University of Leicester
School of Education
Educational Management Development Unit

EdD in Educational Management

Thesis

THE ROLE OF THE
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
IN 'NEW' BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This Thesis describes a study of the roles of heads of department in the 'new' universities, the former polytechnics. The study comprises a survey of all 105 heads of department in four 'new' universities and case studies in three of the four universities. The case studies were carried out by semi-structured interviews with the head and key members of the head's role sets in three departments in different academic disciplines. The role of the head is examined through the application of role theory and role concepts and a theoretical framework for the role is presented.

The study showed that the role is complex and demanding and is subject to several conflicting pressures, many of which are similar to those experienced by heads of department in the 'old' or traditional universities. The main tensions and conflicts faced by heads are simultaneously representing their department to the university and the university to their department; managing academics, particularly in terms of staff discipline and conflict between staff; and acquiring and managing resources in a difficult economic climate. The dual role of the head as academic leader and manager was found to create tensions and conflicts but these were felt to be unavoidable. The need for the head of department to be an academic, rather than a professional manager was considered to be important.

The main personal difficulty which heads experience is the excessive workload generated by role overload and the resultant long working hours. This presents dangers for heads in terms of its effect on their performance, personal academic profile, family life and personal health.
A number of means of supporting the head are identified. These include delegation of responsibilities to others; training and development for heads; organisational mechanisms such as working groups; and the restructuring of faculties to provide flatter management structures.
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CHAPTER ONE       INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

This thesis is presented as a requirement of the Doctorate in Education at the School of Education, the University of Leicester. The thesis comprises a study of the roles of heads of academic departments in 'new' British universities - the former polytechnics. The choice of the research topic arises from the author's earlier study of staff appraisal in higher education, carried out as part of his studies for the MBA in Educational Management at the University of Leicester.

One of the findings of the study was that the introduction of appraisal, along with other changes in higher education, has been instrumental in fundamentally changing the role of the head of department in two principal ways. Firstly, the role has become less that of academic leader and more that of a manager and, secondly, the job has become significantly more complex and onerous. The study also revealed that, whilst a considerable amount of research had been conducted into various aspects of the roles of departmental heads in the 'old' or traditional universities, very little work has been carried out in relation to heads in the polytechnics or 'new' universities.
BACKGROUND

In 1991, the Government published a White Paper entitled, "Higher Education: A New Framework" (HMSO, 1991) in which it proposed the abolition of the 'binary line' between the universities and the polytechnics:

"The distinction between universities on the one hand and polytechnics and colleges on the other, known as the binary line, has become an obstacle to further progress. The Government therefore proposes to abolish it and establish a single framework for higher education." (HMSO, 1991, p.4)

The main features of the new framework were:

- a single funding structure
- the extension of degree awarding powers to the 'major institutions'
- the extension of the title of university to the polytechnics
- a UK-wide quality audit unit developed by the institutions themselves.

Legislation to implement these changes was introduced in the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act.
Thus there are now eighty-seven universities in the United Kingdom* (UCAS, 1996, pp.5-7) of which forty-five are the 'traditional', 'chartered' or 'old' universities and forty-two are the former polytechnics or 'new' universities. Both categories of university now award their own degrees, are funded by the same bodies: the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) and the Funding Council for Wales (FCW) and have their quality control arrangements scrutinised by a common body, the Higher Education Quality Council.

However, they have different traditions:

"...polytechnics have developed missions which emphasise the provision of vocational studies at both degree level and below. There is emphasis too on part-time and other courses designed to widen access and meet local and regional needs. This emphasis differs from that in the universities, which continues to be towards full-time academic courses at degree and postgraduate level, together with associated research."

(HMSO, 1991, p.8)

"Universities have a broad mission which embraces basic, strategic and applied research....By contrast, the research mission of the polytechnics and colleges is, for the most part, applied and related strategic research."

(HMSO, 1991, p.15)

* Counting the Universities of London and Wales as single institutions and ignoring the various 'university colleges' and the University of Buckingham which is not Government-funded.
Furthermore, in its White Paper, the Government recognised:

"...the importance of maintaining the general diversity of the various institutions which make up the two sectors....In particular, it will wish to be satisfied that the distinctive emphasis on vocational studies and widening access developed mainly by the polytechnics and colleges is maintained and extended."

(HMSO, 1991, p.14)

The 'old' universities and the polytechnics also differed in their organisational and governmental structures. Whilst the new framework provided a common procedure, submission to the Privy Council, for changes in institutions' articles of government, the Government signalled that:

"This will not entail polytechnics and colleges needing to depart in substance from their present management structures..."

(HMSO, 1991 p.33)

The 'new' universities have responded to their change of status in different ways. Some have begun to develop their research activities to more closely resemble those of the 'old' universities whereas others have continued to concentrate on applied research and to further develop their links with industry. Some have altered their senior management structures, at least in terms of designations, so that their senior management team no longer comprises, for example, a director and deputy and assistant directors but a vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellors.
Some 'new' universities have sought to 'improve' their academic profiles by discontinuing or reducing the number of their sub-degree level courses, sometimes by franchising them to further education colleges, and others have continued to develop these courses, at least in part, as a means of fulfilling the Government's wish to widen access.

Nevertheless, whatever the extent to which the 'new' and the 'old' universities become more or less similar in the future, the abolition of the binary line is sufficiently recent for the distinction between 'old' and 'new' universities to still be meaningful.

THE HISTORY OF THE NEW UNIVERSITIES

In 1968, Robinson wrote:

"Traditionally, British policy in higher education has been based on three institutions - the university, the teachers' training college and the further education college."

(Robinson, 1968, p.14)

He wrote that the universities had originally been developed for the education of fee-paying upper and middle class children and 'scholars' - exceptionally able working class children; that teachers' training colleges were academically inferior to the universities and trained bright working class children to become teachers in state schools and that further education colleges, which had developed from technical and
trade schools, provided not only vocational training for workers but also for the "overflow from the universities".

In 1956 a Government White Paper acknowledged a growing pressure for university places and for the development of higher education to university level outside the universities (HMSO, 1956). It also listed 24 further education colleges doing advanced work, in respect of which the Government would give special grant aid to the appropriate local authorities. In 1957, the Government announced the setting up of nine of these colleges as colleges of advanced technology (CATs) in which the higher level work would be concentrated. The remaining listed colleges were conceived as regional or area colleges retaining their wide range of work with full and part-time students.

In 1961, the Government established a Committee of Enquiry, chaired by Professor L C Robbins to examine the development of higher education. The report of the enquiry, the 'Robbins Report', was published in 1963 (HMSO, 1993). It suggested that the CATs should be given charters as technological universities but that the regional colleges be left as they were. In respect of the regional and area colleges, the Report stated:

"...some may be best suited by their present system of government. Others may profit from federation with another technical college or with a college of education, or both. Others again may become constituent parts of universities new or old. Some may follow the colleges of advanced technology and attain university status."

(HMSO, 1963, p.138)
The Report suggested that advanced courses in the regional and area colleges should lead to the award of degrees, as in the universities, and recommended the creation of a Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) to control the award of these degrees. The CNAA was established in February, 1964.

In 1966, the Government published a White Paper proposing the incorporation of 60 colleges of technology, building, art and commerce into 30 new polytechnics in which non-university full-time and part-time higher education courses would be concentrated (HMSO, 1966). In April 1967, the Government formally invited local authorities to submit proposals for the establishment of polytechnics. Thus the 'binary line' was created.

In April 1967, the Secretary of State for Education and Science confirmed proposals for the creation of 28 polytechnics in England and Wales. The new polytechnics were funded by local education authorities through a national pooling arrangement overseen by a 'Pooling Committee' set up in 1968 (Sharp, 1987, p.77). A number of equivalent institutions were established in Scotland but were designated 'central institutions' and were funded directly by the Secretary of State for Scotland (HMSO, 1991, p.39).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a national debate as to whether the colleges of education should be removed from the university institutes of education and placed on the local authority side of the binary divide (Sharp, 1987, pp.93-111). In 1972 a Government White Paper announced the introduction of the Diploma in Higher Education and the three-year BEd degree both of which could be validated by a university or by the CNAA (HMSO, 1972). Teacher training was, therefore, added to the portfolio of course provision in many of the polytechnics.
By the end of the 1970s, there was a recognition of the need for local authority higher education to be nationally co-ordinated (Sharp, 1987, pp.148-155) and, in 1982, the National Advisory Body was set up to, "monitor, control and develop the local authority sector of higher education" (Sharp, 1987, pp.163-164). Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s, the provision of higher education in local authority institutions, in the form of degree courses validated by the CNAA and sub-degree level courses validated by the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC), proliferated within and beyond the polytechnics so that, by 1987:

"In England, 405 institutions outside the universities provide higher education: 29 polytechnics and 346 other colleges under local education authority control, plus 30 voluntary and other colleges directly funded by the Department of Education and Science." (HMSO, 1987, p.25)

In 1987, the Government published a White Paper in which it,

"...concluded that it is no longer appropriate for polytechnics and other colleges predominantly offering higher education to be controlled by individual local authorities." (HMSO, 1987, p.28)

In the White Paper, the Government announced its intention to re-establish the polytechnics and "other institutions of substantial size and engaged predominantly in higher education" as "free-standing outside local authority control." These institutions were to be, "established with corporate status". It listed 57 institutions, including all of the polytechnics, which would be re-established and announced the abolition of the
National Advisory Body and the establishment of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council to oversee the, "planning of this sector and the allocation of resources within it" (HMSO, 1987, pp.29-31). Legislation to implement these changes was introduced in the 1988 Education Reform Act and the polytechnics became 'incorporated'.

In 1991, the Government published its White Paper, "Higher Education: A New Framework" (HMSO, 1991) following which the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act provided for the abolition of the CNAA and enabled the polytechnics, together with a small number of colleges of higher education to become the 42 'new' universities.

HEADS OF DEPARTMENT IN THE NEW UNIVERSITIES

There are approximately 1,000 heads of department in the 'new' universities; an average of approximately 25 heads in each of 42 universities. The nature of heads' roles was determined, at least to some extent, by the ways in which these institutions have developed.

When the polytechnics were established in the late 1960s their staff members, including heads, were those who were already in post when those institutions had been regional or area colleges. Thus, heads of the new polytechnic departments often came from environments which were very different from the universities. Lower level, further education courses were provided alongside higher education courses which, in any event, were often at sub-degree level. In many of the new polytechnics, there was little, if any, research activity.
During the 1970s and 1980s, the academic profiles of many polytechnics came to more closely resemble those of the universities. As the Government had stipulated in the 1966 White Paper (HMSO, 1966), sub-degree higher education courses were retained but the provision of degree courses was greatly expanded, although mostly in 'vocational' disciplines, and postgraduate courses were developed. In many cases, there was an increased level of research activity but in very few cases did this become a major feature of the polytechnics' provision.

In the late 1960s, the management structures of the new polytechnics were also very different from the universities and, whereas the academic profiles of the polytechnics changed significantly in the 1970s and 1980s, their management structures did not. In 1991, in comparing heads of a polytechnic department with those in a university, Mathias wrote:

"...the modern head of department's role [in the university] is transitory. Typically, he or she will serve for a three year period...Heads of department in the polytechnic were appointed on a permanent basis and were responsible to the Directorate which consisted of the permanently appointed staff of the Director and two Assistant Directors....There was no equivalent to the dean in the polytechnic but heads of department were more directly responsible to the Director whereas at the University they tended to be answerable to the Senate and Council."

(Mathias, 1991, p.68)

By the time the polytechnics had become the 'new' universities, however, most of their management structures had changed, not only in terms of the re-designation of their directorates as vice-chancelleries, but also in terms of their departments being grouped
into faculties, sometimes called schools, each with a dean or head of school. Thus the head of department ceased to be directly responsible to the director. Typically, a head of department in a 'new' university will now be accountable to a 'dean of faculty' or 'head of school', in some cases through one or more associate or assistant deans. The head will be responsible for a department comprising a number of academic and support staff (the smallest 'new' university department known to the author has 8 members of academic staff and the largest has over 60).

With the acquisition of university status, two conflicting pressures arose in relation to the development of the head of department's role. Firstly, many of the 'new' universities sought to emulate the 'old' universities by placing more emphasis on their research activities, a move reinforced by the possible future linking of funding to the quality and quantity of research. As a consequence, responsibility for the development of research became part of many head's job descriptions and experience in research and a track record of publications increasingly became specified requirements in advertisements for heads' posts. Furthermore, many of the 'new' universities, now expect heads to meet the criteria for appointment to professorships. The 'academic' nature of the head's role was, therefore, enhanced.

The conflicting pressure was the increasingly managerial nature of the universities and of the 'new' universities in particular and, consequently, of the head's role. In writing of the move away from the collegial style of management, Warren wrote:

"In the new universities this voluntary association basis of authority is being challenged and swept away by the rise of the academic manager and the movement towards top-down, hierarchical control." (Warren, 1994, p.52)
The role of departmental heads in the 'new' universities began, therefore, with a dichotomy. As the 'new' universities come of age and develop their own distinctive characteristics, the head's role will also develop. It will do so in a fast-changing environment in which all roles in higher education become increasingly pressured as a result of factors such as, for example, greater public accountability, changes in funding arrangements, the linking of funding to the quality of teaching and research, and exposure to crude market forces.

The nature of this complex and demanding role and the way in which it develops in the future will provide a fruitful and fascinating subject for the student of educational management. The surprising fact that it has not been the subject of significant research in the past may be a measure of the relatively low priority given to research in the polytechnics. Now that they have become universities and, in at least some of these institutions, research now has a higher profile, this position might change. It is hoped that this study will provide a useful starting point.

THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine the roles of departmental heads in the 'new' universities. The objectives are to determine the importance of the head's role within the university, the activities undertaken by heads and the relative importance of those activities, the ambiguities, conflicts and pressures to which heads are subject and to develop a conceptual framework for the role.
The research was carried out by a postal questionnaire survey of all heads of
department in four 'new' universities followed by case studies of the role sets of three
heads of department in different disciplines in three of the universities. The main focus
of the survey was to examine the activities carried out by heads whilst the main focus of
the case studies was to examine heads' roles through role theory and role concepts with
a view to developing the conceptual framework.

The findings of the research are discussed and compared with other studies of heads'
roles, virtually all of which relate to departmental heads in 'old' universities, as
described in the literature. Conclusions are presented which relate to the methodology,
conduct and validity of the research and to the objectives identified above.
Recommendations are offered to improve the effectiveness of Heads and a theoretical
model is offered to describe the role and to provide a basis for future research.
CHAPTER TWO  ROLE THEORY IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter comprises a study of the literature on role, role concepts and role theory, their application in Educational Management (through the constituent domains of organisations, management and education) and, in particular, their applicability to the study of the roles of heads of academic departments in universities.

In the literature there are a number of published accounts of studies of the roles of various post-holders in schools (Burnham, 1969; Hargreaves, 1972; Coulson, 1980; Maw, 1977; Dunham, 1978; Todd and Dennison, 1980; Best, Ribbins, Jarvis and Oddy, 1983; Ribbins, 1988). Similarly, there are accounts of studies of the roles of post-holders in further education colleges (Peeke, 1980 and 1983; Bush, 1983).

There are also accounts of studies of the roles of heads of academic departments in universities in the U.S.A. (Falk, 1979; Bennett, 1982; Hammons, 1984, Tucker. 1984; Weinberg, 1984; Bennett and Figuli, 1990; Green and McDade, 1991); in Israel (Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak, 1986); in Australia (Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982; Moses, 1985; Moses and Roe, 1990) and in the 'old 'universities in Great Britain (Gordon, 1989; Startup, 1976; Middlehurst, 1989 and 1993; Mathias, 1991; Becher and Kogan, 1992; Brooke and Davies, 1994).

There are, however, no published accounts of studies of the roles of departmental heads in the 'new' British universities. Furthermore, although many of the accounts referred to above purport to describe studies of the roles of heads of university departments, they actually describe studies of the duties performed by heads, particular aspects of heads' roles, such as leadership or of particular difficulties faced by heads, such as the increasingly managerial nature of their responsibilities. None of the studies
described applied role concepts or examined the job of the university head of department in the context of role theory.

THE HISTORY OF ROLE THEORY

The history of the term "role" was summarised by Moreno (1960):

"Role" originally a French word which penetrated into English is derived from the Latin 'rotula' (the little wheel - the diminutive of 'rota' - wheel). In antiquity it was used.....to designate a round (wooden) roll on which sheets of parchment were fastened.....From this came the word for an assemblage of such leaves into a scroll or book-like composite. This was used, subsequently, to mean any official volume of papers....as, for instance in England....the rolls of parliament - the minutes or proceedings....in Greece and...in ancient Rome the parts in the theatre were written on the above-mentioned 'rolls'....Only towards the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.....(were)....the parts of the theatrical characters ...read from 'roles' - paper fascicles. Whence each scenic 'part' became a role."

It was not until the 1930's that the term was employed technically in sociological writings on role problems (Biddle and Thomas, 1966, p.6). Three significant writers were Mead (1934), Moreno (1934) and the anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936) who proposed what has become a classic distinction between status (position) and role:

"A status, as distinct from the individual who may occupy it, is simply a collection of rights and duties...A role represents the dynamic aspects of a status...When he puts the rights and duties into effect, he is performing a role. Role and status are quite inseparable....There are no roles without statuses or statuses without roles."

(Linton, 1936, pp. 113-114)
The vocabulary of the role language first articulated by Mead, Moreno and Linton was further developed by such writers as Cotrell (1933), Sherif (1936), Hughes (1937, 1938), Parsons (1937, 1942, 1945), Newcomb (1942) and Sarbin (1943). It was not until the mid-1940s, however, that role-related terms appeared extensively in the titles of empirical studies. The "Psychological Abstracts' which first appeared in 1927 first included, as major index categories, -'role playing' in 1944; 'role' in 1945 (and 'sex role' in 1959) (Biddle and Thomas, 1966, p.15).

Throughout the remainder of the 1940s, the 1950s and into the 1960s the role language was progressively elaborated and refined by writers such as Lindesmith and Strauss (1949), Davies (1949), Merton (1949, 1957), Newcomb (1950), Parsons (1951), Parsons and Shils (1951), Toby (1952), Argyle (1952), Rommetveit (1954), Lang (1956), Turner (1956), Bates (1956, 1957), Levinson (1959) and Gouldner (1960).

Figure 1 (Biddle and Thomas, 1966, p.16) illustrates the trends in empirical research related to role theory by the frequencies of the titles of publications identified under the categories of 'role'.

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. Frequencies of articles and books relating to role theory tabulated from the role bibliography (1922-1963) and Psychological Abstracts (1927–1963).

After Biddle and Thomas (1966, p.16)
By the 1960s role theory had become an established field of study. Biddle and Thomas (1966, p.8) described role theory as a "modern field of behavioural science" and wrote:

"During its relatively brief history, the language of role has grown from few to many concepts, from vague to more precise ideas and from concept to operational indicator. The role analyst may now describe most complex real-life phenomena using role terms and concepts, with an exactness that probably surpasses that which is provided by any other single conceptual vocabulary in behavioural science."

In defining the role vocabulary, a number of writers on role theory have continued to compare the sociological concept of role with the roles played by actors in the theatre (Ruddock, 1969, p 2; Jackson, 1972, p 3; Moreno, 1989; Landy, 1991).

However, Biddle and Thomas (1966, p.3) wrote:

"But even though role theory owes much to the theater, its perspective and language allow for more than a metaphorical characterization of human behaviour. Furthermore, the field of role consists of a body of knowledge, theory, characteristic research endeavour, and a domain of study, in addition to a particular perspective of language...and like any scientific endeavour role theory aspires to understand, predict and control the particular phenomena included in its domain of study".

They listed a number of common terms in role theory, their respective common-language meanings and selected meanings in role theory from which list the following definitions are selectively extracted:
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Common-language Meanings</th>
<th>Selected Meanings in Role Theory</th>
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<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>1. A part or character performed by an actor in a drama.</td>
<td>1. A behavioural repertoire characteristic of a person or a position.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. A part or function taken or assumed by any person or structure.</td>
<td>2. A set of standards, descriptions norms or concepts for the behaviours of a person or a position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>1. A positioning or placing; 2. An office, rank, status or employment.</td>
<td>1. A designated location in the structure of a social system.</td>
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<td>3. A spot, place or condition giving one an advantage over another.</td>
<td>2. A set of persons sharing common attributes or treated similarly by others. 3. A role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>1. A state or condition of a person.</td>
<td>1. A position 2. Power, prestige or wealth associated with a social position.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. One's rank, particularly high rank.</td>
<td>3. Social class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>1. A state of affairs looked for in the future; an anticipation.</td>
<td>1. A concept held about a behaviour likely to be exhibited by a person. 2. A standard held for the behaviour of a person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. A tentative...model of existing events.</td>
<td>3. A hoped-for state of affairs. 3. An anticipation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. A hoped-for state of affairs.</td>
<td>4. An idea concerning what ought to occur. 4. A norm. 5. An attitude.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role Conflict  [Not in the common language]

1. Inconsistent prescriptions
   held for a person by himself or
   by one more others.

2. The attribution of inconsistent
   prescriptions (or standards) to
   others, applicable to one’s self.

3. Feelings of unease resulting
   from the existence or
   assumption of inconsistent
   prescriptions (or standards).

Elsewhere, in addressing the “basic concepts for classifying the phenomena of role”, Biddle and Thomas (1966, p.62) offered the following additional definitions:

Role pressure pertains to all those factors relating to role which singly or in combination are sources of potential difficulty for the individual.

Role strain “the felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations” (Goode, 1960, p.483). If pressure is strong and enduring it of course results in strain.

In 1965 in Great Britain, Michael Banton produced a rather less comprehensive review of the field of study than that of Biddle and Thomas which he described as:

“...a selection of the ideas and conclusions of writers who have had a common interest in the concept of role”.  

(Banton, 1965, p.ix)
In attempting to classify the phenomena of role, Banton usefully adopted a more straightforward approach. He referred to the definitions offered by Linton (1936) who identified:

'Ascribed' roles as those, "assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities" and

'Achieved' roles as those, "left open to be filled through competition and individual effort"

and to Southall's classification of roles according to the principal social domains in which they are exercised:

- kinship and ethnic
- economic
- political
- ritual or religious
- recreational (Southall, 1959)

Finally, he described Nadel's attempt to marry Linton's definitions with this sort of scheme (Nadel, 1957) and developed the following elaboration:

**Ascribed roles**
- Non-relational examples - age, sex, race, descent
- Relational example - kinship

**Achieved roles**
- Non-relational Propriety - categorised by possession of skills, resources or learning, examples - smith, diviner, sage
Expressive - indicating belief, 
creativeness or communication, examples 
- artist, orator

Service - occupational, examples -
teacher, salesman, labourer

Relational
Symmetrical - colleague, partner or rival

Asymmetrical - hierarchical roles and 
those paired with them, examples
- manager, leader, patron.

During and since the 1960s, role theory has continued to be developed as a field of study (Jackson, 1972; Biddle, 1979 and 1986; Heiss, 1981; Ickes and Knowles, 1982; Zurcher, 1983; Stryker and Stratham, 1985; Blau and Gordon, 1991) although there are those who have questioned its usefulness as a concept in Sociology (Coulson, 1972). It has been useful in examining 'complex real-life phenomena' in a number of domains including the social and behavioural sciences.

Of particular relevance to this work is the application of role theory in the domains of organisational behaviour, management and education.
ROLE THEORY IN ORGANISATIONS

In 1966, Katz and Kahn developed the theoretical framework, shown in Figure 2, for the role analysis of a 'focal person' within the context of an organisation.

Figure 2  A theoretical model of the role sending cycle in an organisational After Katz and Kahn (1966)

Katz and Kahn defined the terms used in the framework as follows:

The role set - "consists of the different people with whom the focal person has contact and who have a stake in and hold expectations about the focal person's performance in the job .....called, 'role senders', in the diagram".

Role expectations - "what the focal person should do or avoid doing during their (the role senders) interpersonal encounters with the manager".

The 'sent' role - "the acts of communication and influence by the role set to convey their role expectations".
The 'received' role - "the focal person's perceptions of the messages sent by the role set".

Role behaviour - "what the focal person does in response to the messages he or she has perceived and in response to his or her own perceptions of the job (after Levinson, 1959)".

The framework depicts a cyclical process where the circles represent the contextual features of the role sending cycle - organisational, interpersonal and personal influences and the boxes represent the role set and the focal person. In the cycle, the sent role is influenced by the personal attributes of the focal person, the perception of the sent role by the focal person (the 'received' role') and interpersonal factors between the role senders and the focal person. Both the role senders and the focal person are influenced by organisational factors. The role set's expectations create demands and constraints on the jobholder, while the focal person's role behaviour provides the role set with information about the extent of the compliance with expectations.

Kahn et al. (1966) used the Katz and Kahn framework as a basis for examining role conflict and ambiguity in organisations. They developed, "a theoretical model, providing a general orientation to the interactions of the major groups of variables".

The model was built around the concept of a role episode - a complete cycle of role sending, response by the focal person and the effect of that response on the role senders. The model is shown in Figure 3 and the core of the model is expanded in Figure 4.
Figure 3  A theoretical model of factors involved in role conflict and ambiguity

After Kahn et al. (1966)

Organizational Factors A

Role Senders

Role Expectations
Role Pressures

Experience
Response

Role pressures; psychological coping efforts; compliance; symptom formation.

Focal Person

Experience
Response

Psychological conflict; experienced ambiguity; perception of role and role senders.

Interpersonal Relations C

Personality Factors B

Figure 4  A model of the role episode

After Kahn et al. (1966)

Role Senders

Experience
Role expectations; perception of focal person's behavior; evaluations.

Response
Role pressures; objective role conflict; objective ambiguity.

Focal Person

Experience
Coping efforts; compliance; symptom formation.

Response

Psychological conflict; experienced ambiguity; perception of role and role senders.
The boxes represent events which constitute a role episode and the arrows connecting them imply a causal effect. Role pressures are assumed to originate in expectations held by members of the role set. The role senders have expectations about the way the focal role should be performed and perceptions about the way the focal person is actually performing. They compare the two and exert pressures to make the focal person's performance congruent with their expectations. The adjustive responses of the focal person are observed by the role senders and their expectations are adjusted accordingly. For both the role senders and the focal person, the process, therefore, involves experience and response.

For example, consider the case of the focal person being a middle manager whose immediate superordinate sets an objective, and therefore has an expectation, for the manager's department to set up a committee to oversee a particular issue, perhaps health and safety. If, after a certain period of time, a committee has not been established, the superordinate might exert pressures in the form of a reminder, or some even more forceful signal, to the manager. The initial failure of the manager to meet the objective and the action taken after being reminded of the objective are observed by the superordinate whose expectations regarding the manager's likely performance on this and on future occasions are adjusted accordingly.

A role episode begins with a set of expectations held by the role senders (the superordinate) about the focal person (the manager) and his behaviour relating to his job (the objective of setting up the working group). In fact, the expectations of each role sender may be different according to his/her own anticipation of the focal person's response and the different effects on each role sender of organisational, personality and interpersonal factors.

In the example, the manager requests a member of the departmental staff to chair the health and safety committee but that member of staff resists on the basis of already
being overloaded with work and suggests that another member of staff be given the

The manager believes that the other member of staff would not perform the task
so well, even 'though that member of staff has a lighter workload. The manager's

initial adjustive response when faced with this dilemma (observed by the superordinate

as failure to comply with his or her expectation) is to delay taking action.

To determine the nature of sent role pressures, the expectations of each role sender (in

the example, the superordinate and members of the departmental staff) must be

considered separately. However, to understand the degree of conflict in the role, the
total pattern of expectations and pressures must be considered.

In the framework, arrow 1 indicates that the total set of role pressures affects the

immediate experience of the focal person. The sent pressures (II) (the superordinate's

instruction and the staff member's resistance) lead to experienced conflict (III) (the

manager's dilemma) which leads to coping responses (IV) (delay). These are perceived

.arrow 2) and evaluated in relation to expectations (I) (the superordinate's adjusted

expectations and the staff member's expectation for the manager to allocate the job to

someone else) and the cycle resumes.

Whilst the boxes and arrows represent events at a given moment in time, the circles in

Figure 3 represent comparatively constant states of the organisational, personal and

interpersonal relations between the role senders and the focal person.

The organisational circle (A) represents a set of variables some of which characterise

the organisation as a whole and some of which relate to the positions of the role senders

and the focal person in the organisation (rank, responsibilities etc). In the example, this

would include the line management relationships between the participants and the

organisation's management style, e.g. whether it is formal, collegial etc. Arrow 3

indicates a causal relationship between organisational variables and role expectations

page 26
and pressures. A focal person with a liaison responsibility (for instance, a 'middle manager' as in the example or a head of department in a university!) is likely to be subjected to many conflicting role pressures because his/her role set consists of role senders in different parts of the organisation, each of which has its own goals, objectives and norms.

Personality factors (circle B) are those which describe the propensity of a person to behave in certain ways - his/her motives, values, sensitivities, fears, habits etc. Such factors may affect role episodes in a number of ways. For example, some traits of the person may evoke certain responses from the role sender (the manager is clearly seen, by the member of staff, to be tolerant of resistance) whilst some persons may experience the same role pressures differently from others. Also personality factors may determine or affect the coping responses adopted in response to role pressures (another manager may not perceive the resistance as a dilemma or may not find a delay necessary for its resolution).

Interpersonal relations (circle C) are the fairly stable patterns of interaction between the focal person (manager) and his role senders (superordinate and staff member) and their orientations towards each other. Some of these patterns stem from the formal structure of the organisation and some from informal interactions and the sharing of common experiences. Influences of particular importance in the organisational context are power or the ability to influence; effective bonds such as respect or trust; dependence of one upon the other and the style of communication between the person and the role sender.

There are a number of ways in which the focal person's responses (IV) may produce changes in other variables. Firstly, through direct feedback (arrow 2), the extent of the focal person's compliance with the role senders' demands may, as noted above, affect future role sending behaviour. For example, when the focal person is seen to resist influence (which, in the example, is the perception of the superordinate), the role
pressure may be temporarily increased (the 'reminder'). Another example is where the focal person attempts to initiate communication with the role sender about problems he encounters in performing his job (the manager attempting to explain his or her dilemma to the superordinate). Such feedback may lead to immediate modifications in the demands made of him (the superordinate could agree to set up the committee in another department), to changes in informal collaborative arrangements (the superordinate might intervene within the department and exert pressure directly on the staff member) or even to changes in the formal relationship between him or her and the role set (the manager might, in extremis, be transferred or even dismissed).

Two other feedback cycles affect the whole process of role sending. One is through the effects of the focal person's responses upon his/her own personality (arrow 8) (the manager's tendency to delay) which may affect both future role sender behaviour (arrow 4) (the superordinate might, in future, set objectives by giving firmer instructions) and the focal person's response to it (arrow 5) (to be less amenable to resistance from staff). The other is through the effects of his/her responses upon the interpersonal relationship with each of the role senders (arrow 9) (his/her delay may disappoint the superordinate and annoy the staff member) which may also affect role sender behaviour (arrow 6) (by encouraging stronger signals from both) and the focal person's response to it (arrow 6) (perhaps by causing the manager to move to a resolution of the dilemma).

In summarising their work, Kahn et al. (1966, p.278) wrote:

"This model is presented to provide a sort of cognitive map, a way of thinking about a large set of factors and conditions in a complex interaction. The model becomes a theory when the specific variables in each panel are delineated and the causal connections among them are specified."
ROLE THEORY IN MANAGEMENT

A suggestion by Hales (1986) that role concepts could provide a useful conceptual framework for studying managerial behaviour was developed by Fondas and Stewart (1994). They reviewed three empirical studies of managerial behaviour in which role concepts had been applied in order to:

"...suggest that the role perspective ...could provide a theoretical framework for explicating how a manager affects and effects the expectations others hold of his or her behaviour in the job....propose a more comprehensive and refined model of what we call 'expectation enactment'...discuss some implications of this future model for future research".

(Fondas and Stewart, 1994, pp.84-85)

The three empirical studies examined by Fondas and Stewart were:

1. A study by Kahn et al. (1964) which demonstrated how the amount of a manager's 'boundary-spanning activities' was directly related to the level of role conflict experienced by the jobholder.

2. Research into leadership by Pfeffer and Salancik (1975) which showed that role behaviour is determined by constraints determined by a superior's interaction with the role set.

3. A study of middle managers by Tsui (1984a and 1984b) who found that perceived compliance led the role set to judge the manager to be effective and that this was related to managers receiving better performance appraisals.
Fondas and Stewart wrote that the role framework adopted in these empirical studies was the Katz and Kahn model (depicted in Figure 2) where the 'focal person' becomes the 'focal manager'. They suggested that the model was "overly deterministic" in terms of its suitability for studies of managers,

In fact, in developing their theoretical framework, Fondas and Stewart adopted a similar approach to that of Kahn et al. (1966) (probably unknowingly since it was not acknowledged). They wrote that, in the Katz and Kahn framework, the manager faces an environment of role senders whose expectations elicit the managers behaviour. They suggested that, in reality, managers can, and do, influence their role sets and that, in studying managerial behaviour, it is necessary to accept that the manager can be the source of or otherwise effect the expectations sent by the role set.

