba,1985) and also meant that I needed to take a reflexive approach to the study, which I did in two ways.

Firstly I sought help from a third party unconnected with SU who interviewed me before I started the data collection so that I could fully explore how my insider position may influence the research.   The one hour interview was tape-recorded and transcribed so that I could reflect on its content. This helped me to 'step outside' and observe the tensions between my roles as employee and researcher. The interview indicated that I cared for the organisation and its people. I felt responsibilities to both those leading and those implementing the ambitious Strategy and could recognise the benefits and the tensions in delivering the plan from both perspectives. These positions appeared to be good starting points from which to commence the study. The most significant risk that emerged was that I perceived that I was aligned with the organisational strategy and that could impact on the way in which I interacted with the participants. However, my stronger position was that I saw myself as an intermediary between what the organisation expected of its staff and the support that they would need in order to achieve the Strategy and that, more than a potential risk to the research, this was actually a very sound reason for undertaking the study. Secondly I kept a research journal in which I recorded thoughts and ideas, the struggles and epiphanies. These efforts to surface any assumptions about the research and to identify and deal with any risks to the credibility of the study because of my 'insiderness' influenced the way in which the study was conducted and helped me to identify options and make and justify decisions at each stage of the study.

As the Head of Organisational and Staff Development (HOSD)at SU, my role is to provide development support to staff and, as a researcher in the employment of SU with knowledge and experience of coaching and mentoring, it was natural that I came to the research with some previously held assumptions that influenced my thinking before I commenced the study.   I categorised these into three distinct areas:

- What did I hope to find?
- What did I expect to find?
- What was I curious about?

I hoped that I would find that coaching and mentoring were supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy, because I saw them as a means of creating a supportive environment for individual staff during organisational change, and I hoped that it would be possible to demonstrate that it was possible to achieve strategic results for the organisation by supporting individual needs.

I expected that academic staff would be challenged by the concept of alignment. I expected that coaching and mentoring were having some impact on the alignment of staff with the University's Strategy, based on anecdotal evidence and an initial organisational evaluation of the first cohort of the RREP Programme undertaken before the research study commenced. I also expected that, on closer scrutiny, the quality and quantity of coaching and mentoring in the way that I perceived it would be variable.

However, this was indeed what made me curious; I really wanted to know how coaching and mentoring were perceived by those who were actively engaged in them; I wanted to know more about their experiences of how and what was happening; I wanted to know more about the value for those involved; and I wanted to know more about the value of the outcomes for the organisation.This impacted on my choice of research approach.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study explores the research question: 'What is the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy?'

From an ontological perspective my assumption at the start of the study was that there was a possibility that coaching and mentoring were supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy. As the HOSDat Southern University I believe that I have responsibilities to both the organisation and the individuals working in it. My role in the

organisationis to connect staff development activities with the strategic direction of the institution and therefore I have an interest in finding ways to demonstrate to the organisation that staff development can contribute to organisational achievement. In terms of my responsibilities towards individuals, I work very closely with academic staff and understand a little of their 'lived experience' and therefore I feel a sense of responsibility towards them and believe that I have a role in supporting them during organisational change.

This created a dichotomy when it came to considering my ontological and epistemological perspectives because I had created two potential areas for exploration – whether to try to prove that coaching and mentoring can support the alignment of academic staff with organisational strategy or, what I was most curious about, how it might happen. However, these two very different types of question would require quite different methods of enquiry.

Burrell & Morgan (1979) put forward four paradigms for undertaking research in organisations: 'functionalist', 'radical structuralist', 'radical humanist' and 'interpretive' and these are a useful point of reference to explain the choice of paradigm. The functionalist paradigm is rooted in sociological positivism and suggests that relationships are concrete and can be identified, studied and measured scientifically. One consideration was to take an objectivist approach under the positivist paradigm in an attempt to measure the impact of coaching and mentoring on the alignment of individual academics with institutional strategy.However, there were two reasons why this approach may not be appropriate in my view. Firstly, it would be difficult to isolate coaching and mentoring as the cause of the alignment when so many other change initiatives were also underway. Secondly, as there have not been any studies exploring the central research question for this type of study, there were no pre-existing identified and narrowed down central aspects to be explored and measured (Haunschild & Eikhof,2009),.

The radical structuralistparadigm is useful for exploring structural conflicts within society that generate constant change through political and economic crises and this paradigm may have been suitable if I had only been exploring, for example, the impact of 'managerialism' on the institution. The radical humanist paradigm suggests that there are constraints within organisations that limit human potential. This paradigm may have been suitable had I only been exploring the concept of alignment and whether or not it was an alienating force between the institution and the academics.

However, *the interpretive paradigm* is useful for exploring and explaining the subjective and individual viewpoints of those involved in the phenomenon being studied. There were two main reasons why this paradigm was deemed to be suitable for answering the research question. Firstly, as a study of an organisation and the individuals working within it, it was important to understand how the participants in the study perceived the concept of alignment within their context. Secondly, each participant would have a very individual experience of coaching and mentoring as they would be working with a range of coaches and mentors; they would have different roles and responsibilities, different levels of confidence and competence, and their own individual values and motivations within the organisational context in which they were working. Qualitative research is good for answering *'how'* questions (Academy of Management Journal,2009) and taking a qualitative approach using aninterpretive stance would enable me to explore the perceptions and experiences of the participants in the study and allow them to create their own meanings, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Gray,2004; Crotty,1998).In terms of an epistemological perspective my starting point therefore was a desire to find out about the role of coaching and mentoring and how they were*'supporting'* the alignment rather than trying to prove that it was *'facilitating'* the alignment.

Once the decision had been made to undertake a qualitative study within the interpretivist paradigm, it was important to select an appropriate methodology to undertake the study. The early tensions and dilemmas around this decision are set out in Harding (2009) (Appendix 1) and provide details of three possible methodological approaches that were given consideration: action research; grounded theory; and case study, together with the potential advantages and disadvantages of each for answering the research question. The paper demonstrates the need to ground decisions in my own beliefs and style of working, the need to ensure an appropriate fit between researcher and methodology and to select an approach with the potential to be 'just right' for answering the research question. The final decision was made not to use action research as a potential approach for this study because the 'action' had already commenced at Southern University and I decided to use the grounded theory approach to data analysis for its systematic methods for coding and conceptualising data (Charmaz,2005; Strauss & Corbin,1990; Glaser & Strauss,1967).

The decision to use case study was based on three main considerations: its appropriateness for exploring 'how' questions (Yin,2003); exploring new topic areas

(Eisenhardt,1989); and its usefulness as a study of the particular which could lead to more general learning (Scholz & Tietje,2002). In terms of new topic areas there is no published research into the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of individuals and organisational strategy. Thus this study was an opportunity to explore the perceptions of alignment in an HE institution and the experiences of coaching and mentoring for those working in that context over a bounded four-year period during a seven year programme of extensive change. Many of the claims for the benefit of case study research, such as exploring a phenomenon in a real-life context, can also be attributed to other forms of qualitative research (Haunschild and Eikhof,2009). However, Yin (2003) argues that what is most useful about case study research is the ability to select cases that are unusual or extreme exemplars and there were a number of reasons why SU provided a relevant site to explore the research question. Firstly, coaching and mentoring were already being provided via a staff development programme aligned to SU's Strategy and so could help to build knowledge of the individual and organisation (Stake, 2006). Secondly, because the case already existed before the study commenced it would mean that it would be possible to capture the change as it was happening in the organisation (Hartley,2004) by undertaking a study bounded in time and space (Swanborn,2010) within the context of the organisation's change programme. Thirdly, case study is useful where the phenomenon being studied is not isolated from its context, but is of interest precisely because the aim is to understand how behaviour and/or process are influenced by and influence context (Hartley,2004). As coaching and mentoring were integral elements of a strategic staff development programme, it would be interesting to explore them within a strategically focused organisational context, rather than as a stand-alone intervention.

Case study research takes an idiographic approach (Willig,2010). Commencing with careful and individual exploration of the 'particularity and complexity' (Stake,1995) of an individual case it then moves to cautious engagement with generalisation or theory development. Whilst SU shares some characteristics with other universities who have also developed challenging strategies and are experiencing a similar requirement for culture change, this case will need to be understood in the context of the uniqueness of the institution's history, strategy and individual staff members. This process of 'integrative evaluation' makes use of a variety of viewpoints in the study (Scholz & Tietje,2002) and is designed to help the move towards a more holistic view of the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting the alignment of academic staff and institutional strategy. This is the paradox of case study discussed by Simons (1996) who highlights the ways in which an in-depth study of the particular can facilitate a shift to a more universal and holistic understanding. Case study is therefore an approach that is appropriate for this research

study as it could help to explain more fully the contextual issues affecting the alignment of academic staff and therefore explore and explain more fully the unique contribution of coaching and mentoring when answering the research question.

3.3   THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Figure 3.1 illustrates the methodological framework for the research and indicates the order in which the data was collected over a defined period of time during the study; it also sets out the approach to the data analysis. There were three methods of data collection: (i) documentary data (ii) a questionnaire with academic staff and (iii) semi-structured interviews with senior leaders, mentors, and academics from SU and with external coaches.

Research Question
What is the role of coaching and mentoring in
supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy?

↓

Research Paradigm
Qualitative, Interpretive

↓

Methodological Approach
Organisational Case Study
A Grounded Theory approach to data analysis

↓

Five Sources of Data

QUALITATIVE		QUAL *quant*	QUALITATIVE	
Documents	Leaders	Academic Staff	Coaches and Mentors	Academic Staff

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

Data was Collected in the Order Indicated:				
Documentary Data	Individual Semi-Structured Interviews with **14** Leaders	Qualitative and Quantitative Questionnaire with **36** Academic Staff respondents	Individual Semi-Structured Interviews and One Group Interview with **2** Coaches and **11** Mentors	Individual Semi-Structured Interviews with **6** Academic Staff who had responded to the Questionnaire
(**2006-2010**)	(**Spring 2009**)	(**Autumn 2009**)	(**Autumn/Winter 2009/10**)	(**Spring 2010**)

↓

Grounded Theory Approach to Data Analysis			
Level 1 CODES	**Level 2** CATEGORIES	**Level 3** THEMES	**Level 4** CONCEPTS
Each data set was analysed separately at Levels 1&2 before all of the data was brought together in a form of 'holistic' analysis at Level 2 to explore the common themes and relationships between all of the data sets			

↓

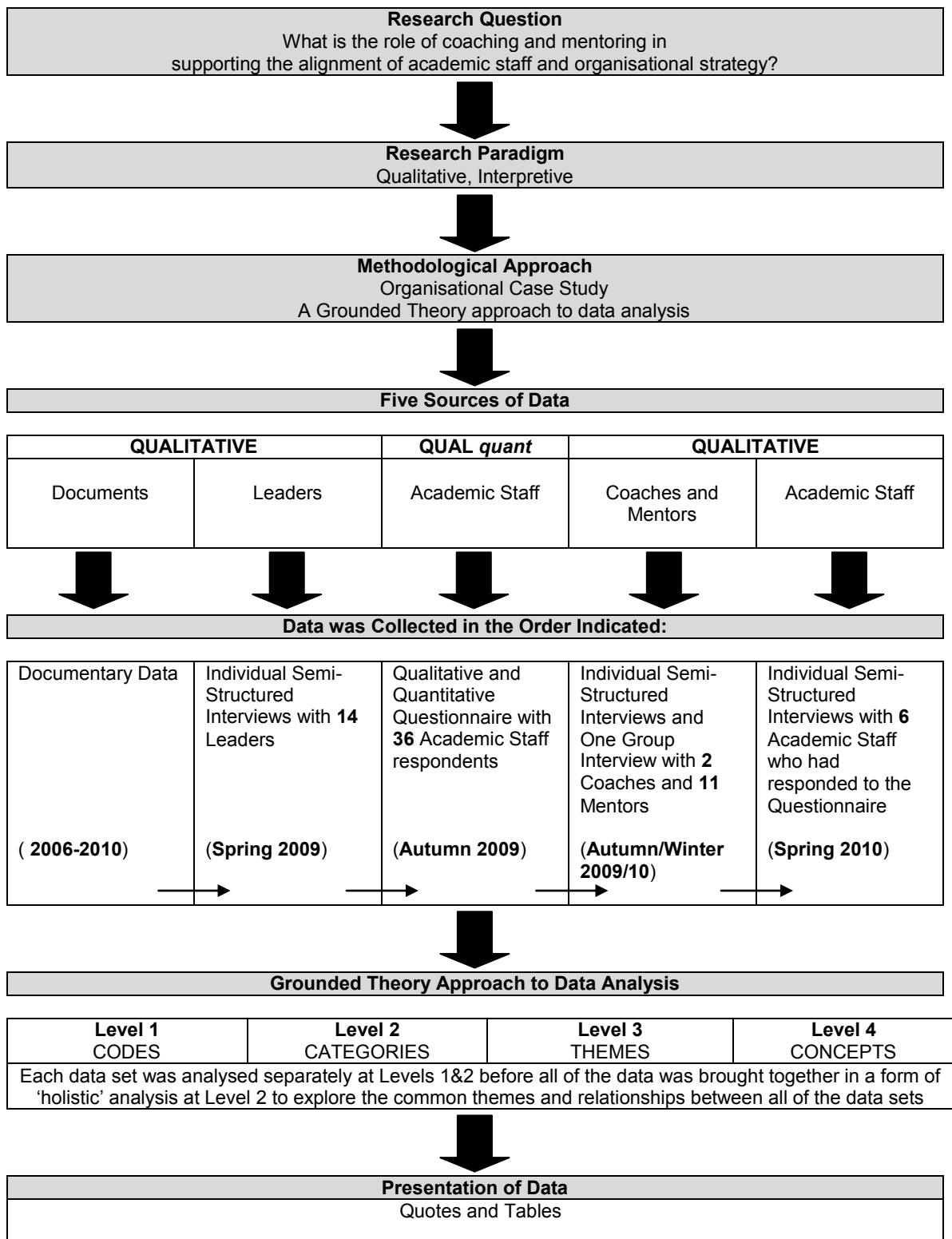| **Presentation of Data** |
| :---: |
| Quotes and Tables |

Figure 3.1 The Research Design

3.4   SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In order to collect rich data on alignment from a range of perspectives, senior leaders, internal mentors and academic staff were invited to be participants in the study; this was also designed to add some 'people perspectives' to what had been stated in the documents. External coaches, internal mentors and academic staff were invited to share their experiences of coaching and mentoring. In total there were 63 individual participants.

3.4.i   Leaders

All of the leaders from the senior management group were invited to participate in individual semi-structured interviews and I was hoping to be able to interview between six and nine of them. However, all 14 accepted the invitation and, as it was important not to lose the opportunity to collect useful data from such an important group so early in the study, I decided to interview them all. Ten of the leaders were also established academics producing academic outputs. The male/female demographic is confidential to reduce risk of participant identification.

There is no 'magic number' of interviews or observations that should be utilised in a qualitative research project; this can only be determined by identifying how many is the right number to answer the research question (Academy of Management Journal,2009: 856). However, the need to be flexible about the research design during the data collection period is a feature of case study (McDonnell et al,2000) and the increase in leader participants influenced my decision on the number of interviews I would conduct with the other groups. I therefore aimed to interview at least 14 participants who had experienced coaching and mentoring (i.e. coaches, mentors and academics) toprovide a balance with the number of leader participants.

3.4.ii Academic Staff

The advantage of undertaking a questionnaire in this study was that it would give an opportunity to ask all of the RREP/EREPP Programme participants about their perceptions of alignment and their experiences of coaching and mentoring. Thus all 78 of the academic staff who had completed the RREP/EREPP Programmes and who were still employed by SU in November 2009 were invited to complete the questionnaire. The invitation yielded 36 responses. Apart from the first question which asked for consent to use the data in the study, responding to the questions was optional. Some demographic data was requested and, where data was provided, a summary of the responses to these questions are shown in Table 3.1.

Staff Development Programme Membership	Number of Responses
RREP Programme	36
EREPP Programme	31
Gender	**Number of Responses**
Male	18
Female	18
Age of Participants	**Number of Respondents**
30-39	7
40-49	14
50-65	11
Skipped question	4
Number of Times Questionnaire Participants had met with their Coach	**Number of Responses**
Once	7
Twice	8
Three or more times	18
Skipped question	3
Number of Times Questionnaire Participants had met with their Mentor	**Number of Responses**
Once	9
2-5 times	14
6-10 times	3
More than 10 times	6
Skipped question	4

Table 3.1 Demographics of Questionnaire Respondents

Academics who completed the questionnaire were also asked if they would be prepared to be involved in an interview; of the 36 who completed the questionnaire 22 said yes. In order to gather data from academics who represented a range of disciplines,

sixacademics, one from each academic School, were invited to interview. Two were the only volunteers from their School. In an effort to minimise personal bias I selected the others based on factual knowledge that set them apart from others on the list. Two had recently volunteered to present at an RREP/EREPP event and two had experience of mentoring others. Four were male and two were female.

3.4.iii Coaches

There were two external coaches involved in the RREP/EREPP Programmes; both had experience of working in HE and worked with academic staff at SU at key stages over the period of the RREP and EREPP Programmes. Both were invited and accepted the invitation to interview.

3.4.iv Mentors

Mentors were invited who were on SU's Academic Mentor Database in October 2009 and who were:

- Internal members of staff still employed by SU
- Currently, or previously, mentors on the RREP/EREPP Programmes and/or had mentored on Doctoral Track, which was associated with the RREP Programme
- Had not already been interviewed – (five of the leaders who had been interviewed who were also active members of the mentor database and met the criteria above)

Thus 43 invites were sent to potential mentor participants. As 25 mentors accepted the invitation to interview, a process took place to minimise personal selection bias. This was based on selecting one mentor from five of the academic Schools and two from the sixth School who had the highest number of mentor volunteers.   Those chosen had the highest number of mentees and were currently actively mentoring. When the invitations were sent out, not all of the seven could make the interviews and so a selection of interview times were sent to the remaining 18 volunteers. This resulted in five individual face-to-face interviews, one group interview with five mentors and one telephone interview, bringing the total number of mentor participants to 11; eight male and three female. Ten of the mentors were professors and one held a different senior academic role. Before

completing the interviews I had considered inviting the remaining mentors to complete a questionnaire, but the interview data was so rich and detailed that I decided not to invite more data. One of the challenges of case study research is making strategic choices on when and how to contain the study to fit the time available (Yin,2003*). I also knew that there was a risk of having too much data to manage in the time available and so, in order to ensure that there was sufficient time to analyse the data thoroughly, I made the decision not to collect additional data for the sake of it.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.5.i   Documentary Data

Documents can provide background information and set a case study within its contextual framework (Swanborn,2010). A possible advantage of using documents is that they are 'unobtrusive' and not affected by the questions asked by the researcher (Robson,1997). However, this can also be a disadvantage as documents have not been written with the research question in mind and the sheer volume of documents that are potentially available means that the collection of documentary data can be cumbersome (Anderson,2009). The use of external documents was limited to those that were publicly availableoutsideSU (for example on the web-site) between 2006 and 2010 that would provide contextual information on the change programme.

Although internal documents are not always accurate in terms of representation of events, they can provide useful archive information and quantitative data (Ward and Street,2010) and SU granted permission to use five internal documents listed in Table 3.2. The RREP Preliminary Evaluation and National Training Award (NTA) and Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) Award applications were used as they provided background information on the RREP and EREPP Programmes. The list of mentors from the Academic Mentor Databasewas the starting point for identifying mentors to participate in the study. An extract from SU's Annual Report on Staff Development 2009/10 was used as it gave information about the RREP/EREPP participant promotions, publication and funding outputs and demonstrated how academic outputs had changed over the course of the study.

Overall the value of the documents lay in their potential to (i) set a context for the study (ii) to provide a longitudinal element (iii) to fill in any gaps left consciously or unconsciously by interview participants in the study who knew that I would have already known about the context in which they were working and (iv) to reduce the amount of time that would be needed to explore contextual issues in the interviews. A list of documents used can be found in Table 3.2.

Document Reference	Title	Available Internal/External
D1	Corporate Plan	External
D2	Strategic Plan	External
D3	RREP Preliminary Evaluation	Internal
D4	Board Minutes	External
D5	NTA Award Application	Internal
D6	LFHE Award Application	Internal
D7	Mentor's Handbook	External
D8	RREP Coaching Website	External
D9	Mentoring Guidelines	External
D10	Academic Mentor Database	Internal
D11	Annual Report on Staff Development	Internal

Table 3.2 List of Documents

3.5.ii Questionnaire

Qualitative researchers in organisations have been accused of relying too heavily on observation and interviews and not spending enough time on multi-method inquiries that explore the extent to which something is happening (Faulkner,1982); thus the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data in the questionnaire could help tell a more complete story (Cresswell and Plano Clark,2007).   Although essentially a qualitative questionnaire, some questions were asked that used a Likert scale to indicate attitudes and strength of feeling about issues (Thomas,1999); this was designed to improve the quality of evidence (Stake,2010) and to provide evidence for the reliability and validity of interpretations (Swanborn,2010). In order to mitigate the risk of creating a separate study (Yin,2006), the Likert style questions were still designed to answer the overall research question.

The overall design of the questions was influenced by the literature, the documentary data and the first set of interviews with the leaders.   A pilot of the questionnaire with two SU staff members (one involved with the RREP Programme and one not) resulted in some

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changes, such as reducing ambiguity in the questions and using language that participants would recognise. I chose to ask the open and qualitative questions on alignment, coaching and mentoring before asking for Likert style opinions in order to minimise the risk of influencing their responses. The survey was designed to take 10-15 minutes to complete.   Some of the qualitative responses indicated that the questions that I had removed from the Likert questions about mentoring qualities could have been left in. However, there was sufficient data in the qualitative responses and so I did not need to go back and ask further questions about this and I explored it further in the interviews with the six academics.

The questionnaire was administered using Survey Monkey online survey software because it was confidential, easy to use, looked professional and allowed for distribution via email and completion online. The identity of the respondents was hidden when the data was downloaded so that interpretation of the data would not be influenced by my knowledge of the participants. The questionnaire template can be found in Appendix 2.

3.5.iii Interviews

Interviews were chosen as they provided an opportunity for participants to speak about their life and experience (Willig,2010). A pilot interview was undertaken with one of the leaders who later gave their consent for the interview to be included as part of the data set. Following the pilot interview, the advantages and disadvantages of seeing the questions in advance were discussed. The decision was made not to share the questions in advance; it was thought that as perspectives and experiences were being sought it would help the interviewee to give an 'in the moment' response from the 'gut' rather than to have 'engineered' their response in advance.

Interviews took place with Leaders, Coaches, Mentors and Academic Staff using open questions and a semi-structured framework. This approach provided both a structure that would help me to answer my research question, but allowed flexibility to explore issues about 'lived experience' from an individual perspective that I may not have considered. I was conscious of the ways in which the construction of the research interview was different from other types of interview or one-to-one interactions that I undertake. When interviewing for a job, there is a purpose to the interview that is linked to a defined

outcome; when coaching someone it is their agenda that we are working with, although as coach I am in charge of the process. As a researcher I needed to be in charge of the process and I had an overall objective to answer the research question. However, I needed the participants to tell their stories in order to ensure that it was their perceptions and experiences that were being told, rather than being overly influenced by the researcher.Semi-structured interviews helped to set some parameters around the exploration, but allowed space for participants to tell me what they thought was important. I needed to find the right balance between letting them talk in case they revealed something significant that I had not thought of, and bringing the conversation back to a place that would help me to answer the research question. It was something that I was constantly mindful of, as the risk in these situations is that the rapport that has been built up in the interview can be disrupted (Willig,2010). Although there are no examples of where the rapport did break down because I needed to 'manage' the conversation, there was one interview that ran significantly over time when the participant proved to be 'un-steerable'!

The average length of time for the interviews was one hour.   Interviews were recorded on a digital tape recorder and I transcribed them verbatim, except for the group interview with mentors where the main points were captured on a flip chart, and the telephone interview where I made hand-written notes.

3.5.iv Interview Questions

In support of the overall research question, the following themes formed the core questionsfor the interviews.

- What does alignment mean to senior leaders, mentors and academics in the context of the research question?
- What are the expectations on academic staff?
- How have these expectations challenged academics?
- How have these expectations motivated academics?
- What experiences do coaches, mentors and academics have of coaching?
- What experiences do coaches, mentors and academics ofmentoring?
- How are academics supported to achieve expectations?

In reality the participants were very vocal and engaged and, although the planned questions were used, I did not need to ask every participant every question as the participant often volunteered the information before I needed to ask. For example, issues around expectations, challenges and support for academic staff were widely discussed in response to the first question about alignment. Thus the interview sometimes became more like the interaction of two people talking about themes of common interest, as in the 'co-authored' event described by Kvale and Brinkman (2009:192).

There are some examples of where later interviews and questions built on the experiences of earlier interviews. The leaders were the first to be interviewed in the Spring 2009. Although five of them had provided mentoring to RREP participants, they were not specifically asked questions about this; this was a self-imposed boundary as I was more interested in their perspectives as leaders rather than as mentors. After the pilot interview I added another question for leaders about organisational achievements since the launch of the Strategic Plan. It seemed that, because the leaders knew me well, they were able to be very candid in their responses, sometimes revealing what they perceived to be individual or leadership team 'weaknesses'; this additional question therefore provided a positive way to end the leader interviews, which I think suited us both! A number of leaders talked about the 'age and stage' of academic staff in their careers and, whilst it had not originally been anticipated that this would be significant, a question about age was included in the questionnaire in order to explore whether age had an impact on alignment, or the ways in which coaching and mentoring were used. I did undertake some statistical analysis of this data using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS)but, as the number of participants was too small for statistical analysis, the results were inconclusive and therefore not included in the thesis.