They described the impact a manager has on the expectations to which s/he will be subsequently held as 'Expectation enactment' which they defined as:

"...impact that occurs as the result of the manager intentionally initiating opportunities to shape role expectations and as a result of automatic feedback and mutual adjustment between the focal manager and role senders. The word 'enactment' captures the notion of a manager actively, deliberately creating the environment rather than solely responding to it."

(Fondas and Stewart, 1994, p.88)

In developing their perspective, they examined, through the literature, three conditions under which a focal manager is able to affect and effect the role set's expectations -

1. Role making during assimilation - modification of the role set's expectations which occurs during the process of assimilation of a newly appointed manager (Graen, 1976).
2. Role reciprocity during interaction - the modification of role expectations and behaviour which occurs continually as a by-product of the focal manager's interaction with members of the role set (Gouldner, 1960).

3. Managerial initiative in job definition - modification of the manager's role as a result of the manager attempting to alter the content of his job (Hales 1986).

Fondas and Stewart (1994, p.97) claimed that their model of expectation enactment, shown in Figure 5:

"...is more comprehensive in its coverage and definition of the separate variables affecting expectation enactment than what is found previously in the separate literatures."

---

**Figure 5**  Model of expectation enactment in managerial jobs

After Fondas and Stewart (1994, p.92)
The model suggests several

(i) characteristics of the role set

(ii) characteristics of the focal manager

(iii) characteristics of the relationship between the role set and the focal manager

(iv) organisational determinants of managerial impact on the role set's expectations.

The authors wrote that each of the variables was selected because of its, "robustness in related research" but acknowledges that future studies, "may reveal the need to include additional variables". The direction of influence on expectation enactment is shown in the diagram by the positive or negative signs.

**Characteristics of the Role Set**

*Authority and distance* - the distance between role senders and the focal manager and the formal authority of role senders relative to the focal manager (Miles and Perreault, 1976).

*Latitude and resources* - personal and positional resources which give role senders the latitude to permit role-making or role-reciprocity, for example, participation in decision-making or task allocation (Graen and Cashman, 1975).

*Diversity* - the more diverse the role set, the more time the focal manager must spend, "trying not to incur the continuing dissatisfaction of any powerful individual or group" (Kotter, 1986) - a source of role conflict. On the other hand, divergent expectations
can provide opportunities for the manager to define the expectations to which he or she prefers to be held (Miles and Perreault, 1976).

Membership variability - the opportunity the focal manager has of influencing the role set when a new member joins or leaves (Graen 1976, p.1227; Graen and Scandura, 1986, p.163).

Expectation strength - if the role set's expectations are weak, the focal manager may exhibit behaviour to which the role set forms an expectation as a rationalisation of that behavioural reality (Biddle, 1979, p.211). If the role set's expectations are strong, they will be less likely to change them as a result of initiatives taken or alternatives proposed by the manager (Thompson, 1967) and the scope for enactment is limited.

Characteristics of the Focal Manager

Power motivation - a person with a great need for power is motivated to control the environment and influence others (Kipnis, 1976; McClelland, 1961; Porter et al., 1981).

Achievement motivation - people with a strong need for achievement prefer situations which allow them to succeed by their own efforts rather than by chance (McClelland, 1961) and will attempt to control the environment in order to succeed (Staw, 1986).

Risk orientation - risk aversion was found by Porter et al. (1981) to reduce a person's propensity to attempt to influence their superordinates.

Locus of control - Rotter (1966) proposed that people differ in whether they believe that outcomes are determined by their own efforts or by external factors. A manager
with an internal locus of control may be expected to be more likely to try to enact expectations than a manager with an external locus.

The Role Set/Manager Relationship

*Interpersonal interaction* - the more frequent and the longer the duration of the manager's interaction with the role senders, the greater is the likelihood for expectation enactment to occur.

*Interpersonal attraction* - where there is interpersonal attraction between the manager and role sender, one is more likely to meet the expectations of the other. Thus, it is more likely that expectation enactment will occur.

*Relative power and influence* - Pfeffer and Salancik (1975) proposed that the focal manager's compliance with the expectations of the role set is partly a function of the relative power of the various members (the manager is more likely to comply with the expectations of his boss than his subordinates).

*Task interdependence* - where the focal manager and the role senders are dependent on each other for the successful performance of their jobs, the manager may use that interdependence to negotiate or otherwise modify the role set's expectations.

External Organisational Conditions

*Variable job definitions* - When an organisation does not have fixed job definitions, managers, not just newcomers, have more freedom to define parts of their job, thus increasing the likelihood of expectation enactment.
Resource uncertainty - where the level of resources available in an organisation creates a condition whereby it is difficult for role sets to demand compliance with expectations that presume a particular resource base.

Mission ambiguity - where there is ambiguity about the main mission of an organisation, because, "it has multiple goals, there is conflict over goals or there is something difficult to pin down about its goals" (Miner, 1987, p.350), it may be difficult or even pointless for role senders to specify expectations in advance.

Change in organisational size - where organisations grow or contract, focal managers face previously undefined responsibilities or duties.

In summarising their work, Fondas and Stewart (1994, p.97) wrote:

("The main contribution of this article is the more complete theoretical model of the determinants of expectation enactment in managerial jobs... The hypothesized relationships summarized...(in Figure 5)... provide a set of testable propositions for future research.... The model... may provide a theoretical perspective for better understanding the commonsense notion that more proactive managers are more successful."

ROLE THEORY IN EDUCATION

An early application of role theory in the domain of education was a study of educational administrators by Peter Burnham (1969). In defining role, Burnham wrote:

"Associated with every position in an organisation is a set of expectations concerning what is appropriate behaviour for a person occupying that position, and these 'appropriate behaviours' comprise the role associated with the"
office....a person occupies a position but plays or performs a role. A role is the
dynamic aspect of a position."  
(Burnham, 1969, p.212)

Burnham examined the role of the educational administrator, focusing, for purposes of
illustration, on the headmaster, using the term 'role incumbent' for the focal person.
He also wrote of 'role expectations' and identified three 'important factors' which have
relevance for the structure of role expectations:

. apprehension of the expectations of others, awareness of how one is supposed
to behave

. the intensity or narrowness of with which an expectation is defined, ranging
from 'strongly required' or 'must' at one end of the continuum, to 'prohibited'
or 'must not' at the other

. the role incumbent's perceptions of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the
expectations of others to which he is exposed.

Burnham (1969, p.216) wrote of the role set of the headmaster:

"the administrator will be involved in a whole series of role relationships. His
position might be visualised as at the centre of a web of relationships, a pattern
referred to as the 'role set'."

He identified the members of the head's role set and, in writing of the leadership role in
schools, wrote:
"The leadership role....is particularly vulnerable to role conflict...the one viewed most apprehensively by the administrator, is that between role expectations and personality.”

He then wrote of other sources of role conflict for the administrator and of the differentiation between 'leadership' and the 'administrative aspects' of the role.

In 1972, David Hargreaves applied role concepts in writing of the interpersonal relationships of school teachers. He used the term "actor" to refer to the role incumbent and the term 'position-role' to, "refer to behavioural expectations associated with a position.". He referred to role behaviour as 'role performance' and described members of a role incumbent's role set as 'role partners'.

He described, "three of the main role relationships that make up the teacher role set" by the diagram shown in Figure 6.

---

Figure 6  THREE TEACHER ROLE RELATIONSHIPS  After Hargreaves (1972)
Hargreaves then identified eight basic forms of, "role strain or its alternative name of role conflict" for the teacher ('actor'):

1. he simultaneously occupies two positions whose roles are incompatible

2. there is lack of consensus among the occupants of a position about the content of the role

3. there is lack of consensus among the occupants of one of the complementary role positions

4. his conception of his own role conflicts with the expectations of a role partner

5. the various role partners have conflicting expectations

6. a single role partner has conflicting expectations

7. the role expectations are unclear

8. he lacks the qualities required for adequate role performance.

He summarised:

"Role strain is obviously a very common occurrence and there are probably very few roles which are not...liable to one or more...conflicts."

Four years later, in 1976, Morgan and Turner wrote of the role of the educational manager. They wrote:
"To us, the importance of role theory as a tool of analysis is that it directs our attention...to the properties of situations rather than to the properties of individuals."

(Morgan and Turner, 1976, p.8)

They identified three forms of role conflict, for which they offered the alternative descriptors, 'role stress' and 'role strain':

1. Conflict between roles, i.e. inter-role conflict

2. Conflict within a role, arising from:
   . contrary directives from one's manager
   . conflict between the incumbent's own perceptions of his job and those demanded by the culture in which he is working

3. Conflict within the role set.

In noting that, "observed role behaviour harnesses both role expectations and individual personality", they referred to the model developed by Getzels (1958) shown below in Figure 7.
They wrote of the 'nomothetic' (organisational role) and 'idiographic' (personality) dimensions of social systems and that, in terms of role theory, any given act or 'observed behaviour' (B) is a function of both the ideographic (P) and nomothetic (R) dimensions, the proportions of which vary according to the degree of role prescription, illustrated in the comparison between the soldier and the artist as shown in Figure 8.
The soldier's role is highly prescriptive and has a high nomothetic dimension whereas the artist's role involves little prescription and is mainly idiographic.
In 1978, Dunham wrote of change and stress in the role of the comprehensive school head of department. Through 'information obtained' from 92 heads of departments taking part in staff development conferences, he identified a number of sources of stress, in particular:

- the "middle management situation - having to perform quite considerable administrative duties against a full teaching timetable"
- problems of working with other heads
- interaction with pupils, colleagues and parents
- being pulled in different directions by contrary role expectations
- being under pressure to perform tasks seemingly belonging to several different roles - teacher of a subject, head of a team, tutor of probationary teachers
lack of communication.

He then discussed possible changes in the head of department's job description which might reduce the incidence of stress.

In 1988, Peter Ribbins applied role concepts to a study of the role of the middle-manager in the secondary school and Jim Campbell similarly wrote of conflict and strain in the role of the curriculum postholder in the primary school.

Role theory has also been applied in the context of the further education college. Peeke (1980) wrote of 'Role strain in the further education college'. Using Hargreaves' (1972) eight sources of strain as a basis, Peeke discussed the incidence of role strain in colleges under three headings - the social system, the individual personality level and the cultural level, identifying the sources of role strain in each.

He then described some of the techniques available for the resolution of role strain, "most of which are automatically applied". These included committees, codes of operation, induction and training courses, methods of facilitating communication, elaborate selection procedures for both staff and students, clear hierarchies of obligations, the spatial separation of roles and the protection of particularly vulnerable role incumbents by the setting up of autonomous departments.

Peeke then wrote of examples of role strain due to educational change and concluded by writing:

"The concept of role strain is useful in highlighting sources of stress and dissatisfaction and conceptualising them in a manner amenable to discussion and resolution. The continuing development of role theory and such concepts
as role distance, role embracement and role relationships...provide a useful model for the examination of individual behaviour in further education organisations."  

(Peeke, 1980, p.80)

In 1983, Bush applied role concepts in a study of 'The role of the vice-principal in further and higher education'. The study comprised a survey by postal questionnaire. Thirty five vice-principals were approached and twenty one, "found time to reply". Bush addressed the issues of defining the role and the responsibilities of the vice-principal and of working towards the development of a model for the vice-principal.

He wrote that, "The ways in which the vice-principal interprets his role depend largely on the views of the principal." (Bush, 1983, p.18). He wrote of Burnham's differentiation of 'instrumental' and 'expressive' leadership behaviour (Burnham, 1969) but that the majority of respondents rejected the distinction, indicating that it was therefore, inappropriate for colleges. He then suggested that, "The relationship between the principal and the vice-principal is complex" and offered the five 'ideal types' characterised by Brown (1974) as a, "useful conceptual framework". The 'ideal types' were:

. The interposed vice-principal
. The prescribed vice-principal
. The assimilated vice-principal
. The lumbered vice-principal
. The parked vice-principal.

Bush suggested that the, "....assimilated category...(where the principal and vice-principal are seen as senior and junior partners responsible for the principalship function)...seems to fit the majority of the survey respondents and, arguably, the needs of colleges in the 1980s."
DISCUSSION

This review has addressed the development of role theory as a field of study and the application of role concepts in the domains of organisational behaviour, management and education. It is highly applicable to the study of the roles of heads of academic departments in the 'new' universities since:

- universities, the environments in which heads operate, are clearly organisations. In fact, faculties and departments have varying degrees of autonomy and may, in some cases, be seen as organisations in their own right.
- heads clearly have a management role, although the extent to which they are managers as opposed to academic leaders has been identified as an important issue in the recent literature (Helm, 1989; Moses, 1989; Rutherford, 1992; Haslam, Bryman and Webb, 1993, Hutchinson, 1993) and will, therefore, be addressed in the research.
- universities are educational institutions.

Role theory had become an established field of study by the 1960s when it was recognised as a useful analytic tool in a number of domains (Biddle and Thomas, 1966). In fact, a study of the literature shows that it had probably reached the peak of its popularity as a field of study at that time. Since the early 1970s, the frequency of publications on role and role theory has diminished. However, it has been revisited intermittently through its application in studies in other domains as exemplified by the foregoing review of its application in studies in British education.

Although role concepts have been applied in the field of education and educational management, they have only applied with any significant degree of rigour in a small number of studies (Burnham, 1969; Hargreaves, 1972; Morgan and Turner, 1976;
They have not been applied at all in any of the reported studies of the roles of university departmental heads.

The majority of studies where role concepts have been applied in education or educational management have focused on the difficulties faced by role incumbents in performing their role. It is unhelpful, therefore, that there is little consensus in the literature over the terminology used to describe these difficulties. Biddle and Thomas (1966) clearly and differently defined *role conflict, role strain* and *role pressure* whilst Hargreaves (1972) offered *role conflict* and *role strain* as alternative names for the same phenomenon and Morgan and Turner (1976) added the term *role stress* as a third alternative.

Nevertheless, the role perspective has much to contribute in studying the role of the university head of department. Firstly, in terms of classifying the head's role, the classifications offered by Linton (1965) provide a useful framework. A sensible hypothesis is that, in Linton's system, the head's role is an *Achieved, Relational, Asymmetrical* role - *Achieved* since heads are appointed, often in competition with other applicants; *Relational* since the head's role heavily involves personal interactions with others and *Asymmetrical* since head's roles are hierarchical, involving superordinates - Deans, the Vice-Chancellery - and subordinates - members of the head's academic department.

The conceptual framework for the role-sending cycle of a focal person in an organisation (Katz and Kahn, 1966) and the 'expectation enactment' model for managerial role behaviour developed by Fondas and Stewart (1994) both offer potential starting points for describing the role of the university head of department. In fact, the two models are very similar, the difference between them being largely one of the emphasis placed on some of the 'causal effects' in the Katz and Khan model which are developed to produce 'expectation enactment' by Fondas and Stewart.
Comparison of the head's role with that of the 'focal manager', for example in the
Fondas and Stewart model, can, however, be only partial since only some of the
relevant characteristics will be addressed in the broad study of the role which is the
purpose of the present work. Whilst the 'characteristics of the role set' and 'external
organisational conditions' might easily fall within the scope of the study, the
'characteristics of the focal manager' will not since the focus of the research (at least at
this stage) is generic. With regard to the 'role set/manager relationship', the sub-
characteristics 'relative power and influence' and 'task interdependence' are key to the
research whilst 'interpersonal attraction' and 'interpersonal interaction' are too specific
to individuals to be addressed.

The literature review will permit comparison of the sources of role conflict for heads
with those identified in the literature either in general, such as the eight identified by
Hargreaves (1972), or for other, similar, role incumbents such as those identified by
Burnham (1969) for the headmasters. This comparison is especially pertinent in the
context of Burnham's (1969) statement that, "the leadership role...is particularly
vulnerable to role conflict", since it can reasonably be hypothesised that the head's role
involves at least some measure of leadership. It can similarly be hypothesised that the
head's role is, in some measure, a liaison role, in relation to which Kahn et al. (1966)
wrote, "a focal person with a liaison responsibility is likely to be subjected to many
conflicting role pressures".

The literature might also be helpful in addressing possible means of reducing role
conflict for heads in terms of either improved job descriptions, the approach taken by
Dunham (1978) for the heads of departments in comprehensive schools, or by
considering the 'automatically applied' measures identified in Peeke's (1980) study
in further education colleges.
CHAPTER THREE   STUDIES OF HEADS' ROLES -  
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Over the past two decades or so, there have been a number of studies of the roles of heads of 
departments in universities or similar higher education institutions in Britain and in other 
countries. In particular, significant studies have been carried out in Australia, Israel and the 
USA. The studies of heads' roles in these countries are of particular relevance to this work for 
different reasons.

In Australia, the structure and recent history of the higher education system bear a strong 
resemblance to that of British higher education. The term 'higher education' has been used 
to cover both Australian universities and colleges of advanced education all of which are 
funded by the Federal government. In the 1980s, there were twenty universities 
(McDonald and Bond, 1989) and sixty-one colleges of advanced education (Lonsdale and 
Bardsley, 1982). The colleges of advanced education were established to provide a more 
'applied' education and were akin to the British polytechnics (McDonald and Bond, 1989). 
However, there was considerable overlap between the colleges and the universities and, at 
the end of the decade, the Government signalled the end of the differentiation between the 
two types of institution and the creation of a 'Unified National System' of higher 
education.

McDonald and Bond (1989, p.118) wrote that, as in British higher education, the basic 
academic unit is described by a number of different terms including 'department', 'school', 
'faculty', 'centre' and 'institute'. They also wrote that the term 'head of department' is 
used to refer to, "a member of academic staff who is responsible for the operation of a

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formally identified element of the institution's organisational structure (the basic academic unit)” and that heads were sometimes elected (more often in universities than colleges) for a fixed term and not necessarily from among senior staff. However, Dawkins (1987, pp. 50-51) wrote that the Australian government had questioned the wisdom of heads being elected.

McDonald and Bond (1989, p.118) also wrote that the nature of the heads role had developed over the decade, in response to the Federal government's requirement for greater accountability, "from the notion of heads of department as academic managers...[they are]...now often selected for managerial skills or potential".

A study in Israel reported in 1986 (Kremer-Hayon & Avi-Itzhak, 1986) is of particular interest because of the research methodology adopted. The study comprised an investigation of the "role perceptions of academic chairpersons of departments at the university level, the fulfilment of these roles and the desirability to fulfil them".

Ninety chairpersons, representing 65% of the population and encompassing all six universities in Israel, responded to a specially-developed questionnaire. Questions were formulated around a number of role components. In describing their approach, Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak wrote:

"A list of role components may, of course, be derived from various role definitions. This study is however field oriented, in the sense that it strives to generate the role components from the target population itself....

A group of twenty professors acting as chairpersons of academic departments were interviewed one at a time and asked to freely relate to the role they fulfil. After
about five minutes of such free relation, they were asked more specific questions in order to clarify issues that needed further elaboration. The interviews were protocolled and content-analyzed. Content analysis yielded 40 perceived sub-roles. These were phrased in items and cast into a Likert-type scale. In order to validate this list of items, the scale was administered to another group of twenty chairpersons. Subjects were asked to indicate on a 1-5 point scale the extent to which each item describes a characteristic role of departmental chairpersons. Twenty-nine items out of the original forty reached 80% of agreement and were thus included in the final questionnaire.

(Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak, 1986, p.107)

In addition to the role perceptions identified in this way, the authors added a number of "background variables that have been found to affect role fulfilment". These included Budget and Department Size and Seniority.

For each role component, respondents were asked to indicate, on the five-point scale, the extent to which they actually fulfil the role, the extent to which they would like to fulfil the role and the extent to which they were satisfied with their role fulfilment.

Quantitative data analysis was rigorous and included "Varimax rotated factor analysis, a series of t-tests and stepwise multiple regression analysis."

Studies of heads' roles in the USA are of particular interest since several of the studies of heads' roles in Australia and Great Britain used earlier American studies either in the design of their research methodologies (for example, by identifying possible role components) or, at least, for purposes of comparison in discussion of their findings (Moses, 1985; Davies, 1989; McDonald and Bond, 1989; Middlehurst, 1989 and 1993; Moses and Roe, 1989). Although the structure of higher education in the USA is somewhat different to that in...
Australia and Britain, the use of American studies in these ways is probably valid since there is considerable agreement in the literature that the range of responsibilities of departmental heads is comparable in all three countries (Tucker, 1984; Bennett and Figuli, 1990; Moses and Roe, 1990a &b; Middlehurst, 1993).

The frequency of studies of heads' roles, especially in Britain, has increased markedly in recent years as the pace of change in higher education has accelerated (Middlehurst, 1989; Mathias, 1991; Brodie and Partington, 1992; Warren, 1994; Tann, 1995).

However, most of the studies reported in the literature and all of the extensive, recent studies cited in this work, have related to the roles of heads in the 'old' universities. Perhaps this is unsurprising given that the research culture is more prominent in the 'old' universities than in other types of HE institution (Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982; Izbicki, 1992; Phillips, 1995).

The most recent extensive study of heads' roles in non-university institutions was the work by Lonsdale and Bardsley in Australian colleges of advanced education some fourteen years ago (Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982) although Hammons (1984) extensively examined heads' roles in both American community colleges and universities. Bradley wrote of the appraisal of departmental heads in British colleges of higher education in 1986 and Warren touched very briefly on the role of the head of department in the 'new' British universities in 1994.

**The Status Of The Departmental Head**

There is considerable agreement in the literature, irrespective of the country or the type of institution to which it relates, regarding the importance of the head of department's role:
"The academic department chairperson is the most pivotal of all positions concerned with instructional development"  (Weinberg, 1984, p.301)

"Any organisational chart will testify to the critical role the chair plays, however unsung that role may be. Together, chairs set the academic tone of the institution."
(Bennett and Figuli, 1990, p.28)

"The head of department occupies a key institutional position"  
(Mathias, 1991, p.65)

"...departmental chairs play a pivotal role...they are higher education's first-line academic leaders"  
(Green and McDade, 1994, p.137)

"The heads of departments' role is pivotal"  (Brook and Davies, 1994, p.56)

It should be noted, however, that many of the writers who have examined heads' roles were themselves, at the time, occupants of that position (as is the author of this work).

In comparing the head's role with that of the occupants of broadly similar positions in other sectors, heads were described by Tann (1995, p.85) as "People managing at the middle level."

Middlehurst wrote:

"Departmental headship is often perceived as a 'middle management' position (but) the traditions of autonomy, the importance of basic units as key contributors to the
Mathias reported a view that the head's role was:

"...more akin to the managing director of a not insignificant business concern."

(Mathias, 1991, p.68)

The Nature Of The Head's Role

There is also considerable agreement in the literature that the range of responsibilities of departmental heads is broadly similar regardless of discipline or type of institution (Tucker, 1984; Moses and Roe, 1989; Bennett and Figuli, 1990). However, there is also agreement that there are some differences dependent upon discipline or the head's personality or management style (Startup, 1976; Tucker, 1984; Davies, 1989; Brodie and Partington, 1992; Eley, 1994), although such differences are largely "differences in emphasis" (Tann, 1995) rather than substance.

In 1993, in her book 'Leading Academics', Robin Middlehurst included a chapter called 'Leading Departments' which focused on "the department as the basic unit and on the role of the departmental head in particular'. She wrote of the common ground in the scope of the role across universities but of the "considerable variety in its interpretation and practice given the range of structures and cultures of departments and disciplines and the range of personalities who become heads". She wrote:
"...headship responsibilities are unlikely to be fulfilled by one individual...so they will require some organisation and delegation in order to spread the load. It is largely in the choice of personal priority areas in the activities of the head that a leadership (or management) orientation can be discerned. The choice is likely to be influenced by the tradition and culture of the department, by the preferences and experiences of the head, as well as the expectations of staff."

(Middlehurst, 1993, p.135)

In particular, the role of the departmental head in the 'new' universities or their precursors, the polytechnics, has traditionally differed from that of the head of department in the 'old' universities. There was:

"...a different academic culture towards management in the ...two types of institutions and different management structures"

(Eley, 1994, p.20)

The main differences were that:

"Heads of department in the polytechnic were appointed on a permanent basis and....there was a much clearer management structure and quicker arrival at, and implementation of, decisions"

(Mathias, 1991, p.68)

"...the former polytechnics advertised such appointments as part of the management structure."

(Tann, 1995, p.86)

However, with the acquisition of university status by the polytechnics, the formation of joint national funding (HEFCE) and quality (HEQC) councils and the possible funding implications of research ratings and other indicators, there is pressure on 'new' universities to re-align their objectives and structures to more closely mirror those of the 'old'
universities. Conversely, the increasingly managerial nature of heads' roles in the 'old' universities (Jarratt, 1985; Mathias, 1991; Brodie and Partington, 1992; Middlehurst, 1993; Brook and Davies, 1994; Warren, 1994; Tann, 1995) has meant that:

"The responsibilities of the head of department in many older universities are increasingly coming to resemble those of their counterparts in the former polytechnics" (Tann, 1995, p.86)

Thus, it is possible that heads' roles in the 'old' and the 'new' universities will converge as the 'new' universities become increasingly mature and the external environment continues to change:

"...with the end of the binary divide and the renaming of the polytechnics as universities, the nature of the universities' management programme may well be affected" (Eley, 1994, p.21)

Functions, Tasks And Responsibilities

The tasks which heads are required to perform in carrying out their role, their areas of responsibility and the aspects of heads' roles considered to be of greatest importance by heads themselves and by members of their departmental staff have been the subject of a number of studies.

The first published account of a systematic study of the role of heads of departments in a British university was provided by Richard Startup in 1976. He described a study carried out at the University College of Swansea in which all academic staff (including heads) of
one department in each of the four faculties were interviewed to "gain an understanding of how departmental heads see their role and what their colleagues expect of them".

The departments involved were classics, civil engineering, pure mathematics and psychology which Startup described as "in certain respects typical of departments in their respective faculties (e.g. in size, the average age of staff and in the extent to which staff research was organised)". Four additional heads were also interviewed since Startup felt that, "a minimum of approximately eight departmental heads was needed to give significant insight into the perspectives of those occupying this key position". Altogether 52 staff were interviewed.

In offering a "formal definition" of the head's job, Startup wrote:

"The departmental head is the person in authority within his department and he is administratively responsible for its entire working...he is expected to advance teaching and research within his particular discipline....he is responsible for what goes on in his department to the Council and Court....he is a member of Senate and is expected to represent the interests of his department and discipline there."

(Startup, 1976, p.234)

In interviews, "staff members were asked to say how they saw the role of the departmental head under the existing system - what did they think was required of him?". Staff identified ('unprompted') eight areas: teaching, research, administration, departmental decision-making, general relationships between the head and other staff, appointments, promotions and the relationship between the department and the university. The respondents did not refer equally often to each of the eight areas, revealing variations of the perceptions of the head's role across departments or disciplines. In particular, Startup
noted that the engineers and psychologists emphasised the importance of the head's role in research whilst the classicists most often mentioned aspects of teaching and the mathematicians were particularly conscious of the head's role in connection with staff appointments.

In concluding, Startup wrote:

"Each departmental head has reached the pinnacle of his academic career. Yet in providing a framework for academic activity, he has often to tackle essentially practical problems. In his attempts to overcome such problems, the academic ideas he has mastered may not constitute an effective resource upon which to draw. This may be seen as an argument for separating out the academic and administrative functions and appointing different people to perform them. Yet whatever reforms take place, if the department is to continue to exist as a meaningful entity it will always be necessary for some person or persons to grasp its activity as a whole."

(Startup, 1976, p.243)

An early American study by Falk (1979) comprised a survey by questionnaire of 300 academic staff, departmental heads and administrators in the State University of New York at Buffalo. The study sought to determine staff expectations of the head's role and showed that administrators, academic staff and heads were in broad agreement about the activities which a head should carry out. Generally, staff felt less strongly about the necessity for the head to carry out specific tasks than heads themselves or administrators.

Of the 46 tasks listed in the questionnaires, the largest proportions of staff agreed that the head "absolutely must" or "preferably should": report departmental accomplishments to his dean or immediate superior (98%); involve faculty members in the department's decision-
making process (97%); participate in the recruitment of all full-time academic staff (94%); develop and review long range departmental goals and objectives (93%).

Staff were keen to work with heads who:

- are engaged in both teaching and research (particularly teaching)
- consult with staff and listen to their grievances
- are involved in the selection of staff
- are involved in the setting of standards
- are successful in resource acquisition
- are successful in internal advocacy for the department
- prepare and manage the departmental budget
- are able to resolve departmental conflicts.

Whilst heads and administrators also gave the top four activities identified by staff a high priority, their highest scoring tasks were: ensuring that excellence is rewarded; engaging in a collegial form of decision making; ensuring a high quality of staff; creating the environment in which the departmental academic activity can be realised.

A major survey of all heads in the Australian colleges of advanced education was conducted in 1981 (Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982). The purpose of the study was to identify the 'administrative tasks' carried out by heads and their perceptions of their professional development needs. The word 'administrative' was used in the American sense to indicate tasks which, in Britain, would be described as 'managerial'.

Questionnaires were sent to 882 heads and there was a response rate of 77% (679 questionnaires). The main section of the questionnaire comprised 83 tasks subdivided into
seven areas. For each task, respondents indicated whether that task was currently one of their responsibilities, the extent to which it should be one of their responsibilities and to what extent they needed professional development for the task. They were also asked what they considered to be the most important aspects of their role as head of department and in what areas they felt most in need of professional development.

Responses to biographical questions revealed that three-quarters of respondents were appointed at the principal lecturer level, over 60% had a teaching load (including supervision of post-graduate students) of between 5 and 12 hours per week and the largest proportion headed departments with between 6 and 15 academic staff.

The major findings of the survey in relation to the tasks carried out by heads were that

1. the most commonly performed tasks were "in the areas of maintenance of internal/external relationships, human relations and personnel administration, and personal and professional development"

2. heads appointed at more senior levels were more likely to perform "policy-related tasks associated with financial management, planning, staff leadership and internal/external relationships"

3. heads responsible for large departments were more likely to be involved in financial and personnel management"

4. more experienced heads "tended to report a wider range of responsibilities"

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the most important aspect of heads' roles was considered to be staff development and motivation. The second most important aspect was the "leadership of academic and administrative activities". Curriculum development and evaluation activities, the maintenance of academic standards and general administration were also considered to be important aspects of the role.

In 1984, Hammons conducted a questionnaire survey of over 2,000 chairpersons in universities and community colleges in the USA in order to "help us to better understand both the persons who presently occupy the positions and the nature of their positions" (Hammons, 1984). He wrote:

"Most chairpersons are responsible for anywhere from 5 to 20 full-time faculty and up to double or triple the number of part-time faculty. Almost all have...secretarial support, most having a full-time secretary. They report primarily to the dean or vice president of instruction....The average tenure is three to five years...they report working a 45 to 50-hour week...Whilst most still teach, there is a tremendous variation in the amount of teaching.

The roles and responsibilities of chairpersons have been...covered from virtually every perspective in more than 40 doctoral dissertations."

(Hammons, 1984, p.15)

As a result of reviewing this and other literature, Hammons presented a table showing "44 different non-teaching functions" for departmental chairpersons under five general headings: general administration responsibilities; student-oriented responsibilities; business
and financial responsibilities; faculty-oriented responsibilities (staffing); curriculum and instruction responsibilities. The table is presented in full in Figure 9.

Hammons also examined faculty expectations of chairpersons from "several thousand faculty responses...collected from faculty participants in workshops I have conducted during the past several years". He found that staff valued chairpersons who encouraged them to change, facilitated their efforts, recognised and rewarded effort, and who were knowledgeable about curriculum and instructional matters.

Finally, he made recommendations for improving the performance of chairpersons under four headings:

1. **Ability** - "you select good people; make sure they are put in the right job; orient them to their job; and then provide continuous training and development opportunities to ensure they can meet the changing demands of their responsibilities".

2. **Motivation** - can be improved by: making institutional expectations known by being part of the job description; providing adequate training; using carefully weighed criteria in evaluating the chairperson.

3. **Opportunity** - colleges should: ask the question 'do chairpersons have time to perform?'; review existing policies and procedures which impede the work of chairpersons; provide the necessary support systems.
Figure 9  Chairperson Responsibilities and Activities

After Hammons (1984, p.16)
4. **Climate** - the environment in which chairpersons work - "many institutions will need to make a major effort to restore curriculum and instruction to the primary place it once occupied".

Also in the USA, in a small-scale study in 1984, Weinberg examined the perceptions of the head's role amongst staff and students in one department, the School of Environmental Design, at the University of Georgia (Weinberg, 1984). The Dean of the Design College, the Chairman of the Landscape Architecture department, a faculty member, a graduate student and an undergraduate student, all from the same department, were asked to respond to 27 items obtained from an internal paper listing the functions of a departmental head.