The coaches were interviewed in Autumn 2009, at the end of the extended period of coaching that had been offered to academics on the EREPP Programme. As there were only two coaches there was less data from the coach perspective. The coaches had been working with the University since the commencement of the first cohort of the RREP Programme on defined projects and not based on campus in between times. Their views therefore brought an unexpected 'longitudinal' and 'independent' perspective to the study, which contributed to the data on how things had changed over time. This, together with the leader data on organisational achievements and data from the questionnaire responses on alignment, prompted a revision of the questions that I asked academics at interview to include questions on what life had been like before, and how it had changed

since, the Strategic Plan, as well as asking a question about their aspirations for the future.

As a matter of interest I asked the mentors about their own alignment with the institutional strategy which prompted some data about the 'mentor's world'. Unexpectedly this data proved to be significant as it provided another dimension on the support that mentors could provide in circumstances where academics had suggested that not all leaders and managers were 'aligned'.

3.6   REFLECTION ON MY RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTICIPANTS AT INTERVIEW

There were two main reflections on the interview process that related to my prior experience and relationship with the participants. The first related to the need to sometimes suspend the 'inter-subjective' elements of the interview (Kvale and Brinkman,2009), minimising my interventions to give focus to what the participant was saying. Although difficult, I made a conscious decision to 'bracket out' (Kvale and Brinkman,2009:27) my experience as a coach and mentor.   Thus I listened to how participants defined, described and experienced coaching and mentoring and put my own views to one side. My decision not to influence or question what they said meant that participants often talked at length about things that I perceived may not have been relevant to answering the research question (Platt,1981). Apart from making sure that the interview time was allocated equally between alignment, coaching and mentoring issues, I made the decision to let the dialogue run and, whilst I may have felt anxious about it at the time, I later recognised that this was the right decision because it made allowances for:

- The participants had not previously seen the questions and were often 'thinking aloud' when responding
- The open nature of the questions
- Contextualising their answer; even after a long narrative of up to ten minutes, I was constantly surprised at the way in which they always returned to the original question

Retrospectively, I recognised that at the moments when I had experienced the greatest uncertainty about the way a dialogue was progressing were the times when my own views had been most challenged and had yielded the greatest insights. This was particularly strong when participants described their experiences of coaching and mentoring. Riege (2003) discusses the need to refrain from subjective judgements and to allow the narrative to run without exerting control over the interview process and this has yielded benefits for the study.

The second reflection related to my relationship with the participants. There are many risks associated with interviewing colleagues (Costley & Gibbs,2006; Alvesson,2003; Coghlan,2001; Platt,1981); although not all of them presented in this case. Indeed, on the whole participants were tolerant about the interview process as most were researchers themselves.I aimed to be myself, but set out very clearly at the commencement of the interview that my role was as a researcher; I was conscious that this required a certain amount of detachment compared to my usual enthusiastic interactions! Nevertheless, participants appeared to be characteristically trusting in their dialogue with me. Concerns that leaders may withhold information because of their seniority were unfounded. Indeed I could tell by the issues that they shared that they were being open and honest.   However, sometimes participants did not elaborate on issues that they assumed I knew about, a risk identified by Platt (1981). I therefore needed to probe in order to establish their views, for example to elaborate on contextual issues. I asked further questions which sometimes distorted the flow of the dialogue as participants were surprised, assuming that I knew the answer; it also used up valuable time. To minimise this I sometimes sourced data from the documents to fill in the gaps when participants had not elaborated on contextual details.

There were a few occasions where participants appeared to be in the minority with their views and I was mindful of two things. Firstly that this was an interpretevist study and therefore it was important to represent the views of all of the participants, and secondly that as I would continue to work with the participants long after the study was complete, I wanted to ensure that I had both accurately represented their views and that they would recognise them if they ever read the thesis. In reality the most significant occurrence of minority viewpoints related to the views on the expected resistance to the concept of alignment set out in Section 4.3.i, whereas the majority of participants had a largely positive attitude towards alignment. Whilst these minority views were general in nature, rather than grounded in their personal experience, I felt that it was important to include them in the thesis.

3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

This study was carried out in accordance with the Oxford Brookes University Code of Practice for the Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants and permission to proceed with the study was granted by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee before data collection commenced.   McDonnell et al (2000) outline several stages for gaining ethical approval from participants. In this study participant approval was secured by using the Oxford Brookes recommended documents: Invitation to Participate; Participant Information Form; and Consent Form.   Participants were offered a copy of the interview transcript, although only one asked for a copy. In addition I decided not to cite the details of the publicly available documents in the references section of the thesis, but simply to number it, as with the interview and documentary data, in order to, as far as possible, minimise identification of SU and its employees.

Interpretivist researchers have been described as being a 'guest in the private spaces of the world' (Stake, 1998, p. 103) and have a number of ethical responsibilities to the participants, needing to minimise the misrepresentation of participants and the misunderstanding of their research (Stake,1995).   Costley and Gibbs (2006) highlight the tensions with reporting data that may injure or affect colleagues and there were several occasions when I felt that the information that had been shared was too sensitive to report, despite their graciousness in sharing it with me; I found myself needing to distinguish between what was 'personal' and what was a 'personal experience' that was relevant to the research.

Having built an intimate relationship with participants during interview and a strong identification with their world, I then felt an enormous responsibility in both interpreting and repeating their story for an audience. Punch (1998) makes the point that people can be oversensitive to ethical issues. When it is hard to say what is public and what is private, when research participants are real people living real lives observed by others in any event and when researchers carry out research close to their institutions, Punch says it is not unthinkable that readers will guess the location of their research. Nevertheless I was very conscious that reporting rich narratives from my participants could risk them being identified and compromise confidentiality (McCleod,2007) and was careful not to link threads of data, such as linking their accounts of how their lives had changed over the

course of the study in a way that, albeit interesting for the reader, could identify them.   In addition I was conscious of the risks in how the participants would feel if/when they saw themselves summarised and interpreted in my study (Punch,1998) and this was something that I was acutely conscious of when analysing my data and deciding how to tell the story of my research; it was vital for me that participants would recognise the stories of life within the institution and for that reason I wanted to represent the complete range of views, although the challenge was not to over-represent minority views in the account of the research.

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS

The approach to analysing the interviews and questionnaire was influenced by the Grounded Theory (GT) approach as it is useful for studying social phenomena (Glaser and Strauss,1967) and employs a systematic method for fracturing data through a series of coding structures, (Glaser,1978).   There are a number of different approaches and interpretations to using the GT model for analysis (Eaves,2001) and each theorist uses the approach to generate codes, categories and concepts from the data and to compare the data to identify patterns and relationships between categories and concepts. The techniques used by four grounded theorists are set out in Table 3.3, together with a comparison of how I analysed the data. The data from the leader, coach, mentor, academic and questionnaire were first analysed separately using the GT approach and then brought together and analysed 'holistically'.

Glaser (1978; 1992; 2001)	Strauss (1987)	Charmaz (2010)	Goulding (2009)	Approach Used in This Study
Substantive Coding	**Open coding**	**Initial coding**	**Open coding**	**Level 1**
Compare incident to incident to generate categories and properties	Code data and generate categories	Code each section of data with words that reflect action	Line by line coding	Leader, coach, mentor, academic interview and questionnaire datawere analysed separately line by line CODES and their properties were identified and colour coded on the transcripts and questionnaire for easy identification
Focused Coding	**Axial coding**	**Focused coding**	**Axial coding**	**Level 2**
Use most significant codes to categorise data	Identify relationships between categories and sub categories	Identify which codes make the most analytic sense to categorise the data	Identify relationships between coded categories or concepts to form descriptive categories	Relationships between CODES were established to generate CATEGORIES The data from all of the participant groups was then compared and the common CATEGORIES and their properties were brought together
Theoretical coding	**Selective coding**	**Axial coding**	**Selective coding**	**Level 3**
Create core categories	Identify core categories	Relate categories to sub-categories, specify properties and dimensions of a category	Generate core categories	The relationships between CATEGORIES were brought together to identify THEMES
Conceptualisation		**Theoretical coding**		**Level 4**
Identify concepts abstract of time, place and people that have enduring grab		Relationships between categories from the focused coding to tell an analytic story with coherence from the fractured data		THEMES were brought together to create CONCEPTS This level provided the highest level of CONCEPTUALISATION and separated the story of this study into distinct areas which dictated the organisation of the chapters

Table 3.3 Comparison of Data Analysis Stages with those Used by Four Grounded Theorists

Although software exists that allows for the analysis of qualitative data based on the approach to GT data analysis, the risk is that the software puts too much emphasis on codes and categories generated from the interview data that do not take account of situational and contextual factors (Denzin & Lincoln,1998). As GT analysis allows for interpretive researchers to interact with empirical data and emerging ideas to interpret what they have observed, heard or read rather than merely report on the viewpoints of participants (Charmaz,2005; Strauss and Corbin,1998), I decided to code the data manually. I completed four levels of analysis and at each stage wrote 'memos' in my research diary that tracked the ways in which I approached the data analysis, but also tracked the process of my thinking and interpretation of the data. The use of memos to name, categorise and conceptualise data is a pivotal intermediate step where thoughts are captured between data collection and writing (Charmaz,2010).

Table 3.3 shows how at Level 1 the data was analysed separately for each participant group: leaders, coaches, mentors, academics, and the questionnaire. Interview and questionnaire data was analysed a paragraph at a time, line by line. Codes and their properties were identified and colour coded on the transcripts and questionnaire for easy identification. This level of analysis is described by Strauss (1987) as a way of opening up the data to produce tentative concepts and is a way of capturing participants' special meanings and language (Charmaz,2010). The Codes and their properties and any emerging Categories were plotted onto a Mind Map. Separate Mind Maps were created for each participant group for alignment, coaching and mentoring. This resulted in 23 different Mind Maps. Appendix 3is an example of this early stage of analysis and showsa MindMap that was created from the leader data on alignment.

At Level 2 relationships between Codes were established to generate Categories. This stage of coding needs to produce codes that make the most analytic sense to categorise the data (Charmaz,2010) and to identify a coherent matrix of associations (Goulding,2009).   Several attempts were needed at this stage. For example the coaching and mentoring data from the separate coach, mentor and academic groups were categorised into 'what the academic sought', 'what the mentor/coach offers', and 'how the mentor/coach helps', which were subdivided into 'descriptions' and 'experiences'; these were not distinctive enough to take the analysis to the next level. As a result the categories and the properties from the different participant groups were brought together to undertake a 'holistic' analysis of the three participant groups and to identify the Categories that were typical of all of the groups. An example of this analysis at Level 2, 3 and 4 can be seen in Figure 5.1 in Chapter Five, which shows the Categories and their

Properties that emerged from the coaching and mentoring data. Approaching the data in this way helped me to compare the data from the perspectives of the different participant groups and enabled me to establish where there were similarities or differences between the ways in which they viewed the phenomenon under investigation. This is a form of 'triangulation' that is helpful in case study as it can assist in understanding and interpreting complexity within a case study (Willig,2010).

At Level 3 the relationships between Categories were brought together to identify Themes from the data. Figure 5.1 also shows how the themes were created from the Categories and their properties. At Level 4 the Themes were brought together to create Common Concepts and these are also shown on Figure 5.1. For Charmaz (2010) this is the final stage of the analysis as a coherent and analytic story emerges from the fractured data. It helped me to separate the story of this study into distinct areas that dictated the organisation of the discussion chapters.

3.9   MAKING SENSE OF THE FINDINGS

In Chapter One and at the start of this Chapter, I discussed my roles as employee and researcher. The intersection between these two roles provided opportunities to acknowledge and respond to the challenges levelled at both insider and case study research and also to take steps to enhance the credibility of the study.   It was also what I would call the 'sense-maker' role where I 'made sense' of what I had discovered.

As a study of the particular, there are challenges in generalising from the findings in case study (Simons,1996) and there are no standardised techniques to do this as there are with some other research approaches (Gray,2004). Stake (1998:95) says that knowledge of a case faces a 'hazardous journey from writer to reader' and case study researchers need to find a way of 'safeguarding the trip', as researchers are at risk of passing on their own interpretations of the study andnot those of participants, whilst readers will also interpret the study in the ways that are meaningful for them. I therefore established three approaches which either ran concurrently with, or followed, the data analysis stages outlined above. The three stages were:

- Reflection
- Confirmation
- Interpretation

Reflection is something that I did throughout the whole research process and which constantly informed what I would do next. Reflective times included writing in a research journal and engaging in dialogue with my supervisors. Although constantly anxious and ever conscious about whether or not my prior experience was influencing the research, I had a moment of insight half way through the data collection and data analysis.I had been so open to the participants and their views, which had differed from mine, that I made the following note in my research diary:

"It is interesting that all the way along I have been worried that my job would influence the research and it is more likely that the research will influence my job!" (ResearchDiary4/19/11/09)

I continued to remember this moment at various stages during the process of analysis and interpretation, since being mindful of the risks of being both employee and researcher has often stifled my ability to stand back and interpret the findings.

Some researchers take their findings back to the participants for confirmation. McDonnell et al (2000) talks about the risk of participants changing data and I made the decision not to take the findings back to the original participants. This was mainly because the data reflected a point in time during a fast changing environment and what had happened to participants since the data was collected was likely to 'colour' what had gone before; there had been two significant changes between data collection and the time when it would have been appropriate to go back to the participants – one was a change of government that had implications for more changes for HE and the other was that a new Vice Chancellor had been appointed. However, research results can be confirmed or corroborated by others at peer debriefing sessions (Lincoln & Guba,1985).Sharing the research with others at two national conferences helped me to move from being a researcher concerned with the design of the study to one who was more concerned with the interpretation of findings. It also gave confidence to allow my own knowledge and experience to feed back into the study as I realised I could now look at the findings with new eyes, whilst recognising what it might mean in other contexts. Whilst it was not possible to erase from the mind all that was known before the research, Aguilar (1981)

suggests that biases or predispositions are disproportionately attributed to insider research, and prior knowledge can be a resource for developing insight as much as a liability (Alvesson,2003). Indeed Hargreaves (2010) said that minimal knowledge of the people that she was interviewing for a coaching and mentoring study limited her capacity to make sense of what they said. Thus in the later stages of the study I made more allowances for my own knowledge and experience to feed back into the study where before it had always felt like a tension.

3.10 PRESENTATION OF DATA

In Chapters Four and Five, the themes emerging from the data will be presented using quotes and tables in order to give an overall picture of the ways in which participants perceived alignment in the context of this study and to present their experiences of coaching and mentoring. Any similarities and differences between the participant groups will be noted.   Where names were used, participants and others are referred to as 'they' rather than 'he' or 'she' or by name to minimise the risk of participants being identified. Each quote is repeated verbatim and has a reference number. Quotes from the different participant groups can be identified by the following prefixes:

D	Document
L	Leader Interview
C	Coach Interview
M	Mentor Interview
MG	Mentor Group Interview
MP	Mentor Phone Interview
AQ	Academic Questionnaire
A	Academic Interview

CHAPTER FOUR
ALIGNMENT, SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE

In order to understand how the participants conceptualised alignment, they were asked questions about what alignment meant to them in the interviews and in the questionnaire. The findings that emerged are based on the responses from all four participant groups: leaders, coaches, mentors and academics. The responses were analysed and categorised and four main themes emerged and these provide the structure for the four main sections of this chapter:

(i)   The clarity of vision and direction for SU
(ii)   The support provided for academic staff
(iii)   The expectations placed on academic staff
(iv)   The challenges for academic staff

The first section presents the views on the clarity of the vision and direction for SU and highlights the need for academic staff performance and behaviour to be aligned to the SU vision. The second section presents findings on the support that SU provided to implement the vision are presented, including an explanation of the place of coaching and mentoring in the support structure. The third section sets out the expectations on academic staff from the perspectives of the leaders, mentors and academics; as the coaches were external to the organisation, they did not discuss expectations.Section four reports on the ways in which academic staff were challenged by SU's Strategy; the challenges were ordered into four themes: career challenges; role challenges; time challenges; and psychological challenges. The summary provides a discussion of the main findings from this chapter.

4.1   ALIGNMENT TO VISION AND DIRECTION

The Strategic Plan signalled a period of organisational change at SU as it strove to achieve *"Academic excellence and financial robustness."(L3/7)*. The Strategy included performance targets associated with an expected change in performance and behaviour.Historically many academic staff had been engaged in education activities, but

the new strategy meant that in future all academic staff would need to be engaged in education and two of three further areas (commonly known as 'pillars') of academic practice: research, enterprise and professional practice, with 80 staff expected to make the transition from being 'teachers', primarily involved in education, to 'academics' engaged in three pillars of academic practice. In addition there were 38 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with measurable output targets for areas such income, publications and achievement of doctoral qualifications. The University's Strategy included a new academic career structure and an undertaking to provide the time, encouragement, resources and structures to enable staff to develop an academic career, with systems for recognising and rewarding achievements (D2). Thus the Strategic Plan very clearly set out the institution's aspirations to be realised by 2012 and the ways in which it would be achieved. All four participant groups valued the clarity in which it was articulated; for example one of the coaches said:

> *I see an organisation that...has very clear goals, knows what it wants and is making great strides to get there. (C16/1)*

There was a recognition that to achieve the aspirations and goals, there would be a need to manage the performance of academic staff; one leader said that now the Strategy was developed:

> *The next stage, and the more mature stage, is in managing that alignment in terms of their performance. (L7/1)*

The other area to concentrate on was academic staff behaviour, as another leader warned that without that:

> *We'll still end up with people behaving in different ways, we'll end up with unaligned behaviour… it will be much harder to get there and it is more difficult to sustain having got there because it's not so embedded. (L9/29)*

The data indicated that the clarity of vision and direction was understood by all four participant groups and provided the foundations for understanding the need for alignment of academic staff performance and behaviour with the Strategy. Kaplan and Norton (2006)

have also highlighted the importance of strong leadership and direction for alignment in organisations to ensure that employees know what the organisation wants to achieve and how they can contribute.

4.2   ALIGNMENT OF SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

As part of the Strategy, SU had set out plans to support academic staff performance and behaviour to achieve the aspirations of the Strategy and these plans were discussed by all four of the participant groups. The findings on support are organised into three main themes: the need for support; organisational level support; and the support available for individuals.

4.2.i   The Need for Support

Leaders, mentors, coaches and academics all talked about support. The leaders spoke of why academics needed support, identifying three main areas for attention: the need for conscious engagement with the Strategy to understand their role within the delivery of the Strategy; the opportunities to discuss concerns and receive feedback; and the use of role models in supporting staff. Academics spoke of the support that they felt they needed; and coaches and mentors spoke of the support that they could offer.

Conscious engagement with the Strategy was seen by leaders as a way for academics to understand their role in the delivery of the Strategy:

> *Because I think it's quite easy for people to see things like Strategic Plans as quite separate to their lived experience in an organisation. (L6/1)*
>
> *Alignment to me...suggests a shared sort of approach...a conscious thing whereby people would know that what they are doing is tied in with [what] their organisation wants from the outcome. (L12/1)*
>
> *So there is something about internalising and really reflecting on how it impacts on them as an employee and as a contributor to actually the success of the [Strategic] Plan. (L6/1)*

Leaders recognised that academics would need to have opportunities to express their concerns in responding to the Strategy and the importance of giving encouraging feedback. They identified that this would also help the organisation to appreciate the experience that academic staff were going through; one of them said:

> *You have to keep repeating [the vision] and you need to give people feedback and positive reinforcement that we are moving in the right direction, that we are making the transition, that it is happening, it is working...there is something around opening up a culture and giving people the opportunity to express tensions [or]...they'll just be hearing 'I'm not good enough'...I think if you are going to get people to line up, you need to experience a bit of their lived experience, listen, be open and care. (L6/18).*

Four of the leaders had come from traditional academic backgrounds and said that they had never received support early in their own careers; they worked in an environment where either they performed or they did not survive and they had to learn how to be an academic *'by diffusion'* (L7/5). They compared their own experience with what was needed by academics at SU:

> *There was never any notion that somebody would coach you or mentor you or support you, or frankly even talk to you. (L3/13)*

> *The approach here has to be a slower, more gentle, more continuously supporting process, as opposed to the chuck 'em in at the deep end one which I grew up on. (L7/5)*

There was a general sense that, because many staff had not experienced working in a traditional university environment, it was difficult for them to envision what was expected of them. Leaders spoke of the responsibility of experienced staff in sharing their knowledge, acting as role models and motivating academics to achieve:

> *There is a kind of evangelical responsibility…those who are producing excellent academic output [need] to assist those who are perhaps willing to make that journey but struggling to be able to do so. (L1/6)*

> *You lead by example…show people how they can do it, get involved. (L2/26)*

> *You need the right people to enthuse academics about education and the right ones to enthuse them about research and enterprise. (L14/10/11)*

It seemed that the leaders recognised that academics needed support to respond to the external demands being made of them in respect of academic outputs, whilst recognising that they would also need support to internalise what was happening.

When asked about what alignment meant to them in the questionnaire, academic staff identified the importance of aligning strategy, people and support, including helping them to understand their own place within the context of the strategy:

> *Alignment to me means ensuring that staff who work within the University are the right staff, doing the right roles, with the right support and resources to ensure that we maximise their potential for delivering the core objectives of the University. (AQ16/17)*
>
> *First trying to understand the organisation strategy, then its meaning for me as an individual. (AQ16/19)*

Many questionnaire respondents discussed alignment as a way of identifying goals, objectives and opportunities that would have mutual benefits for both the organisation and the individual academic and the need to enable staff by developing individual personal and professional development plans:

> *It is about identifying mutual goals and opportunities. Enabling staff to meet these whilst also meeting the strategic vision. (AQ16/20)*

Twenty nine of the 36 academics who responded to the questionnaire said that it was either important or very important to feel supported by the organisation and the same number said that a 'positive emotional climate' was either important or very important for their alignment.Academics cited the reciprocal benefits of aligning individual staff development plans with organisational plans. Staff development was consistently identified as important to alignment and 30 of the academics who responded to the questionnaire said that opportunities to engage in staff development were either quite or very important when thinking about their alignment with the organisation; there were a number of qualitative comments to back this up:

[Alignment is] ensuring that the skills, objectives and efforts of the workforce are organised such that they achieve the business objectives of the organisation usually as set out in a strategic plan. This may mean retraining and development of staff if the business objectives include moving the nature of the business of the organisation. (AQ16/29)

Ensuring staff are able to develop in ways that meet the organisational vision as well as their own development needs. (AQ16/6)

It's about bringing staff in line with the University's strategy, so that the goals of the University are met alongside personal and professional development of individual members of staff. (AQ16/31)

Mentors alsocommented on the need to develop a synergy between the University's strategy, individual aspirations, plans and outcomes:

There is a need for synergy with individual plans and aspirations and the University. (MP22/1)

It's matching up aspirations isn't it to outcomes. (M18/6)

The coaches and mentors talked more about what support they could offer than what academic staff needed. Mentors spoke of their responsibilities as professors to support other academics, as well highlighting a range of supportive roles, including helping to deal with academic processes and giving honest feedback. One mentor described their role as developing people into academics:

My prime goal as a mentor is not to align people with the strategy…I'm really interested in helping a person to develop into an academic, if [that] meets the strategy, that's great. (M17/11)

One of the coaches offered support in *'career development'*(C15/D8) whilst the other coach spoke of the shared responsibilities of coach and academic in the coaching process:

I will focus on your needs, hold you accountable for your own progress, and share my own academic and business experience. I can do hand-holding or cajoling. I need you to be willing to take action, to commit yourself to the journey, to be honest with yourself. (C16/D8)

The data on what the mentors and coaches could offer to academics appeared to point to the mentors focusing on developing their academic capability in supportive ways, whereas the coaches offered support, whilst emphasising that academics also needed to take responsibility within the coaching process.

4.2.ii Organisational Level Support

In implementing the Strategy, SU had instigated a range of infrastructure supports for academic staff at organisational level. This support wasmentioned in the documentary data and discussed by the leaders, mentors and academics who highlighted how they provided support. Indeed all 36 academic staff questionnaire respondents indicated that having an effective infrastructure was either important or very important when thinking about their alignment with the organisation.The types of support provided at organisational level included processes, structures and frameworks and were organised into four categories: reward schemes; workload planning; internal network structures; and resources.

The new academic career structure providedannual promotion opportunities, and the Pay Progression Scheme rewarded performance, as well as identifying the types of outputs that would be recognised and rewarded according to satisfactory, good and excellent criteria. The Code of Practice on Balanced Workload set out suggestions on balancing workload to help organise the time to contribute to three areas of academic practice.In addition the increase in the staff development budget funded the RREP and EREPP Programmes and this, together with the establishment of new research centres and additional support from the Graduate School, provided opportunities for networking with and mentoring by more experienced academic staff. The importance of attending to processes and structure to support alignment in organisations is discussed by Kaplan and Norton (2006) and Holbeche (2009) who also emphasised the importance of aligning reward structures to facilitate alignment. A number of universities have also worked to align systems and processes to strategy (Billot,2011; Fielden and Malcolm, 2005; Wong, 2005).

4.2.iii Individual Level Support

Participants spoke about theplaces where academics could access individual support; these were analysed into four categories: staff development programmes; personal and professional development planning; working with others; and opportunities to develop project work around good practice. For completeness details of the support available at individual level are set out in Table 4.1 and the ones that provided coaching and mentoring opportunities are marked with a 'C' or an 'M'.

Staff Development Programmes	Performance Appraisal and Personal and Professional Development Planning
• RREP Programme (C&M) • EREPP Programme (C&M) • Doctoral Track with Graduate School (M) • PG Certificate in Research Supervision • PG Certificate in Education Practice (M) • Higher Degrees (Masters; PhD) • Events and Master Classes • Action Learning Sets/Surgeries	• Performance Appraisal Scheme • Personal and Professional Development Plan (M)
Working with Others	**Project Work on Good Practices**
• Research Outline Review Panel • Joining a research supervision team • 'Self-help' groups • External examiner opportunities; experience of validation; external viewpoint • Research Centres (M) • Informal mentoring (M)	Releasing Potential Project initiatives – internal conference presentation opportunities

Table 4.1 Individual Level Support

What was noticeable at SU was the way in which the coaching and mentoring support was integral to a number of activities designed to support the institutional strategy, rather than coaching and mentoring existing as stand-alone initiatives. For example, it was possible to access a coach or mentor through the RREP/EREPP Programmes, and mentoring was available on the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education Practice,as well ason the Doctoral Track through the Graduate School which mentored participants to develop research proposals and identify doctoral funding; participants in this programme had accessed mentors through these initiatives. In addition staff were able to access mentors informally through their Research Centre.The RREP and EREPP Programmes were identified as being important to the support provided to academic staff by 16 academics who specifically mentioned in the questionnaire that staff development and the RREP and EREPP Programmes had supported them in their alignment, and a number of

leaders also mentioned the significance of the Programmes in supporting academic staff alignment.

Thus one of the ways that participants conceptualised alignment in the context of the research question was the provision of support to academic staff. Support was designed to help them to identify their own role in delivering the Strategy and to provide opportunities to align their own development plans with organisational plans for mutual benefit. Reward schemes such as the academic career structure, annual promotion rounds and pay progression scheme gave academics something to aspire to, whilst staff development programmes and coaching and mentoring provision were aligned to strategic aims and gave academics opportunities to work with role models who were experienced academics with an established portfolio of academic outputs. Whilst the alignment literature highlights the need to align individuals in organisations, the literature usually focuses on the alignment of processes and structures.   It appeared that not only had SU set out a clear strategy that needed to be achieved by academic staff, but it had also provided support at organisational and individual level to facilitate its accomplishment.

4.3   ALIGNMENT AND EXPECTATIONS ON ACADEMIC STAFF

A relatively small number of participants (seven out of 63) - four leaders, one mentor and two academics expected that there would be resistance to the concept of alignment in an academic institution and their comments will be explored first. These general comments are followed by the actual expectations that leaders and mentors had of academic staff, before presenting the expectations that academics had of themselves.

4.3.i   Expected Resistance to the Concept of Alignment

There were three main viewpoints on the notion of alignment in an academic context: (i) academics align themselves more to their discipline than to an institution ii) academics do not like being told what to do and have a propensity to question and (iii) academics need to protect their position as influencers in society. These viewpoints were mainly general in nature rather than being directly related to the personal experience of these participants;

indeed there were comments from other participants that ran counter to these views and these are also presented.

Three of the leaders commented that academic staff loyalty sits first with their discipline and their own careers, rather than to an institution, saying:

> *Their first loyalty is always going to be to their subject... then to their school or faculty and then a poor third is their institution. (L5/25)*
>
> *Their loyalty is to their career."(L7/8)*

Whilst another leader acknowledged that this was a typical description of academics, they did not believe that there were many academics at SU whose first allegiance was to their subject:

> *I can see in other institutions it would be a really big issue... I'm not sure that's really a mainstream sort of thing here. (L12/15)*

One of the reasons for this could have been that the existing culture in SU meant that many academics were more accustomed to working in a co-operative environment on a teaching team than in focusing on developing their career through disciplinary knowledge. Indeed one of the academics talked about the benefits of the Strategic Plan and the RREP Programme in encouraging staff to collaborate across the institution:

> *The Strategic Plan and Releasing Potential [helped with] increasing your footprint across the University; I could meet people in other Schools...and started to work with people in other Schools. (A25/2)*

The second reason why the notion of alignment was challenged was highlighted byanother leader who remarked that academics do not like being told what to do and that the propensity to question is a feature of academic life:

People are individuals and academic staff...don't like being told what to do...that's the nature of academic staff and that's what makes academic life fantastic is that you question and you don't accept. (L8/3)

However, there was some tolerance that not every academic would align, as another leader said:

Maybe you don't want to get everybody aligned, you always need mavericks in an organisation that can point and say 'listen, I don't like what you're doing'; I'm quite relaxed about that, as long as it's not all of them! (L7/1)

The third view on the notion of alignment in academia was suggested by one of the mentors who said that academics do not align to organisational strategy because the whole philosophical basis of being an academic means that academics are the influencers in society, commenting that was now at risk from the current target driven agenda for HE:

There are people within academia who have alternative ideas and could actually lead where culture could go...ideas may stop coming from academia, because we are trying to comply too much with the dominant culture. (M17/12)

There were two similar comments from academic staff in the questionnaire who suggested that the work of an academic was more important than what a university wanted to achieve:

Alignment suggests requiring staff to conform to the university's requirements. In an academic context this would suggest a threat to traditions of academic independence…This begs the wider question of what or who is the university and whether the organisational strategy should be aligned to academic staff. (AQ16/10)

However, another view focused on the business and societal needs for universities to perform in subject disciplines that were useful to society, rather than academics pursuing their own interests. Two mentors gave examples of how they had changed their own research areas to fit with SU's research aspirations and two leaders commented on the

fact that academics who did not want to do this had taken voluntary severance, or moved to other universities:

> *Some [academics who left] had clear track records in very specific areas that were linked to programmes that weren't recruiting and were linked to research areas that never really performed... There has to be a stronger alignment between where they are going in terms of coherent academic areas. (L14/6/8)*

The concept of alignment in an academic institution is not without controversy as noted by the participants here. However, these comments were general views on the notion of alignment in academia, rather than representative of participant experiences of alignment at SU, and therefore have not been interpreted in an overly negative way. Indeed most participants in this study had a largely positive attitude towards the concept of alignment. One of the reasons could have been because of the choice of participants; whilst all staff had been involved in the development of the Strategic Plan, the leaders were instrumental in crafting the detail; the mentors had been selected because of their experience and because they already had developed academic profiles; and participants on the RREP and EREPP Programmes had been identified by their managers as having potential to develop into academics. It is possible that staff who had taken advantage of the voluntary severance scheme may have been more resistant to the concept of alignment; they may therefore have had a different point of view if they had participated in the study, as one of the mentors said:

> *We're in a culture where people want to be co-operative and are; if they are here they are loyal to SU and they want it to work for them and they want it to work for the School and the University...if they don't want to buy into it...you know they go. (M19/9)*

Notwithstanding the mostly positive attitude towards the concept of alignment, leaders and mentors recognised that achieving alignment was more challenging and this became clear as they talked about the expectations that they had of academic staff.

4.3.ii Leader Expectations of Academic Staff

The leaders expected academic staff to perform academically and to change their behaviour to enable that to happen. They wanted them to generate academic outputs and develop knowledge and passion for their subject to share with their students. Ultimately if academics could achieve the required standard in performance, they would be rewarded through the new career structure:

> *There's a new set of goal posts… but [academics] are very clear where they are; there's been several rounds of promotion and pay progression based on these criteria, so I think everybody' s now fully aware now of what's expected of academic staff and SU. (L4/4)*

> *I think it's easier than it has been in the sense that the career structures are very important in bringing alignment. (L13/3)*

In order to make the transition from being 'teachers' to 'academics', academics were expected to perform in three of the four areas of academic practice; one of the leaders explained how:

> *We set out very starkly in the Corporate Plan to say we need to translate from being teaching led to being academically led...[with] everybody being engaged in education and then in two of the other three of research, enterprise and professional practice. (L12/4).*

Another leader said they expected to see this demonstrated through outputs and achievements:

> *I would expect them to be able to demonstrate their involvement...but not just involvement, there is something there about achievement, about outputs and outcomes as well. (L9/3)*

In practical terms this meant that academic staff would need to be looking inwards to the students and also externally so they would also learn through their engagement with research, enterprise and professional practice and translate that back to the students.

Leaders believed that the ability of their academic staff to be able to achieve this was fundamental to the future of the institution as it competed in an increasingly competitive market and that it would also help staff to realise their own potential, for example:

> *They've got to be facing inwards to the students... [and] to have another eye facing outwards...[they] need to bring that back into the classroom environment. (L7/2)*

> *[We want to ensure that] students who come in are learning from those who are learning...without that teaching becomes anodyne... we [need to] build up those groups of staff who engage at the cutting edge...it will be fundamental to our future. (L3/3/7)*

> *If you do nothing but teaching you become pretty dull... how much benefits the student if you are static that way in terms of your own personal development? (L4/3)*

Leaders anticipated that engagement with a wider academic portfolio would engender a passion for their subject that would benefit students:

> *The crucial point for an individual member of academic staff is they must be engaged with their subject...they are enthused by their subject, they are passionate about their subject...and they bring excitement, that enthusiasm, to our students. (L3/1)*

> *The drive is around an excellent student experience because they have been engaging with academics who are outward facing and well-rounded. (L6/19)*

One of the leaders spoke of the social responsibility of academic staff to generate and share knowledge, describing them as "*Public servants, being allowed to think*" (L13/23b). They expected academic staff to be committed to this endeavour, noting that this would require a change in behaviour that would be challenging for some, saying that they would need to start:

> *Desperately going to work outside the box, all hours, in order to make that happen and that's the true definition of a really high-performing, successful academic. (L13/33)*

> *Some of those individuals now need to have a much ruder awakening. (L13/29)*

It seemed that leaders expected that there would be a clear connection between academic staff performance and behaviour; they expected them to work hard and develop a passion for their subject to share with their students, in so doing they would benefit society, the organisation, students and their own careers.

4.3.iii MentorExpectations of Academic Staff

There was general agreement from the mentors that academic staff needed to step outside their teaching roles, look externally to develop their knowledge and to translate it back to their students:

> *So if academics just taught the same type of stuff every year and didn't go out and ever meet anybody, then they would be very insular. (M18/2)*

Mentors expected that academic staff should achieve doctorates and noted that the organisation also valued this and explained how processes had been introduced to accelerate the process:

> *We've always known that academics should have doctorates...but now we're acknowledging and valuing that more as an organisation, and we've increased acceleration of that process. (M19/3)*

Similarly, mentors agreed that academic staff should be developing their professional ability to be the best in their field and their expectations were high:

> *Not all staff are ambitious... but we're not interested in people who want to do an OK job, we want them to do an outstanding job. And if you're an academic, you should be striving to be the best you can be in your field. (M18/7)*

So for mentors the expectations of academic staff were that they were achieving their doctorates, aspiring to be the best in their field and sharing their knowledge with their students.

4.3.iv The Expectations Academic Staff had of Themselves

Academic staff who were interviewed agreed that the purpose of the strategic aspirations was to improve the student experience.   They spoke enthusiastically about their belief in, and the importance of, the student experience and the ways in which developing a broader academic portfolio could benefit students:

> *Students at University should be taught by people at the cutting edge of their discipline, or certainly people who are movers and shakers in that discipline. I think that's exciting for students and I'm fully behind that. (A25/17)*

Academics also seemed to have the will to align, agreeing that the University's vision was appropriate for a university; one of them said:

> *I'm very passionate. I truly believe in education...I like to work for the VC's vision. (A26/10/12)*

Interviewees were excited by the opportunities that were opening up for their careers. One of the six interviewees was already well published and the others were enthusiastic about developing a more rounded academic profile; one of them said:

> *I want to be a better academic, I want to publish stuff and I want to write books...I have an identity and it's based around the idea of scholarship and being a scholar and for me that is very important, something I see as a good thing to be doing. (A27/4)*

There were similar comments in the questionnaire, indicating that academics expected to work on areas that benefited both their own career and the organisation's goals so that they would be*:*

> *Taking a strategic approach to areas of common advantage for staff and organisation. (AQ16/21)*

It seemed that academic staff had similar expectations of themselves as the leaders and mentors had of academics; they wanted to be working at the cutting edge of their discipline and to provide a good experience for their students that in turn would benefit the organisation and their own academic careers.

The individual is often portrayed as being in opposition to the social structures that surround them in working life (Billett,2006). The concept of alignment had, at first, seemed a potential area of tension between academics and the organisation at SU, however, it appeared that the expectations set out in the institutional strategy and those of leaders, mentors and academic staff were similar. They seemed to be in agreement on 'what it means to be an academic' and they had similar aspirations for academics to be learning themselves by developing a rounded academic portfolio of academic practice and to share their passion, knowledge and experience with their students whilst developing their own academic careers.

4.4   ALIGNMENT CHALLENGES FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

Although some of the participants had discussed the notion of alignment in an academic institution as an area of anticipated resistance, the findings at SU indicated that, rather than the academic staff needing to 'come in line' with the institutional strategy, the institution and academics were 'focusing on a gap'. The gap was that the institution and individual academics were interested in focusing on 'what it means to be an academic'rather than aspiring towards goals at odds with each other. A similar form of alignment is described as 'aligning attention to a gap' by Kegan & Lahey (2009:109) and Heifetz (1994), and is similarly described by Hill and Stephens (2004) when aligning attention to the student experience helped to overcome tensions between individuals and institution during a period of organisational change. However, as an internal researcher and knowing something of the institution's history, I had an appreciation of 'the gap' that required attention at SU and this related to both the stage that the institution was at in its own development and the stage that academic staff were at in their careers; one of the leaders described it as follows:

We don't necessarily have the people that are really firing on the intellectual quality and direction...we don't have that momentum to the institution...it's about maturity of the institution...it's not something that you can build particularly quickly, that history. (L13/23b/24)

This meant that there were a number of challenges for academic staff and leaders, coaches, mentors and academics all described the ways in which academics were challenged by the expectations. Notwithstanding the leaders were key stakeholders of the Strategic Plan, they were also able to appreciate the challenges for academic staff and so their views are also included in this section. The challenges were structured into four themes and these provide the four sub-sections in this section as follows:

(i) Career challenges

(ii) Role challenges

(iii) Time challenges

(iv) Psychological challenges

4.4.i   Career Challenges

All four participant groups discussed the career challenges presented by the new academic career structure; for some the challenge was a positive one and for others it meant a change of culture, which was also difficult for managers of academics who had not experienced working in a traditional academic environment themselves.

The leaders in particular discussed the recent and first round of pay progression and promotions, indicating that they had demonstrated that effort on its own were not sufficient and that in order to be successful in their careers, academics needed to be achieving outputs:

Effort on its own wasn't really enough to get the pay progression or the promotion. (L11/5)

Whereas lecturers had been rewarded for teaching, for taking responsibility, programme leadership, they are now being told 'your career isn't going to advance unless you also have significant areas of enterprise activity, professional practice, or research. If you're not making bids you won't get to the next level. (L8/9)

Academics also commented on the challenge of the *'Changing goal posts'(AQ19/14)*. As an employee of the institution I know that as an ex-polytechnic granted University status in 1992, SU had focused on the delivery of professionally focused subjects which meant that a significant number of staff been recruited for their 'professional', rather than their academic, backgrounds. The leaders and the mentors frequently discussed this issue; one of the mentors described it thus:

> *"One's career as an academic is not as clear cut as an academic in a more traditional University whereby many of them become academics in their twenties and build up a huge publication [portfolio]...whereas people who've been in practice... some of our colleagues are calling them 'second career' academics…our academia… is very credible because it's very focused and practice-based…, so that really suits a university like this. On the other hand, it does mean that we lag behind for our age in terms of [academic outputs]…not as good as if [we] had been an academic all the way along." (M17/3)*

Although two of the leaders used the term 'second career academics' to describe some academics at SU, it would be a generalisation to suggest that all academics had professional careers before they joined SU.   Due to inside knowledge, I knew that although some of the participants in the study already held doctorates, many had not continued to develop their research portfolio; a small number were researchers who had not previously been involved in pedagogic activity; others were teachers who had not undertaken research; for others academia was indeed their second career. The term 'emerging academic' may therefore be a more accurate and encompassing description of the academic staff involved in this study. For these staff the career challenge was not necessarily viewed in a negative way; indeed members of each of the participant groups could identify how the expectations of academic staff were in fact career opportunities that could bring benefits to the organisation and to individual academics.   Whilst it was a challenge initially for many to achieve pay progression or promotion based on their academic outputs, others were excited about rising to the challenge; one of the coaches said that for some of the academics they were working with:

> *This was a challenge, this was exciting, a bit of an adventure. (C16/17)*

One of the leaders commented that for someone who was passionate about being an academic it was not a challenge:

If you are really passionate about your research and your commitment to teach, they're not challenges. (L13/21/22)

Mentors noted that many staff had responded to the expectations as a positive change that provided challenge:

Some have welcomed the change and the challenge and say we've always wanted to do research, to have the time, for it not to be frowned on. (MG1/5)

For an academic it's very challenging, it's very interesting; it's a really fun place to be... there's a lot of pride in working in a University like this that's dynamic and improving all the time. (M18/1)

One of the leaders, two academics and one coach noted the positive synergy between the alignment of staff aspirations and the organisation's needs; the coach said:

Alignment in terms of academic performance is when the aims and objectives of the individual who is developing their career go the same way as the aims and objectives of the organisation [which] is developing their career.(C16/41)

Despite these positive attitudes, this signalled a change of culture. As one academic said: *'The change of culture is challenging' (AQ19/11)* and this change of culture was also challenging for managers of academics. Although there had always been a requirement in job descriptions and academic contracts for academic staff to contribute more widely than just teaching, culturally the expectations had not previously been enforced:

If you look at job descriptions and the contract, the actual words research and bidding and gaining funds are all in there, but we never imposed it. (L12/7/8)

It wasn't in the culture, it wasn't in the appraisal targets...it's not just the old guys from the polytechnic, it's the people who were brought in as post-doc fellows and were never asked to make funding bids, and so for everybody it's changed. (L8/9)

For many academics this constituted the need for a significant mind shift, as noted by a leader and a coach:

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There is a big issue about transforming into something different...for many people they didn't actually in their minds come in to do this...The way we have operated has allowed it to be reinforced that it was about teaching. (L12/7/8)

There are some individuals that feel that this isn't the job that they signed up for. They joined under one paradigm when being really good at teaching was all that was required of them. (C16/1)

All of these challenges were in direct contrast to the comfortable existence that academics had before, which was described by two of the academics:

It was generally comfortable bumbling along...Just run the programmes, keep the students happy and that was quite a comfortable life.   (A24/1)

I was senior lecturer, getting on with my job, teaching, just starting to do a bit of research. It was same old getting on with it. (A25/1)

One of the academics described how the new Strategic Plan challenged staff in terms of expectations of outputs, compared to what had gone before:

When the Strategic Plan came along...[there was] absolute pandemonium responding to what they meant against the background of what we were doing because it really was pushing us in a completely different direction...the emphasis on outputs other than education. (A24/1)

In addition to needing to make a mind shift themselves, academics faced the challenge of working with 'middle' managers who were not themselves delivering on the expectations. There was some evidence from the leaders and five of the academics who completed the questionnaire that some managers were not demonstrating that they had both the will and the way to engage staff in the agenda. For leaders it was because they thought that some of the managers had not experienced themselves what it was to be fully engaged in all four pillars of academic practice and so, although they may have agreed with the Strategy, the implementation was difficult for them. One of the leaders said of managers:

I think intellectually most of them will buy into most of it, but ...to actually really win the hearts and minds ...if you don't actually have the will to do it you never do it.(L12/21)

A number of the leaders talked about the fact that some managers were not aligned to the vision; either because they were not convinced of it or because they were not 'fully-rounded' academics themselves delivering in three of the four pillars:

> *There's still a big issue in terms of actually getting the alignment of the middle management with the institutional strategy. (L12/20)*

> *I think for some of it is them having the confidence that they've got the tools themselves... the skills to actually really win the hearts and minds – and the time. I don't underestimate that. (L12/20/21)*

> *In some instances...the Deans have limited experience themselves of making this transition. (L1/11)*

> *You can only win hearts and minds if your own heart and mind is in it. (L8/7)*

There was a general sense that, because many staff had not experienced working in a traditional university environment, it was difficult for them to conceptualise what it means to be an academic. One of the leaderscommented on the challenges of 'socialising' people into the new environment when they had not experienced it themselves:

> *How you socialise academic staff into an environment where some of them aren't sure what it is and some of them don't know what it is? (L3/4)*

Five of the academics also commented on the ways in which managers blocked alignment because they did not understand the practical challenges of delivering on the expectations themselves:

> *Lack of understanding of the issues by management, and little appreciation of barriers and constraints. (AQ19/17)*

> *Line management that is unsupportive and blocking. Lack of understanding of line managers as to the daily challenges of teaching and researching. (AQ19/24)*

The findings showed that on the positive side, the new academic career structure meant that academics could aspire to greater things for their career within SU and participants viewed this as a positive challenge. However, the expectations around academic outputs

were challenging because in some cases academics were being managed by people who had not experienced developing a rounded portfolio of academic outputs themselves. Once again the data pointed to the need for academics to work with role models who could support them in their endeavours.

4.4.ii Role Challenges

Leaders and mentors discussed their concerns about whether academics had the ability to take on a wider portfolio of academic work. As well as contributing to additional academic areas, academics also needed to change their teaching practice to respond to infrastructure changes related to curriculum and assessment; as one leader said:

> *[As teachers they were comfortable with the] mug and jug theory of teaching where you are giving [the students] all the information; 'if I haven't told them it they won't learn it'. Give [the students] learning to learn skills and some people don't feel comfortable with that at all...releasing some of the control and expecting the students to take responsibility isn't always comfortable for individuals. (L6/6)*

Some staff were previously employed as researchers and were now also required to teach:

> *There is a whole bunch of people who have had research related jobs who aren't making a significant contribution to teaching and of course that's shaking them up as well as the people who have been doing the bulk of the teaching. (L6/14)*

Leaders also talked about the staff who had achieved doctorates, but had not been expected to continue to develop their research portfolio post-doctorate:

> *A PhD is the beginning of your research career, not the end of it... [some people]... are just seeing getting the PhD as the pinnacle as opposed to it really just being a stepping stone. (L6/14)*

Mentors and leaders highlighted the challenges of engaging with research for staff who were not already research active:

> *It is tough if they are not already research active. It's like turning the Titanic. (MG1/4)*

> *You have to have a higher frequency of bidding; you have to design the bids in a different way. (L13/29)*

> *Early career academics...having to cope with things like rejection by publication, by journal editors, they are going to conferences, they are trying to apply for money in a very, very competitive environment, so a lot of what they are having to manage for themselves is a very steep learning curve and very competitive messages, rather than co-operative messages. (M17/10)*

As an institution that had prided itself on its professionally focused courses, many of the academic staff at SU had joined the institution from industry, engaged for their ability to teach students based on their professional experience on courses with a professional focus. Whilst these staff had provided an element of professional currency when they had first joined the institution, they had been working at the institution for a long time and were out of touch with the world outside of academia, which would make engaging with business, industry and the professions to develop research, enterprise and professional practice portfolios challenging:

> *Many of them have been in academia too long and actually don't find it very comfortable relating to the real world. And that goes back to why they came out of the real world into academia, because they didn't want to be out there in the big wide world. (L5/21)*

> *It requires a different set of skills because it involves assembling something that you have to sell, convincing people, having the skills and being confident you can deliver it; what have I got that is transferable outside my teaching.(L12/7/8)*

> *They are not really suited to going to conferences because they are shy people, or haven't got it in terms of being able to write a compelling article. (M18/21)*

> *For some they don't actually know how to translate their knowledge into something that's marketable. (L5/21)*

Thus academic staff at SU seemed to be challenged because what they could aspire to in terms of their careers and what was being demanded of them in their roles was different

from what had been expected of them in the past. The findings indicated that the ways in which academics responded to the career and role challenges would provide external indicators of their academic performance.

4.4.iii Time Challenges

Time challenges were discussed by all four participant groups and there were three main causes of concern around time challenges: the pace of change; the number of tasks academics needed to juggle; and how to use time that had been made available for additional activities. Many said that the pace of change was too fast:

> *The speed [of] change is unrealistic. (L10/7)*
>
> *My worry is that it is going to be like a shooting star in which we are going to get all these measures very quickly and then it doesn't have much sustainability. (M17/13)*
>
> *Everything changed at once; the [Strategic] Plan, the emphasis on different outputs other than education; it really felt quite uncomfortable. (A24/1)*

One of the mentors talked about the length of time that it takes to achieve academic outputs and expressed concerns about how achievable it was to increase a range of academic outputs in a short period of time:

> *We've got a tension in expecting everybody to be able to juggle the same three or four balls in the same way...it's possible if you've got say ten years to show your contribution...I think it's a different thing if you're asking someone to show it in three to five years because of the nature of academic work. (M19/2)*

When academic staff were asked what hindered them from aligning with the organisational strategy in the questionnaire, lack of time was the inhibitor that was mentioned the most with 16 of the 32 comments citing lack of time as a challenge that they were facing, with the reason being the need to juggle competing demands when trying to develop a broader academic portfolio of activities:

High commitments in teaching and assessing. Juggling all aspects of academic practice is difficult. Trying to do a PhD on top of a full-time lecturing post is almost impossible unless specific periods of time can be allocated to study. (AQ19/31)

The coaches talked about how exhausted some staff were *'juggling multiple* balls' (C16/3) and described some of the academics as suffering from *'a bit of burnout' (C16/6)* and *'absolutely wiped out' (C15/47).*

Where academic staff time had been released through curriculum review, leaders recognised the need to support staff in how they used the released time:

I think it's challenged them in that we are giving them more time...it's within their power to develop that and make use of it. It's up to us to guide them in that and to monitor as well, so I think you can't just leave people in the lurch. (L2/7)

The release of staff time for those who had previously had heavy teaching commitments was also challenging; leaders suggested that some had previously used teaching hours as an excuse not to develop their academic portfolios, and now that they had time to undertake other activity, academics were now challenged in how to use the time effectively:

This big burden of teaching...the history of the place is they use it as an excuse not to engage. The whole business of having it within their power to do things differently is the next big step. (L6/7)

Challenge of the time being freed up...issue of confidence and competence or capability. (L12/7/8)

Hence there were a number of time challenges for academic staff including coping with the speed of change and needing to juggle competing demands, particularly when tired. In addition where teaching loads had been reduced, staff were actually challenged by having more time as they sometimes lacked the confidence or competence to engage in other activities.