Respondents were asked to indicate which of the 27 functions they thought was a responsibility of the head of department. Weinberg presented the table below showing which of the responsibilities listed were perceived to reside with the chairperson, the administration, the faculty or with students. For example, the Dean thought that the responsibility to 'formulate departmental goals' resided with the chairperson, C, and the faculty, F, whereas undergraduates thought that it resided with the chairperson, C, the faculty, F, and with students, S. The findings show a significant disparity in the perception of respondents.

In summarising his findings, Weinberg wrote that the role of the chairperson was, "not, in this small sample, as clear as might have been expected: there is even some disagreement between the Dean and the DEO (chairperson)...Whatever the diversity of perceptions which may exist, there can be little doubt that attitudes, knowledge and personal style of the DEO shape the personality of the department and create its learning atmosphere."

(Weinberg, 1984, pp 302-303).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived responsibility</th>
<th>Dean</th>
<th>Chairperson</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formulate departmental goals</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental organization</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attract and recruit faculty</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster curriculum development</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>CFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic catalog and class schedules</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size and teaching loads</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervise departmental facilities</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign faculty responsibilities</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit students</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit administrative assistants</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire secretarial staff</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare budget</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion and tenure</td>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve consulting services</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>Monitor research grants</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty orientation</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote faculty growth</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
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<td>Evaluate faculty performance</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor grading standards</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>CF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve student graduation</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret university policy</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place faculty on committees</td>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster interdepartmental relations</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct faculty meetings</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist students with placement</td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>FA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend university executive meetings</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain personnel records</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: C = Chairperson; A = Administration; F = Faculty; S = Students.

Figure 10  Perceptions of Distribution of Responsibilities

After Weinberg (1984, p.302)
Also in 1984, Allan Tucker produced a practical "how to" guide, covering roles and responsibilities of the department chairperson, covering the topics leadership style, delegation and departmental committees, decision making and change, encouraging faculty development, faculty evaluation, performance counselling, grievances and unions, conflict, setting goals, preparing departmental budgets, assigning and reporting faculty activities and managing department resources (Tucker, 1984).

The work included a very comprehensive catalogue of the potential tasks which a head may need to perform including departmental governance, planning, instruction, staff affairs, student affairs, budget and resources, internal and external communication, office management, professional development, setting and maintaining academic standards, organisation of teaching and research, marketing and many more. He wrote that heads may operate in quite different ways from each other, according to personal style and predilection and particular circumstances. He also wrote that the role of the departmental chairperson differs considerably across disciplines.

The study in Israel reported in 1986 (Kremer-Hayon & Avi-Itzhak, 1986), and described earlier in this work, showed that chairpersons fulfilled various aspects of their role to different extents. Five major aspects of the role were identified by the authors and the relative extent to which chairpersons fulfilled each aspect in descending order of score was: curriculum and instruction; initiation of change; staff development; providing a democratic leadership style; administering the department through committees; planning the department budget; delegating authority; promoting departmental status.

In 1986, Bradley wrote of a study of the appraisal of heads of department in higher education colleges and polytechnics. Although it focused specifically on appraisal, it is referred to here since it represents one of the very few studies relating to heads in the non-university sector of higher education in the UK - institutions which have become the 'new' universities. Bradley (1986, p.11) usefully listed the role responsibilities specified in the Essex Institute of Higher Education job description of heads of department:

1. providing academic leadership
2. representing the department's interests externally
3. monitoring staff effectiveness
4. presenting the department's case for resources
5. consulting staff over resource (and other) issues
6. motivating the department's teachers
7. being an effective teacher
8. encouraging staff development
9. supporting research and consultancy
10. promoting course development and evaluation
11. keeping up-to-date and aware of change
12. promoting short courses
13. ensuring student representation and involvement
14. representing the department to college management
15. establishing good links with DES/LEA inspectors and advisors
In writing, in 1989, of a DES-funded research project set up to evaluate and develop a programme of leadership courses for heads of academic departments, Middlehurst listed the roles of academic heads of departments in 'old' British universities:

| Communicator | Evaluator | Manager-administrator |
| Teacher | Motivator | Supervisor |
| Mentor | Judge | Co-ordinator |
| Researcher | Decision-maker | Counsellor |
| Leader | Planner | Organiser |
| Representor | Negotiator-mediator | Entrepreneur |
| Peer-colleague | Peace-maker | Catalyst |
| Politician-diplomat | Model | Recruiter |
| Interpreter | Problem-solver |

(After Middlehurst, 1989b, p.175)

An extensive study, involving nine universities, was carried out in Australia by Moses and Roe and reported in the literature in 1989 and 1990 (Moses, 1989; Moses and Roe, 1989; Moses and Roe, 1990a; Moses and Roe, 1990b). The research comprised a survey of heads and academic staff by questionnaire and a series of interviews with heads. The work "yielded a great deal of information on the relative importance of the various headship functions in the perception both of heads themselves and of their staffs, and also on staff views as to the competence with which heads perform these functions" (Moses and Roe, 1989, p.5).

The survey showed that the headship functions regarded by heads themselves as being of greatest importance were: selecting staff members, 96%; maintaining morale, 86%;
developing long-range plans, 84%; implementing long range plans, 80%; stimulating research and publications, 79%.

The function most enjoyed by heads was, very clearly, "own research" (93% compared to the second most enjoyable function "supervising postgraduate students" which scored 77%). The activity identified as 'needing more time' was "own research", again by a very clear vote (72% compared to the second item, "supervising postgraduate students" which scored 28%). A majority of heads (62%) noted a "significant reduction" in their research during their period of headship although only 20% noted a reduction in their teaching activity. The function most disliked by heads was "dealing with unsatisfactory staff performance" (72%).

Staffs' views were that the most important functions carried out by or characteristic of heads were "serving as an advocate for the department" (86%); "considers staffs point of view" (81%); "developing long-range plans" (79%) and "consulting staff and encouraging them to communicate ideas" (78%). Staff attached little importance to the head's role in "selecting staff" and also in "evaluating staff performance" which was regarded as of great importance by 76 per cent of heads. Staff rated heads' performance lowest on "dealing with unsatisfactory staff importance"; "reducing, resolving and preventing conflict among staff members"; "maintaining morale" and "developing and implementing long-range plans".

From interviews with heads, Moses and Roe (1989, p.6):

"....obtained a detailed picture of heads as academics (still), academic leaders, supervisors, evaluators, mediators, administrators, distributors of resources, representatives, advocates, politicians".

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A practically useful product of the studies by Moses and Roe was a guide for heads of departments (Moses and Roe, 1990b). The guide offered advice on preparing for and relinquishing headship, on feedback to heads and on the various aspects of heads' roles.

In a paper published in December 1992, Brodie and Partington examined the roles and responsibilities of the heads of university departments (Brodie and Partington, 1992). At the time of publication, the former polytechnics were in the process of acquiring the status of universities and the paper is not explicit regarding the extent, if any, to which it relates to heads in the 'new' universities. However, biographical notes indicate that the background of both authors was primarily related to the 'old' universities. Furthermore, all of the sources cited by Brodie and Partington related to work carried out in the context of the 'old' universities.

In introducing their paper, the authors wrote:

"There is currently much emphasis on the leadership and management of organisations in the UK...This emphasis exists in Universities as much as elsewhere, not least of all because of the rapid changes which are taking place towards, for example:

a) greater public accountability
b) the assurance of quality of higher education services and products
c) unprecedented expansion of both the number and diversity of students in HE....

This paper is put forward as a means by which institutions might explore more carefully and systematically the roles and responsibilities of Heads of Departments/School...it is intended to inform discussions...towards a greater
They listed some of these changes as:

- the requirement to formulate annual, departmental, strategic plans
- the responsibility for demonstrable quality control procedures
- the responsibility for the management of staff appraisal schemes
- the 'cost-centre' management of financial resources
- increased fund-raising activities
- increased general administrative activity.

They wrote that heads' appointments have traditionally been made on the basis of academic distinction, not qualities of leadership/management and that each department is a unique unit with differing aims and objectives, products and operating style. Nevertheless, whenever heads gather together it is clear from the discussion that they have many common problems and aspirations.

They then offered a number of lists of items which heads should, "have in mind"; "be concerned with" and, most usefully, "are responsible for". They listed heads' responsibilities as:

- the planning of syllabuses, course structure and examinations
- the assignment of teaching and other duties
- the admission and progress of undergraduate and postgraduate students
- the allocating of resources in the department
- the allocation of space in the department
the use of departmental facilities for teaching and research

the nomination of departmental representatives

(After Brodie and Partington, 1992, pp.2&3)

Brodie and Partington then discussed some definitions and issues of 'leadership' and 'management' and, citing Jarratt (1985) wrote:

"The Headships of Departments are key appointments. Ideally the individual should be both a manager and an academic leader. However, the most able academic...is not always the person most fitted to manage a department. We take the view that it is preferable to retain the function in one person."

(Brodie and Partington, 1992, p.5)

They also wrote that, whilst this view supported the prevalent view within universities, the question now is "whether it is actually possible for one person to be responsible for all the leadership and management tasks - particularly within large, multi-disciplinary departments". They suggested that it may be more sensible to consider alternative models, for example collaborative leadership (a leader and a manager), management teams, executive boards etc. and that questions raised by this sort of review might include:

. How appropriate is the model of rotating Chair/Head to today's departmental leadership/management function?

. should academic leaders of departments be supported by permanently appointed managers/'backroom' researchers?

. Is there a role for managerially skilled and qualified appointments?
Is it realistic to continue with rotating Chairs or should consideration be given to 'career' leader and manager appointments?

(Brodie and Partington, 1992, p.5)

Brodie and Partington then addressed issues of leadership models, the importance of departmental, teams and leadership styles.

A more recent contribution to the study of departmental chairs was provided by Green and McDade in 1994. In describing the position or status of the chair, they wrote:

"Delicately and sometimes precariously positioned between faculty and administration, departmental chairs play a pivotal role in delivering educational services. They are higher education's first-line academic leaders, making important decisions in the trenches that directly affect the quality of an institution - decisions about hiring, about evaluation and developing faculty, about curriculum and about students....

Department chairs constitute an important talent pool for other administrative positions....They are a vital link in the chain of academic quality, yet they have the least formal preparation of the many "amateur" managers in academic administration."

(Green and McDade, 1994, p.137)

They also wrote that, "Though most department chairs are part-time administrators, they have a staggering array of responsibilities and tasks." They listed the tasks as follows (presented here in full since it was used as the basis for the questionnaire used in this study. Some terms are anglicised):

page 71
. Governing the School:
  - Conducting meetings
  - Establishing School Committees
  - Preparing the school for internal/external evaluation
  - Establishing and implementing goals

. Managing teaching:
  - Assignment of teaching duties
  - Timetabling of teaching
  - Managing teaching budgeting
  - Managing teaching spaces
  - Ensuring curricula are appropriate and up-to-date

. Managing Personnel:
  - Involvement in staff recruitment and selection
  - Assigning non-teaching responsibilities
  - Initiating and managing staff development
  - Evaluating staff performance
  - Dealing with unsatisfactory performance
  - Making merit/promotion recommendations
  - Preventing/resolving conflicts
  - Promoting equal opportunities
  - Ensuring compliance with regulations (e.g. Health & Safety)
Promoting School development:
- Fostering good teaching
- Stimulating research/publication
- Encouraging staff involvement in professional activities
- Representing School at professional meetings

Student issues:
- Recruiting/selecting students
- Encouraging student participation in School activities
- Responding to student feedback
- Liaison with parents/employers
- Involvement in student disciplinary matters

Representing the School:
- Interpreting the discipline to the institution
- Representing School to central administration
- Building/maintaining School reputation
- Representing School in external groups
- Ceremonial functions
- Processing School correspondence
- Completing forms and surveys

Managing Resources:
- Managing School budget
- Seeking external funding
- Promoting staff entrepreneurial activities
Training And Development Needs

A number of studies reported in the literature have highlighted the importance of training or development for heads (Startup, 1976; Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982; Davies, 1989; Gordon, 1989; McDonald and Bond, 1989; Middlehurst 1989b). There is a high level of agreement between the writers who identified specific training needs.

In reporting their study of heads in Australian colleges of advanced education, Lonsdale and Bardsley (1982) wrote that the most important professional development needs for heads in general were perceived to be: academic staff management; planning, innovation and evaluation of instructional programs and departmental activities; obtaining feedback about the head's own performance; utilizing computer services for departmental management; soliciting grants or outside funds for the department; engaging actively in a research role; general management and administrative skills

(After Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982, pp.24-28)

McDonald and Bond (1989) reported two studies of heads' roles carried out in the Australian universities of Queensland (Moses, 1986) and New South Wales (Nightingale, 1986). The findings of both studies were that there was a general acceptance of the notion of training workshops and seminars for heads of department and that the areas in which heads most felt in need of development were: management of academic staff; obtaining feedback about the head's own performance; planning; management and administration; promotion of research.

(After McDonald and Bond, 1989, p.120)

In 1989, Middlehurst wrote of a "two-year research project ...set up to evaluate and develop a programme of leadership courses for heads of academic departments in
In the project, heads identified the need for training and development in skills relating to: finance; office administration; personnel management including disciplinary procedures; academic planning; leadership; interpersonal communication; time management; strategic organisational issues.

(After Middlehurst, 1989b, p.175)

**Problems, Stresses And Tensions**

A number of studies reported in the literature sought to identify the problems, stresses and tensions faced by heads in performing their professional roles:

In his 1984 study, Hammons addressed the question of "What frustrates chairpersons?". Drawing on responses from "over 50 groups of chairpersons", he compiled two lists. The first was in response to the question, "What are the problems/obstacles preventing your functioning more effectively?" and the second was a list of "time-wasters".

The "five top-ranked obstacles (which) almost always headed the list" were:

1. **Inadequate role definition** - manifested in a number of ways: as an unclear or non-existent statement of responsibilities; as an imbalance between what chairpersons have authority to do and those activities for which they have responsibility; as ambiguity between their faculty and managerial roles; as differences of opinion between faculty and administration about their role.

2. **Time** - inadequate time to carry out responsibilities adequately (or too many responsibilities for the time available!).

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3. **Monetary constraints** - inadequate budget to support faculty or provide secretarial assistance for faculty. In some cases the problem was lack of flexibility in the use of funds or delays in the availability of financial statements.

4. **Communications** - examples included lack of information, distortion, delayed communication, conflicting information, unclear directions, lack of feedback.

5. **Administrative inefficiencies** - a general catchall for complaints about administrative deficiencies such as unclear policies/procedures, unnecessary paperwork, too many worthless meetings, inconsistent expectations, inadequate leadership in problem-solving.

The top-ranked items from the list of what chairpersons identified as 'time wasters' were:

1. **Lack of, or unclear, objectives or priorities** - including changing priorities, lack of policy decisions, crisis management, unanticipated assignments, attempting to do too much at once.

2. **Lack of personal organisation** - including spending too much time at coffee breaks or lunch, a stacked desk, failure to use secretary effectively, too much time on paperwork, wasting time looking for things.

3. **Interruptions** - by visitors and telephone calls.

4. **Meetings** - most meetings were considered to be unproductive.

(After Hammons, 1984, pp.16-18)
The study in Israel by Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak (1986) showed that, in relation to all role components identified in the study, there were statistically significant responses indicating that chairpersons would like to fulfill their roles to a greater extent than they actually do. In terms of the level of satisfaction with their role-fulfillment, the factors found to have the greatest effect were: budget size; departmental status; department size; seniority of the chairperson; degree of involvement in initiating change; involvement in curriculum instruction; the degree of democracy in the chairperson's leadership style.

In discussing their work, Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak wrote of some of the difficulties faced by heads:

"This group of people is unique as they usually receive their education in one of the disciplines in which they teach and study. However, they act, either by appointment or by election, in the area of administration for which they have usually had no training.....

Lack of preparation for role fulfilment is but one characteristic...that makes the role a problematical one. Other characteristics that may result in conflict are: the dual loyalty to external groups - various officers in the larger community of the institution - and to internal groups - students and instructors. The interests of these two groups do not always point in the same direction.

The tension between the need for some hierarchy and exertion of authority as a result of complex organisation on one hand, and the need to encourage autonomy and independence on the other, creates an addition source of ambiguities and conflicts. Furthermore, departmental chairpersons are academicians, for which means they identify with their discipline and research. Their role, however,
requires the devotion of a large part of their time to administration, at the expense of their professional work.”  
(Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak, 1986, p.106)

In their study of heads' roles in Australia, Moses and Roe (1989a) identified the most difficult problems heads had encountered under six headings: selection and other staff problems; insufficient resources; dealing with unsatisfactory staff performance; encouraging research; administration and delegation; resolving conflicts among staff.

In summarising the findings of their study, they wrote:

"The variety of roles naturally contributes to making headship complex and some of the difficulties arise from the essential or temporary incompatibility of some of them. Other difficulties are the result of circumstances beyond any head's control, since they are 'given' by the context: the nature and modus operandi of today's college or university. Government policies, economic pressures, democratic participation in decision making, frequent change of head, demands for 'accountability' from both within and outside the department and institution are examples.

What causes difficulty may, however, also confer benefits. Heads may be overburdened by consultations and committees as part of a democratic process which also enables them to share responsibility and to delegate. Accountability pressures, if responded to successfully, may result in a satisfying sense of achievement for both head and department and may significantly enhance the reputation of both.
Many of the heads we interviewed were more eloquent about the difficulties of the position than about its rewards. This may, however, be no more than an indication that they are human, and find it harder to praise and easier to condemn, especially when the former may involve or imply a recital of one's own achievements. Many enjoy headship more than they readily admit in an atmosphere where everyone is telling them it is a thankless task."

(Moses and Roe, 1989a, pp.6&7)

In 1989 Davies drew on papers presented and discussed at the Institution of Management in Higher Education (IMHE) Special Topic Workshop held in May 1988 to write of the training needs of heads of university departments (Davies, 1989). In doing so, he wrote of some of the difficulties which would be faced by heads into the 1990s:

"...the heads of academic departments are being confronted with a range of challenges and threats which are certainly changing expectations of what the head's role should be and, in some cases, destabilising the existing order quite fundamentally...the pressures which are undermining this position are considerable."  

(Davies, 1989, p.202)

Davies identified these pressures as:

1. Financial reduction in higher education
2. Increasing competition between universities for students
3. The changed nature of accountability
4. Shifts in "consumer behaviour, expectations and preferences"
5. The speed of creation of new knowledge and shifts in the structure of knowledge and in the relationships between disciplines
The changing nature of institutions' policy, planning, resource allocation policies and organisational structure.

He then wrote:

"It will be apparent ...that a considerable range of potential tasks, roles and training needs exist for heads of department. It should be emphasised that not all heads will have to perform the same tasks or undertake the same roles, because there is a substantial variation in circumstances...

The principal source of unease remains the concept of headship itself. A strong body of legitimate opinion holds to the notion that academic expertise and standing must still be the mainspring of effective departmental leadership, and heads must not be allowed to turn into middle level bureaucrats in a 'top-down' system. The other view would be that headship needs to be much more professional and authoritative." (Davies, 1989, pp.204&205)

In writing, also in 1989, of her DES-funded research project, Middlehurst independently echoed Davies' view of the difficulties faced by heads:

"Reductions in state support, novel funding arrangements, new sources and kinds of students, changes in secondary level curricula and examinations are amongst the wider issues affecting the higher education system as a whole. Government pressure for improved efficiency and accountability in university governance is matched by increased public emphasis on the value of university outcomes to the community and to the economy."
Restructuring in United Kingdom universities as a response to external pressures has increased the level of managerial responsibility vested in heads of department. It includes accountability for departmental performance in academic and financial terms; coherent departmental planning; monitoring and evaluation; responsibility for staff appraisal and development; departmental representation and advocacy internally and externally; flexibility towards new initiatives and curricula, services, contracts and products. Clearly, the need for management and leadership training at both the individual and institutional level has dramatically increased over the last five years."

(Middlehurst, 1989b, pp. 171 & 172)

And:

"Perhaps the most problematic recommendation is the notion of the 'superdon', that the head of department should ideally combine the qualities of the effective manager and academic leader. In interviews during this project it became clear that combining the two roles is often difficult, conflicting and always demanding. Many heads regard the increasing responsibilities and accountabilities as line managers impossible to perform effectively without damage to the role of teacher and researcher, not to mention the impact on collegial relations within the department, and sometimes domestic life and personal health."

(Middlehurst, 1989b, pp. 174)

Pointing to the lack of preparedness of newly appointed heads of department, Middlehurst wrote that there are approximately 2,900 heads of department or their equivalent in the 50 British universities (the 'old' universities) and that the majority "will not have undertaken any formal management/leadership training before their appointment". She cited the
reported experience of 200 heads who attended Leadership courses at Farnham Castle between 1984 and 1987 (the course evaluated in her study):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training prior to appointment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No formal training</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider of courses/own discipline</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University course</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External course</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National service</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(After Middlehurst, 1989b, p.172)

She then cited recommendations made in two major reports:

"a) Acquire appropriate management and leadership training for development for all members of the management team"

"b) Plan for succession and provide appropriate management and leadership training and development for current and future heads of department"

(CVCP, 1985 - the 'Jarratt Report')

"Universities should take seriously their responsibility for ensuring that heads of department are given some training in management techniques"

(DES, 1987 - the 'Sizer Report')
An insight into some of the difficulties faced by heads was provided by heads who had attended the Farnham Castle course and listed the difficulties they had subsequently encountered in implementing the learning they had acquired on the course:

- staff resistance, suspicion, inertia
- lack of staff to whom to delegate
- lack of time (due to ever-increasing responsibilities)
- institutional inertia
- lack of power to implement change.

In 1990, the role of the departmental head was addressed in a collection of essays by various authors, compiled by Bennett and Figuli. In their introduction, Bennett and Figuli wrote of some of the problems encountered by heads relating to the financial difficulties faced by higher education and its effect on staff morale and interrelationships. In describing the role ambiguity and role conflict experienced by heads, they wrote:

"These and other problems...then become problems for the chairperson. They are often compounded by the narrow and sometimes self-serving perceptions that the faculty may have of the chair. For instance, faculty can regard the chair as the chief clerk of the department, looking to the chair to handle paperwork, or arrange for chalk or travel reimbursements, to allocate typewriters and computers, or to fix problems with the maintenance staff. Leadership in any more substantive or dignified sense is not what they have in mind.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who have totally unrealistic expectations of the powers of the chair....When things go wrong or the department suffers...
setbacks, these faculty then blame the chair for events that may have been completely out of his or her control.

This role ambiguity or role conflict seems to trouble chairpersons in all sectors of higher education. The common factor is the discomfort felt in being expected to represent two sets of interests that are often competing and sometimes conflicting. Both faculty and administrators look to the department chair to advance their specific objectives. The chairperson is often forced to take the larger institutional viewpoint and call for faculty loyalty even when such loyalty may conflict with personal and disciplinary interests and values. This situation is inherently awkward and stressful.”

(Bennett and Figuli, 1990, pp.30&31)

Another valuable insight into the difficulties faced by heads was presented by Haydn Mathias in 1991. Mathias examined aspects of the role of the head of department through the proceedings of a one day conference at Southampton University. The conference provided heads with "an opportunity to consider the nature of their roles and responsibilities and to identify related key problems and issues...both conceptually and practically" (Mathias, 1991). In introducing his paper, Mathias wrote:

"The head of department occupies a key institutional position yet the role is a complex and demanding one which is subject to pressures, conflicts and uncertainties....Although a precise job description rarely exists, he or she has a clear managerial responsibility for the department in terms of its day-to-day operation as well as its future direction and development. He or she also has to represent and promote the interests of the subject within and outside the institution. At the same time, the head is part of the management structure of the university and has to implement decisions which might be detrimental to the interests of the
department. These...observations do not really convey the tensions and ambiguities of the head of department's job. The real issues and problems are only highlighted when the role is put under severe pressure as has been the case in the wake of public expenditure cuts of the 1980s.” (Mathias, 1991, pp.65&66)

The major concerns expressed by heads during the conference, were:

1. Heads in different types of department were working in different contexts with different levels of support.

2. Heads felt that they had limited scope for delegation of responsibilities.

3. Heads saw their time as head as an “interlude in academic life” for which they were inadequately prepared and through which their academic work suffered

4. Several issues emerged "which centred on the head of department's conflicting roles as manager and scholar".

5. There was a need for a clarification and definition of the head's role and responsibilities particularly in relation to the institutional management structure and the administrative system.

One head reported on a personal diary he had kept for a week, which indicated that he had spent approximately 20 hours on teaching and preparation, 10 hours devoted to outside contracts and work on university committees, 10 hours on correspondence and discussions with members of staff and 10 hours on departmental meetings and general departmental work. The 50 hours excluded any personal academic work.
In addition to the contributions made by heads during the conference, there were two other significant inputs. Firstly, contributions by senior management had a common theme which was the emphasis on the head of department's institutional management role. There was a general concern that the head should view the interests of the department within the context of the interests of the university which might involve having to make difficult decisions unfavourable to the department.

Secondly, and of particular significance to this study, a director of a polytechnic who was familiar with Southampton University drew comparisons with the management and decision-making systems of both. Heads of department in the polytechnic were appointed on a permanent basis and were responsible to the Directorate. At the polytechnic there was a much clearer institutional management structure, a greater acceptance of the notion of management and quicker arrival at, and implementation of, decisions.

In relation to ('old') university heads, Mathias concluded:

"The head of department's role is one, therefore, which is seemingly associated with more losses than gains for the person undertaking this responsibility. Apart from the complex and time-consuming nature of the job and the adverse effect on that person's academic work, the support for the head's role is weak, the role itself is unfamiliar and ambiguous, and very few incentives and rewards exist to ameliorate the drawbacks." (Mathias, 1991, p74)

In 1993, Middlehurst reviewed a number of accounts of studies of heads' roles, all of which have also been reviewed in this work, and wrote:
"The picture that emerges from all these studies is a wide range of activities, involving different constituency interests and requiring both leadership and management competence. The tasks facing heads of departments combine routine maintenance, long-term planning and performance review, with encouragement for departmental growth, development and collaboration. Some of the activities or functions may be in conflict with each other: short-term consultancy work and long-range undergraduate or graduate programmes; maintenance and control of traditional standards and innovation in programmes, in student clientele or in assessment methods. Others may be difficult to achieve despite formal expectations: maintaining a significant personal research effort while managing a large and diverse department or school; or developing course teams in a department of individual specialists more used to competition than collaboration. Many of these conflicts and tensions arise from changes in the external environment, which are currently affecting the internal patterns of academic life."

(Middlehurst, 1993, pp.134&135)

In relation to the role ambiguity experienced by heads, she wrote that the ambiguity arises from their dual identity, as academic colleague and as manager/leader and the potentially conflicting expectations of students, the personal and professional hopes of staff and the requirements of the faculty or institution. She wrote:

"As best they can, departmental leaders must balance the needs of both constituencies. Yet many heads express concern about the power and authority at their disposal and the difficulties of managing academics:

Many academics do not see themselves as belonging to a structure that has to be managed at all."
The problem is in managing academics; they're highly individualistic with no strong sense of corporate identity to either the department or the university.

Heads of department in universities have no effective managerial power and operate by inspiring or engineering consent.

(Middlehurst, 1993, p.138)

And, finally, she quoted Bennett (1988):

"the quality of the core academic success of the institution depends on the quality of the chairpersons - their dependability, their resourcefulness, their appreciation of academic values and their insight into the abilities and weaknesses of their colleagues; in short, their ability to manage and lead."

(Middlehurst, 1993, p.139)

An article by Brook and Davies (1994) is of particular value in that it relates the generic difficulties faced by heads of department as reported in the literature to the experiences of heads in one university - the University of Liverpool.

In setting the context for their work, the authors described the view of:

"...many staff in universities that the organisations in which they work are becoming entities whose managerial style is at stark variance with that collegial tradition - and not only at variance but apparently modelled on authoritarian notions of management which most current views of good practice would regard as..."
dangerously outmoded. Both anecdotal evidence and such material as exists in the literature indicate that it is at the level of head of department that the tensions between the collegial tradition and current experience are most acute.”

(Brook and Davies, 1994, p.56)

They described their institution as a “fairly large civic university by UK standards with a wide subject spread and a major research tradition” and acknowledged that there are universities with different types of institutional mission “for example, the much more explicit managerial and contractual arrangements in the former UK polytechnics”. They posed the question of whether, in the various types of institution, “... the focus on heads of department as the location of some of the greatest stresses within a university remains the correct one”.

They wrote that the major areas in which the head of department in the University of Liverpool will typically be involved are: teaching; research; representation of the department internally and externally; general counsellor and resolver of conflict; manager of non-academic staff and the services they provide; planner and manager of human, financial and physical resources; fund-raiser; marketer of departmental services, internally and externally.

Brook and Davies then wrote that the range of responsibilities of heads had broadened and deepened and that the context had become “more pressured” and the unit of resource had continued to contract, both as a result of government policy. Personal and departmental performance had come increasingly under the spotlight due to the funding council's research assessments and assessments of teaching quality. The shifts in responsibility in the areas of finance and staffing were producing "almost incomparable pressure towards the professionalisation of departmental-level administration". They wrote:
"The heads of departments' role is pivotal in this overall picture. The problem is not only one of more work, and more diverse work, falling on heads of department. It is also one affected by the nature of the self-image an individual head of department has in relation to the roles he or she has to perform....which derive primarily from the notions of the ideal in relation to the characteristics of academic life, and thus generate stress and lack of confidence as reality is seen to diverge from the ideal. A further dimension is the range of different audiences or stakeholders whose expectations and perceptions of performance and criteria for judgement...influence a head of department's priorities and values. In each of these sets of expectations...there may be a similar underlying and often unexamined conflict between ideals and realities. There will frequently also be conflict between the perceived requirements of each different audience or stakeholder. The tendency of many governmental agencies and individual institutions to expect immediate and positive responses to a myriad of 'initiatives' on what seems like an almost weekly basis, simply serves to accentuate these underlying difficulties."

(Brook and Davies, 1994, p.56)

They wrote that the responses of institutional managers to the difficulties encountered by heads were to generate policy statements, codes of practice etc.; streamline committee structures; clarify hierarchical management relationships; or provide staff development opportunities.

A recent significant contribution to the consideration of heads' roles was made by Tann in 1995. She wrote of heads' views of their role, "on the basis of research, consultancy and training within higher education" and "In the light of my own experience as a head of school and discussions with many in a similar position".
She wrote of the diversity of models of internal university organisation and departmental management but that "most people managing at the middle level in higher education experience, to a greater or lesser degree, similar tensions, frustrations and rewards."

She elaborated that some heads, particularly those who have been in the same institution for some years, experience a tension between their perception of the university or college mission and their own sense of collegial values. Reports by heads and staff in a dozen or more universities had indicated that the head's role had changed considerably over the past ten years, the time spent on departmental management - what used to be called 'administration' - had increased from 20-30% to over 50%.

Tann wrote that the problem for heads begins with an inadequate definition of the role. In many cases there are no agreed generic principles within a university to describe the role and that, even where there are, they are often limited to brief descriptions in university ordinances or "some form of description....which can rarely be called a job description" when a head's post is advertised. Of particular relevance to this work, she wrote:

"The responsibilities of the head of department in many older universities are increasingly coming to resemble those of their counterparts in the former polytechnics, which traditionally advertised such appointments as part of the management structure. But while there are differences in emphasis the responsibilities of the head of department reside in three main areas."

(Tann, 1995, p.86)
Tann identified the three main areas as:

1. **Duties within the department** - strategic academic planning; the allocation of duties to and the management of all staff, including induction, staff development and safety; admission, teaching and welfare of students; management of financial, space and physical resources; promotion of academic standards in teaching and research; responsibility for implementing university policy on matters such as academic audit and staff appraisal.

2. **Representing the interests of the department** at committees and boards of the university and interpreting and disseminating information from the centre to colleagues.

3. **Academic representative** in his/her field of study, playing a role in scholarly societies and peer review journals and speaking at conferences and seminars.

She identified eight areas of concern which "**seem to be the most burning issues for heads of department**":

1. **Induction** - an incoming head rarely has any induction into the role. Even when an 'induction pack' is provided by the personnel department, it usually contains only information on the contract of employment and formal university systems and processes whereas "**Problems for incoming heads are often located around the trivial but irritating**".

2. **Strategic planning** - heads experience different priorities and pressures depending, in part, on the academic subject - for poor-recruiting subjects, the
priority might be "to get undergraduates in" whereas, in some other subjects the priority might relate to improving research ratings. There is evidence, based on a study in one university department, that the longer the length of service of a head, the less "tightness" there will be between the department plan and that of the university.

3. **Departmental management teams** - There is sometimes a reluctance among heads to establish an advisory group. Many heads avoid the language of management at all costs and engage in 'managing without appearing to do so'. This may be interpreted by colleagues as evidence of elitism or 'managerialism'. The establishment of a small advisory group "usually reduces irritation and anxiety among his/her colleagues".

4. **Departmental structure and delegation** - The diffidence some heads feel over managing and the anxiety of their colleagues about being managed may be partly underpinned by confusion over the interpretation of departmental structures. It can be helpful to make a clear distinction between the lines of decision-making within the department and the lines of individual accountability.