4.4. iv Psychological Challenges

The leaders, coaches and mentors in particular discussed the psychological challenges faced by academic staff as they encountered feelings of denial, anxiety and lack of confidence in meeting expectations. Leaders and mentors talked about the need to recognise the place of feelings during organisational change:

> *This is a human environment, we are dealing with people and people have feelings and people are affected by things. (L11/2)*

> *I think we've had a lot of negative impacts on the human side, even if it's been for the benefit of the organisation. (M19/2)*

> *It is very task-orientated and what is neglected is its person-centeredness in terms of a culture to work in...Something very human has been lost as to what real transformation requires. (M17/3/12)*

Some leaders talked about how some academics had been in denial of the changes:

> *There was a lot of denial going on, that 'this wasn't really going to impact on me...been working here a long time, this is the way I've been doing it, I'll carry on'. (L6/2)*

> *"They want to keep hold of a nice comfy, non-challenging lifestyle." (L13/31/32)*

Although one of the academics was keen to move on, they did acknowledge that previously it was easier not to:

> *The more you kept constant the less you had to develop new material. Developing new material is what takes the time and so there was a vested interest in the status quo. (A24/1)*

The change in expectations led to academics feeling anxious and all four participant groups identified this as an issue. Anxiety was caused by uncertainty about whether or not individuals had the ability to respond to expectations and therefore whether or not they

would be good enough to keep their jobs; some talked about the fact that they needed more reassurance to reduce the anxiety:

> *I think a lot of people have been very nervous, very anxious [they think/say] 'Am I good enough to be able to meet this new world's expectations?' (L6/7)*

> *It's anxiety and fear as well. People are afraid that they might not perform well enough to progress, or may not perform well enough to stay. (M19/9)*

> *They are anxious about losing their jobs. (M19/4)*

> *It would be nice to get some more assurance [that] you are doing what is needed and what is realistic and within your own career path. (A27/23)*

Anxiety was thought to be caused by lack of self esteem and lack of confidence. One of the mentors spoke of how they could identify with the academics that they were working with and the challenges of having been successful in a previous career and then needing to start over again in a new career as an academic. They said:

> *Many people who I support are like I am, which is the 'second career' academic, so I really understand the tension that they have about trying to manage their self esteem. (M17/4)*

A leader talked about how the *"Challenge is one of confidence."* (L12/7/8) and two other leaders described how working outside current levels of competence was challenging academics, with one of them identifying coaching and mentoring as having a role in developing ability and confidence:

> *It's around people extending their competence outside of probably what they have always felt was their key abilities. (L6/5)*

> *So it's a lot to do with confidence as well as ability and I think coaching and mentoring have a role to play in both of those. (L14)*

Some of the leaders, mentors and a coach identified the importance of having a strong 'sense of self' , suggesting that it was not enough for the institution to provide support for the academics, as individuals needed an inner strength to respond to the expectations,

with one of the coaches suggesting that those who were being successful did have this inner strength:

> *Career structures are important in bringing alignment. But ultimately external influences are one thing, but most of it comes from an internal self and that isn't as easy. (L13/3)*
>
> *The broad goal...can be around academic self-fulfilment because I think that's something that academics need to do for themselves. (L8/16)*
>
> *The individuals who were really succeeding and thriving had a very clearly defined sense of self. (C16/14)*

Thus academic staff faced a number of psychological challenges in responding to the expectations on them, most notably the need to deal with feelings and emotions such as denial, anxiety and lack of confidence.

Whilst the career and role challenges would provide external indicators of academic staff performance, the time and psychological challenges appeared to be something that academic staff needed to internalise in order to be able to deal with them. The need to support academic staff by easing anxiety and providing emotional support when adapting to new roles and adapting to new environments was also reported by Peluchette and Jeanquart (2000) and Schrodt et al (2003).

4.5   CHAPTER SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

When participants in this study were asked what alignment meant to them, they discussed the importance of a clear vision and direction for the organisation; the need to provide support for academics; the expectations placed on academic staff and how these challenged them. The expectations on academic staff at SU were not dissimilar to the types of activities that academics are traditionally engaged in such as using the knowledge gained from research and business engagement to inform a good educational experience for students. A similar model of academic model of discovery, integration, application and teaching of knowledge was described as 'scholarship' more than two decades ago by Boyer (1990). Rather than academic staff needing to align with a strategy at odds with their own concerns, the findings indicated that the organisation and

academics were focusing on a gapand this brought the organisation and academics to a shared position of 'what it means to be an academic' at SU. A new academic career structure provided recognition and reward for academic staff who were performing to the required standards bringing mutual benefits in alignment, as what was good for the institution and for students was also good for academic staff and their careers.

The academics in this study came from a variety of backgrounds, had previously been focused on teaching, and could be described as 'emerging' academics at the early stages of developing their academic careers and identities. Although the term 'emerging' academic is not a concept that features much in the literature, there are many examples of the challenges faced by those developing academic identity and careers. Examples of the range of starting points for these academics include: where staff have needed to become involved in a wider portfolio of academic activities due to government or organisational demands (Billot,2011); those moving from teaching careers in schools to teaching in universities (Griffiths et al,2010); those moving from practitioner careers to academic careers (Boyd,2010: La Rocco and Bruns,2006); doctoral students and pre-tenured professors (McAlpine and Amundson,2009). At SU support was put in place to help academics to respond to career and role challenges that would be judged by the external environment, as well as internal time and psychological challenges related to the feelings that the individual needed to wrestle with in order to be able to respond to the expectations placed on them.   These challenges are comparable to a study of those in transition from a practitioner to an academic career who faced struggles with the role, the self, the culture and the future (Coleman et al,2006).

Similar changes are faced by staff in other organisations during change, as described by Schein (2004:319-322). Schein's 'unfreezing' stage could be used to describe instances where academics at SU had the motivation, or the will to change, but experienced the 'disconfirmation' stage when the challenges made the expectations uncomfortable. The transition they experienced as they moved from being teachers to academics is what Schein calls 'learning anxiety' and they needed to undertake a phase of 'unlearning' their existing identities as teachers.   Thus SU put in place support for academics at organisation and individual level to create an environment conducive to becoming an academic and, in particular, coaching and mentoring support that could potentially increase what Schein (p.322) refers to as 'psychological safety'. This type of support was highlighted as important in organisational alignment by Pololi et al (2009) who identified that, whilst an institution and departments can be aligned, alignment does not always happen at an individual level. In universities, studies have highlighted the importance of

developing an environment that is not just about performance measures, but which creates an organisational climate that is favourable to supporting and developing academics (Hurley,2007;LaRocco and Bruns,2006; Grbich,1998). Other studies have highlighted the ability for coaching to provide support for discovery and alignment with the organisation (Watt,2004) and a study on mentoring indicated that the benefits of mentoring are reciprocal and can benefit the institution as well as the academic (Schrodt et al,2003).

Thus there are two main findings identified in this chapter. Firstly a view that alignment of individual and organisation does not need to be a tension, but that it can provide opportunities for both if they can identify a gap that both want to focus their attention on. Secondly the idea of emerging academics as a group of people who may be at different starting points, but who all need to respond to the expectations placed on them in terms of generating academic outputs that will help them to develop their academic identities and careers whilst meeting organisational requirements, as well as needing to wrestle with the internal challenges associated with the way that they feel about the expectations placed on them. The next chapter will present the findings on the ways in which coaching and mentoring supported academic staff in dealing with these challenges.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE TRANSITIONAL SPACE PROVIDED BY COACHING AND MENTORING

The findings presented in this Chapter are informed by the themes that emerged from the data on experiences of coaching and mentoring. It has been possible to make a distinction between participant experiences of coaching and their experiences of mentoring as each academic participant worked with both an internal mentor and an external coach.

When the data from the coaches, mentors and academics was brought together, the categories and the properties that emerged at Level 2 of the analysis (see Figure 5.1) indicated that some support was provided by coaching, some by mentoring, and that other support was provided by both coaching and mentoring. At Level 3 the relationships between the categories and their properties were brought together into themes that showed that coaching and mentoring both provided support for four main areas: future focus; role implementation; forward momentum; and psychological support. At this point it was possible to make a link between the support provided by coaching and mentoring and the challenges experienced by academic staff set out in Chapter 4. Thus the connections were made as shown in Table 5.1.

Challenges from Chapter 4	Support Provided by Coaching and Mentoring
Career	Future Focus
Role	Role Implementation
Time	Forward Momentum
Psychological	Psychological Support

Table 5.1 Connections between Challenges and Coaching and Mentoring Support

The concepts that emerged at Level 4 of the data analysis indicated that the support provided for future focus and role implementation supported academic staff in the career and role challenges that represented their 'outer world', whilst the support provided for forward momentum and psychological issues supported them in dealing with the feelings that represented their 'inner world'. At this stage of analysis the role of coaching and mentoring emerged as providing a transitional space for academic staff as they worked through the challenges presented by the expectations placed on them, with the coaches and mentors helping them to translate between their 'inner' and 'outer' world.

This Chapter is divided into six main sections as follows:

i. Support for career challenges: future focus
ii. Support for role challenges: role implementation
iii. Support for time challenges: forward momentum
iv. Support for psychological challenges: psychological support
v. The transitional space provided by coaching and mentoring
vi. Transformation over time

The findings on how coaching and mentoring provided support for career, role, time and psychological challenges are presented first. The role of coaching and mentoring in providing a transitional space for academic staff is then discussed. Findings are then presented on the ways in which academic staff performance and behaviour had transformed over time; this section includes findings from the documentary data, which covered a four year period, as well as from all four participant groups: leaders, coaches, mentors and academic staff.
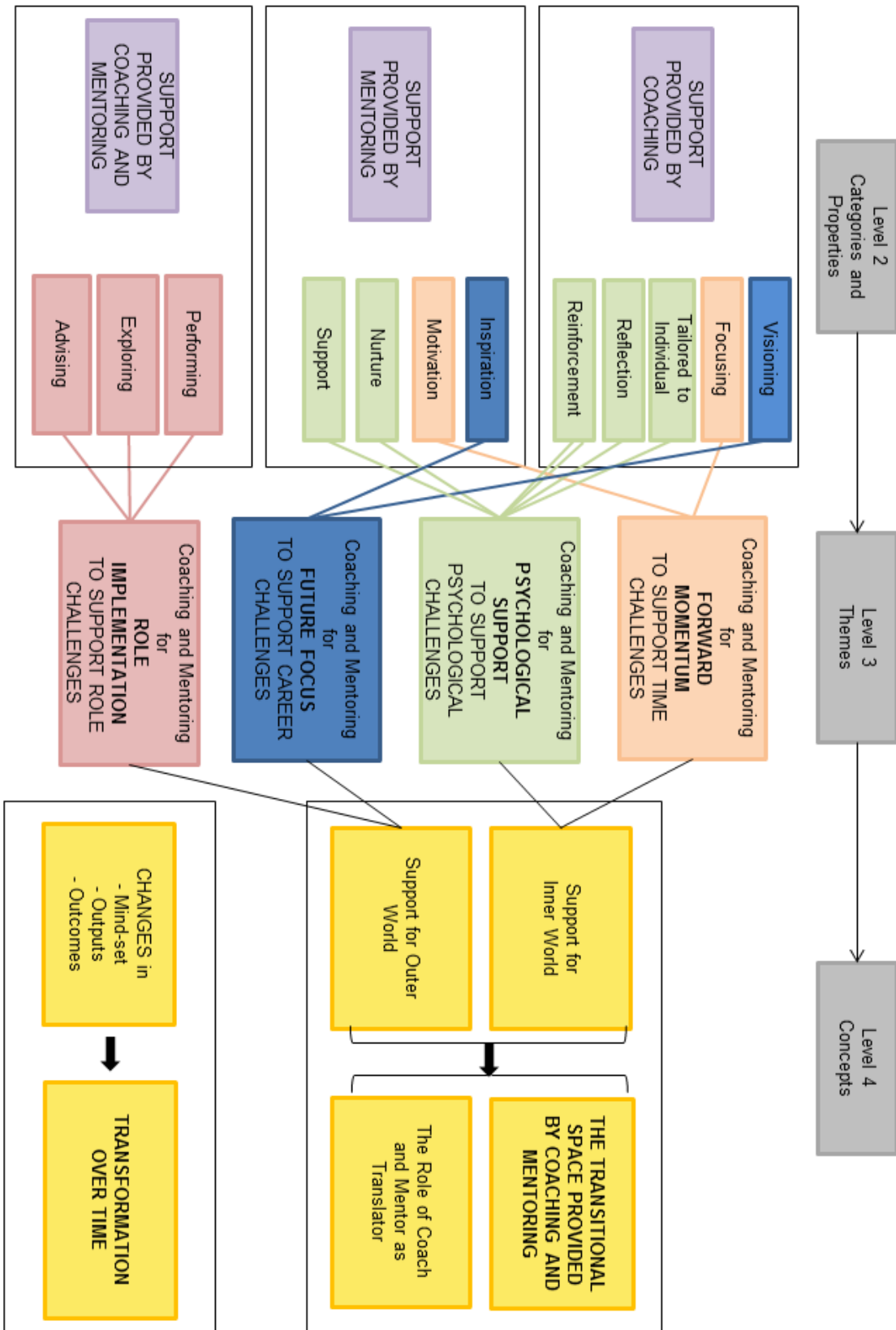
Figure 5.1
Analysis of Coaching and Mentoring Experiences: Coaches, Mentors and Academics

5.1 SUPPORT FOR CAREER CHALLENGES: FUTURE FOCUS

Chapter Four set out the career challenges for academic staff; these provided new reward and promotion opportunities, which some saw as a positive challenge. However, what was required of academics in the future was different to what had been required of them in the past and it appeared that they needed support to create a vision of their future. The findings show how coaching and mentoring provided academics with support for focusing on the future, with coaches helping to create a vision of an academic career, and with mentors acting as inspirational role models.

5.1.i Coaching for Vision

Leaders, coaches and academics identified coaching as an opportunity to look towards the future, prompting a move from the usual focus on daily activities and teaching loads. Four leaders outlined how coaching helped academics to work with career aspirations and create a broader vision of the future; one described coaching as an opportunity to *'Ask [academics] about tomorrow'* (L3). Both coaches described their role as directing thinking to uncover how individuals saw their future careers, saying that they helped them to:

> *Clarify what they want... what they will settle for. (C16)*

> *Talk about where they are going... where they see the future...directing the path. (C15)*

Fifteen academics who responded to the questionnaire said that coaching was quite or very useful for planning their career within SU; three of them said a coach helped them to consider their own place within the strategic context:

> *[Coaching] clarified issues and allowed me to focus on priorities for both myself and how I fit into the wider strategic context of the School and the University. (AQ14/24)*

> *The benefits were to focus on what was important and why to both me and the University. (AQ14/27)*

Provided challenges and structure that would provide significant benefits for the institution and individual. (AQ14/4)

The questionnaire data and the interviews indicated that career coaching alsoencouraged dialogue that helped academics to consider their careers outside SU. Fourteen academics said that coaching was quite or very useful for career planning outside SU. One of the academics found that a lack of critical mass of colleagues working in the same discipline as them was causing them problems in their career and gave an example of how the coach tried to help them to think differently about their career:

The coach said I probably need to think about some other places. (A26/34)

It seemed that regardless of whether the focus was on developing a career inside or outside SU, the overall benefits in terms of career coaching were around helping to think about what it means to be an academic; one said that coaching *'Clarified the process to become an all-round academic.' (AQ14/27*), and another described how the coach helped this:

[The coach] knows nationally the way of thinking, the government policies and the international direction in terms of research... knows how to help people to get on in academic direction. And some of them are so obvious when you are thinking back, but nobody said that before, like that. (AQ26/35)

Another academic highlighted the irony that in supporting them as individual academics, coaching was also supporting the University's strategy:

So I mean I think it has definitely had an impact in terms of, as I say, things like being more conscious of self publicity in what I do and more conscious probably of where I'm putting my efforts in terms of publications... I don't think I would have necessarily thought about doing that without some of the ideas that came out of the coaching...that's interesting isn't it because the coaching aligns with 'Me Incorporated' strategy, which probably does largely align with the University's as it happens. (A29/43)

One of the coaches and some of the academics described how the coach helped them to create a vision of the future by drawing a picture:

> *[The coach said] first of all you draw a picture…where you are, in three years' time, in five years where you'll be. (A26/33)*

5.1.ii Mentoring for Inspiration

The mentors and academics described mentoring as providing inspiration for academics. One of the mentors described how they were a role model to their mentee, whilst another talked about how their invitational style opened up possibilities:

> *[They say to me] I see how you work and I want to have the same focus, or the same x,y,z...I aspire to that - and I try to provide that for them. (M20/36)*

> *[My mentee was] excited by the horizons that were opening up by my invitational style, particularly that we met philosophically. (M17/9)*

The academics discussed how their mentors provided inspiration, as they were leaders in their field and had the skills and attributes that they aspired to:

> *The same subject specialism as me and has insights into professional and academic aspirations.(AQ8/22)*

> *Observe someone doing the research role I wish to move towards.(AQ8/23)*

> *Give you an idea of the level of performance that's required in order to succeed. (AQ8/23)*

> *Gives me very practical help but it's also the inspiration. And I think it's important to surround yourself with positive people and people who have the skills and attributes to which you aspire. (A27/11)*

Thus coaching and mentoring both provided support for a focus on the future. Coaching helped academics to create a vision of their academic career, sometimes by drawing a picture of the future.   Visioning is a coaching approach that focuses on vision and dreams, energising people to look forward (Kauffman,2006) and to find harmony between

internal and external forces by acknowledging limitations and paying attention to what can be achieved (Rosinski,2004). As the coaches were external to the organisation, they were able to support academics in creating a very broad vision of the future as an academic without the need to identify precise goals, thus creating a reality and a vision that had meaning for them as individuals. Mentoring provided an opportunity to work with experienced internal role models, who inspired academics by demonstrating the reality of developing a career as an academic and opening their mind to possibilities. Indeed Macfarlane's research with professors revealed that 100% of the 233 respondents believed that the role of a professor was to help other colleagues develop and 98% said that it was to be a role model (Macfarlane,2011). The importance of role models in socialising inexperienced academics is well documented in the literature, with examples of how they provided support in environments previously dominated by teaching (Grbich,1998), providing role models for research (Katz and Coleman,2001) and in supporting research and scholarly activity (Peluchette and Jeanquart,2000). Mentors have also been described in the literature as change agents who create personal and organisational changes, helping people to feel hopeful and optimistic about the future (Angelique et al,2002) by inspiring their mentees (Maddern,2010).

It appeared that coaching and mentoring provided complementary roles, as coaching helped individuals to envision their future career as academics, whilst mentors demonstrated how to make the vision a reality. In supporting a focus on the future, coaching and mentoring appeared to support both organisation and individual academic aspirations.

5.2   SUPPORT FOR ROLE CHALLENGES: ROLE IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter Four highlighted the role challenges for academic staff, which included concerns about the need to change the way that they worked in order to contribute to three out of four areas of academic practice. Coaching and mentoring both provided support for implementing the expectations of academic staff roles by focusing on their performance and providing a space for exploration and advice.

5.2.i   Coaching and Mentoring for Performance

Coaching and mentoring provided support for performance. For coaching this was about recognising academic staff potential within the institutional context and providing challenge and structure to help academics improve their performance; this included identifying performance that could be measured in terms of outputs and value to the institution. For mentoring this was about stretching and pushing academics to improve their performance.

5.2.ii   Coaching for Performance

Of the 36 academic staff who completed the questionnaire some indicated that coaching supported them in recognising their potential and thinking about and improving their performance, as shown in Table 5.2.

Academics Identified Coaching as a Support For...	Number of Academics who said that Coaching Support was Quite or Very Useful
Recognising my potential	21
Identifying goals in the context of the Strategic Plan	15
Thinking about my long-term performance	25
Improving my performance	17

Table 5.2 Coaching and Performance

It seemed that at this point the coach's role was to support a move from the broad goal identified through the visioning stage to work with academics to identify their potential for performance. One of the academics described how the coach helped to work on focused performance goals in the context of the organisation, saying that coaching was:

A client-led approach that provided challenges and structure that would provide significant benefits for the institution and individual. (AQ14/4)

A coach explained how this was achieved by working with the academic to identify:

Changes that can be measured in terms of productivity and output of value to the organisation. (C16)

Thus coaching provided an opportunity to work with performance in a way that could benefit both the institution and the academic. The ways in which coaching supported both academic staff and the institution is typical of performance coaching that focuses on performance-related behaviours and organisational outcomes (Bachkirova,2011; 2007). In two HE studies, goal alignment linked both individual and organisational objectives which resulted in tangible outcomes for research, publication and career changes (Geber,2010) and helped academics to move beyond ideas formation to publishing their work whichhelped to improve on their previous performance (Baldwin and Chandler,2002).

5.2.iii Mentoring for Performance

Three mentors and the mentors group talked about the value of mentoring in enhancing performance, with one highlighting the mentor's role in being honest about performance issues:

If you can't raise difficulties and problems in performance and make suggestions on how to improve it, you're not effective as a mentor. (M21)

Others described how they stretched and challenged the academics that they worked with:

I say you're not working hard enough; you've got to push yourself further. (M21)

I always ask them, where's the development in your objectives? I challenge their development, with some I say you are standing still. (MP22)

Academics seemed to welcome the drive for performance that their mentor gave them, speaking positively about how the mentors encouraged them to push their boundaries, to set objectives and to identify future steps to enhance their career.   They also expected their mentors to help them to raise their personal profile and that of their work. One of them said that they wanted *'Someone to kick me along a bit.'* (A24) and another welcomed the mentor as *'Someone to drive you forward in your career.'* (AQ8/3).

Whilst the mentors focused on stretch and challenge to support academics in their performance, this type of support is not typical in mentoring.   Although mentoring provides opportunities to give feedback on performance (Kram,1988) and the outcome of mentoring is often improved job performance (Ehrich et al,2004), it is not often described as being a driver for improving performance in the same way that coaching is. Whilst studies of mentoring in the HE literature indicate improvements for those who have engaged in mentoring, it is rare for improvement in performance to be discussed overtly and although academics expect feedback on their work (Wasserstein et al,2007), they would prefer to spend more time with their mentor on reflection than on performance (Zanting et al,2001). It is possible that at SU the mentors knew from personal experience how quickly the academics would need to develop in order to generate the outputs that were expected of them in a short period of time; this was to help meet organisational targets, but also mentors said that they felt a sense of responsibility to support academics to take advantage of promotion and pay progression opportunities.

5.2.iv Coaching and Mentoring for Exploration

Coaches, mentors and academics all described the role of coaching and mentoring in providing a space for exploration. There was more data on the role of coaching in supporting exploration than for mentoring. Academics valued the opportunity to explore this with an independent coach, and used their mentor as a sounding board.

5.2.v Coaching for Exploration

Coaches described how in the coaching sessions academics could bounce ideas and explore tensions, options and choices that helped them to explore established patterns

and look at the unexpected. Both coaches worked with the individual in the organisational context saying that they provided an opportunity to:

Explore individual goals versus organisational goals. (C15)

Explore what will make the individual happy; what will make the organisation happy. (C16)

One coach said that all they needed to do was to *'Provide a few touches on the rudder.'*(C16/8),whilst academics described coaching as empowering, providing opportunities to deal with tough issues, to question themselves and their motives and to work things out for themselves. As one said:

It gave me time to draw my own conclusions about what I need to do to get to where I want to be. (AQ14/6)

Exploration with the coach appeared to be helpful for problem solving, with 25 academics responding to the questionnaire saying that it was quite or very useful in helping them to think critically about their role; 22 said it helped to challenge blocks and barriers and 18 said that it was quite or very useful in helping them to solve problems. Two described how it was helpful:

Brought to the surface several key issues that I was aware of, but had failed to acknowledge to myself and not dealt with. (AQ14/17)

Expressing internal thoughts to an external professional helps with recognising and formulating a personal block or problem. (AQ14/7)

There were mixed views about whether or not it was better for a coach to be internal or external. However, 22 academics who responded to the questionnaire said that it was quite or very useful to work with someone independent. Although five of the academics who were interviewed were keen to develop their careers within SU, one of the academics had seriously considered moving elsewhere and talked about the benefit of being able to speak to a coach who was external to the organisation:

The option to be able to be a bit more open, including discussions about maybe this isn't where you want to stay… quite refreshing in a sense… the bluntness … that would be hard to do with somebody who was internal. (A29/31)

5.2.vi Mentoring for Exploration

Although the mentors and academics also identified mentoring as a space for exploration, there was much less data on this than there was for coaching and exploration. Three of the mentors talked about how mentoring helped to explore different ways of dealing with issues as it helped to:

Talk about the possible from numerous foci. (M19)

 Highlight what the issues are, but also help find ways both novel and new to resolve the issue, but also to cope with the process....look at how they can manage a situation more constructively themselves."(M21/6)

Academic staff described mentoring as somewhere that they could have good debates, to use their mentor as a sounding board and to discuss issues that they had been wrestling with to help them to move forward. One of them said:

On knottier problems it helps to have someone to talk through different approaches before making a decision. (AQ8/14)

Exploration is a typical approach used in coaching and has been used as a sounding board in organisations to work with staff whose vision does not match those of their organisation (Devins and Gold,2000). In an HE study by Geber (2010) academic staff used coaching as a developmental space to explore areas linked to their work outputs. Although another study of mentoring in a university showed how mentoring mediated the negative effects of experiencing change by providing a space to explore options and take ownership (Cureton et al,2010), there was little data on mentoring and exploration in this study.   The independent position of an external coach may have been a reason why academics spent more time in the exploration stage with the coach than with the mentor

as they may have felt that they had more freedom to explore with someone independent from the University.