   Delegation, and the recognition that it involves more than asking an individual to undertake a task, is a process that a number of heads find difficult. This may be, in part, because of the pressures exerted on heads by senior colleagues who require responses 'yesterday'.

5. **Motivation** - The main concern of heads in seeking to motivate staff is that they feel that they have a few carrots and no sticks. One of the greatest difficulties for heads is the lecturer at the top of the scale who does just enough to avoid
disciplinary procedures but is widely believed by colleagues to be 'swinging the lead'. The head is left in a 'cleft stick' for if s/he is seen to do nothing this reflects badly on departmental leadership.

Although in appraisal training appraisers are urged to show appreciation of tasks accomplished, it is the perception of appraisees that appraisers show little appreciation.

6. **Appraisal and staff development** - Appraisal training was one of the earliest pieces of large-scale staff development undertaken in most universities. A problem is that, even within a single institution, the ethos can vary. In some large departments, heads may only appraise other appraisers whereas in a smaller one, the head may appraise all staff. Other problems encountered by heads are concerns of staff over confidentiality and lack of resources to provide staff development needs identified in appraisal.

7. **Communication** - A number of heads believe lines of communication to and from the centre lack clarity and that, with the more managerial approach to university management, there is inadequate opportunity for expressing points of view. There is often a strong suspicion that all matters of importance have been decided elsewhere.

8. **Time for research** - All heads find it hard to allocate time for research. In a survey, a group of heads from one institution responded that they spent as little as 5% of their total available time on research. There is often a feeling that "invading personal and family time" is necessary to maintain research activity.
In conclusion, Tann wrote that, although the head's role is a lonely one, in the main, the role is 'owned' by the incumbents. There is recognition that, in the current educational environment, a head of department needs to manage and nurture resources effectively "for the common good - indeed for survival'. The head of department must possess "the requisite managerial capabilities":

"Nevertheless, academic leadership is essential for departments aspiring to excellence in research and teaching. The head of department is both a strategist and tactician. The working week has lengthened, many heads regularly working between 50 and 60 hours a week." (Tann, 1995, p.96)

Discussion

There is general agreement in the studies reviewed in this Chapter, that heads of department play a major part in the successful operation of universities and fill an important position in their organisational structure (Weinberg, 1984; Bennett and Figuli, 1990; Mathias, 1991; Green and McDade, 1994; Brooke and Davies, 1994).

Whilst the studies show that there is little commonality in the pattern of activities which occupy most of the time of heads, there is general agreement that the range of their responsibilities is broadly similar. These responsibilities have been listed and catalogued in various degrees of detail by a number of writers. In general, the 'managerial' tasks which heads are required to perform fall within the major headings employed by Green and McDade (1994):

- Governing the school
- Managing teaching

page 95
Managing personnel
Promoting school development
Student issues
Representing the school
Managing resources

In addition to these 'managerial' tasks, heads, particularly those in the 'old' universities, are expected to:

- "maintain a significant personal research role" (Middlehurst, 1993, p.136)
- "play a role in scholarly societies and peer review journals and speaking at conferences and seminars" (Tann, 1995, p.97)
- engage in "teaching and preparation" (Mathias, 1991, p.66)

In the studies which had the objective of determining which aspects of the head's role were considered to be of greatest importance by heads and by members of their departmental staff, both heads and staff were in agreement regarding the importance of:

- involving staff in decision-making ('engaging in collegial decision-making'; 'consulting staff')
- staff selection (although, uniquely, Moses and Roe's study showed that heads considered this to be far more important than did staff)
- planning
Heads attached more importance than did staff to:

- motivating staff ('rewarding excellence', 'maintaining morale')
- maintaining academic standards
- general administration

Conversely, staff attached greater importance to advocacy for the department than did heads.

It is possible that staff did not identify motivation and maintaining standards as of great importance because of their perspectives of the roles - they may not have recognised that they required to be motivated or, indeed, were amenable to motivation by the head and they may have felt that maintaining (narrowly defined) academic standards was an integral part of their basic professional responsibilities. With regard to general administration, it is possible that staff were unaware of the burden of administration which falls upon heads.

Staffs' view of the greater importance of departmental advocacy is interesting. It may be that staff had a much stronger departmental allegiance than heads who, as managers, would be required to take a broader, institutional view.

With regard to the problems and difficulties faced by heads, a number of writers cited as problematic the fact that heads are appointed on the basis of their abilities as academics rather than as managers and are, therefore, inadequately prepared for their role when first appointed (Startup, 1976; Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak, 1986; Middlehurst, 1989b; Brodie and Partington, 1992; Green and McDade, 1994). This is often compounded by the
fact that an incoming head may have little or no induction into the role (Hammons, 1984; Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak, 1986; Tann, 1995).

Once appointed, heads become intrinsically vulnerable to stresses and tensions due to the very wide range and diverse nature of their responsibilities (Davies, 1989; Moses and Roe, 1989; Middlehurst, 1993; Green and McDade, 1994). The basic problem of 'role overload' is often exacerbated by the fact that heads often have either an inadequate job description or no job description at all (Hammons, 1984; Mathias, 1991; Tann, 1995). Furthermore, the nature of the role has changed over recent years and has become increasingly complex (Middlehurst, 1989b; Brook and Davies, 1994; Tann, 1995).

All of this has resulted in heads having high workloads, their average working week reported as being of the order of 50 hours (Hammons, 1984; Mathias, 1991; Brook and Davies, 1994, Tann, 1995). A number of writers highlighted the need for heads to delegate some of their duties (Moses and Roe, 1989a; Middlehurst, 1993; Brodie and Partington, 1994) although some studies have shown that heads are sometimes reluctant to delegate (Middlehurst, 1989; Mathias, 1991; Tann, 1995).

Other writers questioned whether the head's role was capable of being carried out effectively by one individual and some raised the possibility of the separation of the academic and management functions to different individuals (Startup, 1986; Middlehurst, 1989b; Mathias, 1991; Brodie and Partington, 1992).

In terms of specific activities, those studies which addressed the issue consistently showed that the activity which heads found most difficult was dealing with unsatisfactory staff performance (McDonald and Bond, 1989; Moses and Roe, 1989; Middlehurst, 1989a; Tann, 1995). It is possible that one of the reasons that heads have difficulty in dealing with
poor staff performance is that many staff in universities are resistant to the notion of being managed (McDonald and Bond, 1989; Middlehurst, 1993). Another possible reason is that many heads perceive themselves to have very little power (Hammons, 1984; Jarratt, 1985; Middlehurst, 1989 and 1993; Tann, 1995) or institutional support (Moses and Roe, 1989; Davies, 1989; Middlehurst, 1989a and 1993; Mathias, 1991; Brodie and Partington, 1992).

By far the most frequently identified tension for heads was the conflict between their dual roles as leading academics and as managers (Jarratt, 1985; Davies, 1989; Middlehurst, 1989a and 1993; Mathias, 1991; Brodie and Partington, 1992; Brook and Davies, 1994).

Many of the stresses and tensions experienced by heads are recognisable in terms of the concepts of role theory. For example, the academic leader/manager tension is a clear example of role conflict. Hammons defined heads' inadequate job descriptions as "Inadequate role definition" (Hammons, 1984, p. 16) whilst other writers described the lack of clarity in regard to heads' responsibilities as role ambiguity (Bennett and Figuli, 1990; Mathias, 1991; Middlehurst, 1993).

Several writers wrote, either implicitly or explicitly, of the different role set expectations of the members of heads' role sets (Hammons, 1984; Weinberg, 1984; Moses and Roe, 1989; Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak, 1986; Bennett and Figuli, 1990; Mathias, 1991; Brook and Davies, 1994). The very many factors which are sources of difficulty for the head produce role pressures and the difficulty felt by heads in adequately fulfilling their role constitutes role strain.

In the Katz and Khan (1966) terminology, the perceptions of lack of institutional support for the head and the head's inadequate power represent organisational factors; the lack of preparedness of newly appointed heads and their training and development needs are
attributes of the person and the head's management style is an expression of interpersonal factors.

Summary

It is clear from the literature that the role of the university head of department is crucial, complex and demanding and is subject to many ambiguities, stresses and tensions. It is equally clear that, in the rapidly changing world of higher education, there is a need for a continuing exploration of the role. Writing of the training and development of heads, Brooke and Davies wrote:

"...whilst these and other strategies are valuable, their effects may be vitiated by a failure to look sufficiently closely at two underlying issues:

1. The question of what heads actually do...

2. The need for an appropriate conceptual framework within which heads operate."

(Brook and Davies, 1994, p.56)

Perhaps, in Britain, this need is particularly acute in the 'new' universities where so little work has been done in this area.
CHAPTER FOUR THE STUDY

PURPOSES

The aim of the study is to examine the roles of heads of departments in 'new' British universities through the perceptions of heads themselves and other members of their role sets.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. determine and examine perceptions of the contributions made by heads to the successful operation of universities as organisations, i.e. the perceived 'importance' of the head's role

2. to identify the various activities undertaken by heads in performing their roles and the relative importance which heads attach to them

3. to identify the key members of heads' role sets and the expectations which they variously have of heads

4. to determine role set members' perceptions of the most important aspects of heads' roles

5. to examine the extent to which the head's role is seen as being that of academic leader and the extent to which it is seen as being that of manager
6. to identify any ambiguities, conflicts, pressures or stresses which heads might experience in enacting their roles, in particular those which relate to:

. the differing expectations of the members of their role sets

. the dual responsibilities of heads as academic leader and line manager

7. to develop a conceptual framework for the head of department's role

8. to compare, the roles of heads in the 'old' universities, as determined through the literature, with the roles of heads in the 'new' universities, as determined by the research.

CONTEXT

The work is confined to the roles of heads of departments in 'new' British universities - the former polytechnics - although comparisons are made with the roles of heads in 'old' British universities. The rationale for studying heads' roles in the 'new' universities is that:

(a) whilst several studies of heads in 'old' universities have been reported in the literature, little, if any, research appears to have been carried out with regard to the roles of heads in the 'new' universities

(b) the former polytechnic sector is of particular interest to the author whose career has been spent in this sector.
There is, at present, no commonly accepted terminology for the various structural levels in universities. This is particularly true of the 'new' universities where the basic academic unit is variously referred to as a 'school', 'department', 'programme area' or 'field'. What, in the 'old' British universities, are called faculties are, in the new universities, called either 'faculties' or 'schools'. This work examines the role of the leader/manager of the basic academic unit, of which Becher and Kogan wrote:

"The main characteristics of such basic units are that they have academic responsibility for an identifiable course or group of courses, that they have their own operating budgets (and some discretion in disposing of them) and that they exercise some element of choice in the recruitment of professional colleagues (and often also of students)."

(Becher and Kogan, 1992, p.56)

Throughout this work, the term 'head of department' is used to denote the "designated heads" of such basic units.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The objectives of the study required the collection of different types of data. Firstly, in order to identify the various activities carried out by heads and to order them in terms of perceived relative importance, responses were required which were amenable to analysis by
quantitative methods. Furthermore, for respondents to identify the tasks which they
performed through open-ended questions would probably have yielded data which was:

1. unreliable - to expect heads to be able to list all of the myriad of tasks which
they are required to perform would have been unreasonable; any such lists would
almost certainly have been incomplete. Furthermore, such a daunting task may
have discouraged potential respondents

2. unusable - it is highly likely that respondents would have used different
terminologies, using different terms for the same tasks and/or the same term for
different tasks so that the data collected would have been incapable of analysis.

It was, therefore, necessary to provide prompts in the form of a closed-format list of
possible tasks against which heads could indicate whether or not each was a part of their
job and to provide some method of rating the extent to which each task was perceived as
part of the head's job.

Secondly, a number of the objectives of the study related to the nature of the head's role.
This required the collection of data which:

. could not be pre-determined but at the same time had a more manageable range
of possible alternatives

. was inherently qualitative in nature, for example, answers to questions such as,
"How do you deal with conflicts and tensions?".
Also, in order to develop a theoretical framework for the head’s role, it was necessary to involve all of the key members of heads' role sets. Thus, it was necessary to adopt a methodology which would permit the use of open-ended questions which could be put, in slightly amended form, to different categories of respondent (heads and other members of their role sets, both subordinates and superordinates).

A multiple methods strategy was, therefore, adopted, a survey approach being used to address the quantitative aspects of the work and a case study approach to address the more qualitative aspects.

Robson (1993) wrote:

"...a research question can, in almost all cases, be attacked by more than one method. There is no rule which says that only one method must be used in an investigation. Using more than one method in an investigation can have substantial advantages, even though it almost inevitably adds to the time investment required...There is much to be said for multi-method enquiry."

(Robson, 1993, pp.290-291)

"The combination of survey and case studies...provides useful complementary information giving valuable insights into the issues."  (Robson, 1993, p.54)

In writing more specifically of the benefits of using multiple methods, Robson (1993, p.290) wrote that such an approach may be used to:

1. allow "The reduction of inappropriate certainty. Using a single method and finding a pretty clear-cut result may delude investigators into believing they
have found the 'right' answer. Using other, additional, methods may point to differing answers which remove spurious certainty."

2. permit triangulation. In fact, it specifically allows 'methodological' triangulation, defined by Cohen and Mannion (1994, p.233) as:

"...the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour."

3. address different but complementary questions within a study - the "Complementary purposes" model

4. "enhance interpretability" - where the interpretation of statistical analyses may be enhanced by a qualitative account or a qualitative account may be enhanced by supportive quantitative evidence

5. "assess the plausibility of threats to validity" of the primary research technique used.

Additionally, Cohen and Mannion (1994, p.234) wrote that the multi-method approach:

1. enables researchers to be confident that the data generated are not simply artefacts of one specific method of collection

2. helps to overcome the problem of "method boundedness" - the tendency of methodologists to "push particular pet methods either because those are the only
ones they have familiarity with, or because they believe their method is superior to all others".

The Survey

A survey approach was chosen for the first phase of the research since it would provide:

- meaningful data which could be used as a basis for the second, qualitative, phase of this research and possibly for future research
- a manageable means of obtaining the breadth of coverage involved in an examination of the complex and multi-faceted role of the head of department
- data suitable for quantitative analysis.

Robson (1993, p.130) wrote that a survey comprises a:

"collection of information in a standardised form from groups of people"

Johnson (1994, pp.13-15), wrote that a survey provides a means of:

"eliciting equivalent information from an identified population"

and that:
"...because the research tool is standardised, once the questionnaire or interview schedule have been designed, it is usually possible to approach a relatively large number of respondents."

In order to "approach a relatively large number of respondents" the instrument chosen for data collection was the postal self-completed questionnaire.

Robson listed the advantages and disadvantages of the survey strategy in general and the use of "Postal and other self-administered surveys" in particular:

1. **Disadvantages**

**General to all surveys using respondents:**

- **a** Data are affected by the characteristics of the respondents (e.g. their memory; knowledge; experience; motivation; and personality).

- **b** Respondents won't necessarily report their beliefs, attitudes, etc. accurately (e.g. there is likely to be a social desirability response bias - people behaving in a way which shows them in a good light).

**Postal and other self-administered surveys**

- **c** Typically have a low response rate. As you don't usually know the characteristics of non-respondents you don't know whether the sample is representative.

- **d** Ambiguities in, and misunderstandings of, the survey questions may not be detected.
e Respondents may not treat the exercise seriously; and you may not be able to detect this.

2. **Advantages**

*General to all surveys using respondents*

a. They provide a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives.

b. They may be adapted to collect generalizable information from almost any human population.

c. Highly structured surveys have high amounts of data standardization.

*Postal and other self-administered surveys*

d. Often this is the only, or the easiest, way of retrieving information about the past history of a large set of people.

e. They can be extremely efficient at providing large amounts of data, at relatively low cost, in a short period of time.

f. They allow anonymity, which can encourage frankness when sensitive areas are involved.

(After Robson, 1993, pp 128-129)

Elsewhere (1993, p 243), Robson suggested an additional advantage:

"*If the questionnaire has been well constructed, the time needed to code and analyse responses can also be short, particularly if computer coding or analysis is available.*"
and further disadvantages:

"The data are necessarily superficial. There is little or no check on the honesty or seriousness of responses. Responses have to be squeezed into predetermined boxes which may or may not be appropriate. While analysis may be easy, interpretation can be problematic."

Wilson and McClean (1994, p.3) wrote that the advantages of the questionnaire as a research instrument are that it:

" - provides a useful method of obtaining information in a structured format
  - can be administered without the direct support of an interviewer"

They wrote that its disadvantages are that it:

" - requires a lot of time to design and develop
  - limits the scope of questioning
  - suffers from the 'form-filling' syndrome, especially if administered by post
  - offers limited flexibility in terms of response format"

Most of the disadvantages identified above can be overcome in a survey, at least to some extent, by supplementing questionnaires with interviews (Johnson, 1994). In this work, the second, qualitative, phase of the research provided an opportunity to so supplement the findings arising from the survey.
The Case Studies

A case is defined by Miles and Huberman as:

"Abstractly, we can define a case as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis. Studies may be of just one case or of several. There is a focus or, 'heart', of the study, and a somewhat indeterminate boundary defines the edge of the case: what will not be studied."  

(Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.24)

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.26) offered some examples of cases: an individual, a small group, an organisation, a community, a nation or, importantly in the context of this work:

"A case may also be defined by a role"

In this study, the case is clearly the role of heads of departments in the 'new' universities.

Johnson (1994, p.20) offered the following definition of a case study:

"A case study is an enquiry which uses multiple sources of evidence. It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."

She wrote (p. 20) that "...we need to 'unpack' the key elements of the definition."

"Multiple sources of evidence. Several research tools may be used to accumulate data, for example, interviewing, observation, and use of records."
In case studies carried out as part of this study, interviews were very much the primary tool and multiple sources of evidence were also provided by interviewing different members of the heads' role sets. It had been intended to use heads' job descriptions as a documentary source but, in the event none of the universities in which the case studies were carried out were able to provide job descriptions for heads.

""investigates a contemporary phenomenon' case studies are concerned with the interaction of factors and events over a period of time. Usually the study is of a phenomenon still in evidence at the present day. though not necessarily new or recent."

(p. 20)

In this work, the studies were concerned with the enactment of the head's role at the present time and the effects of changes in the internal and external environments over the past few years, since the former polytechnics were designated as universities.

""investigates a phenomenon within its real life context' The case study is a naturalistic type of enquiry. It involves the systematic gathering of evidence but does not require an experimental situation."

(p. 21)

This work comprised a study of departmental heads in the real life context of their institutions and their interactions with members of their role sets.

""the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' Common sense perceived boundaries to case studies are not ring fences. As the study progresses, the boundaries appear increasingly permeable. But where the
In this work, the role of the head is bounded by the institution of the university. On the other hand, one of the explicit objectives of the study was to explore some of the boundaries, e.g. the membership, of the head's role set.

Johnson also offered the following strengths and weaknesses of the case study approach:

1. **Strengths**

   a. copes with complexity - even a single case study can provide descriptive data, address problems of meaning, examine the record of past events and relate it to present activity. Moreover several different 'units of enquiry' can be approached.

   b. intelligible, non-technical findings - because many sources of evidence are used, the picture which emerges is 'in the round', compared with the one-dimensional image provided by the average survey. Case study based reports tend to be easily readable, able to be understood by non-researchers, and hence provide a more widely accessible form of research outcome.

   c. can provide interpretations of other similar cases - the rounded picture a case study gives is sufficiently lifelike to be compared with other examples, when similarities and differences can be readily identified.
Weaknesses

d  lack of scientific rigour - the chief criticism levelled at the case study approach. There is no 'book of rules' for the design of a case study. Each must depend on the nature of the phenomenon investigated. Case studies rely heavily on the skill and industry of the individual researcher.

e  possible uniqueness of the material - If a case study focuses on a unique institution or phenomenon, it may be of esoteric interest, but there is no bonus of 'relatability' (lack of generalisability may be a bigger problem - Author)

f  possibility of uneven access to all aspects of the phenomenon studied - although the intention is to make a study 'in the round', the exploratory nature of the work may tempt the researcher down a particular pathway to the detriment of other lines of enquiry. Being 'led by the data' can result in an untidy bundle of findings, rather than a rounded picture.

(After Johnson, 1994, pp.21-23)

In this work, a multiple case studies approach was adopted in order to overcome, or at least reduce, the problems of the possible uniqueness of the material collected and of uneven access. Yin (1994, p.147) wrote:

"The evidence from multiple case studies is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust."

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.29) wrote:
"Multiple case sampling adds confidence to the findings. By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding...we can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings."

DEVELOPING AND PILOTING THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The research instruments were developed by applying the findings from the analysis of the literature to the aim and objectives of the study. Initially, three instruments were identified as being potentially useful; questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and respondent diaries. Versions of all three instruments were designed and were piloted in the author's own institution; Nene College of Higher Education (the pilot exercises comprised studies in their own right of heads' roles at Nene College).

The Questionnaire

In order to identify the various activities carried out by heads and to order them in terms of perceived relative importance, a questionnaire was developed on the basis of those aspects of heads' roles identified by Green and McDade (1994). Although developed in the USA, the Green and McDade listing was chosen because:

- it represented the most comprehensive list of heads' managerial tasks available in the literature
- it was the most recent listing in the literature (it was originally presented by Green and McDade in 1991 but was republished in 1994)
the literature shows that the range of departmental heads' responsibilities is
broadly similar regardless of country, although emphases may differ
(Tucker, 1984, Moses and Roe, 1989, Bennett and Figuli, 1990, Middlehurst,
1993, Tann, 1995)

the list was cited by Middlehurst (1993) in her study of British universities

there is no similarly comprehensive list available in the accounts of British studies.
Bradley (1986) provided a more limited list derived from heads' job descriptions in
one institution and Brodie and Partington (1992) offered a list which was
significantly less comprehensive than that of Green and McDade).

Two questionnaires were originally developed, following the principles identified by
Robson (1993), Johnson (1994) and Wilson and McLean (1994). One questionnaire was
designed to be completed by heads of school and one by academic staff. For each of the
tasks listed in the questionnaires, respondents were asked to tick one box from three to
indicate, whether they thought that the aspect was:

- a major part of the role
- a minor part of the role
- not part of the role.

The questionnaire designed for academic staff was initially piloted by ten members of
academic staff. The questionnaire designed for heads was initially piloted by two deputy
heads of school who were asked to assume the role of heads when completing the
questionnaires. Deputy heads were used since the total population of heads within the
College was small and it would not have been appropriate to include respondents to the
initial pilot exercise in the pilot 'proper'. Some minor changes in wording were made as a result of the initial pilot. The changes mainly involved the anglicising of some of the terms used in questions.

For the pilot 'proper' questionnaires were distributed through the College's internal mail system to all fifteen heads of school and to one hundred members of academic staff selected by systematic sampling, choosing every fourth member of academic staff from an alphabetical list of all staff. The questionnaires were anonymous but were numbered in order to allow follow-up questionnaires to be sent to initial non-respondents.

The response from heads was excellent, all fifteen heads finally responding. The response from academic staff was disappointing, only 34 completed questionnaires being returned out of 100 distributed.

All of the questionnaires returned had been completed appropriately and brief interviews, held subsequently with a number of heads of school, indicated that the questionnaires had been found to be clear and straightforward. Similarly, brief interviews with a number of academic staff respondents indicated that the questionnaires had been found to be clear. However, several academic staff respondents commented that responses to many of the questions had required a high degree of speculation.

Analysis of the results was carried out by allocating a score to each response as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Major part of heads' role</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor part of heads' role</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not part of heads' role</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questions were encoded, the data was entered onto a computer 'Excel 4.0' spreadsheet and a number of numerical and statistical routines were applied. The format of the questionnaires was found to allow the data to be transferred and analysed easily.

The questionnaires for heads were, therefore, considered to be suitable for use without further amendment in the main research study. However, the questionnaires for academic staff were considered inappropriate for the main study since:

. several of the questions required significant degrees of speculation on the part of respondents

. the response rate (from academics within the author's own institution) was low and it was considered that it would probably be even lower in a postal survey of academic staff in several institutions.

In view of the effects of these factors on the validity of the data collected, it was decided to restrict the survey phase of the work to heads of department only and to elicit the views of academic staff in the case studies, in their capacity as members of heads' role sets. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix I.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

A pilot exercise involving semi-structured interviews was carried out in order to:

. develop an interview schedule suitable for the major research exercise

. provide the author with some experience of conducting research interviews.
In describing the distinctive features of interviews, Johnson (1994, p.43) wrote that:

"Any interview is a social encounter between two people, but any social encounter is not an interview. Interviews have a particular focus and purpose. They are initiated by the interviewer, with a view to gathering certain information from the person interviewed."

And, in describing semi-structured interviews, she wrote (p. 45) that:

"The prime aim of a structured interview is to get equivalent information from a number of interviewees, information which is uncontaminated by subtle differences in the way in which it asked for. The semi-structured interview has a similar aim of collecting equivalent information from a number of people, but places less emphasis on a standardised approach. A more flexible style is used, adapted to the personality and circumstances of the person being interviewed."

The 'identified population' in this pilot study comprised heads of departments (called, 'schools' at Nene College) and members of their role sets. On the basis of initial conversations with several heads, the key members of heads' role sets at Nene College were considered to be: the Dean of Faculty, academic staff within the school and the school secretary. Members of the Directorate (the College's senior management team) were not considered to be key role set members since, at Nene College, the usual channel of communication between heads and the directorate is through the deans of faculty.

Because the research for which the interviews were being piloted was to involve multiple case studies, pilot interviews were carried out with the Heads of two schools and, in each

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case, a reduced role set comprising a member of academic staff of the school and the school secretary.

In developing the initial interview schedule, the following principles were adopted:

. the schedule was to have as little structure as possible whilst still ensuring that the information collected was based on sufficiently similar questions to be considered to be 'equivalent'

. questions were as open-ended as possible whilst still providing some structure.

The initial interview schedule was 'pre-piloted' in interviews with two members of academic staff in the author's own school and a Head who was not interviewed as part of the pilot 'proper'. As a result, some of the questions were slightly reworded and an additional question was added.

Following considerable difficulty in arranging appointments, six interviews, each lasting approximately 30 minutes were conducted during September and early October, 1995. In carrying out the interviews, the author consciously attempted to follow the advice offered by Robson (1993, pp.232-233) to avoid:

"Long questions
Double-barrelled or multiple-barrelled questions
Questions involving jargon
Leading questions
Biased questions"
and to follow Robson's recommendations to:

"Listen more than you speak....
Put questions in a straightforward, clear and non-threatening way....
Eliminate cues which lead interviewees to respond in a particular way....
Enjoy it (or at least look as though you do)....
Take a full record of the interview"

'A full record' was taken by making tape recording of the interviews. Full transcripts were subsequently made of the interviews with Heads and notes were made from the recorded responses in the other interviews.

Written notes were not taken during the interviews in an attempt to make the interviews as informal as possible. In the event, some short sections of the tape recordings were indistinct and it would, on balance, have been more sensible to have made written notes at least as back-up to the tape recordings.

In developing an approach to analysing the qualitative data, note was taken of Robson's (1993, p.370) view that:

"...there are no prescriptive formulae for this task.
....it looks on analysis....as mainly concerned with data reduction.
....and focuses on ways of displaying data to assist in drawing conclusions."

In order to reduce the data collected in the pilot interviews and display it in a way to assist in drawing conclusions, content analysis (counting keywords and phrases) of the transcripts and notes was carried out. Initially, it was necessary to design a suitable matrix
and suitable coding categories. In this study of roles, the obvious matrix type was the 
Role-ordered matrix, defined by Miles and Huberman (1984, p.123) as:

"Role-ordered matrix - rows representing data from sets of individuals 
occupying different roles."

In developing coding categories, the following useful definition was offered by Robson 
(1993, p.385):

"A code is a symbol applied to a group of words to classify or categorise them. 
They are typically related to research questions, concepts or themes."

Strauss (1987, p.81) offered the following guidelines:

"Coding is of categories in the data. Try to discover genuine categories and 
give them a name. 
Relate those categories as specifically and variably as possible to the contexts in 
which they occur.

Relate categories to each other; construct sub-categories where appropriate.

Always do this on the basis of specific data, underlining or highlighting each 
ocurrence."

Twenty-six coding sub-categories were identified from an examination of the transcripts 
and notes and were grouped into five major categories. The major categories were pre-
determined by the interview schedule and were: the important aspects of Heads' roles; the
major problems faced by Heads; the most rewarding aspects of Heads' roles; the important qualities required in Heads and the overall perception of Heads' roles. The numbers of separate references made by each interviewee to each subcategory in each interview were counted. For the interviews where full transcripts were not made, the tape recordings were used in conjunction with notes in counting the references.

Piloting of the interviews was particularly useful in that it resulted in:

1. the author gaining useful experience of developing interview schedules and conducting semi-structured research interviews

2. an appreciation that access to several members of a number of role sets might be difficult to arrange and would require advance planning, careful communication and considerable persistence

3. the introduction of the author to the concept of role and the importance of developing a conceptual framework for the head's role

4. a decision not to use tape recordings but to use notes taken directly during interviews and subsequently confirmed by the interviewees. The reasons for this decision were:

   a number of interviewees in the pilot exercise had expressed some discomfort with the presence of a tape recorder

   the tape recordings contained a considerable amount of repetition and data which were not directly relevant to the study
there were practical difficulties in obtaining recordings of sufficiently
good quality to be able to guarantee audibility on playback, especially in
'field conditions' over which the researcher might have little physical
control (e.g. distance between interviewer and interviewee, background
noise).

5. the realisation that some questions were more suitable for some role set
members than for others so that slightly different schedules would be needed
for the different members of the role sets

6. issues being raised which were not anticipated by the author, for example, the
suggestion that heads might be an under-used resource in informing
institutional decisions and policies.

Thus the pilot study (together with the author's study of role theory) resulted in the
development of separate semi-structured interview schedules for the different members of
heads' role sets. They were significantly different from the original pilot schedule in that
they incorporated issues identified for the first time during the pilot study and in that they
placed much greater emphasis on elements of role theory.

Development Of The Interview Schedules

The interview schedules for the case studies were developed following the principles
described above, taking account of the findings of the pilot study. In general, the aim was
for the questions to be as open-ended as possible. However, there were a number of
issues identified in the literature review, the pilot studies and the survey which required
further investigation and had to be addressed specifically. Some questions were, therefore, intended to elicit very specific answers although interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on their basic answers. An example of this type of question, and by far the most 'closed' question was, "Roughly how many hours per week do you work on average?".

Different interview schedules were developed for the different members of the role sets, the Head, the Dean, members of academic staff and the Departmental Secretary. Two additional but conflicting principles were adopted in developing the different schedules. On the one hand, the questions put to each member of the role sets were as similar as possible to permit comparative analysis. On the other hand, where possible, questions which required interviewees to speculate were avoided. For example, the question, "What are the most difficult things you have to deal with?" was only put to heads since it relates to the head's perception of difficulty.

The questions put to the other members of the role sets were those which could be answered on the basis of their observations, for example, "Roughly how many hours per week do you think heads work, on average?", or were those on which the interviewee might legitimately have an opinion, for example, "From your point of view, what are the most important things heads have to do?".

The main focus of the interviews was to explore the role relationships between heads and their role set members, the expectations which those role set members have of their head and the ambiguities, conflicts and pressures experience by heads in enacting their roles. However, in order to overcome some of the limitations of the survey approach identified earlier (pp. 107-111), the interviews were also used to supplement the findings of the survey. This was particularly important because the survey required respondents to
identify tasks and the relative importance of those tasks from a list and it is possible that the list may not have been entirely comprehensive in its application to all heads.

Samples of interview notes which incorporate the interview schedules are presented in Appendix II.

The first question, Question 1 in all of the schedules, "How would you define the role of the head of department?", was intended to elicit from interviewees a summative overview of the head's role before any cues were offered by the other interview questions.

The second question, "Do you have a formal job description?", was put only to heads and deans since there is no legitimate reason for other members of the role set to know whether or not heads do have job descriptions. It was put to both heads and deans to elicit whether there was agreement on what should be a matter of fact since inadequate role definition was identified as a major problem for heads in the literature. A supplementary question, "How does it relate to what you actually do?" was designed to be put only to heads who indicated that they did have a formal job description to examine whether the presence of a job description reduces the problem of role ambiguity.

In the third question, all members of the role sets were asked which are the most important things heads do. The purpose of this question was to:

- supplement the findings of the survey and the literature in the case of heads
- supplement the findings from the literature in the case of other role set members
compare the different perceptions of the role set members to determine whether there is a link between perceptions of importance and expectations.

In the next question heads and their secretaries only were asked what activities heads spend most of their time doing. Other role set members were excluded as it was unlikely that they would spend large proportions of their time with their heads and would, therefore, be unable to make a judgement other than by speculation.

All members of the role sets were asked how many hours per week, on average, they thought heads worked. The purpose of this question was to elicit views on the perceived workload of heads.