5.2.vii Coaching and Mentoring for Advice

Coaches, mentors and academics discussed the role of coaches and mentors in giving advice. There was more data on the role of mentoring in giving advice, than for coaching.

5.2.viii   Coaching for Advice

Academics gave a number of examples of where their coach had been able to give advice. The situations ranged from the understanding that the coach had of international and government policies, rules and politics, influencing others and how to link with networks to secure funding. One of the academics likened it to apprenticeship, whilst another likened it to sports coaching; they said that coaching was like:

> *Apprenticeship, how to do it, deal with things, do them the right way. (A26/39)*
>
> *Telling you what to do to improve stuff – like sports coaching.(A27)*

The giving of advice is not typical in coaching (Watt,2004) and research undertaken by Treuer and van der Sluis (2005) showed that the 'expert' coach style had no significant influence on the performance of coachees. However, a study by Alafaci (2006) showed that the majority of coaches do give advice and their coachees expect it. However, the coaches at SU drew on their own knowledge and experience of working and coaching in other institutions. One of the coaches described how they used their own experience to support academics, saying: *'My academic insight gave useful levers, some advice I could share.' (C16/10).*

5.2.ix Mentoring for Advice

Mentors and academics described mentoring as a space for giving advice and the questionnaire asked questions about the help that the mentor gave in generating academic outputs.

Mentors gave details of their role in providing guidance and suggesting pragmatic strategies on how to deal with problems. They also gave examples of where they had a role in providing opportunities for academics to become involved in projects. One said that they were:

> *Looking out for them and see opportunities for them; linking them across Schools into things that they might not know about. (M20/9)*

Academic staff who responded to the questionnaire identified areas where the support of their mentor had been quite or very useful and these are set out in Table 5.3.

Task	Number of Staff Who said Mentor Support was Quite or Very Useful
Writing/submitting items for publication	17
Writing/submitting bids for funding	14
Writing/submitting abstracts for conferences	10
Developing networks/contacts	11
Choosing a doctoral programme	10
Developing a research proposal	14

Table 5.3 Mentor Support

The academics gave many other examples that indicated the value of their mentors' experiences in problem-solving, including: giving advice on processes, including for professional accreditation and promotion; knowing the answers to questions; understanding the organisation and how senior staff think. Overall, academic staff identified mentoring as being important in supporting them to develop as an academic:

Provides direction for my academic understanding. (A27)

Provides a space for being an academic outside everyday demands of teaching. (AQ8/10)

The provision of advice is a typical role in mentoring (Kram,1988) and is included in one of the four most frequently cited positive mentor/mentee outcomes in studies of mentoring in the educational literature (Ehrich et al,2004). Whilst the coaches in this study gave some advice, the mentors were established academics contributing to a wide portfolio of academic activities and their advice was based on their own experiences. The giving of advice by mentors on producing academic outputs was also cited in a study by Foote and Solem (2009).

It seemed that coaching and mentoring provided support for academic staff in implementing their roles, with coaching encouraging a structure for measuring performance and mentors stretching and challenging academics to improve their performance. Working with an independent coach provided scope for exploring options, whilst mentors were used as a sounding board. Mentors were able to use their experience of generating academic outputs to give advice on a range of academic areas, whilst the coaches gave some advice based on their own experiences of working and coaching in other HE institutions.

5.3 SUPPORT FOR TIME CHALLENGES: FORWARD MOMENTUM

Chapter Four highlighted how academics were challenged in how to spend their time. The pace of change was fast, compared to the time it takes to generate academic outputs and some felt they had to juggle with competing demands on their time. Some academics lacked confidence where time had been made available for them to engage in different academic outputs, as heavy teaching loads had previously provided a reason for not engaging in new areas of work. The findings indicate that coaching supported staff in focusing and structuring how to spend their time, whilst mentors facilitated a process to motivate academics by working with their passions and making expectations seem possible.

5.3.i   Coaching for Focus

The coaches did not explicitly discuss coaching as support for focusing; however, academics talked about how coaching helped them in *'Learning to be focused.'* *(AQ14/19)*, and 24 academics who completed the questionnaire said that coaching was quite or very useful in helping them to think critically about how they spent their time, providing clarity of thought about what they needed to do in order to achieve. One of them said that coaching was:

> *Influential in getting me to examine my own processes...my self-management stumbling blocks. (A24/6)*

> *Guided clear thinking about my aspirations and what is do-able and possible. (AQ14/30)*

This clarity of thought then helped the academics to better organise themselves as it helped to: *'Focus on the key issues.'* (AQ14/2); *'Provide focus and strategies.'* (AQ14/1); and to *'[Be] proactive, moving forward and progressing.'*(A29).Academics described how this provided a structure; two of them said that it:

> *Enabled me to see how I needed to structure my time in order to maximise possibilities for research and enterprise. (AQ14/20)*

> *Gave clear direction...identified milestones or key tasks. (A28/4)*

This coaching approach is similar to that described by Bachkirova (2011) where the coach helps the coachee to slow down and concentrate focused energy and effort from a rational and detached perspective. Academics gave examples of how coaching had helped them to move forward. For example two of them said it was:

> *A push factor to start acting on solutions to overcome personal hurdles. (AQ14/7)*

> *Since our sessions I have actually moved forward with some of the things that I felt a bit stuck with. (AQ14/13)*

It is interesting that the coaches did not talk about how they provided support for focusing, but the academics said that coaching helped them to focus. This could be because it was something that followed quite naturally from standing outside of the issue and knowing what they wanted to achieve – maybe this was a natural by-product of the other work that they did with the coach – they knew what they wanted to do and what they needed to do to get there and the ability to focus on that and set milestones was something that naturally followed. Had the coach started from actions and milestones, academics may have described it differently. This phenomenon is explored in the coaching literature on goals, which presents a range of views that suggest that coaching can start with goals, can generate goals, or that goals are a outcome of coaching (Garvey et al,2009) or thatthe development of goals is an iterative process (Clutterbuck and Megginson,2007).

5.3.ii   Mentoring for Motivation

Although the academics did not specifically discuss motivation, seven of the mentors did. The mentors described how they motivated academics by finding what out what excited them, breaking tasks down to make them feel possible. One mentor talked about the ways in which they motivated academics by calling them to action, identifying possibilities that were *'Active, represent adventure, or the future.'*(M17/8). Two mentors spoke of the importance of helping academics to feel energised by change, to feel empowered and take responsibility:

> *Not taking anything away...something they go out and do themselves...them having the insight to think I can do that. (M20/13)*

> *Formulating ideas which are much broader and open-ended for them to fill in the sub text and the detail. (M21/7)*

 Another talked about the need to find out what they were excited or felt passionate about, either as a starting point, or to help unblock them if they were stuck:

> *Talk to them about what aspect of what they do they really love and what excites them and what they are interested in...try to find ways to make as much as possible point to that. (M19/19)*

Others talked about the need to make the mentee feel good about what they were trying to achieve:

> *I value and motivate them and make it feel possible. (MP22/2)*
>
> *Give them a bit of feeling good about themselves and their contribution. (M20/9)*
>
> *Help them to see and achieve deliverables. Helps to see it's not as big as they thought it was. (MG1/10)*
>
> *It seems insurmountable...I just unpick it and say you've got to take it one step at a time. (M18/48)*

It is interesting that the mentors talked about how they motivated academics, but the academics did not specifically talk about being motivated by the mentor. This could be because for academic staff it was what happened after they were motivated that they noticed, rather than what the mentor was doing, or how the mentor was motivating them. The mentors appeared to facilitate the process of motivation, rather than doing something obvious. One mentor described it as:

> *Facilitating a process that sparks that 'aha' moment. (M21/3)*

The mentor's role in motivating mentees is well recognised in the literature (Clutterbuck,2004; Kram,1988). The environment that was created at this stage by the mentors for academics at SU was similar to that described by Kalin et al (2009), who describe how the mentor resists giving the answer, acknowledging the mentees' creativity and authority, encouraging them to choose from their own options.

Thus coaching and mentoring both provided support for the time challenges faced by academic staff. Coaching helped academics to stand back and develop a structure for dealing with the challenges; whilst the mentors facilitated a process where academics started with what they felt passionate about and helped them to break things down to what felt possible.   It appeared that this type of support provided forward momentum, supporting academics to deal with the feelings that they had about their use of time to help them to move forward to achieve their aspirations.

5.4   SUPPORT FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES: PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The expectations on academic staff set out in Chapter Four presented psychological challenges for academic staff as they came to terms with what was expected of them but remained anxious about their future with the organisation and sometimes lacked confidence in responding to the changing demands placed on them.   The findings show that coaching and mentoring both provided support for dealing with these feelings, with coaches and academics describing the ways in which coaching was tailored to the individual's needs, providing opportunities for reflection and reinforcement; mentors and academics described the importance of relationship and the supportive space created by mentoring.

5.4.i   Coaching for Psychological Support

The areas of psychological support provided by coaching were: coaching tailored to individual needs; coaching for reflection; and coaching for reinforcement.

5.4.ii   Coaching for Tailored Support for Individual Needs

The coaches and academics discussed how coaching was an opportunity to focus on the individual, with 22 of the academics who responded to the questionnaire saying that it was quite or very useful in focusing them on issues that were important to them. Some of them said that they appreciated the coaching because *'People like to be the centre of attention at times.' (A27)* and it was:

> *Tailored to exactly the issues I was facing. (AQ14/24)*
>
> *Always nice to talk about yourself. (A25)*
>
> *Very focused on me. (AQ14/30)*

One coach saw the coaching as an opportunity to *'Work on individual career plans.'*(C15/9)and 23 academics who responded to the questionnaire said that it was either quite or very useful in helping them to identify their development needs, with 22 saying that it helped them in planning their personal and professional development. Although individually focused, the organisational context was not excluded from these conversations and many academics described how the individual focus was discussed in context. One said that coaching:

> *Looked at me as an individual within the context of the institution and how I might develop.'(A27)*

Academics also appreciated focusing on their own needs and development, rather than just focusing on what the organisation wanted or needed and some saw this as an advantage of working with an external coach.

5.4.iii Coaching for Reflection

The coaches and academics discussed the benefit of coaching as an opportunity to reflect. One coach talked about how coaching provided a structure and a time for self reflection, providing a chance to:

> *Reflect and do a complete assessment of life. (C16/9)*
>
> *Develop sense of self. (C16/21)*
>
> *Develop core identity. (C16/5)*

Likewise, 23 of the academic staff who responded to the questionnaire said that coaching was either quite or very useful in providing a listening ear, with the same number saying that it helped them to make time to reflect and think.

One of the academics spoke of how attentive the coach was, saying that they would *'Listen to who I am.'* (A27) and others spoke about how reflection prompted an increase in self awareness, saying that coaching:

> *Opened my eyes to myself. (AQ14/20)*
>
> *Helps you understand yourself better. (AQ14/3)*

Academics said their coach achieved this by being *'Open and non-judgemental.'* (AQ14/20) and *'Very much a critical friend.'* (AQ14/4). One of the coaches talked about how this reflective stage helped the academics to *'Develop self confidence.'(C15)*and 17 of the academics said that coaching was quite useful or very useful for increasing their self confidence.

5.4.iv Coaching for Reinforcement

Academic staff talked about how coaching provided a space for reinforcement, although the coaches did not discuss this; maybe because it was something that the coaches naturally did, rather than something that they set out to do. Five academics described coaching as a space for encouragement, reassurance and reinforcement, which gave them confidence, for example three said that:

> *Coaching reinforced what I was doing right. (AQ14/11)*
>
> *I gained reassurance in the validity of the activities I am pursuing. (AQ14/21)*
>
> *If ithadn't been for these sessions I wouldn't have had the courage of my conviction to apply for funding. (AQ14/14)*

It appeared coaching helped academics to focus on their own needs and development, increasing their self awareness and building their confidence.

5.4.v Mentoring for Psychological Support

The findings indicated that mentoring provided a nurturing relationship which, in turn, created a supportive space for academics where they could share their thoughts and feelings and feel valued.

5.4.vi Mentoring for Nurture

The mentors spoke about the importance of creating an environment where academics could both share their vulnerabilities and build their confidence, whilst academics discussed the importance of the relationship that they had with their mentor.

Mentors explained how *'People expose their vulnerabilities' (MP22)* when working with their mentor and how in that situation it is possible to find out about their *'Anxiety and lack of confidence.' (MG23).* Mentors talked about the importance of meeting academics where they were, rather than imposing a starting point on the mentoring process, with one of them describing it as:

> *Rather than impose something they can't identify with...contact people where they are, rather than where we want them to be. (M17)*

Another described their role in focusing on the whole individual, not just the issue that they brought to the session, by:

> *Nurturing the whole individual, not just the problem they bring because that's a moment, an opportunity that you can change the process of their thinking rather than just focus on an individual situation. (M21/6)*

Academics described the relationship with their mentor as comfortable, and like *'a family relationship'* (A25/26). Their experience was of working with someone very close, who was looking out for them, who they could trust, who knew them as an individual, and where the relationship was authentic and respectful. One of them explained the special connection between them and their mentor as:

The golden thread, some sort of connection between people. (A27)

One of them described the mentoring conversation as:

A psychological chat... [where the mentor can] analyse something about you. (A26)

Others discussed how the relationship gave them a greater sense of belonging, of friendship and confidence building. One of them said that the relationship:

Calms me down...makes me feel not alone. (A26)

5.4.vii Mentoring for Support

The word that was most often used by mentors and academics to describe mentoring was 'support'. Whilst everything that helped the academic during the mentoring process could be described as 'support', when the mentors talked about the support that they provided, they talked mostly about creating a supportive space for academic staff to talk:

I have empathy for them and create space. (MP22/2)

Space to talk about their work out loud. (M19/17)

Create space to explore how to create synergy with their own individual motivation levels and the School and the University. (MP22/2)

Mentors also talked about the importance of listening for creating the space that academics needed to offload and to move forward, for example:

People can offload...get it out of their system... move it to the next bit...how can I help you change that, improve that, deal with it, manage it, re-frame it. (M20/11)

Unpick their reticence and send them out with a positive steer. (M18/48)

One mentor highlighted the importance of creating a space where academics felt that their thoughts and ideas were valued:

[They can] experience their thoughts being valued, their ideas being valued, and their values being valued [which] mitigates against highly competitive, critical feeling. (M17)

In a similar way to their experience of coaching, academic staff talked about how mentoring created a place for them to be listened to, to be reflective, for someone to provide reassurance and reinforcement, for encouragement with someone who would give their time and be responsive to their needs. They described it as:

Important to have someone to talk to on general or specific project problems."(AQ8/22)

Emotional back up. (A24,A26)

Thus coaching and mentoring both provided support for the psychological challenges faced by academic staff. Research has shown that positive reinforcement is necessary for high achievers to receive reassurance about their skills, knowledge and competence (Jones and Spooner,2006). At SU where academic staff needed support to overcome their anxieties about the changes that they were experiencing, coaching focused on the individual's needs, providing opportunities for reflection and reinforcement. Zeuss and Skiffington (2005) and Redshaw (2000) have also highlighted the importance of coaching in providing encouragement and reinforcement to people who are lonely, discouraged and stuck when learning new things. In addition, mentoring provided a nurturing relationship and a supportive space where academics could offload and share their concerns, similar to the mentoring support described by Girves et al (2005), where mentoring provided a supportive, nurturing and protective experience that helped to facilitate growth.

5.5 The Transitional Space Provided by Coaching and Mentoring

One of the mentors in the study talked about their role in providing a transitional space for academic staff as they helped them to translate between their 'inner' and 'outer worlds'. This section sets out the findings in relation to the concept of transitional space and introduces the role of the coaches and mentors as translators between the inner and outer world of academics. The mentor described their role in supporting academics within the challenging expectations placed on academics at SU as described in Chapter Four:

> *I'm really interested in helping a person to develop into an academic...I'm interested in transformation... I'm in this middle position...to represent transitional space in which I can translate between these two worlds, between their inner world and their outer world. (M17/11)*

The mentor described the 'outer world' as expectations and the 'inner world' as feelings and it is possible to draw parallels between this mentor's explanation and the career, role, time and psychological challenges faced by academics as described in Chapter Four. For academics in this study their inner world could be described as their feelings about the expectations placed on them, such as those set out in the sections on time and psychological challenges; and their external world could be described as the expectations where the results would be visible to the outside world, such as career and role challenges. The issue of transition during organisational change is described by Bridges and Mitchell (2000), where change is manifested as an external process, but transition is also an internal process whereby an individual needs to undergo a psychological reorientation before change can take place, with the need to let go of the old and to move through a neutral 'space' before being able to move forward. Hultman and Gellerman (2002:106) suggest that internal conflict occurs when there is an 'intrapersonal misalignment' when a person is torn between beliefs about themselves and their desire for personal growth, with the result that the person shifts between confidence and fear, hope and despair, self-doubt and certainty.

All of the leaders, coaches and mentors interviewed believed that coaching and mentoring had a role in providing support for academics as they responded to organisational expectations, individual career aspirations, and the feelings that they had about the challenges that they were facing, with suggestions that all of these could be usefully

discussed in a supportive environment.   In considering the notion of transitional space in this context, it seemed that coaching and mentoring were supporting the alignment of academic staff in two ways. Firstly, the coaches and mentors provided both a transitional space for academics within which they can step back from their everyday concerns and work through the expectations and the challenges that they faced. This can be likened to the transitional space described by Winnicott(1999) who describes transitional space as the territory between the internal (psychic reality) and external world of individuals.Dubouloy's (2004) research explores coaching using the concept of Winnicott's transitional space when working with managers finding their 'true' selves when they work in challenging environments. At SU the transitional space could be described as the physical time, place, resources and support provided by the coaches and mentors where they helped academics to work with their internal time and psychological challenges in order to better deal with their externally measured career and role challenges.

The second way in which coaching and mentoring at SU could be considered to be providing a transitional space in supporting academic staff in their alignment relates to the role of the coaches and the mentors. One of the mentors said:

I can translate between these two worlds, between their inner world and their outer world, especially in a culture and a context in which their inner world is under-represented and they don't have a voice for that. (M17/11)

In this respect the coaches and mentors could loosely be said to be fulfilling the role of the transitional object, described by Winnicott (1999) as a thing or phenomenon used by children as a defence against anxiety, which could be something like a teddy bear, or their mother, providing support within the transitional space. To quote the word used by the mentor, the term 'translate' has been defined as to 'move from one place or condition to another' (Oxford Dictionaries,2012) and could therefore be used to describe how in the transitional space, the coach or mentor helped to move the academic from where they were towards where they wanted to be.   The skill of facilitating a transition shift is discussed by Hawkins and Smith (2010:59) who suggest that to help a person shift their levels of consciousness, their current level of being and thinking needs to be moved from their current way of operating and that this is most appropriately facilitated by someone who is able to function at a higher level than the person being helped. One of the mentors described their role in helping academics as they were able to step back from the detail to facilitate the academic in making a transition:

And what you've done is avoid the detail, you've come at it much more open ended as someone looking in, rather than someone being in, and that enables them [the academic] to fill in all the bits and pieces and often come up with the problem or solutions more effectively. (M21/7)

One of the academics talked about how their coach helped them to shift their thinking and behaviour by the way in which they were able to 'be with' them; they compared an experience of receiving support on a previous occasion with the support that they were now receiving from their coach, saying that on the previous occasion:

I thought why don't you actually stop doing what they trained you to do in such a mechanistic [way] and why don't you actually just start trying to be with people, rather than to think, 'right this is the job that I've got to do and this is the technique that I've got to use'. (A27/14)

Of their coach they said:

I enjoyed being with them and I think they enjoyed being with me. (A27/13)

Thus the idea of how the coach or mentor operated within the transitional space was important to the ways in which coaching and mentoring supported academics. The idea of 'space' between therapist and client is discussed by Bridges (2007) as the need for a therapist to attend carefully to the manner in which they meet with the client and the physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual manifestation of their presence with the client. One of the mentors talked about how they did this by comparing their approach to Todres' (2007) model of 'being-with' used for developing students in adult psychotherapy and designed to help them reflect on some of the ways that they can be 'present' with their clients during therapy:

I think those four ways of being in therapy are important to mentoring as well... 'attentive being with', 'focusing being with', 'interactive being with' and 'invitational being with' and it's an integration of those four ways of being with and locating ourselves as a mentor. (M17/8)

Although at SU the concept of 'being with' was perhaps not manifest purely in the ontological way in which Todres and Bridges have described it, it did appear that by 'being with' and working with academics in different ways, the coaches and mentors were able to support the academics in dealing with the expectations placed on them and the challenges that they faced by supporting them in focusing on the future; supporting implementation of academic roles; providing forward momentum; and psychological support. Thus it appeared that the role of coaching and mentoring was to provide a transitional space in which academics could access support to work through the challenges that they faced.

5.6 TRANSFORMATION OVER TIME

It would not be appropriate to talk about 'transitional space' without including findings about what was different after the coaching and mentoring had taken place. There was evidence that changes had taken place over time and there were three main sources for these findings. Firstly, the coaches and mentors provided observations of how the academics had changed over the four years that they had been working with them. Secondly, academic staff provided evidence of how their careers had changed over the period of the study. Thirdly, documentary data (D11) showed how the funding and publication outputs of staff on the RREP Programmes had changed over the period which was under investigation.

The coaches and mentors provided observations of how the academics had changed over the time that they had been working with the academic participants. The coach data is particularly significant as the coaches were external and their observations are based on punctuated periods of work with SU; therefore their observations from the outside looking in are pertinent as they were not embedded in the detail of everyday life in the institution.One of them reflected on their experiences at the start of working with SU, where the academics were *'What I call Further Education, not university, lecturers in their minds.'* (C15/2) and how they had worked with staff who were full of anxiety. They saw the final round of coaching sessions in a much more positive way and gave examples of how the confidence of academic staff had increased:

These last three [coaching sessions] have been much more about being academics…there's a much more positive focus than there was when we first started…there's been a real shift in attitude…and a lot more confidence…They've made quite a big journey over the years…they've shifted quite considerably. (C15/2)

There might be some angst about whether they are going to get everything they want published, but they are assuming that they are going to get published now, it's more about where. (C15/3)

The coaches talked about how the academic staff were beginning to develop their own identity as academics, rather than being overly focused on what the organisation said that they *'had to do'* (C15/27), one said:

Most of them have forgotten the alignment with the organisation…they tucked the alignment in to the back of their head…they are actually focused on their individual careers and on publishing in the right places and making a name for themselves and perhaps getting on a government policy group or two…so it's got more to do with personal development, but it's personal development that they've been given the freedom to do by the alignment…they see it as more freedom for them, or development for them, they're more confident, can see more clearly. I don't think many of them would want to go back to the way they were before. (C15/27)

The other coach commented similarly:

No matter what their starting point, they all realised that now they did want to do research and yes it was something extra and it may not originally have been part of the job description but… they enjoyed doing it, they valued the recognition that they got from it and saw that if I can do this then it's actually good for my career as well. And so they really saw it as a win-win, they were getting something from it and the organisation was getting something from it. (C16/12)

Mentors shared examples of mentee achievements since they had started working with them and these examples demonstrated that the expectations on academic staff set out in Chapter Four were not at odds with what was being achieved. Two of them said:

I have mentees who are intrinsically motivated, they are passionate about their subject area, they are passionate about their discipline, they are passionate about their students, they love teaching and they have research programmes that they are really excited about. (M17/4)

There's people wanting to do well and wanting to seize opportunities and wanting to see the School and University thrive. Very committed to the students...I do think we've got big buy-in so people will just work [really hard] to make it work. (M19/9)

Academics gave examples of how their academic work had changed over time. Table 5.4 shows a range of responses from the questionnaire. The left-hand column shows a typical response and the right hand column shows the total number of staff who gave similar responses. Their responses indicated that their activities were in synergy with the expectations on academic staff set out in the Strategic Plan and discussed in Chapter Four.

Examples of Alignment with Organisational Strategy	Total Number Contributing in Similar Areas
"I have become much more research focused." (AQ17/3)	9
"I am contributing to the 'Four Pillars'." (AQ17/6)	8
"I am applying for funding to develop our enterprise project." (AQ17/14)	7
"Undertaking a doctorate." (AQ17/9)	6
"Working towards achieving higher academic profile through all academic activity." (AQ17/8)	3
"Improving the student experience developing short courses." (AQ17/24)	2
"Building professional networks and collaboration outside SU." (AQ17/7)	2

Table 5.4
Examples of the Ways in which Academic Staff were Aligning with Organisational Strategy

Finally, the documentary data (D11) showed how the funding and publication outputs of academic staff on the RREP Programmes, who were still employed by SU at the end of the data collection period, had changed over the period under investigation. Table 5.6 shows an increase in the average number of successful funding applications submitted per year and in the number of successful publications, which seems to indicate a growth in both confidence and competence.

RREP Cohort 1 Participant Outputs	Average successful outputs per annum in the two years prior to RREP Cohort 1 commenced	Average successful outputs per annum in the four years since RREP Cohort 1 commenced
Number of Funding Applications Submitted	7	32.5
Successful Funding Applications	4	12.5
Average Successful Grants	£143,000	£168,000
Successful Publications	52	85
RREP Cohort 2 Participant Outputs	Average successful outputs per annum in the two years prior to RREP Cohort 2 commenced	Average successful outputs per annum in the threeyears since RREP Cohort 2 commenced
Number of Funding Applications Submitted	14.5	37
Successful Funding Applications	9.5	19
Average Successful Grants	£343,000	£411,000
Successful Publications	65	90

Table 5.6 Publication and Funding Outputs

By the end of the data collection period, ten of the participants had been promoted to Grade 9, the equivalent of a Principal Lecturer grade, in recognition of them achieving excellent academic outputs in one of the Four Pillars and good and satisfactory outputs in two of the others; and one had been promoted to Associate Professor. The output data indicates that the support given to academic staff may have contributed to a growth in their confidence and competence in achieving academic outputs. A similar investment in development support aligned to organisational requirements is discussed by Pangarkar and Kirkwood (2009), who suggest that aligning workplace learning with organisational requirements can help to increase the return on investment in learning.