Heads only were asked what were the most difficult things they had to deal with and whether there were any particular sources of stress in their job. Their secretaries, with whom they work most closely, were asked what they thought causes most problems for heads.

All role set members were asked what skills or abilities they thought were the most important for a head to possess since this might also relate to expectations.

Next, all role set members, except secretaries, were asked to what extent they considered the head's job to be one of 'line management' and to what extent one of academic leadership. The manager/academic leader conflict was identified in the literature as a major source of stress for heads.

Heads were then asked if they found that there were any tensions between those two aspects of the job and, if so, how they dealt with those tensions. Deans were asked
whether they thought there were any tensions between those two aspects and, if so, how they expected their heads to deal with them. Academic staff members were asked if they thought there were any incompatibilities between the two aspects and, if so, how they were affected by them. Heads, deans and academic staff were then asked whether they thought there was a case for having departments run by 'professional managers', allowing heads to concentrate on academic leadership - a suggestion made by several writers in the literature.

Secretaries were not asked about the management/academic leadership issue since, due to the nature of their professional relationships with the heads, it was felt that they would be unable to provide informed answers (this was found to be the case in the pilot study interviews).

As a preface to questions explicitly relating to role set expectations, heads only, as the 'focal persons' of the role sets, were asked, "Who do you consider to be the important members of your role set - the main people with whom you interact in your job?" The primary purpose of this question was to confirm the role set membership adopted for the study from the preliminary investigations.

Questions on role set expectations were put differently to different members of the role sets in ways considered appropriate to their positions. Heads were asked if they experienced any particular tensions or incompatibilities between the different expectations of the various members of their role sets, if so, how they dealt with them, and if they thought that any of those expectations were incompatible with their understanding of what the role should entail.
Deans were asked what their expectations were of their heads, whether they thought that their expectations were in conflict with the expectations of others, how they expect their heads to deal with those conflicts and whose expectations they thought had most influence on the way heads carry out their jobs.

Academic staff members were asked the same questions except that they were asked, "How does your head deal with these conflicts?", and then, "How do you expect them to...".

Secretaries were asked if they though that different expectations people have of the head cause him/her problems; if so, who are the main parties who have those conflicting expectations; how the head deals with this and whose expectations they think have the most influence on the way heads carry out their jobs.

In the final question, all interviewees were asked if there were any other points they wished to make about the role of the head of department.

**Respondent Diaries**

A pilot study was also carried out using 'respondent', 'informant' or 'commissioned' diaries, variously defined as:

"....an annotated chronological record or "log""

(Zimmerman and Weider, 1977, p.480)

"...not records of engagements or personal journals of thoughts and activities,
but records or logs of professional activities"

(Bell, 1987, p.102)
"...a kind of self-administered questionnaire .....it can range from being totally unstructured to a set of responses to specific questions. They can also serve as proxy for observation in situations where it would be difficult or impossible for direct observation to take place" (Robson, 1993, p.254)

"...records which an investigator asks an informant to compile and produce to assist in the research enquiry" (Johnson, 1994, p.64)

Burgess (1994, pp.300-301) took a rather broader view of the definition of diaries, writing:

"In many accounts distinctions are drawn between logs, diaries and journals...While this may be useful analytically I would wish to combine the elements of all three documents and therefore refer to them all as 'diaries'".

A diary was developed on the 'what, when, where, how?' basis described by Zimmerman and Weider (1977), taking account of principles identified by Bell (1987), Johnson (1993), Robson (1994) and Burgess (1994). Each page of the diary covered one day on an hourly time grid similar to that used by Morrison and Galloway (1993). For each hour, respondents were requested to identify the main activities in which they were involved and, in separate columns, to indicate the percentage of time spent on 'line management' activities and the percentage of time spent on 'academic leadership' activities. These terms were explained in guidelines issued with the diaries. Two heads of school completed diaries for the one-week period, Monday 13 November to Friday 17 November, 1995.

Although the diaries provided much useful data, it was decided not to use respondent diaries for the main study since:
the completion of an hourly diary would represent a significant commitment on the part of a busy head of department. Not only might heads have been reluctant to undertake such a commitment in the first place, but it was felt possible that the persuasion of heads to do so might have led to unreliable data - "Reluctant subjects rarely provide usable data" (Bell, 1987, p.102).

the level of detail provided by diaries was felt to be inappropriate to the comparatively broad study of the role of heads in general. It was felt that diaries might provide a useful instrument for further, more detailed future research arising from this study.
CHAPTER FIVE \hspace{1cm} THE SURVEY

Selection Of Sample Population

For the study to be of an appropriate scale, a survey of heads of departments in all 'new' British universities (a census) would have been overly ambitious. It was, therefore, necessary to determine an appropriate sample in terms of both size and distribution characteristics. Consideration was given to examining the role of heads of departments in particular academic disciplines. However, since the literature had shown no previous research into the role of heads in the 'new' universities, it was felt important for this initial study to take a broader approach and to relate to heads of 'new' university departments more generally.

It was decided that a sample of approximately 100 heads from a range of disciplines would be appropriate and that this could be achieved by a survey of all heads in four 'new' universities. Selection of the universities in which heads would be surveyed was carried out on the basis of two criteria:

The universities were broadly 'typical' in terms of size and range of academic disciplines and were similar in terms of their historical development. Thus they were all former polytechnics and were not, for example, selected from the small number of colleges of higher education which had achieved university status.
they were in geographically convenient and hence economic locations for the author to visit during the case study phase of the work.

Potentially suitable universities were identified from an examination of the comprehensive collection of institutional prospectuses available in the author's own institution. Whilst the prospectuses were consistently useful in revealing the range of disciplines offered by the universities and their geographical locations, it was not possible to identify the basic academic units in the universities in all prospectuses. Thus universities were selected on the basis of the two criteria stated above and the 'incidental' criterion that their prospectuses revealed the identities of their basic academic units.

The institutions selected for the survey were three 'new' universities located in the Midlands and a 'new' university located in the north of England. All of the institutions selected offer similarly broad ranges of academic disciplines and are located conveniently for visits - the first three because they are within easy, and therefore economic, travelling distance for the author and the last because it is located near to other institutions which the author visits regularly as external examiner.

In order to preserve confidentiality, particularly in the subsequent case study phase of the work, the universities were allocated pseudonyms: the Eastchester Metropolitan University (EMU); the Gordon Noakes University (GNU); the University of Rutland at Newtown (URN) and the University of Great Hampton (UGH).
Eastchester Metropolitan University is one of the largest 'new' universities in Britain. It is located in the medium-sized Midlands city of Easthampton where there is also a fairly large 'old' university.

The Gordon Noakes University is located in a smaller Midlands city where there is an 'old' university which is also relatively small. Whilst GNU is smaller than EMU in terms of its main site, it has a number of remote sites and a significant number of franchise arrangements with other colleges. GNU engages in vigorous student recruitment activities (the University's name, which has no geographical connotation, is considered to be problematic in this context) and has an institutional priority to develop its research activities.

The University of Rutland at Newtown is of medium size and is located, mainly on a single site, in the North of England, in a fairly small city where there is no other university. It has strong links with local industry and, like GNU, has the development of research as a high institutional priority although its present research base is less well developed than that at GNU. External income generation is also a high institutional priority.

The University of Great Hampton is a large 'new' university based on several sites in a large Midlands city. The city has two 'old' universities and is within a large conurbation where there are also two other 'new' and two other 'old' universities within daily commuting distance of the city. UGH has strong links with local industry and with other institutions in various parts of the world. It has a strong entrepreneurial culture exemplified by its active Enterprise Unit and external 'non-government' income generation is a high institutional priority.
Administering The Questionnaire

Copies of the questionnaire developed in the pilot exercise were distributed by mail to all of the departmental heads in the four selected universities, a total of 105. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope and by a covering letter explaining the context and purpose of the study and providing an assurance of confidentiality. Although they were to be analysed anonymously, the questionnaires were numbered to allow follow-up questionnaires to be distributed to initial non-respondents. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix I.

Sixty-four questionnaires were returned from the initial distribution and a further seventeen from the follow-up distribution. Thus the final response was eighty-one questionnaires, a response rate of 77%.

Results

The number of responses to each question were as follows:

THE ROLES OF HEADS OF SCHOOLS - QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Governing the School:
(a) Conducting meetings
   Major part of role: 57
   Minor part of role: 24
   Not part of role: 0
(b) Establishing School Committees
   Major part of role: 37
   Minor part of role: 37
   Not part of role: 6
(c) Preparing the school for internal/external evaluation

(d) Establishing and implementing goals

2. Managing teaching:

(a) Assignment of teaching duties

(b) Timetabling of teaching

(c) Managing teaching budgets

(d) Managing teaching spaces

(e) Ensuring curricula are appropriate and up-to-date

3. Managing Personnel:

(a) Involvement in staff recruitment and selection

(b) Assigning non-teaching responsibilities

(c) Initiating and managing staff development

(d) Evaluating staff performance

(e) Dealing with unsatisfactory performance

(f) Making merit/promotion recommendations

(g) Preventing/resolving conflicts

(h) Promoting equal opportunities

(i) Ensuring compliance with regulations (e.g. Health & Safety)
4. Promoting School development:

(a) Fostering good teaching 68 11 2
(b) Stimulating research/publication 70 10 1
(c) Encouraging staff involvement in professional activities 52 27 2
(d) Representing School at professional meetings 52 28 1

5. Student issues:

(a) Recruiting/selecting students 14 41 26
(b) Encouraging student participation in School activities 14 46 21
(c) Responding to student feedback 48 29 3
(d) Liaison with parents/employers 19 51 11
(e) Involvement in student disciplinary matters 39 34 8

6. Representing the School:

(a) Interpreting the discipline to the institution 50 25 2
(b) Representing School to central administration 53 25 1
(c) Building/maintaining School reputation 74 6 0
(d) Representing School in external groups 61 20 0
(e) Ceremonial functions 39 41 1
(f) Processing School correspondence 58 20 2
(g) Completing forms and surveys 28 48 4
7. Managing Resources:

(a) Managing School budget 71 9 1

(b) Seeking external funding 42 36 3

(c) Promoting staff entrepreneurial activities 41 34 5

(d) Developing and maintaining School administrative systems 34 38 9

(e) Supervision of clerical staff 8 51 22

(f) Supervision of technical staff 9 32 40

Analysis Of Results

In order to enter the data onto a computer 'Excel 5.0' spreadsheet for analysis, respondents were numbered and the questions and corresponding responses were coded. Responses to each question were given numerical values as follows:

Major part of heads' role 2
Minor part of heads' role 1
Not part of heads' role 0

For each question on the questionnaires, the computer program was used to generate the sum, the mean, the standard deviation and the median of the recorded values and to count the number of responses of each value.
Separately, the responses of heads regarding the importance of the various aspects of heads' roles were sorted according to their respective mean scores in order to determine rankings.

The following table lists the aspects of heads' roles according to rank as determined from heads' responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Aspect of Role</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Establishing and implementing goals</td>
<td>1.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Evaluating staff performance</td>
<td>1.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Building/maintaining school reputation</td>
<td>1.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Involvement in staff recruitment and selection</td>
<td>1.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Preparing the school for internal/external evaluation</td>
<td>1.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Managing school budget</td>
<td>1.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Stimulating research/publication</td>
<td>1.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Fostering good teaching</td>
<td>1.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Preventing/resolving conflicts</td>
<td>1.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Initiating and managing staff development</td>
<td>1.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Representing school in external groups</td>
<td>1.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ensuring curricula are appropriate and up-to-date</td>
<td>1.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Conducting meetings</td>
<td>1.704</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Processing school correspondence 1.700
15. Dealing with unsatisfactory performance 1.688
16. Representing school to central administration 1.658
17. Representing school at professional meetings 1.630
18. Interpreting the discipline to the institution 1.623
19. Encouraging staff involvement in professional activities 1.617
20. Assignment of teaching duties = 1.600
20. Responding to student feedback = 1.600
22. Promoting equal opportunities 1.593
23. Managing teaching budgets 1.550
24. Making merit/promotion recommendations 1.506
25. Seeking external funding 1.481
26. Ceremonial functions 1.469
27. Assigning non-teaching responsibilities 1.457
28. Promoting staff entrepreneurial activities 1.450
29. Establishing school committees 1.388
30. Involvement in student disciplinary matters 1.383
31. Ensuring compliance with regulations (e.g. Health & Safety) 1.358
32. Developing and maintaining school administrative systems 1.309
33. Completing forms and surveys 1.300
34. Liaison with parents/employers 1.099
35. = Encouraging student participation in school activities 0.914
35. = Timetabling of teaching 0.914
37. Recruiting/selecting students 0.852
38. Supervision of clerical staff 0.827
39. Managing teaching spaces 0.705
40. Supervision of technical staff 0.617

A similar analysis was carried out separately for each of the four universities involved in the study in order to ascertain the degree of similarity in responses amongst the universities as a measure of the generalisability of the overall responses. The following table lists the aspects of heads' roles according to rank as determined from heads' responses overall and shows the ranking of each aspect in each of the four universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank Overall</th>
<th>Aspect of Role</th>
<th>Rank GNU</th>
<th>Rank EMU</th>
<th>Rank UGH</th>
<th>Rank URN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Establishing and implementing goals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1=</td>
<td>2=</td>
<td>1=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Evaluating staff performance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11=</td>
<td>2=</td>
<td>1=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Building/maintaining school reputation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3=</td>
<td>4=</td>
<td>3=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Involvement in staff recruitment and selection</td>
<td>5=</td>
<td>3=</td>
<td>4=</td>
<td>3=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Preparing the school for int/external evaluation</td>
<td>5=</td>
<td>5=</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Managing school budget</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Stimulating research/publication</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Fostering good teaching</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Preventing/resolving conflicts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Initiating and managing staff development</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Representing school in external groups</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ensuring curricula are app't and up-to-date</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Conducting meetings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Processing school correspondence</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Dealing with unsatisfactory performance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Representing school to central administration</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Representing school at professional meetings</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Interpreting the discipline to the institution</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Encouraging staff invt. in prof. activities</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Assignment of teaching duties</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Responding to student feedback</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Promoting equal opportunities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Managing teaching budgets</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Making merit/promotion recommendations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Seeking external funding</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
26. Ceremonial functions  
27. Assigning non-teaching responsibilities  
28. Promoting staff entrepreneurial activities  
29. Establishing school committees  
30. Involvement in student disciplinary matters  
31. Ensuring compliance with regulations  
32. Dev'g and maint'g school admin systems  
33. Completing forms and surveys  
34. Liaison with parents/employers  
35. Encouraging std't part'n in school activities  
36. Timetabling of teaching  
37. Recruiting/selecting students  
38. Supervision of clerical staff  
39. Managing teaching spaces  
40. Supervision of technical staff
Discussion

The response to the survey was good. There was a 61% response rate after the initial distribution, rising to 77% after the follow-up distribution to initial non-respondents. Although there was no investigation into the reasons for the high response rate, there are three factors which are likely to have been the main contributory causes:

1. the stamped, self-addressed envelopes which accompanied the questionnaires not only made it very easy for recipients to respond but may have provided some inducement for potential respondents who might be reluctant to 'waste a stamp'

2. the covering letter fully explained the purposes and context of the work and was to heads, from a head and may, therefore, have been viewed more sympathetically than otherwise would have been the case

3. the sample population comprised members of academic institutions who might reasonably be expected to be more appreciative of the value of research than others.

It is clear that these positive factors outweighed the potential problem of the sample population comprising individuals who, characteristically, have a high workload and are subject to considerable pressures in their roles (Hammons, 1984; Mathias, 1991; Brook and Davies, 1994; Tann, 1995).
The returned questionnaires contained no explicit indications from respondents of any lack of clarity or other difficulties in answering the questions. Out of a total of 3,240 questions in the questionnaires returned (81 respondents x 40 questions), there were only 18 'nil' responses. This was considered to be a positive indicator in terms of:

- confidence in the results. Robson (1993, p.128) warned of the danger of "ambiguities in, and misunderstandings of the survey questions"

- the value of piloting the questionnaires.

Analysis of the responses for the individual universities and comparison with the overall results show a high degree of consistency which also adds confidence to the findings. Some notable differences between individual institution's responses and the overall responses are:

1. 'Evaluating staff performance' was ranked eleventh equal by heads at EMU in comparison to rankings of second overall and fourth, second and first for the other universities. The reason for this is unclear; subsequent communication with the Personnel Department at EMU confirmed that, like the others, the university does have an appraisal system for academic staff.

2. 'Managing school budget' was ranked seventeenth by heads at GNU in comparison to rankings of sixth overall and first, first and sixth for the other universities. This was consistent with the fact, determined during the case
study work, that heads of department at GNU have comparatively small devolved budgets.

3. 'Stimulating research/publication' was ranked first at GNU which gives a high institutional priority to external income generation than to research. The overall ranking for this aspect was seventh and for the other universities it was fifth, eighth and twelfth.

4. The relatively high ranking (fifth equal) of 'Representing the school to central administration' by heads at EMU might reflect the size of that institution, which is large, so that sub-units might, therefore, feel a greater need to exert their presence than is the case in smaller and possibly less anonymous, institutions.

5. The variations in ranking of 'Assignment of teaching duties' - eleventh, thirty-third, twelfth and eighth - is probably indicative of different working practices in the four universities in that this duty might be delegated to subject leaders or divisional leaders in some cases but not in others.

6. The comparatively high rankings of 'Managing teaching budgets' at UGH (9th compared to 23rd overall) and 'Making merit/promotion recommendations' at GNU (7th compared to 24th overall) are probably also indicative of slightly different working practices in the different universities.
In comparing the findings of the survey with studies reported in the literature, those studies which examined the importance of heads' roles in the perception of heads (Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982; Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak, 1986; Moses and Roe, 1989) are clearly of most relevance.

The findings of Lonsdale and Bardsley (1982) were that the most important aspect of heads' roles in Australian colleges of advanced education were staff development and motivation. In this study, 'Initiating and managing staff development' was ranked only ninth equal. The second most important aspect identified by Lonsdale and Bardsley was "leadership of academic and administrative activities". This rather general description of a role aspect is difficult to compare with the specific descriptions used in this study. However, 'Establishing and implementing goals', which could be interpreted as 'leadership', was the highest ranking aspect in this study.

In Israel, Kremer-Hayon and Avi-Itzhak (1986) found that heads considered the most important aspect of their role to be 'Curriculum and instruction'. In this study the highest ranking comparable aspect was 'Fostering good teaching' which was ranked only eighth whilst 'Ensuring curricula are appropriate and up-to-date' ranked only twelfth equal. Other high-ranking aspects in the Israeli study, 'Initiation' and 'Staff development' were also ranked relatively low in this study.

There was more consistency between the findings of this study and the extensive study carried out in Australia by Moses and Roe (1989). Moses and Roe found that heads considered the most important aspect of their role to be 'selecting staff members' and, in this study, 'Involvement in staff recruitment and selection' was ranked fourth. There was no direct comparison in this study with Moses and Roe's second ranking aspect,
'maintaining morale' but their third and fourth ranking aspects, 'developing long-range plans' and 'implementing long-range plans' were consistent with the highest ranking aspect in this study which was 'Establishing and implementing goals'.

In making these comparisons, it should be noted that there was little consistency in the findings of the studies cited from the literature. It is unsurprising, therefore, that there is not a high degree of correlation with the findings of this study. Furthermore, all of the previous studies which examined the perceived importance of heads' roles related to departmental heads in overseas institutions: Australia and Israel, and were carried out some time ago: 1982, 1986, 1989 so that this work will, perhaps, provide a timely and useful contribution to the field of study.

Whilst the case study phase of the work focuses particularly on issues such as pressures, stresses and conflicts in the head's role, the findings of the survey throw some light on one of the major conflicts for heads identified as such in the literature and which is explicitly examined in the case studies. This is the possible conflict between the heads as an academic leader and the head as a manager. In the survey, the six top-ranking aspects of heads' roles are all predominantly managerial rather than academic. The highest ranking aspect which is clearly 'academic' is 'Stimulating research/publications' which is eighth ranking whilst 'Fostering good teaching' is ranked only ninth.
CHAPTER SIX  CASE STUDY 1 - THE UNIVERSITY OF
GREAT HAMPTON

THE CASE STUDIES

Selection of Cases

In developing the research strategy, it was determined that the case study phase of the work would comprise studies, primarily by semi-structured interview, with members of the role sets of a number of departmental heads, supplemented by an examination of the head's job description, where available. The original intention was to study four role sets, in different disciplines, two in each of two of the universities included in the survey.

In the event, gaining access to heads' role sets proved to be difficult. In the questionnaires distributed during the survey, respondents were asked to indicate if they would be willing to participate in follow-up interviews and if they would nominate members of their role sets, identified in the questionnaires by designation (e.g. Dean, member of academic staff), who might also be approached with a view to providing interviews.

Out of the 81 questionnaires returned, only fifteen heads indicated that they would be prepared to participate in interviews and only eleven nominated other members of their role sets. None of the heads at the Eastchester Metropolitan University responded positively.

Of the three remaining universities, the two most convenient for travelling (the nearest to the author's home) were selected for inclusion in the case studies. Letters requesting interviews and offering a number of suitable dates were sent to all of the heads who had
responded positively via the questionnaires; five heads at the University of Great Hampton and four heads at the Gordon Noakes University. Only one head in each of the universities agreed to participate and interviews were arranged by telephone with those heads and key members of their role sets.

Replies from heads who did not wish to be interviewed and telephone calls to those who did not reply revealed that, in all but one case, heads felt that they were too busy to spare the time for interviews although a number offered to consider the request at a much later date. The exception was a head at GNU who initially agreed to participate but subsequently reported that his Head of School (i.e. 'Dean') had decided that neither he (the Head of School) nor other members of the School should participate. The head did not know the reason for this decision.

In view of these problems, it was necessary to review the case study strategy. It was decided that interviews with three role sets in three different universities and in three different disciplines would provide an appropriate range of cases. Thus letters were sent to the heads at the University of Rutland at Newtown who had initially responded positively. One of the heads agreed to participate and arrangements were made to interview the head and the key members of his role set.

Interviews were, therefore, conducted with the heads and key role set members of:

1. a large Department of Design at UGH

2. a small Department of Building Studies at GNU

3. a medium-large department of Languages at URN.

The interviews were conducted during May, June and July, 1996.
Selection Of Role Set Members

The pilot interviews carried out in the author's own institution had indicated that heads considered their key role set members to be:

- their immediate line manager, the Dean of Faculty or Head of School
- members of the academic staff of their department
- the provider of personal administrative support - their secretary or their departmental secretary.

The pilot study findings in relation to the membership of heads' role sets was tested in the case studies. Heads were asked, "Who do you consider to be the important members of your role set - the main people with whom you interact in your job?". Other interviewees were asked, "Whose expectations do you think have the most influence on the way heads carry out their jobs?". Responses confirmed the findings of the pilot study. The staff members listed above, plus heads, were, therefore, considered to constitute heads' role sets for purposes of the case studies and, for each role set, interviews were carried out with:

- the head of department
- the dean of faculty or equivalent
- the head's secretary or departmental secretary
- a senior member of the departmental academic staff (a principal lecturer)
- a relatively junior member of the departmental academic staff (a lecturer or senior lecturer).

The approximate duration of the interviews were: one hour with the Dean, one and a half hours with the Head, one hour with each member of academic staff and thirty minutes with the Departmental Secretary.
For the 'relatively junior' member of staff, heads were invited to nominate either a lecturer or a senior lecturer. In the event, two of the three heads nominated senior lecturers. The likelihood of this was expected since, in the 'new' universities, the proportion of academic post holders below the level of senior lecturer and who have been in post long enough to have significant experience of the operation of an academic department is low.

An interesting feature of this listing of key role set members is that it excludes members of the institution's senior management, reflecting the change in management structure in the new universities identified in Chapter One (p.11).

**Analysis Of The Case Study Data**

Whilst content analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts in the pilot studies, it was not used in the case studies for the main research. In the pilot studies the semi-structured interviews carried out at a very early stage of the research were used to identify possible issues for the main study and to give the author some experience of conducting interviews. They were, therefore, nearer, on the continuum, to being unstructured than to being structured.

On the other hand, by the time the case studies were carried out in the main study, the literature study of role theory and the survey phase of the research had been completed. Thus the issues to be examined in the case studies were sufficiently clearly identified for the interview schedule to be more focused and somewhat more structured. With more clearly focused questions it was felt that content analysis was inappropriate and might make analysis more complex if the different interviewees used a wide range of terminology to describe the same phenomena.
The interview notes are, therefore, analysed in each case study under a number of headings which relate the objectives of the study to the questions asked in the interviews, although interviewee's responses did not always align with the questions asked, i.e. some parts of a response to a particular question in fact related to a different question. The interview questions put to heads are listed below and Table 1 shows broadly how the discussion headings relate to the interview questions and the objectives of the study listed on pages 101-102.
Interview Schedule - Heads

1. How would you define your role as a Head of Department?
2. Do you have a formal job description?
2a (Suppl). How does it relate to what you actually do?
3. What do you think are the most important things you do?
4. Which activities take up most of your time?
5. Roughly how many hours per week do you work on average?
6. To what extent do you consider your job to be primarily one of line management and to what extent one of academic leadership?
7. Do you find that there are any tensions between those two aspects of the job?
8. How do you deal with these tensions?
9. Do you think there is a case for having departments run by professional managers, allowing heads to concentrate on academic leadership?
10. Who do you consider to be the important members of your role set - the main people with whom you interact in your job?
11. Do you experience any particular tensions or incompatibilities between the different expectations of the various members of your role set?
11a (Suppl) If so, how do you deal with these?
11b (Suppl) Do you think that any of these expectations are incompatible with your understanding of what your role should entail?
12. Are there any other particular sources of stress in your job?
13. What are the most difficult things you have to deal with as Head of Department?
14. What skills or abilities do you think are the most important for a Head to possess?
15. Are there any other points you would like to make about your role as Head of Department?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Analysis Headings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Objective</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Defining the Head's Role</td>
<td>Qns 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,</td>
<td>1, 2, 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Role Set and Its Expectations</td>
<td>Qn 10</td>
<td>3, 4, 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Qn 10 for Deans)</td>
<td>(Qn 8 for acad. staff)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Head as Manager or Academic Leader</td>
<td>Qns 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguities, Conflicts, Pressures and Stresses</td>
<td>Qns 11, 12, 13</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualities for Headship</td>
<td>Qn 14</td>
<td>3, 7, 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Issues</td>
<td>Qn 15</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
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**Table 1** Framework for Analysis of Interview Data
THE CASE STUDY THE UNIVERSITY OF GREAT HAMPTON

Context

At the University of Great Hampton, interviews were conducted, on three different days in May and June, 1996, with the Dean of the Faculty of Art and Design, the Head, a principal lecturer, a senior lecturer and the secretary of the Department of Design. The Department had been newly created by the merger of two former departments - Fashion and Three-dimensional Design. The Head had previously been Head of both departments simultaneously.

At the time of the interviews, the Head, the Dean and both members of the academic staff interviewed had been in post for a number of years. However, the Departmental Secretary had only been in post for about three months. All four heads within the Faculty have a major cross-Faculty role, in addition to their departmental responsibilities. The Head of Design has a responsibility for the management of the Faculty's buildings including two large new buildings each of which cost over £60 million.

The Faculty of Art and Design at UGH is large, comprising four large departments spread over four sites in a large Midlands city. The Department of Design has over sixty full-time academic staff with twelve distinct sub-units called 'schools'. Courses offered by the Department are mostly highly vocational and all of the departments within the Faculty have strong links with local industry. The Department runs higher education courses at sub-degree level, degree level and at postgraduate level and has a number of postgraduate research students. It also runs further education BTEC diploma and 'foundation' courses, most of which are operated through franchise arrangements with a number of further education colleges.
The Department actively recruits overseas students and external income generation has a high priority. In describing the complex nature of his Department's funding, the Head commented:

"Funding is also complex. About 40% of the Faculty's work is FE, so it involves the FEFC as well as the HEFCE and, of course, external funding and overseas students. We go, as a Faculty, to all of the British Council recruitment fairs abroad."

At UGH, the faculties have a high degree of autonomy. According to the Principal Lecturer (P.L.):

"This university is reputedly one of the most devolved in the country. The faculties are highly autonomous. The University is like a holding company. All the day-to-day management is devolved to the faculties."

The Interviews

Defining the Head's Role

The Head's responses in terms of defining his role were revealing with regard to one of the main issues for heads identified in the literature, the problem of role ambiguity and, in particular, the ambiguity between the head as manager and as academic leader. When asked how he would define his role, the Head's response was:

"I am a professional manager and have always seen my job as that of a manager. Academic leadership is also my responsibility and I manage the resources which provide the opportunity for the Department to carry out its academic work."
About half-way through the interview, when asked whether he thought the job was primarily that of a manager or an academic leader, the view reflected a more even balance:

"My management responsibilities are on a par with my academic leadership responsibilities."

At the end of the interview, when asked if there were any other points he would like to make about his role, the Head offered:

"First and foremost, I'm an academic leader, followed closely behind by being a manager."

The Dean's view was that heads' roles differed across the University, "We don't have an institutional view of what heads do which is the same in every case". He said that, within the Faculty, there were four main sites and the four heads were considered site managers. However, they had, "...highly autonomous roles within their particular sites." which allowed them considerable scope to define their own roles:

"Heads are encouraged to do their own things. They have developed very interesting roles for themselves."

He did, however, think that heads' roles had changed:

"The head's role has increased over the past three or four years. It now varies from a controlling activity to international activity, consultancy and external income generation."
The Dean said that the University did have job descriptions for heads but that he did not feel them to be very useful:

"Yes, there is a University-wide job description which is tailored to fit the job. I'm not all that keen on fixed job descriptions. We have Individual Performance Review (IPR) which defines the job description each year."

The Dean's lack of enthusiasm for generic job descriptions may have accounted for the Head having a different view of their existence but a similar view about IPR. When asked if heads at the University had job descriptions, the Head replied:

"Not any more. Fixed job descriptions have been replaced by objectives set and agreed annually with the Dean in the Individual Performance Review."

A letter to the Personnel Officer at GHU enquiring if there was a University-wide job description for heads of department had failed to elicit a response.

The Principal Lecturer thought that the Head's role was a changing, and perhaps doomed, one:

"So, when I talk about heads' roles, I am talking about a mixture of things, the role as it used to be, as it is in this transitional period and as it is planned to be...In the old structure...an important part of the Head's role was walking about, detecting problems. This was important because the Head could detect and address problems before they hit the fan...In the transitional period...planning became a substantial part of the role...The Faculty plan is to do away with heads of department. There are two reasons for this, cost-cutting and, more importantly, to flatten the management structure."
In defining the role of the Head, the Senior Lecturer showed a degree of respect bordering on awe:

"A difficult question, like, 'How do you define God?'. You assume he's always there. The Head of Department should be a person who is in overall control of resources and academic management of the department."

The Departmental Secretary's view of the role seemed to succinctly encompass a whole range of issues:

"It's very diverse. He's involved in a lot of different things. With sixty staff, it's a lot to cope with. He seems to spend an awful lot of time in meetings."

There was less than total agreement about the most important things heads do, which may be indicative of the complexity of the head's role and the differing expectations of his role set colleagues:

"Man management. I think it's essential to know ones staff. I know all my staff personally and I know about their family circumstances. Quality control of courses is also one of my key roles, monitoring all courses through committees" - the Head

"The first is the duty to students. Overall management of academic programmes...the management and distribution of resources...management of research...not necessarily in that order." - the Dean
"Manage change...coming heavy if people don't co-operate." - the P.L.

"To maintain a balance between management and academic leadership...to motivate and enthuse staff...to initiate and encourage external funding ventures and be prepared to discipline those who fall by the wayside." - the S.L.

"Managing the staff, certainly in this Department. Fund raising. Budget allocation." - the Secretary.

A particularly striking difference in these responses is that all of the Head's subordinates cited or alluded to staff discipline as being important, whereas the Head and the Dean did not.

The Head's view of the activities which took up most of his time, "Planning, organising and conducting meetings" was shared by the Departmental Secretary, "Going to meetings and probably dealing with the outcomes of meetings".

The Role Set and Its Expectations

The Head considered the key members of his role set to be:

"The Dean, The Heads of School, my Secretary. Below that, course leaders and the Head of Research."

The Dean's expectations of the Head were couched in terms of responsibilities:

"They are responsible for the buildings...responsibility for personnel...heads have a devolved academic responsibility for courses within their buildings,"
research and, increasingly, for the generation of external funding...they have vertical responsibilities rather than horizontal ones."

And, in summarising his expectations of the heads within his Faculty:

"I do expect them to have a responsibility to the Faculty, an understanding of the Faculty good. I don’t think it always happens. Part of my role is to develop an overall responsibility to the Institution. To the Institution the responsibility is through me."

The P.L.’s specific expectations of the Head were:

"To manage the consensus. To be as fair as possible. To share the necessary information for people to act and not act in ignorance. To listen and talk through problems."

The S.L. expected the Head:

"To offer leadership, support and to deal with matters or problems in a calm, collective and responsible manner. They must provide a link between all staff within their department and senior management within the University, from the Dean to the Vice Chancellor and all stages in between. They are there to champion the cause of the staff, academic, administrative and technical, representing the views of the staff"

The Head was asked if he experienced any particular tensions or incompatibilities between the different expectations of the various members of his role set:
"I am torn between the expectations of the Dean and members of the Department, usually over pressures put upon myself and colleagues by the need to respond urgently to things. Of course, it isn't necessarily the Dean who is putting on the pressure, it may be on him from above."

The Dean was asked if he thought that his expectations of the Head conflicted with those of others:

"I don't think they do, no. I think heads have difficult roles and you need particular kinds of people to enact all those roles but I don't think there's conflict. Perhaps staff have a higher expectation of the pastoral role than I do.

Heads are very well paid here. Part of their role is to take the s*** and if they can't handle it, they need to look for another kind of work."

The P.L. thought that the expectations of others did conflict with his own expectations of the Head and that the conflict related to others being less willing to participate in the decision-making process and their failure to appreciate the constraints on finance:

"Yes, I think they do. For example, some heads of school (P.L.s) would prefer not to waste their time in things like management meetings but they do not like decisions to be taken that they do not agree with.

A common expectation people have is in relation to finance. They are given money and they think they only have to ask to get more. This is increasingly impossible, we are planning with a dead budget."

The S.L. thought that conflict was not a problem because of the delegation of the Head's responsibilities:
"Because the expectations are so wide and the responsibilities of the Head reflect the number of expectations, the question of conflict does not arise, due primarily to delegation amongst senior Departmental staff."

Both members of the Department's academic staff thought that the person whose expectations has most influence on the way heads carry out their jobs was the Dean although the S.L. added:

"The Head's secretary may also wield a certain amount of power and influence."

The Dean thought that the question of influence on the Head was:

"...a dialectic between me and the staff. It depends on the context. In general, it's students and staff, the Dean and, faintly behind that, the University."

The Head as Academic Leader or Manager

The Head's inconsistent view as to whether he considered his role to be primarily one of management or primarily one of academic leadership are presented above. It is probably reasonable to accept his 'middle position' that his management responsibilities are, "...on a par..." with his academic leadership responsibilities.

The Dean and the S.L. shared the Head's view:

"Both. They have a direct responsibility for line management...They also play a major role in academic planning. Operational academic planning is mostly the responsibility of course leaders. Heads can't specialise in all areas within their
departments but they provide the structure and framework which allow it to happen." - the Dean

"I think they are both equally important. An inseparable task for any head of department. In an ideal situation, given a head of department who is responsible for both, a 50/50 split." - the S.L.

The P.L., a course leader, held, but more strongly, a similar view to the Dean's on the role of the course leader in academic leadership:

"The head can only be an academic leader if there is a cognate subject to be led. There is an academic leadership job to be done but it is not the role of the head of department. The head can lead in terms of management style but academic leadership goes a lot further down. You need to take action in order to lead. Departments are mainly about management rather than academic leadership."

Interviewees were asked if they felt there were any tensions between the two roles. The Head's response was that the tensions were due to role overload:

"There are tensions all the time due to having too little time and too many things to do."

The Dean's view was that the management structure of the Faculty was a contributory factor:

"Yes, I think there is a tension between line management...and academic planning. It works well at subject level but less well across the Faculty. For example, we don't have a modular structure...We certainly couldn't run as we
do now if we were modular. Therefore, an inhibitor to some academic development is the management structure."

The S.L. thought that the head’s personal attributes were significant factors:

"Ideally, both roles should be evenly distributed but that is often impractical. One head may have a predilection for entrepreneurship, another for resource management and, finally, one that is a dyed-in-the-wool academic."

The P.L.’s response was consistent with his view that heads do not provide academic leadership, at least in large departments:

"In some smaller departments...the head can be more of an academic leader. With a department as large as this one, if the Head was required to provide academic leadership, it would take more than 100% of his time."

There was general agreement that the most appropriate strategy to help heads cope with the tensions arising from the dual roles was delegation:

"I am good at delegation. I operate by project management, that’s my management style. I build a team to deliver the project."
- the Head

"...they delegate issues to course leaders to deal with..."
- the Dean

The S.L. described delegation in terms of balancing the head’s personal attributes:

"It is the role of senior members of staff, working with the head to compensate for these inadequacies or preferences, a compensating role. Some heads do this well. Others have a total blank about knowing what people are good at."
There was total agreement that there was not a case for having departments run by professional managers, allowing heads to concentrate on academic leadership:

"You can't do it. The resources you are managing are academics and the issues are academic issues."

- the Head

Several different reasons were offered to support this view. The Dean thought that it would increase the tensions:

"No. I don't believe that professional managers would be appropriate. It doesn't actually work. With professional managers you would have a double layer of management and there would be tensions between the resource manager and the academic leader. Also, it would be an even more costly structure."

The P.L. thought that it might lead to a management style inappropriate for a university:

"No. From my experience, not people with management training. I have been privy to a number of institutions where the management structure is adversarial. I don't think academics understand that. They are not interested in managing other people but in their subject. A sympathy with, if not a deep understanding of, the subject motivates staff. If the manager does not understand the subject, it can be disastrous. We need managers but not professional managers."

The S.L. thought that there was a need for heads to have managerial support:

"No but having said that, it is imperative that any head has an accountant or business manager to undertake the day-to-day finances of the department."
Ambiguities, Conflicts, Pressures and Stresses

The Head was asked about particular sources of stress in his job. He responded:

"There are areas of stress particular to me. For example, I'm not very computer-literate. Financial management is another area. I'm not an accountant."

He thought that the most difficult things he had to deal with were:

"Telling staff they haven't delivered. Knowing that staff can't do it and telling them. I identify why they can't and try to help. I don't like fighting, falling out with colleagues. It is difficult because there are sometimes conflicts of objectives."

The Head also offered:

"Headship is a very complex activity. Management is complex but starts from perceptions of the academic plan. Defining where there's money, how to get it and then tailoring it to academic activity. I am very active externally, for example, on committees. I am very active in professional organisations. How do we do all these things? Some people believe there is a limit to how much you can manage. I know a senior university manager who believes that no-one can successfully manage more than about 15 staff and he limits the size of his university's units to 15.

The job has changed to the point of asking, "Is it sensible? Can one do it?" I consider myself also to be a practising designer but there's so little time these days. We need now to be much more commercial than we have ever been."
The job is so complex and stressful that you have to be physically fit to cope. Stress relief can't be achieved by just time-management or by delegation. I get out of stress by being a very active sportsman. I am a rower, a skoller. I train at 6.30 am every morning to provide stress relief. Without this, I would be unliveable with. One must have some means of getting rid of frustrations.

The Head's concern about whether one person can do such a demanding job points to another possible source of stress, the sheer workload on heads. All interviewees were asked how many hours per week they thought heads worked:

"At least fifty when I am not abroad on University business." - the Head

"I would be very surprised if it wasn't 8.30 to 7.00 pm. It varies - about ten hours per day." - the Dean

"The statutory hours are thirty-nine. We all take work home, with the Head it's planning and policy papers etc. I can't really hazard a guess." - the P.L.

"I would say more than 60 hours, maybe up to 70." - the S.L.

"About 50 I should say, seeing what time he comes in and goes out." - the Secretary

Qualities for Headship

All interviewees were asked what skills or abilities they thought heads should possess:

"The ability to listen. The ability to have a vision about where the department should be - the standing of the subject. As a professor, I have to represent the
subject as well. That's the most important thing I do. I am a custodian of that bunch of academic knowledge." - the Head

"Academic planning abilities. The understanding of the relationship between academic planning and employment to ensure courses are provided which provide the education students require.

They need to have very good personnel skills. Increasingly, very good financial management skills which most haven't got. They have to learn on the wing.

To be a subject leader, external examiner activities, involvement with national bodies, professional and vocational bodies. Some are very specific. For example, in Jewellery, they have to deal with the trade on an almost daily basis and run the School like a business. I think this should now be the case across the whole educational framework.

I still think academic planning and personnel management are most important but I suppose all are interconnected." - the Dean

"As far as skills are concerned - a good bedside manner; a very good perception of body language etc.; a clear strategic view of what to do next; planning the future - a very different set of skills, almost design skills - a creative phase, an analysis phase and then a choice phase." - the P.L.

"Legion! leadership, tact, diplomacy (they are not always the same thing), unflappability, understanding (sympathy and empathy). Very crucially, to make a decision - a correct decision - and stick by it but not be inflexible if circumstances change." - the S.L.
"To be able to interact with people, staff and students alike." - the Secretary

Other Issues

In the final question, each interviewee was asked if there were any other points they wished to make. Two particular issues were raised which are significant in that they bear upon findings of other studies reported in the literature or of the other case studies in this work.

The Head commented on the need to be increasingly responsive to external influences:

"There is a need to respond much more quickly than ever before, a need to be more responsive to the outside than ever before."

A number of comments were made with regard to institutional support for heads. The Head commented:

"There is not really sufficient administrative support."

But that:

"I get good support from the Dean"

And the Dean said that heads were supported by:

"A number of management mechanisms. We have two-weekly management meetings at which we take on cross-faculty issues. For cross-institutional issues, we have institutional forums which provide arenas for debate. They are..."
Commentary

The Department of Design at UGH is large, it offers a wide range of academic provision and is involved in extensive entrepreneurial activities. It is also going through immense change, two departments being in the process of being merged into one and the management structure being under review with the possibility of radical change, perhaps even involving the elimination of the role of head of department. The diverse nature of the Head's role, the high workload, the high level of stress reported, the need for the Head to delegate and the Head's doubt about whether the job can be done by one person must be considered against this background and compared with the roles of heads of smaller departments in the other case studies before any general conclusions can be drawn.

The role is perceived to evenly encompass management functions and academic leadership although the principal lecturer, uniquely, did not think that academic leadership was part of the Head's role. This may be due to the P.L.'s 'ownership' of his role as course leader or may be an issue of how academic leadership is defined. It is possible that facilitating academic provision and academic planning are not considered to constitute academic leadership by some. The Head may be thought, by those subscribing to this view, to be able to offer academic leadership only within his own specific discipline, in this case, Design. In any event, there is unanimous agreement that there is no case for separating the management and academic leadership functions to different individuals.

The usefulness of a fixed job description appears to be in some doubt as a result of Individual Performance Review at which objectives are set annually. The activities
which are considered important for heads are personnel management including
motivation of staff - the Head was particularly keen to stress the importance of knowing
his staff - and, according to the Head's subordinates, discipline; managing quality;
managing change; resource management and external income generation.

The activity which seems to occupy most of the Head's time is preparing for and
attending meetings. The task which the Head finds most difficult is dealing with
unsatisfactory staff performance which is interesting in view of the importance given to
staff discipline by the academic staff.

Two particular potential sources of conflict due to different role set expectations are the
Dean's view of the importance of the Head's responsibility to the Faculty set against the
senior lecturer's expectation for the Head to, "champion the cause of the staff" and the
pressures put upon staff to respond quickly to requests from higher up the management
tree.
CHAPTER SEVEN  
CASE STUDY 2  
THE GORDON NOAKES UNIVERSITY

Context

At the Gordon Noakes University, interviews were conducted, on June 11, 1996, with the Head of the School of the Built Environment (equivalent to a Dean at UGH) and, on May 14, 1996, with the Head, a principal lecturer, a senior lecturer and the secretary of the Department of Building Studies. At the time of the interviews, all of the interviewees had been in post for a number of years. The term 'Head', when used unqualified in describing the interviews below, refers to the Head of Department. The Head of School's designation is used in full throughout.

The School of the Built Environment, the equivalent of a Faculty at UGH, is a relatively small school. It comprises four departments based on a city-centre site in a small Midlands city. The Department of Building Studies has twelve full-time academic staff, including the Head. The courses offered by the Department are highly vocational although the Department's links with industry are not particularly strong as, consistent with University policy, research is given a higher priority. In the year before the interviews were conducted, the School had converted all of its courses into a modular framework.

Within the modular programme, the Department runs one honours degree programme, one full-time Higher National Diploma course, one part-time Higher National Certificate course and a number of part-time courses which prepare candidates for the external examinations of professional bodies. In common with all HE Built Environment providers, poor student recruitment is a major concern.
Schools at GNU have considerably less autonomy than those at UGH. In the words of the Head of School, "This University is a 'top-down' institution". Similarly, within schools, the departments have relatively little autonomy. Again, according to the Head of School:

"Heads' contributions are reactive rather than proactive. They are the implementers of policy. The Head has to respond to the Head of School and has no power to take too many initiatives without my say-so."

This view was shared by the Head:

"This University is very much proactively managed from the top."

And by the principal lecturer:

"At this University, they [heads] are told what to do. It seems a very dictatorial University."

And by the senior lecturer:

"I don't think heads have enough power. I don't think they carry enough weight in the University."
The Interviews

Defining the Head's Role

Interviewees' responses, when asked how they would define the role of the head of department, reflected, in varying degrees, the hierarchical nature of the institution. The Head defined his role as:

"In this University, the academic leadership of a group of people in one vocational unit. The financial side is not done by me but by the Head of School. I have no involvement in staffing budgets"

In offering his definition, the Head of School made no mention of academic leadership at all:

"A departmental administration role with a school management component. The Head of Department manages within the Department but the management role extends beyond the Department, it has a School component. Development planning is not overtly part of the role. I allocate budgets through a management team."

The P.L. defined the role as:

"The person responsible for all members of staff and acts carried out by staff and students. I suppose it's about academic leadership, personal leadership and disciplinary leadership."

The S.L. thought the role was:
"To take a leading role in the direction of departmental policy in terms of education and management; to manage the integration of skills within the Department; to contribute, by teaching and research, to the Department's, the School's and the University's activities; to protect the interests of the Department; to be a good chap and be approachable."

The Secretary's definition was:

"It's a very complex job. The role is running the Department, administration. The above plus piles of paperwork, correspondence, forms to complete."

There was some confusion over the existence of a University job description for heads:

"No, I have a contract, not a job description, and that is loosely defined."

- the Head

"Yes, there is a formal job description."

- the Head of School

In replying to a letter from the author enquiring about job descriptions, the University's Director of Personnel wrote,

"We do not as such have a formal general job description for Heads of Department. Each individual would have a separate description as agreed between them and the Head of School to whom they report, given that there is considerable variation between the different academic departments."

Interviewees were asked what they thought were the most important things heads do. Most thought they relate to staff issues:
"I think it's to enable courses to run smoothly which is managed by directing the staff resource. That is quite 'hands off' here, it's about keeping people from each other's throats and putting the most appropriate people into the right jobs. And recruiting staff, of course. To enable and encourage research."

- the Head

"Ensure that their departments run smoothly. That means that departments and staff are successfully able to implement School strategy but also to pursue staff development objectives which are key in maintaining quality. i.e. to look after and enthuse the staff."

- the Head of School

"I'm one of the old school. Discipline on a grand scale, of staff mainly but also students when that's appropriate."

- the P.L.

The S.L. took a broader view:

"To facilitate the progressive direction of the Department. This seems to cover survival, management and academic prowess."

And the Secretary, simply, "To administer the Department."

The Head's response when asked which activities take up most of his time was interesting in relation to the things seen as being important:

"I think it's activities like the Research Assessment Exercise, organising the conversion to modularity, managing research contract budgets. A lot of these things don't relate to the things I've just identified as the most important things I do, it seems to be different."
The Secretary though that the Head spent most of his time on:

"Paperwork, unfortunately. I know he'd rather do other things but that's what it boils down to. Also, meetings take a lot of time. All sorts of committees and sub-committees, staff meetings etc."

The Role Set and Its Expectations

The Head considered the key members of his role set to be:

"The Head of School, programme leaders - I have two P.L.s doing this. After that the rank and file staff. Kathy [pseudonym] has a passive role, a typist rather than a secretary, she's part-time."

And, when asked if he normally has direct contact with senior university management:

"No, it all goes through the Head of School."

The Head of School's expectations of his heads were:

"To run their departments properly and efficiently. To contribute to the development of the School in a non-parochial way - to think 'School' and 'Department' simultaneously. A very important requirement is that I am 'first among equals' with respect to the heads of departments. I expect them to tell me, aggressively sometimes, if I do things wrong. I want them to protect their corner without fear. Afterwards, we can go for a beer."
I expect them to be conscientious. To be sensitive to the requirements of individual members of staff. Some are real prima donna's. To recruit enough students - to be honest about recruitment, not to set unrealistic targets.”

The P.L.'s expectations of the Head were to provide him with support in dealing with colleagues:

"From my point of view, to make my job easier if I have to get information from staff. I find it difficult dealing with people over whom I have no control. When I have difficulties, the Head writes memos."

The S.L. expected the Head:

"To lead in the academic progression of the Department. To persuade [sic] clear communications between people and to grasp the nettle."

When asked if he experiences any particular tensions or incompatibilities between the different expectations of the various members of his role set, the Head's response was:

"Yes. I think partly arising from the fact that I have little power over staff. Colleagues are often disappointed in how little I can do to facilitate things. This cuts both ways - If there is any 'dirty work' to be done, it is done by people above me. I rarely come over as the bad guy. The fact that I have no teeth is good and bad."

And, when asked "Do you mean staff discipline problems?":

"Yes. I do deal with day-to-day disciplinary problems. I am not confrontational - I walk away from rows. It's my job to keep a lid on things like that. Most staff do what's needed without me telling them and will consult
me if they wish. Other staff are awkward so-and-so's. In some cases, it's a
problem when it really comes to the crunch. I have no power to sort out staff."

The Head was then asked if he thought that any of the expectations of staff are
incompatible with his understanding of what his role should be. He replied:

"No, I don't think so - people have learned what I can and can't do within the
system we have here and my own limitations. For example, they know I will
never organise departmental meetings. I don't believe in them. The mouths
just shout - they take over and lose their temper."

The Head of School was asked if he thought his expectations of the Head conflicted
with those of others. He replied, "No, I think staff have similar expectations to me."

The Departmental academic staff offered a similar view when asked if they thought that
their expectations of the Head conflicted with those of others:

"I wouldn't have thought so." - the P.L.

"No, I don't. Not conflict. He has a whole set of requirements imposed on
him, for example by the Head of School, of which I'm not aware because, at
my level, I would not need to be aware or, more relevantly, participate in
them." - the S.L.

The Secretary thought that the different expectations people have of the Head might
cause him problems:

"They could well do. Different lecturers expect different things of him .
Lecturers are split into two age groups, the older ones who are used to previous
heads and the newer ones who aren't, younger and older staff, established and new ones."

And, when asked how the Head deals with this:

"He gets to understand the individuals and deals with them on an individual basis. He takes a great deal of trouble to understand people."

There was little agreement as to whose expectations have most influence on the Head. The Head of School's view, perhaps surprisingly in view of the limited autonomy given to departments at GNU, was that the Head largely determines his own activities:

"My suspicion is that heads' activities are 90% doing what they think is best and a 10-20% modification of that in the light of what I tell them."

The P.L. thought that most influence was wielded by:

"The Head of School and then each individual member of staff."

The S.L. thought that the sources of influence are more diffuse:

"Those who persuade by clear reason, academic skill and contingency. The person who can be most persuasive by the appropriate means. There is a power relationship with the Head of School which has an influence. Different people have different influence in different ways. The Head judges the way to respond to different people as people behave in different ways."

The Departmental Secretary thought it was:
"The Head of School or senior management."

The Head as Academic Leader or Manager

When asked if he considered his role to be mainly one of academic leadership or one of management, the Head replied:

"More academic leadership in a fairly loose sense. This University is very much proactively managed from the top. You're driving along and somebody suddenly grabs the steering wheel. It's from a level above my boss. In terms of line management, I have little left to do. By elimination, it leaves me with a loose academic leadership role.

There are routine line management tasks - appraisal is one of them, organising part-timers etc. I have nothing to do with staff promotions except make recommendations on a form which nobody takes any notice of."

The Head of School thought the Head has a dual role:

"Both line manager and academic leader - you can't separate them. The line management job is back-stopped - the Head of School is always there to catch anything which slips through the net. The academic job is not so obviously back-stopped. If the Head is not doing the academic leadership job, the Department suffers but not so much with line management.

Staff often come directly to me. I have interviewed all promotion candidates personally. Really, it's the Head's job but heads might not feel comfortable doing it."
In terms of academic leadership, there's no way I could back-stop properly. I can simply give support."

The P.L. and S.L. had similar views:

"A dual role - about 50/50." - the P.L.

"Both. I think about 60% management and 40% academic leadership." - the S.L.

When interviewees were asked if they though there were any tensions or incompatibilities between the academic leadership and management roles, the Head thought that there were, due to the personnel management aspect of the job and to the workload:

"Yes, I suppose there are tensions. Aren't there always these tensions? When you're leading people there are always tensions. There are other tensions - physically fitting things into the time available."

The Head of School's response was similar but more detailed:

"Yes, there are tensions, especially in the 'new' universities in that they - the universities - have reputations to build. There is historical baggage to get rid of. The need for overt academic progress is paramount. Unfortunately, they don't have the resources to do so and individual staff have portfolios which are unsustainable. Fifteen or more hours of teaching plus four papers per year - it's impossible. Heads face a dichotomy - every member of staff can't cover all the objectives, therefore there is a need to be selective and decide where to place the academic emphasis and where to pick up the other bits and pieces."
This is made more difficult by the system of rewards favouring research successes rather than others - say teaching. A very difficult problem for heads - I feel sorry for them."

The S.L. also thought there were tensions due to workload and role overload:

"In this School and Department, the Head is over-layered with work, just like most people. Therefore, too much is expected of a head in all directions."

However, the P.L. didn't think there was a problem with the dual role:

"I don't think there are any incompatibilities. I would have thought that's what the job was."

When interviewees were asked if they thought there was a case for having departments run by professional managers, allowing heads to concentrate on academic leadership, the range of responses was more varied than at UGH:

"That's, in a sense, what we're trying to do here. The heads of department have the academic leadership role and the Head of School has the professional management role.

In practice, the heads of department do a bit of both and vice versa. Like making sure that people have time for research and I do have a small departmental budget to manage." - the Head
"It depends how big the departments are. I have a school manager who meets me regularly to discuss budgets etc. This could work at departmental level but you would need large departments for it to be cost-effective. What heads need more than anything is a good personal assistant - not a secretary, a PA."

- the Head of School

"Here we have asked why we have departments. Under the new system things have been pushed downwards. The head of department is not responsible for courses any more. Modules are managed by module management boards who are heads of departments. Departments as well knit groups of academics have become superfluous."

- the P.L.

"No because I think in very many cases there would be an unresolvable conflict of interest. I think it's right for the person who knows about academic matters to grapple with the problems of resourcing or facilitating those academic matters."

- the S.L.

Ambiguities, Conflicts, Pressures and Stresses

The Head was asked if there are any other particular sources of stress in his job:

"Fitting everything into the time. Avoiding confrontation with difficult staff - a small minority. The stress of managing on minimal resources - that spreads over into everything.

Above all, the stress of interference from the people above - the senior management, not the head of school. What's coming up over the horizon from senior management next? Often they get it from Government, for example the Teaching Quality Assessment visits."
He thought that the most difficult thing he has to deal with is role overload:

"It's such a complex job - the complexity of the job - so many tasks going on simultaneously many of which seem endless."

The Secretary thought that what causes most problems for heads is, "Lack of finance to cover all he'd like to do."

Although they were not asked specifically, other interviewees suggested likely sources of stress for heads in their responses to other questions:

"Staff place you on a pedestal when you are in charge. They don't see you as a person. Certain members of staff have an image of their head which is different to mine. They revere their heads - I don't have that problem. They go to heads and expect answers to the impossible."

- the Head of School

"Finance causes stress. A lot of last-minute enquiries from senior management for information, reports etc. and producing figures at the snap of a finger. One of the stress items is keeping the staff in line at times. They're all accomplished people who don't like to be directed sometimes - they like to do things their own way."

- the Secretary

All interviewees were asked how many hours per week they thought heads worked:

"Forty. I don't work in the evenings and I don't work at weekends. I don't have any energy left for it any more. I have active research but, as a matter of policy, I'm resisting taking on more. It's a mad rush at work - I'm not taking work home. I'm doing less research now."

- the Head
"I'd say about sixty hours per week" - the Head of School

"I don't know. I suppose more than anybody. I suppose some work is done at home."
 - the P.L.

"I don't know. It varies. 40-50, not including meetings after hours etc." - the S.L.

"Forty hours." - the Secretary

Qualities for Headship

When interviewees were asked what skills or abilities they thought are the most important for heads to possess, their responses were:

"Patience is one. Understanding of other people. And a thick skin." - the Head

"A head needs very good personnel management skills - to deal with difficult characters. He/she has to have good business management skills - heads must work with tight budgets and squeeze the maximum out of a system working against them.

It's very important to have academic leadership skills. That doesn't mean you have to be a good academic yourself but you have to understand the nuances of the discipline and inculcate an academic culture within the department.

Normally, you have to be a good academic." - the Head of School

"Keeping cool when provoked." - the P.L.
"Tact, a benign firmness, flexibility and immediacy in terms of the quality of response. The ability to judge a situation and the ability and willingness to grasp the nettle."
- the S.L.

"Academic skills. Dealing with people, including students."
- the Secretary

Other Issues

A number of interesting issues were raised in response to the final 'catch-all' question in which interviewees were asked if they wished to make any other points:

The Head of School expressed concern about the effects of falling academic standards:

"The role of heads in the new universities is very different in professionally-based courses rather than in non-professional ones. Professional courses are at degree level and have a long history. Other departments are not overtly university - they have evolved into HE. Some still have a range of post-sixteen education - FE and HE. Therefore, our heads are almost schizophrenic - there is the university mission to broaden access and be flexible and the constraints imposed by professional requirements (e.g. the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) to maintain standards. Also the old university model was for the top 6% to go to university, now it's the top 30% - average entry standards are lower. Perhaps it's about different standards rather than lower ones."

The P.L. raised an issue regarding the failure of the University to provide adequate institutional support for the Head in staff disciplinary matters:
"The disciplinary leadership is being shoved down to the Personnel Department - nothing seems to have happened from the Personnel Department. I would have thought it was the Head's job in a way although I certainly wouldn't like it myself."

The S.L. felt even more strongly about institutional effects on the Head:

"...there has been a lot of meddling at the wrong moment in the appointment process. The goalposts are changed. I'm talking about the executive, not the Head of School."

Commentary

In conducting the interviews at GNU, one of the most striking features was a strong impression of low morale on the part of the Head and of the academic staff members. A number of possible reasons for the poor state of morale became evident during the interviews. All of the reasons relate to the perceptions of the University having an autocratic management culture.

Firstly, the change to a modular structure was seen to have been imposed upon staff and had generated additional work. It was also seen by the principal lecturer to have removed one of the Head's major areas of responsibility and to have put into question the need for departments at all.

Secondly, there was some resentment of what was seen as 'interference' by the University's senior management. A particular recent issue involved the appointment of a new member of staff. The departmental staff involved in the selection process, including the Head, had favoured a particular candidate who had extensive relevant professional experience but the senior managers involved had insisted, against the
wishes of the departmental staff, on appointing another candidate who had a good research profile.

Thirdly, there was a perception that the University was failing to deal appropriately with a contractual dispute with a member of the Department's staff. This may have accounted, at least in part, for academic staff interviewees considering staff discipline an important role for the Head. It may also have accounted for the P.L.'s view that the failure of the Personnel Department to act on disciplinary issues further detracted from the Head's role.

One of the effects of the low morale was that, during interviews, the Head and the academic staff members, whilst being co-operative, were somewhat taciturn. They were less forthcoming than interviewees in other case studies and offered responses which were often brief quite.

Perhaps the most telling effects on the Department were:

- the Head's expression of his determination to work no more than 40 hours per week, not to take work home and not to take on more personal research

- the Head's admission that, although responsible for carrying out staff appraisal, he had appraised none of his staff

- the view of the Head and the academic staff interviewees that the Head has insufficient power.

In defining the Head's role, only the Head thought that it is mainly one of academic leadership. All of the other interviewees thought that it is much less so. However, when the question of the balance between academic leadership and management
Perhaps the most telling contribution was the comment made by the Head when asked if there were any other points he wished to make:

"I feel slightly concerned that this might not be a typical university or typical management structure."
CHAPTER EIGHT

CASE STUDY 3
THE UNIVERSITY OF RUTLAND AT NEWTOWN

Context

At the University of Rutland at Newtown, interviews were conducted, on a single day in July, 1996, with the Dean of the Faculty of Cultural, Legal and Social Studies and the Head, a senior lecturer, a lecturer and the secretary of the Department of Languages. The senior lecturer was nominated as a 'senior member of the academic staff' and the lecturer as a 'less senior member'.

At the time of the interviews, the Dean had been in post for one year but had previously been Head of the Department of Languages. The Head had, therefore, also been in post for one year but had previously been a member of the Department's academic staff for several years. The members of the academic staff interviewed had been in post for several years but the secretary had been in post for only three months.

The Faculty of Cultural, Legal and Social Studies at URN is large and comprises four large departments based on a single city-centre site in the North of England. The Department of Languages has 33 full-time academic staff and about 17 part-time lecturers. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in a range of Languages, courses in a variety of modes in 'English as a Foreign Language' and courses of preparation for candidates for the external examinations of professional bodies. The Department was recently the subject of a successful HEFCE Teaching Quality Assessment visit.
The University's institutional management style lies between those UGH and GNU. Whilst its faculties are allowed a degree of autonomy, according to the Head:

"...the objectives of the University...tend to be top-down, albeit through various democratic processes. ."

And:

"The Dean has said that, if I'm asked to do something by the Vice-chancellor, I should put down everything else. That's a bit sad, it suggests an autocratic institution..."

The Interviews

Defining the Head's Role

In defining his role, the Head thought that it was:

"First and foremost as a leader. The job is very connected to the people side of things with the number of staff in the department. To tie in the objectives of the Department with the objectives of the University. To marry our objectives with the University's. Team building. To develop a view of our objectives is very important. Staff development in all sorts of senses.

To provide a sense of direction - curriculum development, breaking into new markets, partnerships with employers. What I do as Head of Department is to support our overall efforts and provide direction."
Formal parts of the job as defined by the University include chairing assessment boards, recruiting and appraising staff - that is not devolved at present, I have 33 people to appraise."

The Dean defined heads' roles as:

"Within this University, academic leadership and resource management. To break the academic leadership down - course development, research development, preparation for internal and external assessment and, of course, students. Resource management - human, physical, financial. I expect a quality-driven department but within the resources available.

I think the heads deliver for us the academic programme. It is, therefore, a very significant role. Most heads in this Faculty are responsible for very large departments. They also provide a consultative layer for University plans which flow up and down from senior management through the deans."

The senior lecturer thought that:

"The head should provide academic leadership but also, in the new universities, be more of a manager than an academic leader. An academic leader and a manager, including budget holder."

The lecturer considered the Head's role to be:

"A split role. The manager - staff, budgets, income-generation. The academic leader - promotes people to work towards research assessment exercises, towards excellence within the Department to improve recruitment. It does involve some financial management."
The Departmental Secretary offered a more detailed definition:

"Responsible for the co-ordination of courses and the implementation of new courses. Decision-making, academically, financially and in relation to personnel. Responsibility for liaising with other heads within the Faculty.

To improve and develop internal systems which are then confirmed or approved by the Dean. Ultimately responsible for all actions of academic staff. He's the sole person in the Department who should know every detail of what's going on from student affairs to new course development.

Specific to Brian [pseudonym], the face representing the University to external bodies, the marketing figure for the Department."

The Head and the Dean were in agreement regarding the existence of a University job description for heads and its usefulness:

"Yes. It's pretty basic. It doesn't have any organic feel. It is interpreted according to our management style and the nature of the department. I suppose it couches the range of responsibilities but not the weightings." - the Head

"There is a general job description. It is not specific to the job they do, i.e. specific duties at Faculty or University level" - the Dean

Letters to the University's Personnel Department requesting a copy of the job description for heads, failed to elicit a response.

Interviewees were asked what they considered to be the most important things heads have to do. The Head responded:
"To do with trying to provide inspiration. Coming back to leadership, trying to facilitate the development of ideas and who does what. Delegation is an important part of that. To involve the staff and students in the Department."

The Dean thought that many of the Head's activities were equally important:

"A lot of things are of equal importance. Effective leadership. Devolvement of clear duties and responsibilities to staff. To manage the Department effectively. In terms of the academic discipline, to be aware of developments in their discipline. They, therefore, have an important external role. Knowing where their subject is going. Equitable resource management, not, for instance, funding an activity because the member of staff is a trouble-causer and you hope they'll go away."

The senior lecturer focused on leadership although there was some confusion about its meaning:

"Manage people well. Support their staff in all sorts of ways, it could be staff development time. He has to lead the Department in terms of where we think we're going as a department. It's not really about leading is it? I suppose it's about getting us all to think about where we're going. Providing the impetus."