The evidence suggests that the coaching and mentoring was a contributory factor in supporting the alignment of academic staff and institutional strategy. Indeed the majority of leaders cited the RREP Programme and the coaching and mentoring support as being significant in supporting the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy. The following quotes from one academic and then two leaders highlight the positive ways in which the coaching and mentoring on the RREP and EREPP Programmes was viewed:

I thought this is probably the best chance I've got to try to get some sense of direction and maybe more than that. Motivation's a funny thing; I've always felt I was motivated to do it, but I was always afraid of taking any steps. You know, which step, which way? I was really nervous about that and I saw what was going on [with RREP] as an opportunity to help me take some steps. (A24/4)

[RREP] is a classic example of where a structured programme has delivered genuine support for that important group of staff who were perhaps lacking in confidence about research and enterprise who have now been exposed to people who can act as exemplars, who can show them the tricks of the trade, who can generally provide encouragement and support. (L4/11)

We've identified a little spark in there and we've blown on that spark and we've ignited them and they're going to fly. (L13/31/32)

5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this Chapter the findings indicate how coaching and mentoring provided a transitional space for academic staff to work through the challenges that they faced in aligning with the organisational strategy, that could be externally measured and recognised by helping them to develop a focus on their future careers, as well as helping them to concentrate on implementing the new aspects of their roles. Working with an external coach helped them to open their minds, explore options and create a vision for what they might aspire to in terms of their own academic career, as well as helping them to identify how they might measure their performance. As the internal mentors had already established academic careers and outputs, they were able to act as role models and acted as sounding boards for academics to explore options; they also provided inspiration and advice and stretched and challenged them to improve their performance. It appeared that a number of managers were also not aligned to the Strategy, as they had not yet fully developed their own academic profile; therefore the mentors were able to inspire and support them to meet the expectations placed on them where maybe their managers had not. These three types of support provided by mentoring are similar to the socialisation processes identified by Feldman (1981), where socialisation provides the acquisition of role behaviours, work skills and abilities, and adjustment to work norms and values.

The coaching and mentoring provided at SU did not just help academics to focus on what would be externally measured and judged, it also helped them to work through the internally focused time and psychological challenges that they faced. Whilst coaching helped them to focus and structure their time, mentoring provided complementary support as the mentors motivated academics to achieve by working with they felt passionate about, helping to break things down so that they felt achievable. As the coaches were

external to the institution, they had some scope to support individuals in reflecting on their own personal as well as their professional development plans, and were able to provide reassurance that they were moving in the right direction based on their own experiences of working within HE. Whilst there was some benefit in the externality of working with a coach who was not an employee of the organisation, the benefit of working with an internal mentor was that they had time to build their relationships and the mentors provided a supportive space as well as a nurturing environment.

The findings indicated how academic staff had transformed over time, both in terms of academic performance and behaviour, but also in their attitudes towards the expectations that had been placed on them. At SU a number of supports had been put in place for academic staff, as described in Chapter Four, and therefore it is not possible to isolate the coaching and mentoring and attribute them to the reason why academic staff had improved their confidence and competence in engaging in a wider portfolio of academic activities. Unlike Frantz et al (2011) and Geber (2010) who claim that research outputs were increased as a result of coaching, at SU it would be difficult to claim that the coaching and mentoring were the only reasons why the outputs and performance improved. However, coaching and mentoring did provide support at an individual level and so worked with other supporting mechanisms to facilitate the development of academics. For example, the new academic career structure could have inspired academics to develop their careers, but coaching and mentoring helped them to work on developing vision at an individual level and provided role models for inspiration and techniques to motivate themselves to work towards their aspiration. Opportunities to review the ways in which the curriculum was delivered could have provided academic staff with additional time to spend on activities other than education, but the coaching and mentoring provided support and advice at an individual level to explore and focus on how best to use the time. Coaching and mentoring also provided tailored support focused on individual needs with nurturing relationships providing opportunities for reflection, feedback and reinforcement to develop self confidence. However, this could be seen as a strength of the coaching and mentoring provision at SU as the purpose was to support academic staff in aligning to the vision and strategy and it complemented the other supporting mechanisms that had been put in place; as such coaching and mentoring was embedded in the support structure, rather than being a stand-alone initiative.

At the beginning of this study, it appeared that the concept of alignment would be a tension for participants at SU. The managerial discourse which accompanies the concept appeared to be at odds with the notion of academic freedom and the ways in which

academics had previously understood their world (Deem et al,2008). Academics at SU were expected to contribute to a range of strategic initiatives and, most specifically, the expectations for their careers and their roles had changed. However, it appeared that the emphasis on alignment at SU was much more about the alignment of institutional level and individual level support for academic staff as they developed their careers and identity, rather than the creation of a top-down managerial culture. The coaching and mentoring and other support provided reciprocal benefits for organisation and individual academics. It appeared that the academics in this study were just beginning to 'emerge' in terms of their career, role and identity development and the support that was provided to them was helping them to develop their confidence and competence in engaging in academic activities and generating academic outputs. By working towards university goals the academics developed their own outputs and in turn their careers; likewise supporting the academics to develop their careers was helping to achieve the university's goals and KPIs. Thus at SU, alignment has emerged more appropriately as a way of supporting emerging academics in developing their careers and identities in a new world, rather than as a top-down initiative that academics resisted.

Whilst at first it may have appeared paradoxical to study the ways in which coaching and mentoring could support individual and organisational alignment,   it seems that at SU it was possible for both the concept of alignment and the support provided by coaching and mentoring to co-exist. At SU this happened without damaging the existing frame of reference by which the coaching and mentoring as a way of supporting individuals has previously been understood.   It is likely that this was able to happen as the decision to provide coaching and mentoring support was grounded in a genuine intention to support individuals in a challenging and changing environment, rather than with the objective to make academics do what the organisation wanted them to do.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: *'How are coaching and mentoring being used to support the alignment of academic staff and organisational strategy?'* For those working in organisations, the concept of individual and organisational alignment has long been a challenging one. The motivation for the study was to discover the ways in which individually focused coaching and mentoring could provide support for individual and organisational alignment. Higher Education provided an interesting place in which to study the question, as changing demands from governments, a competitive market place and rising student expectations have provided a challenging context for HE institutions globally, which in turn has placed different demands on the nature of academic staff roles.

This thesis commenced with an introduction to the changing context for HE that had influenced SU's Strategic Plan (2006-2012). This had placed different expectations on a large group of its academic staff and led to the provision of a staff development programme that included coaching and mentoring as two of its main components. The theoretical perspectives that underpin the study have been set out, including the antecedents of modern day organisational alignment and some of examples of what alignment means in both organisational and HE contexts. The debate surrounding the definitions of coaching and mentoring has been highlighted, and examples given of the ways in which coaching and mentoring are used in both HE and organisational contexts, along with the gaps in existing knowledge that this study set out to explore.The description of the design of the research study included the dilemmas and decisions that influenced the methodological approach and the challenges for an insider-researcher; the ways in which the data was collected and analysed were also explained. The findings on alignment at SU were presented, including the ways in which the research participants conceptualised alignment. The expectations placed on academic staff and the challenges that they faced were explained, along with the support provided for them at both institutional and individual level. Findings on the ways in which the participants experienced coaching and mentoring as a transitional space were presented with evidence for the ways in which coaching and mentoring provided support for the alignment of individual academic staff and organisational strategy.

In this chapter, the main findings from the study and the ways in which they make a contribution to theoretical, practical and methodological knowledge are discussed, along with suggestions for future research. Whilst it can be difficult to generalise from case study, the following four findings and their implications have the potential to be transferable to similar contexts:

- A new understanding of alignment of the individual within an organisational context
- A model of the transitional space provided by coaching and mentoring
- A definition of emerging academics and the need to support their development
- A model for improving credibility in insider research

6.1 A New Understanding of Alignment of the Individual Within an Organisational Context

The literature on alignment in organisations tends to focus on the alignment of strategy and process. An increasing amount of attention on proactive methodologies to align strategy, processes and people often focuses more on the success of aligning the structural aspects and, whilst acknowledging the importance of aligning people, is limited on advice on specific ways to align people in organisations (Kaplan and Norton,2006). Whilst lip service is paid to the importance of aligning individual staff to strategy within organisational contexts, there is a dearth of literature that unites the concept of individual and organisational alignment with the ways in which it can be achieved. In addition it has been argued that the individual is often portrayed as being in opposition to the social structures that surround them in working life (Billett,2006), and the literature evidences a long history of the challenges presented when these sometimes competing agendas are brought together. This study sought to identify the ways in which the gap between the individual and the organisation could be filled and how that might be supported through coaching and mentoring.

The findings indicate that the alignment of individual and organisation does not necessarily need to be a tension, but how, conversely, it can provide opportunities for both the organisation and individual if they can identify and focus on ways to fill the gap between them. At SU the gap was identified as being 'what it means to be an academic' and closing the gap would bring mutual benefits for organisation and individual academic

in achieving organisational strategy. For example, developing academic excellence was good for achieving institutional targets, good for the student experience, and good for academic staff and their careers. However, this study shows that merely identifying the gap was not sufficient to align individual and organisation, it was also necessary to understand the gap by appreciating the challenges that it presented. At SU these challenges were not just those generated by the organisation's expectations of academics, they were also very personal. The case of SU shows that once the gap has been identified and understood, energy and support can then be focused on the gap and the support provided can have reciprocal benefits for both the organisation and the individual.

It has been argued that instead of considering the organisation and individual as separate entities, more attention should be paid to the interdependencies of the individual within the organisational environment and the relational processes that occur at the intersection of people and organisations (Kyriakidu and Ozbilgin,2004).Thus this study has provided an additional perspective to add to the debates in the literature on alignment of individual and organisation by suggesting that (i) alignment does not need to be a tension, but that it can be a focus on a gap that will bring mutual benefits to both organisation and individual and (ii) that once the gap has been identified and understood, energy and support need to be focused at an individual, and not just at organisational, level.

These findings have enabled me to develop a practical model for supporting the alignment of individual staff and organisational strategy that may be useful to other organisations striving to achieve such alignment. For SU, alignment of organisational strategy and individual academic staff was about focusing on the gap between individual and organisation, with the gap being conceptualised as what it means to be an academic at SU; the benefits that alignment would bring to the institution and the individual member of staff; and overcoming challenges through focusing on a gap. Findings suggest there were four main stages as set out in The Individual and Organisational Alignment Map in Figure 6.1:

(i) Identify the gap
(ii) Understand the gap
(iii) Support the gap
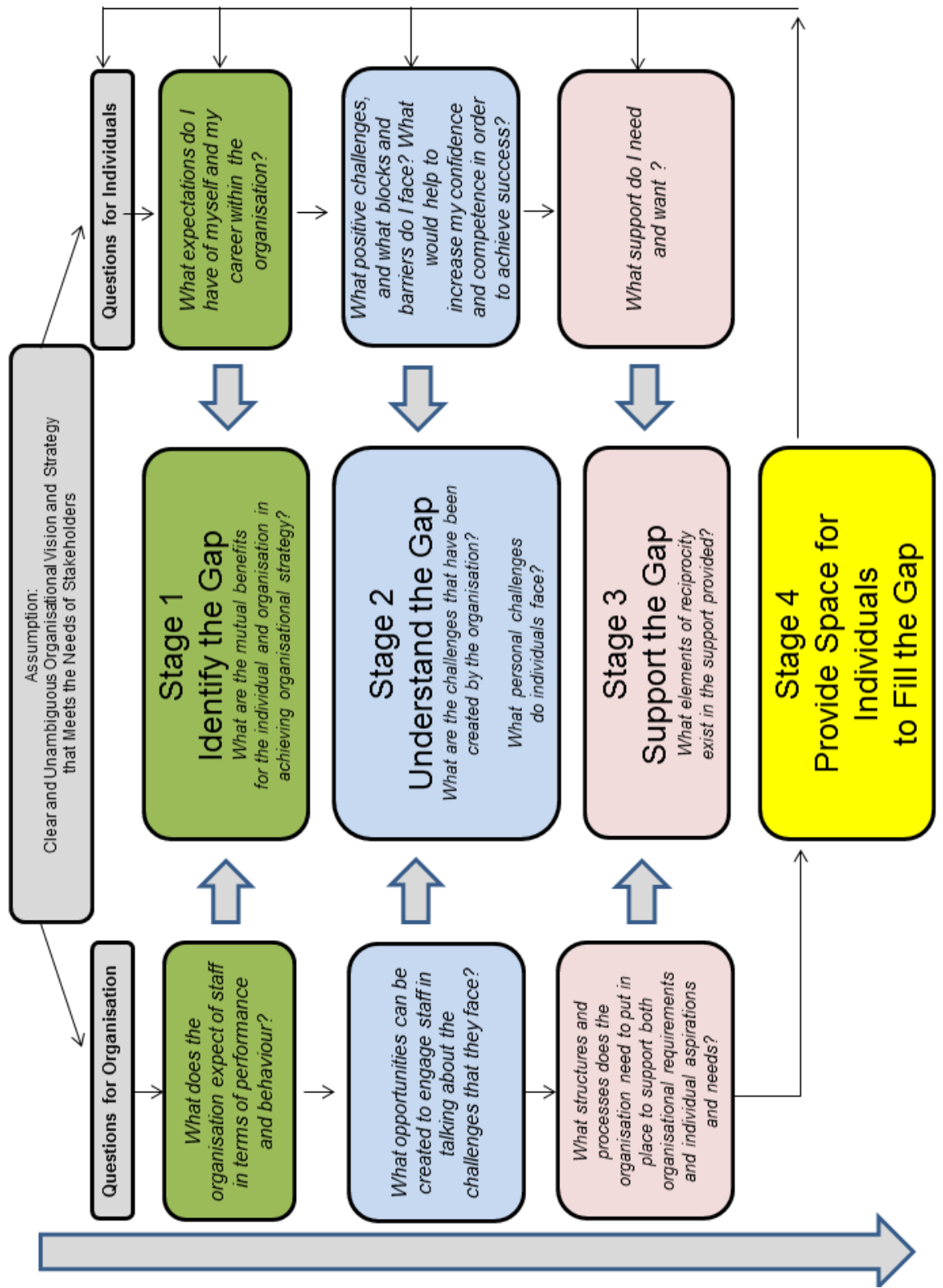(iv) Provide space to fill the gap.

Figure 6.1 The Individual and Organisation Alignment Map

The Individual and Organisation Alignment Map can be used to describe a planning process and a series of generic questions for organisations and individuals to consider that could help to support the alignment of individuals within organisational contexts. The process assumes that there is a clear and unambiguous organisational vision and strategy that is relevant to the organisation, its staff and other stakeholders. If this is not achieved then it will be difficult to complete the next stages of the planning process.

At Stage One 'Identify the Gap' there needs to be a very clear understanding of what the organisation expects of its staff. So the organisation could ask the question: 'What does the organisation expect of staff in terms of performance and behaviour?' At this stage the organisation needs to make clear how it expects its staff to perform and behave in order to achieve its targets; at SU these were set out in the Corporate and Strategic Plans. Staff also need to consider their own needs and identify their own expectations of their role and career within the organisation and ask questions such as: 'What expectations do I have of myself and my career within the organisation?' At SU academics wanted to provide an excellent academic experience for their students and to have interesting individual careers. It was clear that there were mutual benefits for the institution and the individual academic in achieving the institutional targets. Thus at Stage One the overall question that needs to be answered is: 'What are the mutual benefits for the individual and organisation in achieving organisational strategy?'

At Stage Two, 'Understand the Gap', the case of SU highlighted the importance of understanding the challenge presented by alignment; academic staff faced career, role, time and psychological challenges. At this stage the organisation needs to find ways to engage with staff in ways that will help it to understand the challenges that are faced by its individual members of staff. The organisation might ask questions such as: 'What opportunities can be created to engage staff in talking about the challenges that they face?' These challenges could be related to the external world of staff and at SU external world challenges were represented by the visible and measurable challenges related to career achievement and role outputs, or related to their internal world. At SU internal world challenges included challenges that were not visible externally and related to time and psychological challenges, such as the way that they felt about the expectations being placed on them.

At Stage Three there is a clear strategy to 'Support the Gap'; the organisation needs to consider how it can best support those challenges at both institutional and individual level. Questions might include: 'What structures and processes does the organisation need to put in place to support both organisational requirements and individual aspirations and needs?' At institutional level SU provided reward schemes, such as an academic career structure, pay progression and promotion opportunities, thus demonstrating that where staff achieved outputs relevant to achieving organisational strategy, they would be rewarded, as well as giving staff something to aspire to. At an individual level coaching and mentoring provided individually focused support through a staff development programme that was specifically aligned to the goals set out in the Strategic Plan. The programme was designed to support staff in increasing their confidence and competence in engaging in additional areas of academic practice. This had the additional benefit of better positioning staff to take advantage of future promotional opportunities and pay progression. As such coaching and mentoring were firmly embedded in the support structure.

At Stage Four the organisation needs to 'Provide Space for Individuals to Fill the Gap'. Whilst organisations recognise the need to support and align individuals with organisational strategy, often not enough support is given in terms of providing space to fill the gap. The case of SU demonstrates the potential for coaching and mentoring as a tool to create this space as it helped individuals to recognise and articulate their responses to the questions posed at Stages 1-3. However, at SU coaching and mentoring gave an opportunity forconscious engagement with the strategy, to understand what it meant for them as individuals, where they could make their contribution, to share, confront and deal with their challenges and concerns openly in a safe and supportive space and to align their personal and professional development plans and receive feedback and encouragement. In these ways SU supported academics in working through whether they had both the will and the way to align with the Strategy.

Thus the Individual and Organisation Alignment Map can provide a resource for organisations to help them to pay attention to both the structures and processes that need to be put in place to support individuals within the organisational context. It also adds to the existing literature on this subject by suggesting ways in which the individual can also think through the individual support that they need for their own alignment. For external coaches working in organisations, the Map provides questions and challenges that they couldask the organisation at the start of a coaching assignment. For internal mentors the Map provides a checklist of organisational issues for them to familiarise themselves with

so that they can add these resources to the repertoire of support that they offer to an individual. For coaches and mentors the Map also highlights questions that they can explore with an individual within the organisational context. The full extent of the ways in which coaching and mentoring can support individuals with their alignment is more fully explained in the following section,where a model showing the Transitional Space Provided by Coaching and Mentoring is set out.

6.2   A MODEL OF THE TRANSITIONAL SPACE PROVIDED BY COACHING AND MENTORING

The literature shows many examples of the challenges of aligning individuals and organisational strategy. For example Montuori and Purser (2001) highlight the need for more humanistic approaches in organisations and not just a focus on the bottom line. Whilst it has been suggested that coaching and mentoring are two of the most powerful ways of helping people to undertake the inner dialogue that brings together the potentially conflicting dynamics of organisational and individual ambition and drive to succeed (Clutterbuck and Megginson,2007), the definitions of coaching and mentoring are often blurred. This means that it is unusual for organisations to make a decision to offer both coaching and mentoring within the same programme of support for staff, and unusual to have a study that looks at both coaching and mentoring within the same organisational context, with the same people, at the same time.   Hence there is a lack of published research that shows how coaching and mentoring can be used to support individual and organisational alignment, and also a deficiency in research which shows the similarities and differences between their roles in providing support.

This study sought to add to the literature by exploring the role of both coaching and mentoring in supporting alignment.   The distinction between the purpose of coaching and mentoring at SU and the ways in which it was offered at different points in the programmes by different people meant that participants were able to separate their experiences of coaching and mentoring. This ability for participants to distinguish their experiences provided the opportunity to collect and analyse data separately for the two interventions.   Thus the findings outlined in Chapter Five give evidence on the particular space provided by coaching and the particular space provided by mentoring as shown in Table 6.1. These findings can be used in a practical way to support the development of coaches and mentors as they distinguish between the roles that they could play. The model can also provide the recipient of coaching or mentoring with some ideas on the

ways in which they could work with a coach or mentor to support their personal and professional development challenges.

Coaching and Mentoring For…	Coaching For…	Mentoring For…
Future Focus	Vision	Inspiration
Forward Momentum	Focus	Motivation
Psychological Support	Reflection Reinforcement Tailored to individual's needs	Nurture Support
Role Implementation	Performance Exploration Advice	Performance Exploration Advice

Table 6.1 Support Provided by Coaching and Mentoring

The findings from this research have enabled me to develop a practical model that shows how coaching and mentoring can provide a transitional space for staff to work through alignment challenges with a coach and mentor. The practical benefits offered by this space are set out in Figure 6.2 which articulates a model for using coaching and mentoring to support individual and organisational alignment. The model draws on the evidence provided by coaches, mentors and academics on the ways in which coaching and mentoring helped to address the challenges faced by academic staff discussed in Chapter Four.
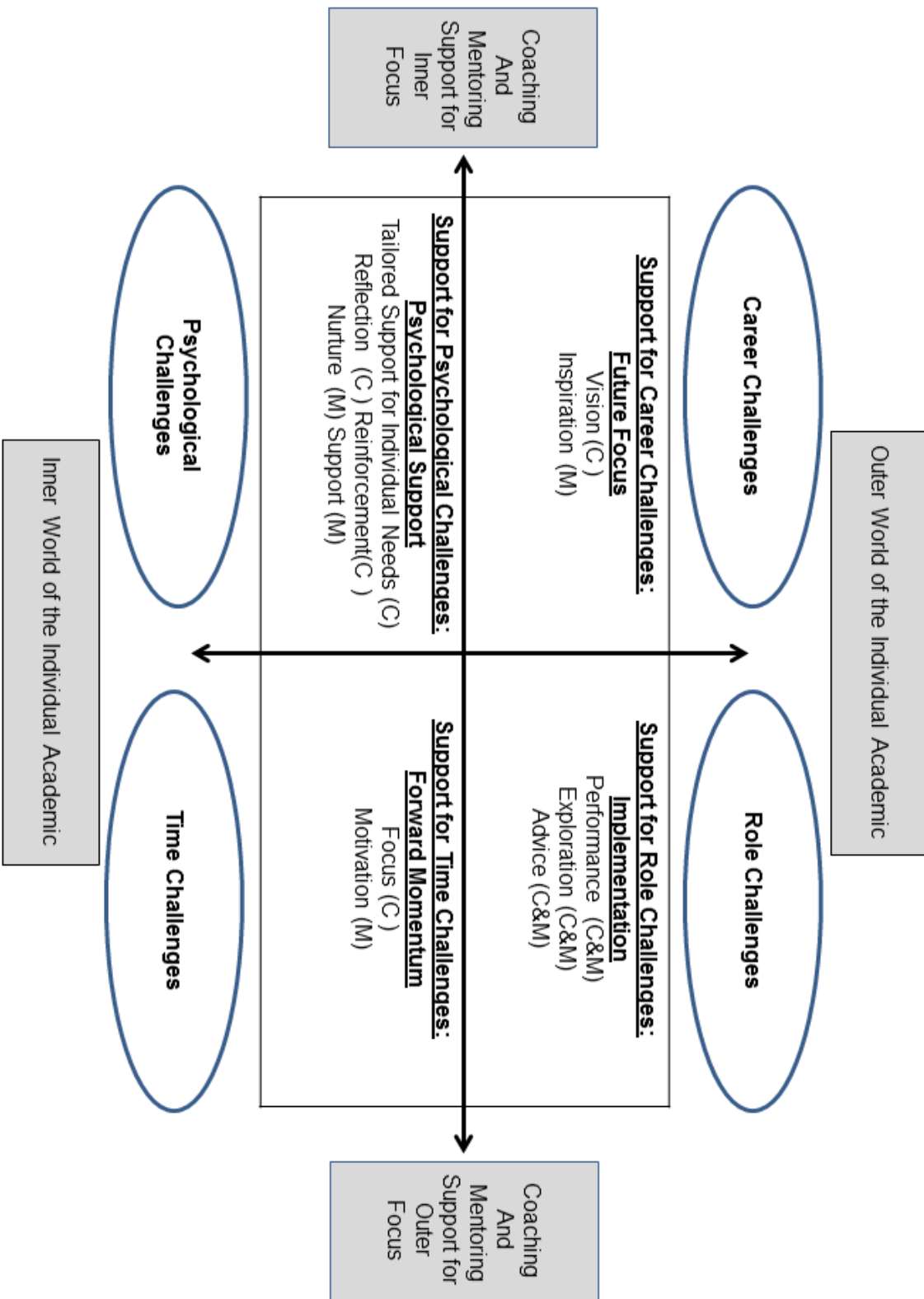
Figure 6.2The Transitional Space Provided by Coaching and Mentoring

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The vertical axis in Figure 6.2 indicates the dimension between the outer world of the individual and their inner world. The outer world could be the external demands placed on the individual that will have outputs and measures that can be recognised externally. At SU the outer world represents the context for HE that influenced institutional strategy, which in turn placed demands on the academics that were different to what had been expected of them before: they needed to contribute outputs in three of the four areas of academic practice, as well as being passionate about their subject and providing a good experience for their student. These expectations materialised in career and role challenges for academic staff. The inner world represents the way that individuals feel about the expectations placed on them. At SU academics faced psychological challenges, as achieving the expectations required a change of mindset and the need to deal with emotions such as denial, anxiety and lack of confidence, as well as concerns about the speed of change and the amount that they would need to achieve in a short period of time.

The top left quadrant indicates how coaching and mentoring can provide an opportunity to focus on the future. The external coaches in the study supported the academics in creating a vision of the future, which in turn helped them to think about their career aspirations as academics. The mentors were experienced academics who acted as role models since they were already contributing outputs in a range of academic activities and provided inspiration to the academics that they worked with. The bottom left quadrant shows how coaching and mentoring offered psychological support. At SU coaching provided tailored support for each individual, helping academics to reflect on where they were now, which raised their self-awareness, focused on development plans and gave reinforcement for their positive actions. The mentoring provided a supportive relationship and space where academics felt that their thoughts and feelings were valued and the mentor supported them by focusing on their needs as a whole person, not just on the problem or issue that they brought to the mentor. The two quadrants on left of the diagram therefore demonstrate the dimension of inner focus at work and this type of coaching and mentoring appeared to focus on possibilities and to support the academics in developing their *will* to align and to meet the expectations that were demanded of them.

The top right quadrant indicates how coaching and mentoring can support individuals in implementing expectations required of their role through a focus on performance, exploration and the giving of advice. At SU this support was provided through both coaching and mentoring, although this may not be typical of all organisational contexts. For coaching the focus on performance supported the individual in thinking about their

performance in ways that could benefit both them as individuals as well as the organisation. The mentors were focused on providing stretch and challenge for the academics to help them to improve their performance; this type of support is untypical in mentoring, but may have been appropriate at SU as the mentors understood from their own experience exactly what was expected of academic staff and that the time in which they needed to achieve it was challenging; their support was therefore likely to have been more inclined towards mentoring for performance than is typically the case. The coaching provided opportunities for academics to explore the blocks and barriers that were preventing them from achieving what they wanted to achieve and there was more data on coaching for exploration than there was for mentoring. This may have been because the coaches in the SU study were external to the organisation and because academics appreciated the independent perspective provided by the external coaches. At SU the mentors were more focused on giving advice than on exploration. Although the giving of advice is largely untypical in coaching, the coaches in this study gave advice on a range of issues, including developing an academic career in the wider HE context and how to deal with organisational politics. Although the coaches were external to the organisation, they had previously worked in universities, one as an academic, and were experienced coaches in HE. This may have had some bearing on the ways in which academics at SU accessed advice through their coaching experience.

The quadrant on the bottom right of the model shows how coaching and mentoring can provide support for forward momentum. Coaching created an opportunity to stand back and to see things more clearly, focusing on what prevented the academic from moving forward, and also provided a structure that set a framework for focusing on goals and milestones. Mentors supported the academics in creating forward momentum by facilitating a process that created a spark for action; they did this by encouraging academics to focus on what excited them and by breaking things down into manageable chunks so that when they called academics to action they were ready to move forward. The two quadrants on right of the diagram therefore demonstrate the dimension of outer focus at work and this type of coaching and mentoring appeared to have a task focus and to support the academics in developing the *way* to align and to meet the expectations that were demanded of them.

Thus the Transitional Space Provided by Coaching and Mentoring model could be useful in other organisations who could use it in conjunction with the Individual and Alignment Map to show how coaching and mentoring can provide a transitional space in which individuals within organisations be given space to focus on the alignment gap identified in

Figure 6.1.   This space can give individuals within organisations the opportunity to work with a supportive person who can help them to identify and understand the gap, and to provide support and space to fill the gaps. In this way the coach and/or mentor can create a supportive space and provide time, resources and support to help the individual totranslate between their inner and outer world by working throughwhat is expected of them, what is important to them as an individual and how they can move forward to achieve what both they personally and the organisation want to achieve. Work undertaken by Cavanagh and Grant (2009) indicated that there were significant overlaps between the personal and professional when coaching executives within organisations and that for coaching to be most effective, the coach must pay attention to personal and professional issues when coaching on business-related issues, as a person's psychological processes impact on all aspects of their life, both personal and at work. In this study there is evidence that coaching and mentoring both supported personal and professional issues for academics involved in the study by providing support for career, role, time and psychological challenges.

This study therefore adds to the theoretical debates on the definitions of coaching and mentoring by distinguishing between the particular support provided by coaching and the particular support provided by mentoring for the same staff within the same organisational context during the same staff development programme. The evidence indicates that both coaching and mentoring can provide a transitional space for individuals in working through their alignment with organisational strategy through future focus, role implementation, forward momentum and psychological support. Whilst both coaching and mentoring could support each of these four dimensions, what became clear in this study is that there could also be strength in offering both coaching and mentoring.

The ability to distinguish between the role of coaching and the role of mentoring in supporting the alignment of individual and organisation in this study means that this study has gone some way towards defining the similar and different ways in which coaching and mentoring could bring practical benefits for individual alignment within organisational contexts. These findings could be used in a practical way to support the development of coaches and mentors as they distinguish between the roles that they could play. For staff developers this model can provide some clarity on the potential benefits of using both coaching and mentoring in supporting individual and organisational alignment.   Further research would need to be undertaken in order to establish if there is indeed a benefit in providing both coaching and mentoring to support alignment, or if similar results could be achieved through the provision of only one of the interventions.

6.3 A Definition of Emerging Academics and the Need to Support their Development

In my professional life I work with staff developers in other universities. This external dimension has highlighted that, although many staff developers are skilled and experienced in developing leaders and professional and support staff, they often lack confidence or opportunities to engage with academic staff development, or deem it is out of scope for their role.   For some it is because academics seem more focused on developing professionalism within their discipline and, as they lack experience in this area, staff developers also lack confidence to become involved. In some institutions academic staff development is only focused on learning and teaching quality and is located in a separate department.

However, this study has shown that there is a need for academic staff development beyond discipline or learning and teaching development. The case of SU has shown that there is both a will and a way to support staff in developing their academic identity and careers. SU's strategy had been a direct response to the external pressures, which in turn had impacted on the expectations of a large group of academic staff. Whilst they had been challenged by the new expectations placed on them, the participants in the study appeared to be responding positively.   This could have been because the academics could see that by responding to the Strategy, they would also have opportunities to develop both their academic outputs and their individual careers.   What was significant was where these academics were starting from. Previously the focus of work, outputs and reward had been mainly to teach and the ways in which their performance had been measured related to teaching outputs. However, now they were expected to contribute to three out of four areas of academic practice: education, research, enterprise and professional practice. These staff could perhaps be better described as 'emerging academics', seizing opportunities to develop their own academic identity and career within a changing HE landscape. The literature shows that there are other staff employed in HE institutions who are also interested in developing their academic identity.   An increase in the number of modern universities in the last twenty years has seen a number of other HE institutions, such as polytechnics, achieving degree awarding powers. Many of these institutions had focused more on professional, rather than traditional subjects, which also means that academic staff had been recruited from a wider range of backgrounds and have been challenged by the move into HE (Boyd,2010; Griffiths et al,2010).In addition there are other groups of staff who face similar challenges in developing their academic identity such as doctoral students and pre-tenure staff (McAlpine and Amundsen,2009),

early career researchers (Vitae,2012), those needing to achieve post-graduate qualifications (Fielden and Malcolm,2005) and those needing to engage in research for the first time (Billot,2011).

Although 'emerging academics' is not a term widely recognised in the literature, the concerns of staff working in universities who need to develop broader portfolios of work that take account of a range of academic responsibilities have been more widely discussed. My definition of 'emerging academics' is therefore set out in Box 6.1.

> *'Emerging academic staff are those who were primarily teachers, or researchers, or who have joined HE from professional practice, who are now developing their own academic identity by developing their confidence and competence to engage in a rounded portfolio of academic activities including education, research, enterprise and professional practice. This engagement has the potential to yield benefits for the institution, the career of the individual academic, and the students who will ultimately benefit by learning from those who are themselves learning.'*

Box 6.1 Definition of Emerging Academics

I also use the term 'emerging academic' as distinct from more widely used terms such as 'early career researcher ' defined in the REF Assessment Framework (2011) which applies to staff who started their careers as independent researchers; or used by organisations such as Times Higher Awards (2012) who refer to postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers or research staff; and Vitae (2012) who use the term in connectionwith researchers who have not spent longer than five years in active research since achieving their PhD. This is because these categories are too narrow for the type of academic staff referred to in this study. The term early career researcher also causes concern for those on academic contracts who do not fall into that category and who therefore miss out on opportunities such as being able to apply for funding due to age restrictions, as per the discussion posted by Humphrey (2010). This study therefore builds on the existing theoretical literature on academic staff development and allows me to propose a new category of 'emerging academics' which demands the attention of institutional staff developers who have a responsibility to support academic staff in their personal and professional career and academic identity development.

This study has demonstrated some of the ways in which coaching and mentoring have supported academic staff in developing their academic identity. Coaching has enabled them to create a vision of what their academic career might look like and helped to focus on the steps that they need to take to achieve that, whilst working with a mentor has provided an opportunity to work with role models who provide inspiration and work with an individual's motivation. The very individual support provided by both coaching and mentoring have created a supportive environment for academic staff to work in, as well as someone to turn to for advice who can also help them to focus on both their own performance and how that relates to the performance of the organisation. In response to Quigley's (2011:21) challenge around academic identity and 'how academics come to be' and 'how academics come to know', coaching and mentoring have formed an integral part of a framework of organisational level and individual level support that have assisted academic staff at SU to 'come to know' what it means to be an academic. This in turn helped them to 'come to know' in terms of developing and disseminating knowledge and has therefore helped them to develop their competence as an academic. Consequently coaching and mentoring have helped them to 'come to be' an academic by supporting them in facing and overcoming career, role, time and psychological challenges to develop their confidence and competence to generate academic outputs.

Staff developers therefore need to increase their understanding of the challenges faced by academic staff who have come from differentbackgrounds and who are challenged by developing their academic identity. This study has shown the practical benefits of working with a career coach who understands the landscape of HE and with a mentor who has first-hand experience of what is expected of academics to demonstrate that this could be a way of developing academic identity. Staff developers do not need to support the development of academics alone, particularly if they feel that they do not have the right expertise. Their role could be to identify and provide coaches and mentors who can help academics to translate between their inner and outer world to meet challenges set before them. Indeed Lieff (2009) says that the missing link in academic career development is the need for alignment of inner direction with outer context, which is critical to professional fulfilment and effectiveness. At SU the alignment of inner direction with outer context represented a reciprocal benefit for staff seizing a career development opportunity, as the organisation and its students also benefited from the individual's change in focus. Staff developers therefore need to take courage to step into the space to facilitate the development of emerging academics, supporting them in their career development and looking to other appropriate people to join them in providing support, for examplethrough coaching and mentoring.

6.4   A MODEL FOR IMPROVING CREDIBILITY IN INSIDER RESEARCH

The methodological approach chosen for this study was heavily influenced by the need to acknowledge and surface the risks posed by the insider perspective of the researcher. As an employee of the organisation in which the research was undertaken, I faced a number of challenges that needed to be addressed in order to establish the credibility of the study. The details of the challenges and how they were overcome are largely covered in Chapter Three and provide a justification for the choice of methodological approach. However, in addition there were a number of significant learning points that have been drawn from this experience that are outlined here in order to present a model for improving credibility in insider research and which may be useful to other researchers in a similar position.

Figure 6.3 sets out in the first column the main challenges that I faced as an employee undertaking research in my own organisation and the second column shows the risks that these posed to the research. The third column identifies the questions that I needed to ask myself at the intersection between my employee and researcher roles in order to, as far as possible, find ways to improve the credibility of the research.   A checklist of questions to use within the model can be found in Appendix 4.
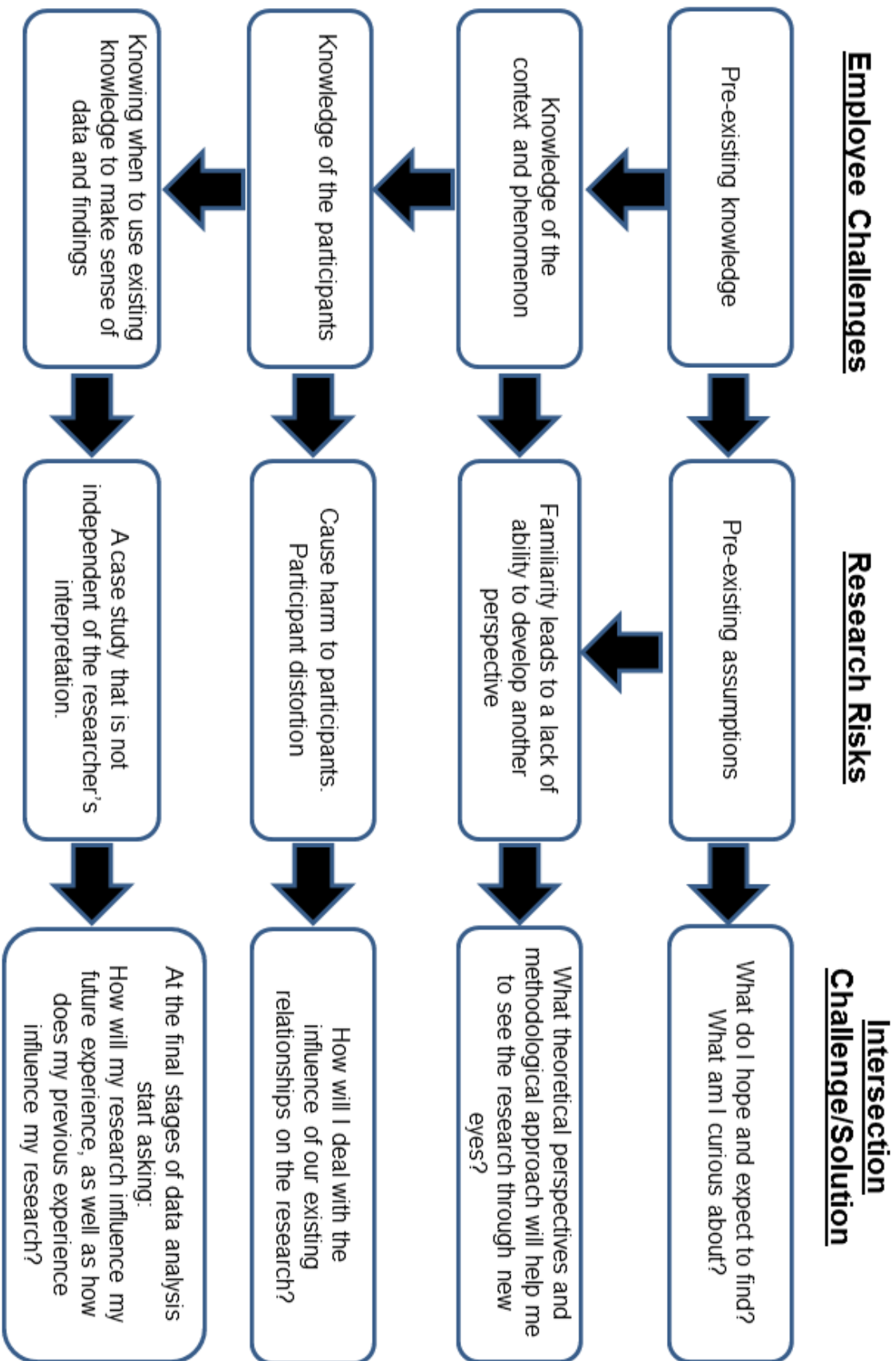
Figure 6.3 A Model for Improving Credibility in Insider-Research

The figure is organized into three columns:

Employee Challenges
- Pre-existing knowledge
- Knowledge of the context and phenomenon
- Knowledge of the participants
- Knowing when to use existing knowledge to make sense of data and findings

Research Risks
- Pre-existing assumptions
- Familiarity leads to a lack of ability to develop another perspective
- Cause harm to participants. Participant distortion
- A case study that is not independent of the researcher's interpretation.

Intersection Challenge/Solution
- What do I hope and expect to find? What am I curious about?
- What theoretical perspectives and methodological approach will help me to see the research through new eyes?
- How will I deal with the influence of our existing relationships on the research?
- At the final stages of data analysis start asking: How will my research influence my future experience, as well as how does my previous experience influence my research?

The additional checklist in Appendix 4 provides a series of sub questions to ask at key stages of the model. Hanson (2008) warns that insider research is not to be taken lightly, citing two examples where internal researchers have considered changing the direction of their research (Edwards,1999) or where they had to resign from their job (Holian,1999). In a PhD thesis on insider research Humphrey (1995) concludes by recognising that insider research can be useful in understanding and improving the organisation in which it is conducted, but as it carries a number of opportunities and risks, its potential can only be realised by processes that encourage ongoing critical reflection. Thus the Model for Improving Credibility in Insider Research contributes to the methodological literature by bringing together into one place a checklist of questions for the internal researcher that highlight a number of issues that need to be considered before and during the study, that may not only protect their research participants, but could also protect their roles as employee and researcher.

6.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has utilised participant perceptions of alignment, experiences of coaching and mentoring and documentary data to explore the role of coaching and mentoring in supporting alignment of individual and organisation. Whilst this was not a longitudinal study, this approach has enabled me to present a study that balanced context with how things have developed over a period of time. Data was collected from three different sources and with four different participant groups, was analysed separately and then 'holistically', which enabled the 'triangulation' of data between sources and groups to establish patterns within, and credibility of, the findings. I had a working relationship with the participants before the study commenced and this helped in recruiting participants for the study and in securing trust within the interview setting. Being a practitioner was also helpful when conducting the study as I was able to make sense of the data from the perspective of a reflective practitioner (Schön,1983).

However, the ability to generalise from this study is limited as it is a case study of one university, at a particular moment in its history, and undertaken with a particular set of people working within a particular context. The ways in which alignment was conceptualised at SU may only be representative of the participant group who, at the time of data collection, were leaders responsible for the development of SU through its new Strategic Plan; mentors who had been invited to mentor staff on the RREP Programme as they were seen as effective role models; and academic members of the RREP/EREPP

Programmes who had been identified as having potential and were willingly engaged in the Programmes. Staff who had left the University on the Voluntary Severance Scheme, or who had moved to other institutions may have had a different point of view. As a case study of SU and the experiences of staff employed on permanent contracts at SU, it was out of the scope of this study to explore if there would have been alternative views on alignment at SU from those who no longer worked there.Although at SU alignment was conceptualised as a clear direction, expectations, challenge and support which provided the specific framework to focus on a gap of what it means to be an academic at SU, this may only have been typical of the organisational culture at SU and the ways in which alignment is conceptualised in different types of university or organisation may vary; thus there are further opportunities to explore the concept of alignment and the specific enablers of alignment of individuals within other organisational contexts.

This study was designed to explore the experience of coaching and mentoring from the perspectives of the individuals who engaged with it. Thus an interpretive approach allowed for the individuals involved in the study to share their experiences; these accounts are valid because they were based on real-life experiences where participants were able to make their own meanings in relation to the phenomena under investigation. However, the very individual nature of coaching and mentoring and the individual accounts given by participants means that a different set of coaches, mentors and academics may have had different experiences.   It is a possible assumption that because the responses to the questions related to perception and experience were in the main positive and constructive, only those who were satisfied with their experiences of working at SU and of coaching and mentoring volunteered to be a part of the study. This type of concern is typical of any study and further research may help to add a different dimension. Although there were 11mentors involved in this study, there were only two external coaches involved. Opportunities therefore exist for further research to take place with other individuals to continue to build knowledge about the experience of coaching and mentoring.

It is unusual for studies to be conducted into both coaching and mentoring at the same time; a possible reason is because they are not usually both provided on organisational staff development programmes at the same time . This could be because the debates around the definitions of coaching and mentoring mean thatthe justification for including both at the same time is nebulous.   According to the ETHOS database,this is the first doctoral study undertaken with individuals who have received both coaching and mentoring at the same time.   Therefore there are opportunities for further research to be undertaken in order to establish if there is indeed a benefit in providing both coaching and

mentoring to support alignment, or if similar results could be achieved through the provision of only one of the interventions.

Although the concept of 'emerging academics' has been proposed by this study, along with recommendations about their development, the study did not set out to explore the concept of emerging academics and, if it had, other questions may have been asked of the participants, so this is a potential area for further research. Another area of potential exploration would be to undertake the research with established academic staff and/or those from a more traditional institution, as this study only focused on a single post-1992 university.

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure the credibility of the research from an insider perspective, the study has been undertaken using an interpretive approach by an individual who has pre-existing knowledge of the context of the study, of coaching and mentoring, and of the people involved in the research and these factors may have influenced the ways in which the study has been interpreted. Therefore there are opportunities for others to undertake similar studies within HE, or any other type of organisation, from the position of the 'outsider researcher'.

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Researcher as Goldilocks: searching for a methodology that is 'just right' for a coaching and mentoring study

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore some of the tensions and possibilities for those engaging in coaching and mentoring research, maybe for the first time. The paper highlights the importance of good research into coaching and mentoring and then goes on to consider some of the epistemological options available to the researcher. Following the introduction of a specific coaching and mentoring study the paper explores some of the tensions for the researcher in the research process, before considering three methodological approaches and their appropriateness for answering the research question.

Keywords: coaching, mentoring, research, methodology

Introduction

The growing interest in the theory and practice of coaching and mentoring has brought with it an increased call for good quality research into coaching and mentoring. One of the challenges for the serious researcher is to find an appropriate methodology to answer the research question and this paper aims to set out some of the methodological conundrums facing both the academic and the practitioner undertaking research into coaching and mentoring.

The paper is divided into two parts. The former is largely theoretical with a focus on the call for research and some of the epistemological options available to the researcher searching for good quality evidence. The second takes a more pragmatic approach. The author will introduce a research study with a specific focus on coaching and mentoring and will explore some of the practical challenges confronting the researcher, including the way in which the researcher is conceptualised in the research process. The author will then take the reader on a 'metaphorical journey' to consider three potential methodologies, with the aim of discovering a methodology that will be 'just right' for the coaching and mentoring study.

The call for good research into coaching and mentoring

In recent years there have been calls for more effective research into coaching and mentoring. As coaching matures into a profession and the expectations of potential clients have increased, Kauffman and Bachkirova (2008a) highlight the need for those involved in coaching to be aware of coaching research and good practice and to

develop the ways in which they articulate what they are offering, grounded in the theoretical and empirical bases of their coaching practice.

However, empirical research into coaching is still in its infancy and historically the evidence base for the effectiveness of coaching has been anecdotal, far from rigorous and has been either methodologically flawed, or limited in the defence of the methodologies that have been used (Clutterbuck, 2008; Grant and Cavanagh, 2004). Nevertheless, the knowledge base of coach-specific research that details theories, techniques and outcomes of coaching is growing annually (Grant & Zackon, 2004) and there is a growing body of empirical evidence for research into executive and development coaching (Clutterbuck, 2008).

Although mentoring theory, practice and research are also maturing, Hezlett and Gibson (2005) point to the lack of mentoring articles in the human resources development literature and have outlined a research agenda to fill some of the gaps in the mentoring literature that is relevant to human resources and development; this agenda includes building on research into individual and organisational benefits, as well as research into processes and relationships, with the goal of more effectively informing the practice of mentoring in organisations. Clutterbuck (2008) highlights the dominance of US based quantitative studies of mentoring suggesting that they have been flawed and use a model of mentoring that is not shared in all cultures, although he does suggest that studies are once again in evidence that explore developmental mentoring through a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Along with the recognition of the need for good research to support the development of coaching and mentoring practice, there are suggestions of who would be well placed to undertake the research. Passmore and Gibbs (2007) suggest that coaching psychologists may have a real contribution to make to research in the coaching profession, building on their experience of undertaking high quality, psychological research. However, research does not need to be purely the domain of the coaching psychologist: Fillery-Travis and Lane (2008) challenge both academic and practitioner researchers to learn and work together to develop good practice for the coaching profession.

Methodological options for coaching and mentoring research

The challenge for the serious researcher is to find an appropriate methodology to answer the research question. There are a number of methodological approaches available to the researcher and it is worth taking time to explore some of the philosophies and theoretical perspectives that underpin the approach to a research study. Crotty (1998) highlights that the starting point for a research study is not in choosing the methods for data collection, but in the epistemological position of the researcher as he or she seeks to identify what kinds of knowledge are legitimate and adequate for answering the research question. This position influences the theoretical perspective and therefore the methodology, which in turn influences the choice of methods (Gray, 2004).

The researcher may begin with a preference for representing a more objective reality and therefore may be more inclined to take a positivist approach, choosing a methodology that will generate quantitative data, to potentially give the study 'an aura of scientific respectability' (Denscombe, 2003, p.236). This type of researcher believes that measurement is fundamental to scientific activity (Coolican, 2004) and builds on the advantages of analytical techniques based on mathematics, probability and statistical tests of significance that can give the interpreted data additional credibility.

An alternative starting point for the researcher might be in the more socially constructed nature of reality where truth and meaning are created by the interaction of the research participants with the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) and in which the participants create their own meanings in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomena (Gray, 2004, p.17). This would involve a more qualitative approach leading to a study that is the product of a process that involves the interpretation of data in which the researcher's own identity, values and beliefs cannot be entirely eliminated from the process (Denscombe, 2003, p. 268). Much of the existing research into coaching is of the qualitative type, often involving small scale research and case studies (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004) and a phenomenological approach has also been identified as being of value in mentoring research (Gibson, 2004).

The researcher may select a more pragmatic paradigm and decide on a mixed methods approach to the study, driven more by the demands of the research question rather than the philosophical arguments, and aim to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods into a distinct research design or methodology. This approach has grown more during the last decade and has been gaining acceptance in the social sciences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Coaching as a field of knowledge has often drawn from different disciplines such as management, education, social sciences, philosophy and psychology, which in turn are representative of a range of starting points and assumptions (Kauffman & Bachkirova, 2008b). As such there is no easy answer for the researcher when making decisions on the best way to construct their study. Grant and Cavanagh (2004) have called for an increase in more systematic and rigorous research into coaching with more large scale, methodologically rigorous, controlled outcome studies with an increased focus on objective quantitative outcome measures, such as the study by Grant and Zackon (2004). However, Drake (2008, p.23) encourages the researcher to look beyond evidence that is 'universal, static, objective and neutral' to evidence that is 'contextual, dynamic, subjective, political and socially constructed'.