The lecturer, who is the leader of a small subject, an Asian language, took a narrower view:

"From my point of view, co-ordination between the subjects. I represent a small subject and the way of running it needs the Head of Department to have an input in offering some kind of vision, to provide some way of allowing a developing subject to grow. Here it's the promotion of Asian languages.
Another role is ensuring the financial advisability of various decisions.

Balancing the goals of each subject - we have to compete through the Head of Department."

The secretary, who seemed throughout to have a remarkable grasp of the issues considering the short time she had been in post, shared the Dean's view of the wide range of important things heads have to do:

"Decision-making, staff selection procedures, developing new courses or, rather, co-ordinating the development of new courses. The allocation of finances. Acting as a personnel officer for the Department in the Appraisal System, personal development recommendations for academic staff."

The Head's account of the activities which take up most of his time was also indicative of his high workload:

"Dealing with people, with internal staff. I'm going to have to get much harder and confine meetings to 10 minutes. One of my strengths but also one of my problems is that I'm a good listener.

Financial management. I'm the only budget holder in the Department. Therefore, there is a lot of signing of forms and producing memos to go with those. Then, I suppose, meetings.

The other thing is thinking time. I haven't time in the middle of the day. That is difficult to quantify. Most people in HE spend most of their time thinking about the job and that is when a large part of the work is done. If inspiration keeps flowing, I come in the mornings thinking about getting it done, bouncing it off other people etc."
The secretary quantified the issue but her answer was also indicative of the Head's high workload:

"Meetings 70% of the time at least. Dictating letters, memos, administration 20%. Generally sorting problems 10%. I'm sure he works at home. He comes in the next day with work done, ideas etc."

The Role Set and Its Expectations

The Head considered the key members of his role set to be:

"I suppose the people in the Departmental management team. A lot of the job is about representing the Department in the Institution and the Institution in the Department. People who support us on the commercial side. Clearly, the Department's admin. staff. Not with senior management, it's through the Dean."

The Dean listed her expectations of the Head as:

"I have so many. They're highly paid. I expect them to manage and lead their departments effectively; manage, lead and develop their staff effectively; be responsive to change; be proactive and not reactive to things that happen to us; to be corporate, to run a department within a university; to understand and implement the mission, to use the mission as a starting point.

I expect heads to be able to delegate and not to think that it's more important to deal with that urgent letter rather than, say, have a view of the Faculty strategic research plan up to the year 2000."

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The senior lecturer's expectations related to the Head's relationships with staff:

"To treat staff fairly. To support and encourage me in terms of my personal and professional development, practically as well as in terms of finance, if required. I'd expect recognition of my efforts which a lot of heads forget - not in financial terms, a "Thank you". I'd expect him to inspire us in terms of thinking about what we do and what new things we can do.

He is probably our only means of letting senior management know what's going on, on the ground floor. His contribution would be to represent what we want to do but also to inform us of what senior management are thinking or planning. In many ways, the only common point of contact between deans and above and anyone working in the Department."

The lecturer expected the Head to provide:

"Academic leadership and support. Financial support for professional development, conferences etc. Promotion of new subject such as Japanese. A fair balance between the need to generate income and support for teaching in the Department."

The Head was asked if he experienced any particular tensions or incompatibilities between the different expectations of the various members of his role set:

"Yes, some. Partly to do with the fact that some members of the Department haven't quite come to terms with the funding environment there is or with the extent to which the University has developed its commitment to research. There is some dismay when a post becomes available and internals are nor short-listed where they would have been some years ago. The ground is
shifting beneath their feet and that's uncomfortable. There was a tremendous growth in posts about five years ago and some people think we're still in the same situation."

He said that he dealt with these tensions:

"By being as open as possible. If people are disappointed when they're not short-listed, I let them know the reasons and explain why the strategy has changed."

He was then asked if he thought that any of the expectations of the key members of his role set are incompatible with his understanding of what his role should entail?:

"No, I don't think so. It's pretty clear. I'm new, still feeling my way in the job but so far, it's pretty clear."

The Dean was asked if she thought that her expectations were in conflict with those of others. She replied:

"Some teaching and support staff within an academic department have a narrow view of the role of Heads of Department. Heads are not only responsible for managing their departments effectively, they also have a Faculty-wide role. Heads must be aware of events which will impact upon the Faculty and in particular their own departments. The implications of the Harris Report, for example, may have a significant impact on research.

A Head of Department should ensure that staff have a wider view of Faculty and University expectations of academic Heads in terms of their role and responsibilities within the University. Sometimes the staff are unaware of the University responsibilities of the Head of Department, for example, chairing a
validation panel and fail to understand the absence of a Head of Department from his/her Department on corporate business. It is equally important for Heads to be able to delegate to staff and ensure that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities within the Department.

I am trying to develop an 'explaining' culture within the Faculty, whereby staff understand why a particular measure is essential. I am very keen for staff to be aware of the current financial environment and the difficulties we all face in the University sector. At the moment, the University is identifying distinctiveness in terms of teaching and research. We have agreed that resources will be used to promote areas of distinctiveness in the University.

This concentration of resources to areas of distinctiveness has the potential to exacerbate the sources of possible conflict identified by both the senior lecturer and the lecturer, namely the distribution of human and physical resources. The senior lecturer said:

"I think on the whole not. Where there might be a conflict is in terms of timetables. If, for example, I needed more time to do something but in terms of fte's I had to have a higher timetable, there could be a conflict between the ideal and what is practical - resource expectations from above."

The lecturer thought that conflict was inevitable:

"I think there must be conflict, there's only one budget."

However, she thought that, in her Department, the Head applied a strategy which minimised the conflict:
"Our head enables subject teams to take responsibility for some aspects of subject management. He is perceived to be very fair. We all have a proportional share of what's available to manage as we see fit.

We also use working parties for decision-making. For example the Head's working party to look at sabbaticals and research leave."

The secretary thought that there was conflict between, "The Dean and the academic staff" and that it related to expectations built in respect to a previous head (who is now the Dean):

"Because he's new...the head before was very assertive. People now treat the Department differently, there's a more relaxed environment. There is a problem with that. They do feel he's very diplomatic, which he should be, but not assertive enough. He has to sign every form and there's a problem when the Dean disapproves requests from staff through the head. The head has to be assertive enough to fight for staff requests."

Interviewees were asked whose expectations they thought most influence the way heads carry out their jobs. The Dean thought:

"There are expectations of many stakeholders which combine to affect the way in which a Head of Department undertakes his/her job. The Government, students, parents, the senior management of the University, and of course, the staff within the Departments.

Some Heads have created a 'dependency culture' whereby staff feel that they are unable to take action without consultation with the Head. There is an absolute need to devolve clear and precise responsibilities to staff."
The other interviewees thought the question of influence was more clear:

"I'd say, ultimately, those higher up than him. In our University, the Dean and, after that, the senior management team. Definitely a top-down not a bottom-up approach." - the senior lecturer

"It depends on the personality of the head. Deans and those higher up the line will have some influence. A sensitive head will also listen to what members of the Department have to say." - the lecturer

"His own. He wants to reflect well on the Department. I would have said the Dean first but the Dean is more of an academic boss who lays down the procedures the head works through. The Dean doesn't see how the head goes about his daily tasks, she doesn't see how the head is admired by the staff." - the secretary

The Head as Academic Leader or Manager

The Head's view of his role was that it is mainly about academic leadership:

"I think much more academic leadership. In terms of budgets etc., I am a manager but the Department can only be a success if they get that feel of academic leadership. It's the most important part of the job. There are grey areas where it isn't clear whether they are managerial or academic."

The Dean thought it was a more even split:

"They're intrinsically linked. Unless you know your staff and can manage and appraise them and manage their staff development effectively, you won't be able to lead effectively. At the same time they have to be an academic leader and
filter ideas both up and down. Some heads spend too much time on staff
management. I wouldn't put one above the other."

The academic staff members each had a different opinion. The senior lecturer shared
the Head's view:

"Our head is an academic leader because he takes an interest in the whole
student experience and what we do as teachers. As a lecturer, he was very keen
on innovative teaching techniques. He's a manager but also an academic leader.
He understands the whole process and comes up with ideas for innovative
teaching and learning. At the same time, as line manager...I can't detach it, it's
very difficult to separate them out. That's the trouble, an academic department
can't be run like a company. You can't ever take the academic out of anything
we do, even income-generating activity."

whilst the lecturer thought it was:

"Probably two-thirds line management, one-third academic leadership. My
position is slightly different, as a head of subject, he is my line manager but I
have line management accountabilities to others. More line management than
academic leadership."

Interviewees were asked if they thought there are any tensions between the two aspects
of the job. The Head's view, consistent with his view that the job was mainly
academic, thought that difficult managerial tasks, which might cause tensions, had not
yet impinged upon him:

"I could see where there might be but there haven't been any significant ones so
far. There may be in the future with the funding changes. We've been lucky
here so far, savings have been made from savings in capital expenditure and not filling vacancies, so nothing unpleasant has happened yet."

The Dean thought that there were tensions for the Head:

"I think there are. This University has recognised these tensions. People are often asked to do things more than once by different people. For example, for the HEFCE visits the bureaucracy was enormous. Often heads are concerned that the academic leadership side of the role might suffer due to the bureaucracy."

The senior lecturer thought that there was a danger of heads giving too much attention to the management aspect:

"There can be a degree of being so much a line manager that you're outside the Department attending meetings etc. If you're not even thinking that what we're primarily doing is educating, the two then become incompatible. That isn't the case in our Department."

The lecturer identified a possible problem with conflicting objectives:

"The roles are closely related, academic leadership which leads to income generation and the management aspects. There is a conflict when the academic leader has to push for research which does not necessarily lead to a better quality teaching programme."

As in the other case studies, none of the respondents thought there was a case for having departments run by professional managers, allowing heads to concentrate on academic leadership:
"No, although I think there is a case for departmental offices being run by professional managers. The University is trying to build this model. If the balance between academic and administrative staff was shifted it would make the job more interesting but not a manager for the line management affairs of academic staff.

Academics are a breed apart. Trying to apply the business ethos has not worked in the universities and has not been pushed particularly in HE in comparison, say, with the Health Service or the BBC. No-one has dared to suggest a full 'market system'; it would be distasteful and difficult.

Of course, you can professionalise the way heads manage but it's important for staff to feel they have academics managing them. There have been disasters with academic managers who can't manage but I think it's worth it." - the Head

The Dean's view was that it would lead to conflict:

"No. There would be a conflict if there were professional managers and academic leaders. Anyway, resources wouldn't allow it. A professional manager is OK for financial services etc. but not for an academic department."

The senior lecturer's response supported the Head's view that academics would be unhappy with a professional manager:

"So what would the professional manager do? No, I don't think there's a case for it at all. I wouldn't like a head with no idea of what it's like to be a lecturer. To juggle academic with administration would be a very dangerous path to go down. It's hard for an academic leader to be a budget holder but infinitely preferable to a good budget holder who thinks only of numbers and money."

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And the lecturer thought it inappropriate for a university:

"Obviously there's a case for it, it's done in the health service. I don't think it's the right thing to do. Funding comes through academic performance of the Department so it would be a mistake to separate the two."

Ambiguities, Conflicts, Pressures and Stresses

The Head thought that other particular sources of stress in his job were:

"To do with the size of the workload and conflicting demands. There's a parallel universe going on somewhere. University senior management are a social set of people who find each other and their comings and goings more important than running an Institution. There is a cut-off between the classroom experience and the power game.

The Head of Department is between the two. I feel it's important to keep contact with the classroom by teaching. It's not compulsory for heads here but I feel it's important. It's tempting to drop the teaching to do other things but that would cut me off."

He thought that the most difficult things he had to deal with were:

"Small things nag at me a lot - they're annoying and get in the way. Filing, for example, I find that difficult and I hate doing it.

On a serious note, dealing with issues where I know it will clash with that person's expectations. There are more ambitions in a department than can be
realised. That means there are blows to individuals which the head has to break to them.

Then there's the demand on heads of what people tell you in confidence, for example the death of a parent. Shouldering problems. It's often difficult to resolve interpersonal conflicts. I enjoy dealing with that but the stuff off-loaded is stressful."

With regard to his workload, the Head said:

"Well. I did work it out at 60 hours per week in terms of sitting down either here or at home in front of paperwork. I've been on a steep learning curve this year. I would hope to get that down to leave me more thinking time, to get more exercise and be with my family. I would be more effective and set a better example. I don’t believe in the 'workaholic' approach. Long hours isn’t necessarily the same as doing a good job."

The other role set members also thought that the Head had a high workload:

"There are peaks and troughs, for example, when we have HEFCE assessments visits or the Research Assessment Exercise. It must average 45 - 50 hours if not more - yes, that would be a minimum, about 45 - 50 hours minimum."

- the Dean

"I'd say they do more than 40 hours per week, about 50. I think that would depend on the head. 40 - 80 depending on the head."

- the S.L.

"About 50 hours per week."

- the lecturer

"Approximately 55-60 hours per week."

- the secretary
Qualities for Headship

Interviewees thought that the most important skills or abilities for a head to possess were:

"Probably empathy and level headedness. Clarity and strategic thinking. Self confidence, creativity. Articulacy, the ability to write clearly." - the Head

"Academic credibility and integrity. A management style appropriate to the nature of their department. Enormous resilience, energy and demonstrable enthusiasm." - the Dean

"Interpersonal skills. Person-management skills. A certain amount of vision. Not to be a 'yes' person to senior management if it's what might not be best for the Department." - the S.L.

"Four basic skills in order of importance:

1. interpersonal skills
2. basic business skills
3. financial management skills
4. academic leadership of the Department." - the lecturer

"Diplomacy, flexibility, confidence. Able to handle crises in a calm manner, openness, approachability. Standard of spoken and written English and marketing acumen, that he is up-to-date with business factors. The ability to cope with stress." - the secretary
Other Issues

Interviewees were asked if there were any other points they wished to make about the Head's role. The Head had a clear view about the importance of departments and, therefore, of heads:

"I'm very interested in recent research findings about what affects students' learning experience. It's at the level of departmental culture that changes are felt most clearly, especially the relationship between the tutor and the student. A university must work at the departmental level to change things, therefore the role of the head of department is the most important role in the university. It's a very exciting and challenging position precisely because of where it is positioned."

In recognition of the pressured nature of the head's role, the Dean stressed the importance of time-management:

"To be an effective head you have to be quite ruthless and think about the department's objectives. If there is a bang on your door, ask the person to make an appointment unless it's something really urgent. Be ruthless in terms of time management. Manage meetings effectively, start and end them on time."

The lecturer raised an interesting point about the effect of the head's personality in defining the role:

"The role can vary according to who holds the role. I have known two heads of department who have defined the role for themselves quite differently."
Commentary

The Department of Languages at URN differs from the departments in the other case studies in that two of the key interviewees, the Head and the Dean, had been in post for a relatively short time, although both had been members of the Department for a number of years before being appointed to their present posts. This study also differs in that the Dean and both members of the Department's academic staff were women. In the other studies, all of the participants except the secretaries were men. The secretaries in all cases were women.

There was general agreement amongst all interviewees that the Head's role comprises a mix of academic leadership and management. The Head thought that the academic leadership role was the more important and the junior academic thought that the role was rather more managerial. Perhaps most tellingly, both the Dean and the senior academic thought that the two components of the role were inseparable. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there was no support for the notion of a professional manager although administrative support for the Head was identified as an important need. As in the other case studies, job descriptions for heads were not considered particularly useful. Both the Head and the Dean recognised the importance of activities at the departmental level and, hence, of the Head's role.

In relation to the most important things heads do, leadership and vision were recurring themes. The importance of delegation of tasks by the Head to others was stressed by both the Head and the Dean. The secretary's quantification of how the Head spends his time was particularly useful. The suggestion that the Head spends 70% of his time in Meetings and 20% on routine administration is consistent with the Head's acknowledgement that he has insufficient time for thinking during the working day and the effects of this on his domestic life.
There are two particular potential sources of conflict due to differing expectations of the Head. Firstly, there is the Dean's view that the Head should, "be corporate" set against the departmental staffs' view that he should, "represent what we want." Secondly, there is the problem of staff members' expectations not being able to be met due to financial constraints or to changes in the University's institutional priorities. In fact, the climate of change was recognised by the Head and the Dean as being difficult for staff.

In spite of the Dean's suggestion that there were a number of stakeholders who had influence on the Head, all of the other participants, including the Head, thought that the Dean, as the Head's line manager, had most influence. The Head though that the main sources of stress were his workload, his inability to meet the expectations of staff and his role in sharing the stresses of staff who confide in him with their personal problems.
The Studies

The case studies involved interviews with fifteen subjects, five members of the role sets of each of three heads of department in three different 'new' universities. The total duration of the interviews was approximately fifteen hours. All of the interviews were carried out within a six-week period and so were contemporaneous even in the fast-changing world of higher education.

The interview schedules were found to be very suitable, few supplementary questions being required to elicit the types of responses required from the interviewees. In this regard, the pilot study exercises were particularly useful. They were also useful in forewarning of the difficulties experienced in obtaining access to a sufficient number of appropriate interviewees. These difficulties necessitated a change from the original strategy to study four role sets in two different universities to a strategy of studying three role sets in three different universities.

The ability to arrange access to only three role sets is a possible weakness of the research in that it allowed no selectivity other than self-selection. However, in the event, the three cases were so very different that they provided the potential for a high degree of triangulation which is, therefore, a major strength of the studies. The cases provided:

- departments in three very different academic disciplines: Art and Design (UGH); Building Studies (GNU); and Languages (URN)
departments within universities with different institutional management styles:
one with highly autonomous faculties (UGH); one managed predominantly
from the centre (GNU); and one at neither extreme

one department where staff morale is very low (GNU)

departments of different sizes: large, with over 60 full-time staff (UGH);
medium-sized, with 33 full-time staff (URN); and small, with only 12 full-time
staff (GNU)

one department in which the undergraduate programme is modular (GNU) and
two in which it is course-based (UGH and URN)

one department which supports a significant amount of further education
provision and is heavily involved in franchising and two more conventional HE
departments

departments which prioritise external income generation (UGH and URN) and
one which prioritises research (GNU)

departments in which the Heads have been in post for several years (UGH and
GNU) and one in which the Head has been in post for only one year

one department which is currently in the midst of major structural change
(UGH) and two which are relatively stable (GNU and URN)

two all-male role sets (UGH and GNU) and one role set comprising four
women and one man (URN) although all three heads are men.
One possible weakness of the method of selection of subjects is the nomination of academic staff members by heads who may have nominated individuals for particular reasons, for example, a shared view of certain issues. However, in view of the difficulties experienced in setting up the interviews, there was no alternative method of selection available, particularly since it was essential for interviewees to be members of specific role sets.

**The Role**

In defining their roles, a common element in the responses of all three heads was that of leadership. The Head at UGH thought his role was as a "professional manager" and as an "academic leader" in roughly equal proportions; the Head at GNU thought his role was almost entirely academic leadership and the Head at URN thought his role was about leadership of his staff and providing a "sense of direction" for his Department.

In contrast, the Deans tended to emphasise the managerial aspects of the role rather more. The Dean at UGH said that heads had a high degree of autonomy in defining their own roles and that heads' roles varied across the University. However, when being more specific, he identified one of the key roles as that of "site manager". The Head of School at GNU made no mention of leadership, academic or otherwise, in his definition which centred around administrative and managerial functions. Only at URN did the Dean define the role as one of "academic leadership" first and "resource management" second.

Most of the members of academic staff defined the role as one of both academic leadership and management, the exception being the P.L. at UGH who thought that the role was entirely managerial and that academic leadership was the responsibility of others "a lot further down." The P.L. at GNU additionally cited a responsibility for
staff discipline as part of the Head's role and the S.L. thought it was also about protecting the interests of the Department.

It is clear that, albeit in varying degrees, the role of the head of department is generally considered by heads and by their key role set members to be one combining academic leadership responsibilities and managerial responsibilities.

In none of the three Universities did the Deans or Heads think that formal job descriptions for Heads were very useful and that objectives set during appraisal or, "agreed between them [the Heads of Department] and the Head of School [Dean]." were more useful. This is, perhaps a useful arrangement in a fast-changing environment but it is dependent for its usefulness on individual deans and heads actually setting clear and appropriate objectives. There is a risk that it may increase the role ambiguity sometimes felt by heads themselves and, unless the objectives are shared with the role set, others may be unclear about the precise nature of the head's role at any particular time.

The Heads all thought that their most important responsibilities related to the management of staff, the, "people side of things", variously described as, "Man management"; "Managing the staff resource" and, "Involving staff in the Department".

The Deans' views of the most important things Heads do were more varied. The Dean at UGH thought they were quality control of academic programmes, resource management and managing research. The Head of School at GNU thought they were to "ensure the Department runs smoothly" and to "enthuse the staff". The Dean at URN shared her Head's view that his most important tasks were to provide leadership and delegate appropriate responsibilities to staff within the Department. Additionally, the Dean at URN thought that the Head's role was a crucial one in that heads "Deliver the academic programme" and "Provide a consultative layer" between staff and senior management.
Four of the six academic staff members thought that staff discipline was one of the Head's most important duties. The S.L. at UGH also thought that enthusing staff was important and both academic staff members at URN thought that "Leadership" and providing "vision" was important, possibly reflecting the management style of their Head who had defined his role as providing "a sense of direction".

Although the various role set members held different views about the most important things heads do, most of the responsibilities identified were consistent with those identified in defining the head's role. However, one possible source of conflict for the head, relates to the expectations of members of academic staff for the head to provide discipline over the staff. The probably reasonable assumption that this discipline relates to other members of staff was supported by the P.L. at GNU who cited his main expectation of the Head as being to deal with, "people over whom I have no control."

All three Heads and all three secretaries thought that the activities which took most of Heads' time were meetings followed by routine administration, described by one secretary as "paperwork". Although meetings may provide a vehicle for many of the heads' important responsibilities, one head did remark that the activities on which he spent most of his time were not those which he had identified as being the most important.

The Role Set

All three Heads were in agreement that the key members of their role sets were their Dean, or equivalent; the academic staff within their Departments, in one case the more senior members of the academic staff; and their Departmental secretaries. In responses to direct questions, they all confirmed that they did not consider members of the
Universities' senior managements to be members of their role sets as communication 'upwards' was always through the Deans.

Whilst all Heads included their Departmental secretaries in their role sets, the interviews revealed that the nature of the relationships between Heads and their secretaries were somewhat different in character than the other role relationships. For example, whilst the other role set members held views about issues of expectations, and particularly of ones relating to academic issues, the secretaries did not feel themselves qualified to offer opinions on these matters. Nevertheless, secretaries provided useful insights, based on observation during their more extensive contact with the Heads, on such issues as what Heads spend most of their time doing and the number of hours per week Heads work.

Role Set Expectations

The three Deans identified a number of different expectations of their Heads. At UGH, the Dean expressed his expectations in terms of responsibilities for buildings, personnel, courses and external funding. The Head of School at GNU expected his Heads to run their departments effectively and be sensitive to the needs of staff. At URN, the Dean's expectations were numerous but, uniquely, explicitly included an expectation for Heads to delegate responsibilities to others.

There was, however, one expectation held in common by all three Deans, namely an expectation for the Heads to have a Faculty or University perspective. This was described by the Dean at UGH as, "a responsibility to the Faculty, an understanding of the Faculty good"; by the Head of School at GNU as, "to think 'school' and 'department' simultaneously" and by the Dean at URN as, "to be corporate, to run a Department within a University."
Academic staff members' expectations of their heads were to provide leadership, to represent the Department, to treat staff fairly but provide discipline and to share information with staff. The expectation to treat staff fairly but provide discipline may be a further indicator that there is an issue of potential conflict for heads due to some members of staff feeling that others are, in some way, not 'pulling their weight'.

A major possible source of role conflict is the Deans' expectations for heads to take a Faculty or University view set against the, sometimes strongly held, expectation of staff for heads to represent them or their Department - "They are there to champion the cause of the staff"; "to protect the interests of the Department"; "Representing what we want"; "Not to be a 'yes' person to senior management". One of the heads recognised the dichotomy, "A lot of the job is about representing the Department in the Institution and the Institution in the Department."

Interviewees were asked if they thought there were conflicts for heads due to differing expectations. The Head at UGH thought that there was a conflict between the expectations of the senior management, expressed through the Dean, for urgent responses to things and the expectation of staff for the Head not to put them under unnecessary pressure.

The other heads thought that the major problems in terms of expectations were about unfulfilled expectations rather than conflicting ones. At GNU, the Head thought that the main problem was staffs' expectations for him to provide the discipline which he felt that he did not have the power or authority to provide. At URN, the Head thought that the problem was mainly disappointment over the lack of funding and promotion opportunities.

The Deans thought there was no conflict over different expectations although the Dean at URN thought that many staff did not take a broad, institutional view, but were too
focused on the Department. Most academic staff interviewees thought there was little conflict but two identified their expectations of the Head with regard to the availability of funding as a possible source of conflict.

With regard to whose expectations have the most influence on heads, one Dean thought it was, "a dialectic between me and the staff", one Dean thought it was the Head himself and one Dean thought there were many sources of influence including senior management, students and staff but, interestingly, not the deans. The other interviewees had a clearer view; there was strong agreement that dean's expectations have most influence on heads. It may be that this difference of view between deans and all other interviewees is due to a measure of modesty on the part of deans.

The Academic Leader/Manager Conflict

The dual role of the Head of Department, identified by interviewees in defining the Head's role (and in the literature), was examined in more detail. In addition to asking interviewees to what extent they considered the Head to be an academic leader and to what extent a manager, they were also asked whether they thought there were any tensions between the two aspects of the role.

All of the Heads thought that workload and role overload were a major cause of difficulties - "Too little time and too many things to do"; "Physically fitting things into the time available"; "the workload and conflicting demands".

The Deans thought that there were tensions between the two roles but for different reasons. The Dean at UGH thought that a non-modular structure was an inhibitor of academic progress. The Head of School at GNU, where research has a high priority, thought that a major challenge for heads in the 'new' universities was, "overt academic progress" but that heads had inadequate resources and departments had inadequate
staff portfolios to achieve this. The Dean at URN thought that bureaucracy (a managerial aspect) might be an inhibitor of academic development.

With the exception of the P.L. at UGH, who thought the Head's job was entirely managerial, the academic staff thought that there were tensions between the two aspects of the role. One of the academics thought that the nature of the tensions was dependent upon the Head's personal attributes, "One may have a predilection for entrepreneurship...one...is a dyed-in-the-wool academic."

Other Ambiguities, Conflicts, Pressures and Stresses

The Heads all identified excessive workloads and conflicting demands on their time as a major problem in general and not only in relation to the duality of their roles. The Head at UGH also cited personal inadequacies in certain skills, notably computer literacy and financial management skills. The Head at GNU, where the management style was agreed to be 'top-down', thought that dealing with difficult staff and managing on minimal resources were major problems but "Above all, the stress of interference from the people above - the senior management, not the Head of School."

The Head at URN thought that interpersonal conflicts and being unable to meet staffs' expectations were sources of stress for him but that a more difficult problem was being the 'man in the middle'. "University senior management are a social set of people who find each other and their comings and goings more important than running an Institution. There is a cut-off between the classroom experience and the power game. The Head of Department is between the two."
Qualities for Headship

All interviewees in all three universities were in agreement that there are certain skills or abilities which it is important for Heads to possess. In most cases the first need identified was good interpersonal skills, variously described as, "The ability to listen"; "a good bedside manner; a very good perception of body language"; "To be able to inter-react with people"; "Understanding of people"; "empathy"; "openness, approachability". The second most important ability was planning, described as, "academic planning"; "vision"; "strategic thinking". Thirdly, academic credibility was thought important - "To be a subject leader"; "a custodian of that...academic knowledge"; "academic credibility and integrity."

Other abilities identified as important by some interviewees were financial management skills, having a thick skin, keeping cool when provoked, enthusiasm, energy, articulacy and the ability to cope with stress.

Summary

The case studies show that the Head of Department's role in the 'new' universities is a complex and demanding one. It is also a very important one, not only for the universities for whom they "deliver the academic programme" and on whose behalf they are required to "be corporate" but also for academic staff for whom they provide representation to the Institution as well as academic leadership and management and whose quality of professional life depends to a large extent on the role enactment of their Head.

The role is subject to many pressures and stresses from a variety of sources including the number of different aspects of the job, the differing expectations of various stakeholders, the rapid pace of change, the need to respond quickly to the ever-
increasing demands of senior management and Government, the difficult financial
climate, the need for external income generation, the requirement for accountability for
quality in teaching and research and many others.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Heads report high levels of stress. "The job is so
complex and stressful that you have to be physically fit to cope". Heads also report
high workloads. The length of the working week for most heads is in excess of fifty
hours, excluding 'thinking time'. This leaves little time for heads to maintain their own
personal academic credibility, a quality considered to be important for heads.

According to one Dean, "What suffers is the personal academic profile." It also reflects
on the Head's private and domestic life, "I hope to get that [60 hours per week] down
to leave me more thinking time, to get more exercise and be with my family."

The high workload also raises the issue of how effective heads can be when working
under such pressure. One Head said, "Long hours isn't necessarily the same as doing
a good job"; and another confessed, "I just do the job badly, take short cuts".

The question of whether the job is capable of being done adequately by one person was
raised by one Head and the need for Heads to delegate was a recurrent issue. A
number of interviewees also thought that Heads would benefit from more
administrative support. However, there was no support whatsoever for the notion of a
professional manager to work alongside the Head in running the Department. It was,
'though, recognised that Heads could manage more professionally and that training
might be useful in this context.

Two of the Faculties in which role sets were interviewed were actively considering the
possibility of restructuring to provide a flatter structure, spreading the Heads' load
more evenly amongst the leaders of some type of sub-unit and eliminating the role of
Head of Department as it presently exists. It may be that this would, effectively,
simply reduce the size of departments consistent with the view of a senior manager, reported by one Head that, "No-one can successfully manage more than about 15 staff."
CHAPTER TEN DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is, as explained in Chapter Four, to examine the roles of heads of departments in 'new' British universities. Heads' roles are examined, through the perceptions of heads themselves and key members of their role sets, determined by the use of a survey and three case studies. This Chapter comprises a review of the study and brings together the findings of the survey and the case studies. The findings are compared with the findings of other studies of heads' roles, mostly in the 'old' universities, described in the literature.

The objectives of the study are addressed within themes which consider the head's role in the context of role theory using role concepts. From the findings of the study and the literature on role theory, a theoretical framework is developed for the role of the head of department. Thus the study addresses the "underlying issues" identified by Brook and Davies (1994, p.56) of "The question of what heads actually do" and, "The need for an appropriate conceptual framework within which heads operate".

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The use of a multiple methods research strategy was particularly beneficial in providing a high degree of triangulation. The powerful combination of a survey and multiple case studies provided the two types of methodological triangulation described by Cohen and Mannion (1994, p.236) as, "(a) the same method on different occasions [and] (b) different methods on the same object of study".
The pilot studies were also beneficial. In the case of the survey, they confirmed the usefulness of the questionnaire for heads but revealed the questionable validity of surveying members of heads' departmental staff since many of their responses would have been speculative. It may also have been difficult to achieve a good response rate. In the case of the interviews, the pilot studies demonstrated the weaknesses of data collection by tape recordings and led to the use of interview notes, a method which, in conjunction with collaborative confirmation, worked very well in the main study. They also showed the inadequacy of the initial interview schedule which subsequently led to the development of different and improved schedules for each member of the heads' role sets which, in the case studies, also worked well.

In the main survey, the response rate was good, at 77%, and the questionnaires returned showed no evidence of ambiguity in the questions. The use of stamped, self-addressed envelopes for returning the questionnaires helped to overcome the, "form-filling syndrome". The case study findings showed that a weakness of the questionnaires, which were based on a list of heads' activities devised by Green and McDade (1994), was that it concentrated on the managerial aspects of the role.

For example, the list included, "Managing teaching", "Stimulating research and publications" and, "Representing the School to external groups". However, it did not include heads' personal academic activities such as teaching, carrying out research or participation in external academic activities such as academic conferences or involvement with professional bodies. One of the findings of the case studies was that it is often these activities which suffer due to heads' workloads and other pressures and, in retrospect, it would have been useful for them to have been included in the questionnaire.

The major difficulty with the case studies was negotiating access to a sufficient number of role sets. The main reason for this was that they are time-consuming for
interviewees, in terms of arranging the interviews as well as in participating in them. A number of participants expressed some concern about confidentiality and this may also have been the cause of some reluctance.

In the event, the cases studied covered a range of different role sets and provided a great deal of useful data. There were a number of issues which were recurrent in the case studies, thereby adding to the confidence in the findings in relation to those issues. It was disappointing that formal job descriptions for heads were not available, although in two of the three cases it was because they did not exist. Ironically, only the Eastchester Metropolitan University, where no heads were willing to participate in interviews, was able to provide a formal job description for heads.

All of the interviews proceeded satisfactorily (and were enjoyable) and all interviewees subsequently amended, where appropriate, and confirmed the accuracy of the interview notes. Again, stamped, self-addressed return envelopes were useful in securing a high return rate.