Whichever approach the researcher decides to take, Stober et al (2006) encourage coaching professionals to make connections between coaching, research and evidence in a way that has scientific integrity and practical utility and Kauffman and Bachkirova (2008a) and Drake (2008, 2009) remind researchers that their primary aim is to gather evidence that will help in understanding what is happening in the coaching process, with the ultimate goal of improving practice

Once researchers have worked through the issues relating to their philosophical perspectives they need to make some practical decisions about how they are going to answer their research question. This paper now moves to outline the current doctoral research study into coaching and mentoring that is being undertaken by the author of this paper as she seeks to find an appropriate methodology for answering the research question.

Introduction to the study

The context of the study and the chosen epistemological approach will be introduced briefly. There will then follow an outline of some of the tensions for the researcher within the study. Three methodological options for the research study will be considered for their suitability for the study, both in terms of minimising the tensions for the researcher and for their potential for answering the research question.

The study seeks to answer the research question: *'How are coaching and mentoring being used to support the alignment of academic staff and institutional strategy during a period of significant organisational change?'*

The study is taking place in a university in the South of England that has responded to the complex political agenda for Higher Education by developing a new strategy that has challenged the traditional 'way of being' for academics in that institution and which, in turn, has impacted on the values, motivations and aspirations of academics at an individual level. The study aims to discover the ways in which coaching and mentoring are supporting academic staff to align with the institution's new strategy (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: The context for the study
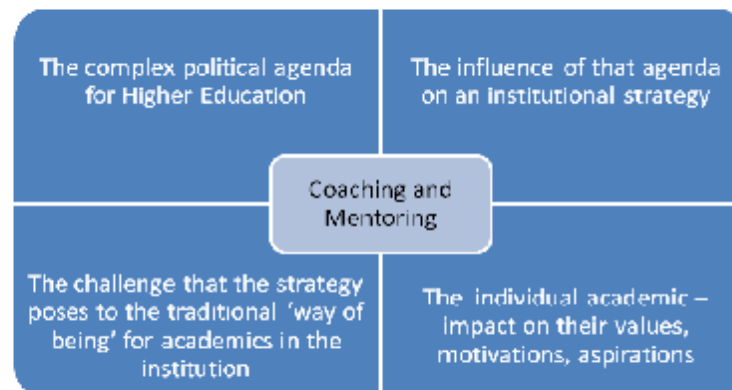
The research aims to achieve a greater understanding of individual perspectives within an organisational context and the study has the potential to touch on the types

of tensions, dilemmas and possibilities for research into emotion in organisations described by Fineman (2005) who makes a case for the superiority of interpretive approaches in representing the qualitative texture of emotion and its political contextualisation. The researcher has taken up the challenge set out by Drake (2008, p.23) to design a study that will facilitate the collection of data that is 'contextual, dynamic, subjective, political and socially constructed'. The study is therefore being conducted under the epistemological perspective of constructivism in order that those involved in the study will be able to create their own meaning from their experiences. The researcher has considered three methodological approaches traditionally linked with the interpretevist paradigm with the intention of using mainly qualitative methods.

Once satisfied with the chosen epistemological underpinning for the study, the researcher then needs to give consideration to the ways in which she is conceptualised in the research process. Qualitative research has sometimes been described as problematic because, in practice, there is a tension between the search for validity and truth and the personal engagement of the researcher. The experience and identity of the researcher inevitably influence the design of the study and the findings (McLeod, 2007). It is important therefore for a researcher to select a methodology that acknowledges the likely impact of the researcher on the study, as well as one that has the potential to answer the research question.

The researcher in the research study

In order to counter the charges of bias levelled at qualitative research, researchers are often encouraged to reflect on and articulate issues of reflexivity to help the research audience to understand the researcher and the work that is being presented to them (Wellington et al, 2005).

The need for this researcher to acknowledge and articulate the reflexive issues around the study are more pronounced in that she is what could be described as an 'insider-researcher'. As an employee of the institution in which the study is taking place, the researcher's 'pre-understanding' of the institution both theoretically and as a lived experience means that she is familiar with the history, the culture and many of the people who work there. Her experience of working in the institution for ten years will mean that she will appreciate the significance of critical events that may occur during the course of the study. The relationships that they have built up should enable her to act freely without attracting attention or suspicion. Conversely the disadvantage of her role as an insider-researcher is the risk of the ways in which her own preconceived ideas and underlying personal bias may influence the study. As the research is so immersed in the life and culture of the institution there is also a risk that she may miss what Silverman (2007, p. 18) describes as 'being able to locate the mundane features of extraordinary situations and to identify what is remarkable in everyday life'. Neither does she want to compromise her own position, and the relationships that she has built up over a number of years, through the ways in which she conducts the research. The dual roles of organisational member and researcher can cause conflict and there will be a need to balance the justification for the

organisational requirements for the study with the researcher's own justification for the activities involved in the study (Coghlan, 2001).

BERA (2009) and Bridges (2001) highlight a continuum from insider-researcher to outsider-researcher and it could be argued that this researcher could also be described as an 'outsider-researcher'. The researcher holds a unique position in the organisation because her role as Staff Development Manager is balanced between supporting the implementation of the institutional strategy and being grounded in an appreciation of what it is like in the real world for staff working in the institution. Whilst the institution's senior managers have certain expectations of academic staff, academic staff may have their own motivations for working at the institution. The researcher's functional job role within the institution is to provide a business-focused individually- centred approach to developing staff and involves providing appropriate staff development solutions to support the academic staff in achieving the institution's strategy. As an employee of the institution the researcher is potentially what could be described as an insider-researcher. However, as the researcher is a member of the University's 'professional' staff and therefore an employee that is on a contract different from those who are the subject of the study (senior managers, professors and academics) the researcher could be perceived as an 'outsider-researcher'. The risks associated with being an outsider-researcher include the potential for creating damaging frameworks of understanding as the outsider 're-presents' the views of the participants and this can potentially lead to a feeling of disempowerment for the participants in the research (Bridges, 2001).

These tensions increase the challenge in choosing a methodology that is 'just right' for the study. The paper now moves on to explore just three of the methodological approaches traditionally linked to the interpretive paradigm that could be suitable for this coaching and mentoring study: action research, grounded theory and case study.

An exploration of three methodological approaches

During the process of exploring the three methodological approaches (Action Research, Grounded Theory and Case Study), the researcher identified with the story of Goldilocks, first recognising the options that were metaphorically too hot, cold, big, hard and soft before identifying the ways in which the methodologies could be 'just right' for the research study.

Action Research

Action research has been described as a collaborative research process that follows the cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting that can lead to community and organisational changes (Gray, 2004). At first the action research approach seemed 'too hot' in that a lot of work would need to be completed in the early stages by all of the practitioners involved in the study, it would take considerable time to work through all of the cycles, it could be hard for the researcher to be detached and impartial in approach (Denscombe, 2003) and because there are often tensions in

terms of ownership, leading to an abuse of power, influence and authority in the research process (Avison et al, 2001). Action research seemed 'too cold' because the research site can affect the extent to which generalisations can be made, limiting the study's potential for making a contribution to knowledge.

However, there were a number of reasons why it seemed that action research could be 'just right'. Action research has a strong focus on human development (Stringer, 1996), deals with real issues in the workplace (Denscombe, 2003), is used by practitioners to improve their professional practice (McNiff et al, 1999) and participants can apply what they have learned to their own contexts (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Whilst the possibility could still exist for the researcher to influence the study in a number of ways based on her 'pre-understanding' of the institution and its people, the collaborative approach of action research could help to minimise some of the potential for researcher bias. Action research can be useful for the type of research where the aim is to uncover the lived reality of those involved in the study, rather than finding answers to problems (Stringer, 1999) and can be a useful way of learning about how things work (Bryman, 1988) as well as exploring the types of change that take place at the level of professional self development (Denscombe, 2003) which could provide a useful basis for exploring the experiences of the coaches, mentors and their clients involved in the study. As such it appears that action research is a methodology that could be 'just right' for answering the research question *'How are coaching and mentoring being used to support the alignment of academic staff and institutional strategy?'*

Grounded Theory

The principles of grounded theory involve the researcher 'making sense' of the social world by generating a theory grounded in the data and developing a formal framework for understanding the phenomenon being studied (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). For the researcher grounded theory seemed 'too big'; the fact that the approach does not allow for precise planning (Denscombe, 2003) seemed a disadvantage to a researcher who has some preference for structure and order when dealing with complex problems. The need for an open-minded approach (Denscombe, 2003) also raised the question of whether the researcher could put to one side her existing conceptions and experiences of the institution and its people when analysing the data, and its propensity towards a more singular, rather than collaborative, approach to research (McLeod, 2007) held little attraction for the researcher when compared to the opportunities for collaborative learning promised by action research.

However, grounded theory is an approach that uncovers the basic social processes that underlie behaviour, with people seen as purposeful agents engaged in action which results in, or is in response to, change (McLeod, 2007) and could therefore be helpful in answering the research question: *'How are coaching and mentoring being used to support the alignment of academic staff and institutional strategy?'* The fact that the researcher does not need to be constrained by the existing theoretical

frameworks of understanding outlined in the literature at the start of the study and can develop a theory from categorising the literature in a new, rather than standard, way (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) allows for some ingenuity and creativity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) that could potentially help to counter-balance the researcher's existing pre-understanding of the context for the study. More than this the clear and structured process for analysing the data could, if carried out correctly, allow the researcher to demonstrate that she had undertaken a rigorous study using a method of analysis that could meet the criteria 'for doing good science' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.27) that might satisfy those calling for scientific and rigorous approaches to coaching and mentoring research outlined earlier in this paper. There are a number of reasons therefore why grounded theory could be 'just right' for the coaching and mentoring study.

Case Study

A case study provides an opportunity to explore the complexity of a single case and the interactions within its contexts – a study of the particularity and complexity of a single case which helps the researcher to grow towards understanding the case (Stake, 1995). Case study is useful where the phenomenon being studied is not isolated from its context, but is of interest precisely because the aim is to understand how behaviour and/or process are influenced by and influence context (Hartley, 2004).

However, there were a number of reasons why the researcher believed that the case study approach may not be 'just right' for this study. The richness of the context can mean that the study can have more variables than data points (Yin, 2003) and there can be a tension between the case and the issues meaning that they demand more time for study than is available. The need to be able to find ways to confine the study seemed 'too hard' for a researcher who knows so much about the intricate workings of the organisation and its people under investigation in the study. Conversely it seemed that case study had the potential to be an approach that would be 'too soft' for the research study. Case study has been discredited as a weak methodology open to challenge (Yin, 2003). The uniqueness and particularity of case study is not always favoured as an intrinsic study of the particular as it can be in biography (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) and can be a poor basis for generalisation (Stake, 1999). It has been described not as a methodological choice, but as a choice of object to be studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Conversely, case study approaches have been used to build knowledge of the individual and the organisation, as well as understanding around any complex social phenomena surrounding the case (Stake, 2006). Case study has the potential to capture the 'emergent and changing properties of life' in an organisation and the rich data collected in context would help to examine the research question by setting it in a contextual and causal context (Hartley, 2004, p. 323-3334. The researcher does have a strategic choice on ways in which to contain the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) and Simons (1996) has described the paradox of case study as an in depth study of the particular that can facilitate a shift to a more universal and holistic understanding. Case study is therefore an approach that could be 'just right' for this

research study as it allows for an exploration of the context that could help the researcher to explain more fully the contextual issues affecting the alignment of academic staff and to therefore explore and explain more fully the unique contribution of coaching and mentoring when answering the research question: *'How are coaching and mentoring being used to support the alignment of academic staff and institutional strategy?'*

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to raise awareness of just some of the tensions and possibilities for the academic and the practitioner undertaking research into coaching and mentoring. The conundrums facing the researcher at every stage of the epistemological and methodological journey can be met in a variety of ways. The exploration of three possible methods for answering the research question in a coaching and mentoring study have demonstrated that each had distinct disadvantages as well as the potential to be 'just right' for answering the research question.

This paper has demonstrated the ways in which choosing a methodology for a research study is a 'time-consuming, personal and reflective process' (Goulding, 1999, p. 870). Coaching and mentoring researchers and practitioners are hearing the clarion call for good and rigorous research into coaching and mentoring and the first step must be in exploring and defending the methodological approaches selected by the researcher, grounded in the researcher's own understanding of his/her beliefs and style of working to ensure an appropriate fit between researcher and methodology and the potential for each to be 'just right' for answering the research question.

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Appendix 1

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1. Introduction

Thank you for visiting this questionnaire. There are 22 questions and the questionnaire should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. By taking part in this survey you are agreeing to the following:

(i)I have read the information sheet attached to the invitation email

(ii)I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason

(iii)I understand that I can withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied

(iv)I agree to take part in the study: 'Coaching and mentoring in Higher Education: supporting the alignment of academic staff and institutional strategy.'

(v)I agree to the anonymised use of quotes in the thesis and any subsequent publications

Please answer all of the questions.
The deadline for completing the survey is Friday 13 November 2009.

*1. Do you agree?

    ○ Yes

    ○ No

2. RREP/EREPP Programme

*2. I was a member of the RREP Programme

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

*3. I am ALSO a member of the sequel EREPP Programme

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

3. Mentoring

*4. I have a mentor arranged through the RREP and/or EREPP Programme

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

*5. I have a mentor arranged through the Doctoral Track

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

*6. I have an informal mentoring arrangement

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

7. How many times have you met with your mentor/s?

- ○ We have met once
- ○ We have met 2-5 times
- ○ We have met 6-10 times
- ○ We have met more than 10 times

8. Please write a few sentences describing the benefits of working with a mentor

9. How useful has mentoring been in supporting you in the following?

	Not useful	A little useful	Quite useful	Very useful
Writing/submitting items for publication	○	○	○	○
Writing/submitting bids for funding	○	○	○	○
Writing/submitting abstracts for conferences	○	○	○	○
Developing education practice	○	○	○	○
Developing networks/contacts	○	○	○	○
Developing enterprise opportunities	○	○	○	○
Developing professional practice	○	○	○	○
Balancing my workload	○	○	○	○
Research team leadership	○	○	○	○
Research-informed teaching	○	○	○	○
Choosing a doctoral programme	○	○	○	○
Developing a research proposal	○	○	○	○
Identifying doctoral funding	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

4. Coaching

*10. Did you have a coaching session with Penny at the start of the RREP Programme?

○ Yes

○ No

*11. Did you meet with Penny or Margaret for additional coaching sessions on the EREPP Programme?

○ Yes

○ No

*12. Do you have an informal coaching arrangement?

○ Yes

○ No

*13. How many times have you met with a coach?

○ We have met once

○ We have met twice

○ We have met three or more times

14. Please write a few sentences describing the benefits of working with a coach

15. How useful has coaching been in supporting you in the following?

	Not useful	A little useful	Quite useful	Very useful
Identifying goals in the context of the Strategic Plan	○	○	○	○
Identifying other goals	○	○	○	○
Identifying my development needs	○	○	○	○
Personal and professional development planning	○	○	○	○
Career planning within BU	○	○	○	○
Career planning outside BU	○	○	○	○
Thinking critically about my role	○	○	○	○
Thinking critically about how I spend my time	○	○	○	○
Challenging blocks and barriers	○	○	○	○
Problem solving	○	○	○	○
Providing a listening ear	○	○	○	○
Making time to reflect and think	○	○	○	○
Increasing self confidence	○	○	○	○
Recognising my potential	○	○	○	○
Improving my performance	○	○	○	○
Thinking about my long term performance	○	○	○	○
Personal issues that can affect my ability to focus on work	○	○	○	○
Work-life balance	○	○	○	○
Providing independent perspective	○	○	○	○
Focusing on issues important to me	○	○	○	○
Understanding my Myers Briggs Type	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify below)	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

5. Alignment

*16. This study is about aligning academic staff and organisational strategy. In a few sentences describe what alignment means to you.

*17. In what ways are you are aligning with the organisational strategy?

*18. What helps you to align with the organisational strategy?

19. What hinders you from aligning with the organisational strategy?

✱20. As an academic, how important are the following for you when thinking about your alignment with the organisation?

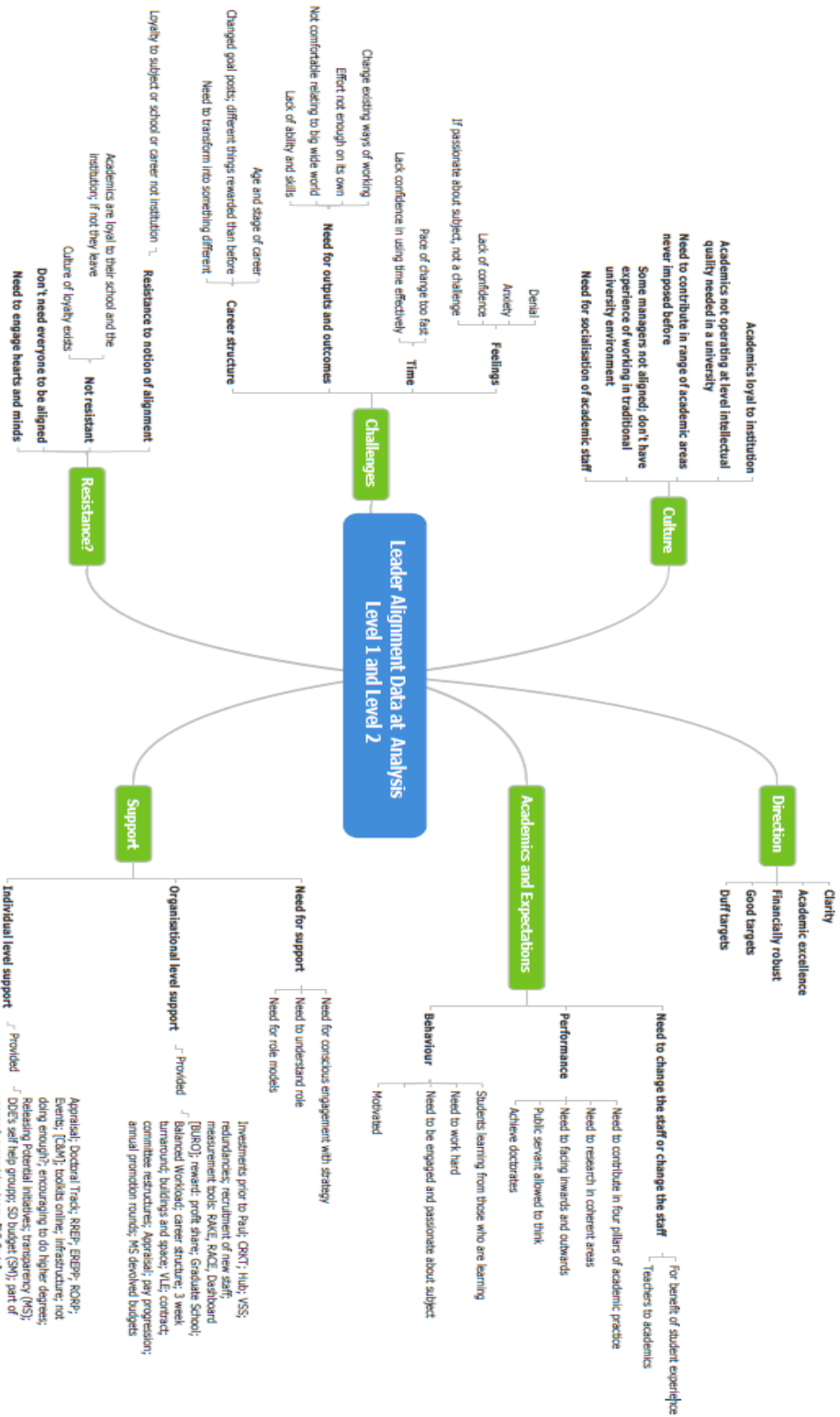|	Not Important	Not very important	Important	Very Important
The need to focus on strategy, measures and accountability	○	○	○	○
The need for you to establish authenticity and identity in the organisation	○	○	○	○
For you and the organisation to have similar values	○	○	○	○
To feel supported by your manager	○	○	○	○
To feel supported by the organisation	○	○	○	○
Opportunities to engage in staff development	○	○	○	○
Reward for your work	○	○	○	○
Recognition for your work	○	○	○	○
Person organisation fit	○	○	○	○
Positive emotional climate	○	○	○	○
Effective infrastructure	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

6. Further Research

＊21. Please tell me your age.

22. Would you be happy to take part in a confidential interview with the researcher about your experiences of coaching and mentoring on the RREP/EREPP/Doctoral Track Programme(s)? The interview will take place in the Autumn Term 2009.

If yes, please give your name here:

Leader Alignment Data at Analysis Level 1 and Level 2

Leader Alignment Data at Analysis Level 1 and Level 2

Challenges

- Academics loyal to institution
- Academics not operating at level intellectual quality needed in a university
- Need to contribute in range of academic areas never imposed before
- **Need for outputs and outcomes**
  - Change existing ways of working
  - Effort not enough on its own
  - Not comfortable relating to big wide world
  - Lack of ability and skills
  - If passionate about subject, not a challenge
  - Lack confidence in using time effectively
- **Career structure**
  - Age and stage of career
  - Changed goal posts; different things rewarded than before
  - Need to transform into something different
- **Feelings**
  - Denial
  - Anxiety
  - Lack of confidence
- **Time**
  - Pace of change too fast

Culture

- Some managers not aligned; don't have experience of working in traditional university environment
- Need for socialisation of academic staff

Resistance?

- Loyalty to subject or school or career not institution
- **Not resistant**
  - Academics are loyal to their school and the institution, if not they leave
  - Culture of loyalty exists
- **Resistance to notion of alignment**
  - Academics are loyal to their school and the institution, if not they leave
  - Don't need everyone to be aligned
  - Need to engage hearts and minds

Direction
- Clarity
- Academic excellence
- Financially robust
- Good targets
- Duff targets

Academics and Expectations

- **Need to change the staff or change the staff**
  - Need to contribute in four pillars of academic practice
  - For benefit of student experience
  - Teachers to academics
  - Need to research in coherent areas
  - Need to facing inwards and outwards
  - Public servant allowed to think
  - Achieve doctorates
- **Performance**
  - Students learning from those who are learning
  - Need to work hard
  - Need to be engaged and passionate about subject
- **Behaviour**
  - Motivated

Support

- **Need for support**
  - Need for conscious engagement with strategy
  - Need to understand role
  - Need for role models
- **Organisational level support** — Provided
  - Investments prior to Paul; CRKT; Hilb; VSS; redundancies; recruitment of new staff, measurement tools: RAKE, RACE, Dashboard [BURO]; reward: profit share; Graduate School; Balanced Workload; career structure; 3 week turnaround; buildings and space; VLE; contract; committee restructures; Appraisal; pay progression; annual promotion rounds; MS devolved budgets
- **Individual level support** — Provided
  - Appraisal; Doctoral Track; RREP; EREPP; RORP; Events; [C&M]; toolkits online; infrastructure; not doing enough?; encouraging to do higher degrees; Releasing Potential initiatives; transparency (MS); DDES self help group; SD budget (SM); part of research supervision team; [HG Certs]; opportunities; external examiner, validation, external view

Checklist of Questions for Improving Credibility in Insider Research

PRE-EXISTING KNOWLEDGE
How does my previous experience influence the research?
What do I already know about the context for the research?
- The wider context?
- The organisation/location for the research?
- The potential participants?

PRE-EXISTING ASSUMPTIONS
How does my role as an employee influence the research?
What assumptions am I making?
- What do I expect to find?
- What do I hope to find?
- What am I curious about?

How can I reduce the risk of my assumptions affecting the credibility of my research through my:
- Philosophical position?
- Methodological approach?
- Research methods?
- Model for establishing credibility?

How will I make 'the familiar strange'?
How can the literature and research questions best serve to ensure that I see the research through new eyes?
Which of the following would help me to give quality of attention to the risks?
- To be interviewed about my assumptions?
- To keep a record in a research journal?

KNOWLEDGE OF THE PHENOMENON
- How can I best separate my research from my experience?
- What questions should my 'internal supervisor' ask of me during an interview?
- What are the triggers to look out for?
- How will I ensure the best way to emerge myself thoroughly in the raw data to ensure that I appreciate fully the participant view and do not interpret too early?

KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLE
How will I deal with the influence of our existing relationship on the research?
- How will I brief them so they fully understand my role/task as a researcher and how it is different to my relationship to them as colleague?
- What style/approach should I adopt for the interview? How will it be different to our usual interactions?
- What are the risks of learning about the private world of people who I will continue to work with after the research?
- What supports are available to me to reduce the risk of causing harm (e.g. Ethics Committee)?
- How will I ensure that what I do as a researcher does not have an adverse affect on our future relationship? For example: How will I deal with minority views? How will I deal with sensitive data?
- How will I deal with different types of participant in respect of our existing relationship e.g. people who are more senior to me?

MAKING SENSE OF THE DATA AND FINDINGS
At what point is it appropriate to make use of my own knowledge and experience of the context and phenomenon to make sense of the data?
- Have I used a robust system of data analysis that has enabled me to check and re-check that I have analysed the data appropriately?
- Who are the audience for this study?
- What will they be most interested in knowing?
- When I write to make sense of the findings, am I completely certain that what I write can be clearly traced back to the data?
  - When I connect what I know now to what I knew before, what do I think?
  - How will my research influence my future actions

TRANSFERABILITY
How will my research influence my future?