Overall, the research strategy and methodology provided a satisfactory means of acquiring the data necessary to address the objectives of the study and the important aims of determining, "What heads actually do" and developing a, "conceptual framework within which heads operate".

THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

The Status of the Role

In the literature, a number of writers highlighted the importance of the head of department's role (Weinberg, 1984; Bennett and Figuli, 1990; Mathias, 1991; Green
and McDade, 1994; Brook and Davies, 1994). There was, however, little support for this view in the case studies.

At UGH, where, at the time of the interviews, the structure of the Faculty was being examined with a view to the possibility of eliminating departments and hence heads, the Dean's view of the contribution which heads make to the University was, "As far as I'm concerned, heads run the faculty at the operational level". At GNU, where the institutional management style was 'top-down', the Head of School took an even narrower view, "The Head has to respond to the Head of School and has no power to take too many initiatives without my say-so."

Only at URN did the Dean offer a positive view about the importance of the head's role - "It [headship] is a very significant role." The Head at URN also thought that, "The role of the Head of Department is the most important role in the University."

This difference in view regarding the importance of the head's role may be due to organisational factors such as the level of autonomy allowed to faculties or departments or to institutional management style. It may also be due to the fact that most of the writers who highlighted the importance of heads' roles in the literature were themselves heads. The Dean at URN had herself been a head of department until one year prior to the interviews. It may also be a feature of the difference between heads' roles in the 'old' and 'new' universities.

**Role Definition**

The dual role of the head as academic leader and manager, recognised by all participants in the case studies, reflected the definitions of heads' roles in the literature (Startup, 1976; Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982; Hammons, 1984; Tucker, 1984; Middlehurst, 1989b and 1993; Moses and Roe, 1989; Mathias, 1991; Brodie and Partington, 1992;
Green and McDade, 1994). The differences in emphasis between the Deans, who all stressed the managerial side of the role, and the other members of Heads' role sets, who all stressed the leadership side, might be indicative of a fundamental difference in role set expectations between heads' superordinates and heads themselves and their subordinates.

Whilst there is agreement in the literature that the range of heads' responsibilities is broadly similar (Tucker, 1984; Moses and Roe, 1989; Bennett and Figuli, 1990), there is also agreement that one of the difficulties faced by heads is inadequate role definition (Hammons, 1984; Weinberg, 1984; Mathias, 1991; Tann, 1995). One reason often cited for this is the very wide range of heads' responsibilities (Hammons, 1984; Davies, 1989; Moses and Roe, 1989; Brodie and Partington, 1992; Middlehurst, 1993; Green and McDade, 1994), an issue addressed below under 'Role Enactment'.

Another reason cited in the literature for inadequate role definition is the absence of a suitable job description (Hammons, 1984; Mathias, 1991; Tann, 1995). Only one of the Universities in which the case studies were carried out provided an institutional job description for heads and none of the Deans or Heads thought that job descriptions were useful.

Objectives are agreed periodically, usually during annual appraisal, between heads and deans. At UGH, the Dean said that, "Heads are encouraged to do their own things. They have developed very interesting roles for themselves." Although these arrangements may be convenient in a time of rapid change, they do not help to overcome or reduce the inadequacy of role definition. On the other hand, although role overload and work overload were often cited as problems in the case studies, inadequate role definition was not.
The Academic Leader/Manager Roles

In spite of the differences in emphasis in defining the head's role referred to above, the case studies showed that the two aspects of the head's role, academic leadership and management, are considered by most members of heads' role sets to be of approximately equal importance. This reflected the views of Middlehurst (1989b, p.174), "...the head of department should ideally combine the qualities of the effective manager and academic leader" and of Brodie and Partington (1992, p.5), "Ideally the individual [the head] should be both a manager and an academic leader."

In fact, it may be that the roles are inseparable: "They're intrinsically linked" (a Dean); "I am a manager but the Department can only be a success if they get that feel of academic leadership" (a Head); "I can't detach it, it's very difficult to separate them out...You can't ever take the academic out of anything we do, even income-generating activity" (an academic staff member). Even the Dean at GNU, who did not mention leadership at all in defining the head's role, described the role as, "Both line manager and academic leader, you can't separate them" when asked specifically about the two role aspects.

This is an interesting finding in the context of the 'new' universities where heads are often responsible for large departments which include sub-units whose academic disciplines are somewhat removed from their own. For example, a Department of Cultural Studies might comprise sub-units specialising in English, Music and Drama. It is, perhaps, even more interesting because of the view, sometimes expressed in the 'new' universities, that it is appropriate to appoint managers at the departmental level solely on the basis of their managerial abilities, irrespective of their academic profile.
Role Enactment

In this study, the question of what heads actually do was addressed explicitly in the survey. It was also addressed in the case studies through questions relating to the most important things heads do, the activities which take up most of heads' time and the expectations of role set members.

There is general agreement in the literature that the head's role is complex and diverse (Davies, 1989; Moses and Roe, 1989; Middlehurst, 1993; Green and McDade, 1994) and the literature contains several lists which give testimony to the great number of heads' responsibilities (Startup, 1976; Falk, 1979; Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982; Hammons, 1984; Weinberg, 1984; Tucker, 1984; Bradley, 1986; Middlehurst, 1989b; Moses and Roe, 1989b; Brodie and Partington, 1992; Green and McDade, 1994).

The survey confirmed that, in the 'new' universities, heads responsibilities are numerous. All of the 40 aspects of the role listed in the questionnaire were considered to be part of the head's role to some extent, most to a significant extent. Heads responses were scored 2.0 for aspects which they thought were a major part of their role, 1.0 for aspects which they thought were a minor part of the role and 0.0 for aspects not considered part of the role. Out of the 40 role aspects, only 6 received an average score of less than 1.0 and the lowest score was 0.617.

The wide range of heads' responsibilities was also evident in the case studies through the number of different responsibilities referred to and the expression of views such as, "A lot of things are of equal importance" (a Dean); "The expectations are so wide and the responsibilities of the Head of Department reflect the number of expectations" (an academic) and "It's a very complex job" (a secretary).
In the literature, the aspects of heads' roles considered most important were involving staff in decision-making, staff selection and planning. Heads also thought that motivating staff, maintaining academic standards and general administration were important and academic staff thought that advocacy for the department was important.

In the survey, which was restricted to heads, the aspects of the head's role considered most important related to planning, staffing issues (evaluating staff performance and staff selection), representing the department and preparing the department for evaluation. Thus there is a high level of agreement between the survey findings and the literature.

Heads' views, in the survey, of the importance of evaluating staff performance was not highlighted in the literature. This may be because many of the studies reported in the literature were carried out before the relatively recent introduction of performance review, or staff appraisal, for academic staff. It may also be symptomatic of the increasingly managerial nature of the head's role in general (Jarratt, 1985; Mathias, 1991; Brodie and Partington, 1992; Middlehurst, 1993; Brook and Davies, 1994; Warren, 1994; Tann, 1995).

In the case studies, all the Heads agreed that aspects of staff management, including motivation and selection, were amongst the most important parts of their jobs. Quality control of courses was also cited as important as were preparing the department for evaluation and, "involving the staff". Members of academic staff thought that enthusing staff, providing leadership and vision and advocacy for the department were important. Thus the findings of the case study in these respects also reflected the findings of other studies.

One recurring issue in the case studies which was not identified in other studies was the level of importance attached by staff to heads' responsibilities for staff discipline. This
may be a feature of the increasingly managerial nature of higher education; to differences between the 'old' and 'new' universities or, as is probably most likely, to the increased workload of all academics resulting in increased resentment of those colleagues seen to be 'swinging the lead'.

Whilst the literature contains the many lists of heads' responsibilities and assessments of the relative importance of those issues, there has been very little work carried out to determine what heads actually do on a day-to-day basis. In the case studies, heads were unanimous in their view that they spend most of their time in attending, or preparing for, meetings, and that the second most time-consuming activity is routine administration. Heads' secretaries shared this view. There are, however, two problems with this as a 'finding' of the study.

One is that heads' views of what takes up most of their time is anecdotal and their secretaries' views are similarly anecdotal but of their observations of heads enacting their roles. The other, perhaps more serious problem, is that meetings and, to some extent, 'administration', can be considered as means by which aspects of the role are carried out rather that as aspects in their own right. In other words, what heads do in meetings and when engaged in 'administration', and the issues which they are addressing are probably more relevant than the activities themselves. Further research in this area, using more searching research techniques such as respondent diaries, would be helpful in this regard.

THE HEAD'S ROLE SET

Role Set Membership

The case studies show clearly that the key members of heads' role sets are considered to be the head's line manager, the academic staff in the head's department and the
head's secretary, who is, in some cases, the departmental secretary. There are others who influence heads including students, other heads within the university, other university staff, the university's senior managers and a whole host of external people with whom the head comes into contact either directly or indirectly. However, the influence of these others is usually either:

- exerted through key members of the role set, for example the influence of the university senior managers which is exerted through the dean or the influence of students which is often exerted through members of the academic staff

- relevant to some aspect of the head's role other than headship, for example students who come into contact with heads in their role as teacher, external academics who come into contact with the head as fellow academics in the head's discipline or area of research interest

- infrequent or weak, for example other members of the university with whom the head comes into contact during committee work. This influence can probably be considered as an 'organisational factor' in the context of the Katz and Kahn framework for role analysis (Katz and Khan, 1966) described in Chapter Two.

The study has shown that there are, however, external influences which are significant in terms of the head's role enactment and these are addressed below in the development of a theoretical model for the head of department.

The relationships between the head and the different key members of the role set are, of course, different in nature, depending upon the status of the member. There is, in the words of a member of academic staff in one of the case studies, "a power relationship" between the head and the dean.
Whilst there is also a hierarchical relationship between the head and the departmental academic staff, with the head as superordinate rather than subordinate, the relationship may involve a greater degree of consensus than that with the dean. Heads spoke of, "Consensus management"; "being as open as possible" and, "trying to provide inspiration" whilst, on the other hand, deans spoke of heads having, "no power to take too many initiatives without my say-so" and, "To the Institution, the responsibility [of heads] is through me."

The secretary has a yet different relationship with the head. Whilst the relationship is not based on a shared professional background (there is no academic dimension to the secretary's role), the secretary usually has more contact with the head on a daily basis than any other member of the role set and may, thus, in the words of an academic staff interviewee, "Wield a certain amount of power and influence."

An interesting feature of the secretary's status in the 'new' universities is that, although the secretary works closely with the head of a department and his/her duties usually relate only to that department, the secretary's line manager is seldom the head but is, more usually, a senior faculty administrator. In the case studies, one of the secretaries expressed the view that this arrangement was inappropriate.

Role Set Expectations

In the case studies the expectations of role set members reflected, to some extent, the nature of their relationships with the head. All of the deans' shared the expectations for their heads to run their departments effectively and to take a faculty or university perspective in doing so. One of the deans felt that it was important for academic staff to also take a broader institutional view and that it was important for heads to encourage this. Deans also expected heads to provide academic leadership although one dean
thought that it was unnecessary for the head to be "a good academic" in order to achieve this.

The expectations of academic staff members in the case studies were broadly consistent with those expressed by staff in other studies as reported in the literature which were to involve staff in decision making, be involved in planning, motivate staff, maintain standards and represent the department internally and externally. Expectations identified by staff in the case studies were to provide leadership, represent the department, motivate staff, share information with staff, treat staff fairly and provide discipline. Providing staff discipline was the only expectation of staff in the case studies not identified in the literature.

Role Ambiguities, Conflicts, Pressures and Stresses

There is agreement in the literature that the head of department's role is a problematic one. Bennett and Figuli (1990, p.31) wrote explicitly of the, "role conflict or role ambiguity" experienced by heads; Mathias (1991, pp.65-66) wrote of the, "pressures, conflicts and uncertainties" and, "tensions and ambiguities" of the head's job; Middlehurst (1993, p.135) wrote of, "conflicts and tensions" and Brook and Davies (1994, p.56) wrote, "the focus on heads of department as the location of some of the greatest stresses within a university remains the correct one".

A number of studies described in the literature identified and addressed the particular problems and difficulties faced by heads of department (Hammons, 1984; Middlehurst, 1989b and 1993; Moses and Roe, 1989a; Mathias, 1991; Brook and Davies, 1994; Tann, 1995). Most of these difficulties were also identified as problematic in the case studies.
Role Issues

Inadequate role definition was identified as an underlying problem for heads by Hammons (1984) and Tann (1995). In the case studies, it was not recognised explicitly as a problem although the absence of job descriptions and the general agreement that they are not particularly useful anyway may be an indicator that the role does lack definition. The facts that the job description has been replaced by the setting of objectives annually, during appraisal and that this is not seen as problematic may mean that, in a fast-changing environment such as higher education, fixed job definitions are no longer appropriate.

One of the difficulties with variable or dynamic role definitions is that, unless the definition is very clear and is communicated clearly, at least to the role holder and, preferably, other members of the role set, it can lead to a lack of clarity regarding the exact nature of the role holder’s responsibilities. This role ambiguity was recognised as a problem in some other studies (Mathias, 1991; Middlehurst, 1993). In the case studies, it was not seen to be a problem by heads who did not think that the expectations of their staff were incompatible with their own understanding of what the head’s role should be. However, the range of different tasks which academic staff members identified as the most important things for heads to do might point to a degree of ambiguity. It might also point to another problem, that of role overload.

Role overload, having too many different things to do, was recognised as a problem for heads by Hammons (1984), Moses and Roe (1989a) and Brook and Davies (1994). It was a recurring issue in the case studies: "A lot of things [responsibilities of the Head]are of equal importance" - a Dean; "so many tasks going on simultaneously many of which seem endless" - a Head; "too much is expected of the Head in all directions" - an academic staff member; "It's very diverse. He's involved in a lot of different things" - a secretary. There is also a perception, particularly amongst heads,
that the problem of role overload is increasing - "What's coming up over the horizon from senior management next?" - a Head.

One of the results of role overload is that it puts heads under a great deal of pressure - "It's a mad rush at work" - a Head; "pressures put upon myself....by the need to respond urgently to things" - a Head; "It's a very pressured position" - a secretary. This often leaves the head little time for being reflective - "The other thing is thinking time. I haven't time in the middle of the day" - a Head.

Another result of role overload is that it generates very high workloads for heads which result in long working hours, a problem recognised in other studies described by Middlehurst (1989b), Mathias (1991) and Tann (1995). In the case studies, heads spoke of stresses being, "To do with the workload". There was general agreement both in the literature (Mathias, 1991; Tann, 1995) and in the case studies that most heads work at least 50 hours per week, excluding work done 'at home'.

In turn, the excessive workload gives rise to other problems recognised both in the literature and the case studies. Firstly, it may affect the head's personal academic work (Mathias, 1991; Middlehurst, 1989b and 1993). In the case studies, one Dean said, "What suffers is the personal academic profile" and a Head said, "I'm doing less research now".

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it may affect the head's domestic life and personal health (Mathias, 1991; Middlehurst, 1989b and 1993). In the case studies, Heads said, "You have to be physically fit to cope"; "I don't work in the evenings and I don't work at weekends. I don't have any energy left for it anymore" and, "I would hope to get that down [the working hours] to leave me more time to get more exercise and be with my family. I would be more effective and set a better example".
Role Conflict is also a problem for heads recognised in the literature (Moses and Roe, 1989a; Mathias, 1991; Middlehurst, 1993; Brook and Davies, 1994) and apparent in the case studies. Two particular sources of role conflict for the head are the conflict between the academic leader and manager aspects of the role and the conflict between representing the faculty and university to the department and representing the interests of the department and the departmental staff to the institution.

In the case studies, almost all participants thought that there were tensions due to the head's dual role as academic leader and manager but that, as explained above, these were unavoidable. The possibility of conflict due to the head's responsibility to represent the faculty or university and the expectation of staff for him or her to represent the department was one of the most striking features of the case studies. The Deans were unanimous in citing heads' responsibilities to the institution as being an important part of their role and staff were equally clear that advocacy for the department was important.

Staffing Issues

The problems associated with the management of academic staff are recognised in the literature. Middlehurst (1993, p.138) wrote, "The problem is in managing academics; they're highly individualistic". It was also cited as a major source of stress for heads in the case studies - "Academics are a breed apart" - a Head; "When you're leading people there are always tensions" - a Head; "Other staff are awkward so-and-so's" - a Head; "They're all accomplished people who don't like to be directed" - a secretary.

Two particular difficulties in managing staff identified in both the literature and the case studies were dealing with unsatisfactory performance (Moses and Roe, 1989b; Mathias, 1992) and resolving conflicts amongst staff (Moses and Roe, 1989b; Middlehurst, 1993).
In the case studies one Head said that the most difficult thing he has to deal with is, "Telling staff they haven't delivered". Another said, "I do deal with day-to-day disciplinary problems...It's my job to keep a lid on things like that. In some cases it's a problem when it really comes to the crunch."

In terms of conflicts amongst staff, one Head thought that, "It's about keeping people from each other's throats"; another said, "It's often difficult to resolve interpersonal conflicts" and yet another said, "I don't like arguments or fighting, falling out with colleagues. It's difficult because there are sometimes conflicts of objectives."

A problem in relation to staff management raised by one head in the case studies and not referred to in the literature was the burden of taking on staff's anxieties, "Then there's the demand on heads of what people tell you in confidence, for example the death of a parent. Shouldering problems. I enjoy dealing with that but the stuff off-loaded is stressful".

One of the difficulties faced by heads in addressing staffing issues, particularly disciplinary ones, is their lack of power or authority (Hammons, 1984; Mathias, 1992; Middlehurst, 1993; Tann, 1995). In the case studies, one head thought that a major source of difficulty was, "partly arising from the fact that I have little power over staff...I have no teeth". An academic staff member thought, "I don't think heads have enough power".

Financial Issues

Financial difficulties, a main cause of concern in higher education at the present time, has been recognised as a problem for heads for some time (Hammons, 1984; Moses and Roe, 1989a; Middlehurst, 1989b and 1993; Mathias, 1991). It was also cited as a
difficulty in the case studies - "some members of the Department haven't quite come to terms with the funding environment" - a Head; "I think there must be conflict, there's only one budget" - an academic staff member; "A common expectation people have is in relation to finance. They are given money and they think they only have to ask to get more. This is increasingly impossible" - an academic staff member.

**Supporting the Head**

In view of the recognition that the head of department's role is a difficult and demanding but yet an important one, a number of writers have addressed the issue of how the head might be supported. Moses and Roe (1989a), Middlehurst (1993) and Brodie and Partington (1994) wrote that it is important for heads to delegate some of their duties to others. The Head at UGH agreed, "I am good at delegation. I operate by project management, that's my management style. I build team to deliver the project". The Dean at URN also felt strongly that, "I expect heads to be able to delegate...the Head will sit down with the team and delegate clear responsibilities to PLs".

A number of writers have stressed the importance of training for heads (Startup, 1976; Lonsdale and Bardsley, 1982; Davies, 1989, Gordon, 1989, McDonald and Bond, 1989, Middlehurst, 1989b). In the case studies, only one head, at URN, was supported by,"a good training and development programme the University has". It is possible that training for heads in the 'new' universities is not considered important because headships are permanent appointments rather than rotational ones and so the number of newly appointed heads at any one time is small or even non-existent.

In writing of role strain in further education colleges, Peeke (1980) described some. "automatically applied" techniques for resolving role strain. As well as training courses, these included committees, codes of operation, and methods for facilitating
communication. The Dean at UGH said that heads were supported by, "A number of management mechanisms. We have two-weekly management meetings...we have Faculty forums which provide arenas for debate. Ultimately there is the Faculty Board".

A THEORETICAL MODEL FOR THE HEAD'S ROLE

In seeking to develop a theoretical model or conceptual framework for the role of the head of department in the 'new' universities, there are a number of approaches in the literature, described in Chapter Two, which offer useful starting points. Bush (1983), in writing of the role of the vice-principal in further and higher education offered five 'ideal types' of relationship between the principal and vice-principal characterised by Brown (1974). This might provide a useful conceptual framework for the relationship between the head and the dean or, alternatively for the relationship between the head and a particular member of his or her department. However, it falls short of providing a comprehensive model for the head's relationship with his/her role set.

Similarly the model developed for teacher role relationships by Hargreaves (1972), illustrated in Figure 6, might also provide a useful model for a number of individual relationships. However, it does not encompass organisational, interpersonal or personality factors which are important factors in role conflict and role ambiguity.

The model developed by Katz and Kahn (1966), shown in Figure 2, Chapter Two, for the role sending cycle in an organisation does take these factors into account and the further development of that model by Kahn et al. (1966) illustrates how the cycle works dynamically through role episodes.

However, a limitation of this model, identified by Fondas and Stewart (1994), is that it assumes that role episodes originate in expectations held by the role set and that,
therefore, the role senders' expectations elicit the manager's behaviour. Fondas and Stewart argue that, in reality, managers can and do influence their role sets and that it is necessary to accept that the manager can be the source of or otherwise affect the expectations sent by the role set. They offer a model which they call 'Expectation Enactment', described in Chapter Two, for the impact which the manager has on role set expectations.

Fondas and Stewart identified three conditions, described in pages 30 and 31, under which a focal manager is able to affect the role set's expectations, 'Role making during assimilation'; 'Role reciprocity during interaction'; and 'Managerial initiative in job definition'.

The fact that managers can and do effect role set expectations was evident in the case study at URN where the new Head had been in post for only one year, an example of 'Role making during assimilation'. The secretary said, "Because he's new, people now treat the Department differently". A member of the academic staff said, "I think I have a good Head of Department and that has helped to shape my expectations of what a future head should be".

Although the Fondas and Stewart model of expectation enactment does take account of this effect, it focuses only on that part of the role episode.

The influence of the manager (hereinafter called the 'head') on role set expectations can be accommodated into the Kahn et al. model by considering the episode or cycle to be reversible, i.e. by making provision for the head's expectations to influence the role senders as well as the other way around.

One other important influence which is missing from the Kahn et al. model is that of external factors. In many organisations, it may be sufficient to assume that the
influence of external factors is through the organisation and, therefore, to include them as 'Organisational factors'. In the case of university departments, which have a degree of autonomy, external factors have a significant direct effect on the expectations of the head and hence, through expectation enactment, the head's role set as well as on the organisation. Examples of these external influences are those of marketing for student recruitment, academic networks, professional accrediting bodies and industrial research collaborators. Since academics traditionally have a degree of autonomy, external factors may also directly influence their expectations.

A theoretical model based on the model of Kahn et al. and incorporating these influences is presented in Figure 12. The Kahn et al. model, which is shown in Figure 3 is reproduced in Figure 11 to aid explanation.

In the Kahn et al model (Figure 11), role pressures originate in expectations held by members of the role set (I). Through the process of role sending, (II) and (I), the focal person experiences the role set expectations (III) and this experience generates a response (IV). The role senders observe the response of the focal person to their expectations (2), compare the response with their expectations (I) and exert pressure (II) to try to make the focal person's response congruent with their expectations. The influence of organisational, personality and interpersonal factors on both role senders and the focal person is shown by the lines 4 - 9 inclusive. The cycle is explained and illustrated more fully in Chapter Two.

In Figure 12, this same process occurs when role pressures originate in expectations held by members of the role set (I). As before, through the process of role sending, (II) and (I), the focal person, the head, experiences the role set expectations (III) and this experience generates a response (IV). The response is observed by the role senders (2), who compare the response with their expectations (I) and exert pressure (II) to try to make the head's response congruent with their expectations. The influence
of external factors on the head is shown by line 12, on the role senders by line 13 and on the organisation by line 14.

In Figure 12, role pressures may also originate in expectations of the head (V). The head's expectations exert pressure (VI) on the role set members - 'expectation enactment' (10). The role set member(s) experience this pressure (VII) which generates a response (VIII). The head observes the response (11), compares it with his or her own expectations (V) and exerts further pressure (VI) to try to make the response match his or her expectations. As before, external factors may influence the head's expectations (12), the role set members (13) or the organisation (14). In this framework, unlike that of Kahn et al., the organisational factors are also shown to influence the head (15) since, in 'new' university departments, as the case studies showed, the head, "represents the University to the Department and the Department to the University".

In Chapter Two (pp. 25-26), the Kahn et al 'Role episode', where role pressures originate in expectations held by members of the role set, was exemplified by the case of the focal person being a middle manager whose immediate superordinate sets him or her an objective and, therefore, has an expectation, for the manager to set up a committee.

The reverse process, where role pressures (VI) originate in expectations held by the focal person, the head (V), can similarly be illustrated by the case of the head setting an objective for a member his or her role set to set up a committee. A role episode begins with a set of expectations held by the head about the role set member, i.e. that the objective set will be realised (V). The role set member experiences the pressure exerted by the head, the communication of the objective setting (VII), which generates a response (VIII) which may be compliance or resistance. The head observes the role set member's response (11) and his/her expectations (V) are adjusted accordingly and, in
Figure 11 A theoretical model of factors involved in role conflict and ambiguity

After Kahn et al. (1966)
Figure 12. Theoretical Model for the Role Set Interactions of a Head of Department in a "New" University.
the case of the response being resistance, further pressure, a reminder, (VI) is exerted to try to make the response match his/her expectations (compliance).

In reality, role set enactment is a complex process involving role pressures originating in expectations held by both role set members and the focal person and being continuously adjusted as a result of observed responses. For example, the illustrations presented above and in Chapter Two might form parts of a more complex process where the head's superordinate, the dean, has an expectation of the head which is translated into an expectation which the head has of the other role set members to whom he or she delegates the particular tasks necessary to fulfil the objective.

Whilst the expectations of each role set member must be considered separately to determine the nature of role pressures, the total pattern of expectations and pressures must be considered to understand the degree of conflict in the role.

CONCLUSIONS

The study provides an interesting and useful examination of the role of the head of department in the 'new' British universities. It is the first extensive study of the head's role in the 'new' universities and it complements the many studies of heads' roles in the 'old' universities reported in the literature.

The study has shown that, although the roles of departmental heads in the 'old' and the 'new' universities may vary, many of the difficulties, pressures and stresses experienced by heads are common to both sectors.

The head's role is complex and demanding and is subject to many pressures. The main causes of these pressures are the number of stakeholders involved in the enactment of the head's role; the position of the head between the academic 'sharp edge', which is
the department, and the universities' senior management; the dual role of the head as academic leader and manager; and the rapid rate of change and difficult economic climate in higher education, and in the 'new' universities in particular. The main sources of role conflict for heads are, therefore:

- the difficult balance of representing the department and its staff to the university and, at the same time, the university to the department

- the difficulty of managing academics, particularly in the areas of staff discipline and resolving conflicts between staff

- acquiring and managing resources in a very difficult economic climate.

Whilst the conflict between the academic leadership and management aspects of the role is recognised, it is agreed that this is inevitable and that it is important, in universities for the managers of academic departments to be academics.

It is recognised that, in the fast-changing environment of higher education, fixed job descriptions for heads are no longer useful and have been replaced by, or in institutions where they still exist, supplemented by the setting of objectives during the appraisal process.

The most difficult problem for heads is role overload which leads to high workloads and to long working hours. The very real dangers associated with this are that:

- heads may not perform at their best when suffering physical or mental fatigue

- heads' personal academic profiles may suffer
heads' family and domestic life may suffer

heads' personal health may suffer.

There is a clear need for the role of the head of department to be supported. Such support may come from the delegation of some responsibilities to others; training and development, including time and stress management; organisational mechanisms such as committees or working groups; or re-organisation to provide flatter management structures thus spreading the managerial load more evenly.

Whilst this is the first extensive study of heads' roles in the 'new' universities, it will not be the last. The head's role and the way that it develops as the 'new' universities find their identity will continue to provide a fascinating subject for the researcher in educational management.
APPENDIX I

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
THE ROLES OF HEADS OF SCHOOLS - QUESTIONNAIRE

Title of your School/Department........................................

University...........................................................................

Please indicate, by ticking in the appropriate box, the level of importance you attach to the following aspects of your role as Head of School or Department.

1. Governing the School:
   (a) Conducting meetings
   (b) Establishing School Committees
   (c) Preparing the school for internal/external evaluation
   (d) Establishing and implementing goals

2. Managing teaching:
   (a) Assignment of teaching duties
   (b) Timetabling of teaching
   (c) Managing teaching budgets
   (d) Managing teaching spaces
   (e) Ensuring curricula are appropriate and up-to-date

3. Managing Personnel:
   (a) Involvement in staff recruitment and selection
   (b) Assigning non-teaching responsibilities
   (c) Initiating and managing staff development

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<tr>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>Evaluating staff performance</td>
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<td>(i)</td>
<td>Ensuring compliance with regulations (e.g. Health &amp; Safety)</td>
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4. **Promoting School development:**

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<td>(a)</td>
<td>Fostering good teaching</td>
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<td>(c)</td>
<td>Encouraging staff involvement in professional activities</td>
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5. **Student issues:**

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<td>(a)</td>
<td>Recruiting/selecting students</td>
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6. Representing the School:

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<td>(a) Interpreting the discipline to the institution</td>
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<td>(e) Ceremonial functions</td>
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<td>(f) Processing School correspondence</td>
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<td>(g) Completing forms and surveys</td>
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7. Managing Resources:

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<td>(a) Managing School budget</td>
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<td>(b) Seeking external funding</td>
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<td>(c) Promoting staff entrepreneurial activities</td>
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<td>(d) Developing and maintaining School administrative systems</td>
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<td>(e) Supervision of clerical staff</td>
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<td>(f) Supervision of technician staff</td>
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8. Would you be prepared to participate in an interview as described in the covering letter? (Please tick box)

Yes ☐ No ☐

If 'Yes', please indicate which members of your role set I should approach in this regard:

Member of Senior Management...

Dean of Faculty...

Dept Secretary...

Members of Dept Academic Staff...

--------------------------------------------------

NB If you would be prepared to approach any of the above on my behalf, I would be most grateful.
APPENDIX II

CASE STUDY INTERVIEW SCHEDULES AND NOTES
Q1 How would you define your role as a Head of Department?

I am a professional manager and I have always seen my job as that of a manager. Academic leadership is also my responsibility and I manage the resources which provide the opportunity for the department to carry out its academic work.

Q2 Do you have a formal job description?

Not any more. Fixed job descriptions have been replaced by objectives set and agreed annually with the Dean in the Individual Performance Review. Essentially, the objectives remain the same but they have been added to.

Q3 What do you think are the most important things you do?

Man management. I think it is essential to know one's staff. I know all my staff personally and I know about their family circumstances. Quality control of courses is also one of my key roles - monitoring all courses through committees.

Q4 Which activities take up most of your time?

Planning, organising, preparing and conducting meetings. I do all of those things. There is not really sufficient administrative support for this.

Q5 Roughly how many hours per week do you work on average?

At least fifty when I am not abroad on university business.

Q6 To what extent do you consider your job to be primarily one of line management and to what extent one of academic leadership?

My management responsibilities are on a par with my academic leadership responsibilities.

Q7 Do you find that there are any tensions between those two aspects of the job?

There are tensions all the time due to having too little time and too many things to do.

Q8 How do you deal with these tensions?

I am good at delegation. I operate by project management, that's my management style. I build a team to deliver the project.
Q9 Do you think there is a case for having departments run by professional managers, allowing heads to concentrate on academic leadership?

You can't do it. The resources you are managing are academics and the issues are academic issues.

Q10 Who do you consider to be the important members of your role set - the main people with whom you interact in your job?

The Dean, the Heads of Schools (P/Ls), my secretary. Below that, course leaders and the head of research.

Q11 Do you experience any particular tensions or incompatibilities between the different expectations of the various members of your role set?

I think that would be better answered by others. They would know whether I am a good head - whether I make what I want clear.

I am torn between the expectations of the Dean and members of the department, usually over pressures put upon myself and colleagues by the need to respond urgently to things. Of course, it isn't necessarily the Dean who is putting on the pressure - it may be on him, from above.

Q12 Are there any other particular sources of stress in your job?

There are areas of stress particular to me. For example, I'm not very computer-literate. Financial management is another area. I am not an accountant.

Q13 What are the most difficult things you have to deal with as Head of Department?

Telling staff they haven't delivered. Knowing that staff can't do it and telling them. I identify why they can't and try to help.

I don't like arguments or fighting, falling out with colleagues. It is difficult because there are sometimes conflicts of objectives. I get good support from the Dean. I have always had very good deans, I am very lucky.

Q14 What skills or abilities do you think are the most important for a Head to possess?

The ability to listen. The ability to have a vision about where the department should be - the standing of the subject. As a professor, I have to represent the subject as well. That's the most important thing I do. I am a custodian of that bunch of academic knowledge.

Q15 Are there any other points you would like to make about your role as Head of Department?

Headship is a very complex activity. First and foremost, I'm an academic leader, followed closely behind by being a manager. Management is complex but starts from perceptions of the academic plan. Defining where there's money, how to get it and then tailoring it to academic activity. I am very active externally, for example, on committees. I am very active in professional organisations. How do we do all these things? Some people believe there is a limit to how much you can manage. I know a senior university manager who
believes that no-one can successfully manage more than about 15 staff and he limits the size of his university's units to 15.

The job has changed to the point of asking, "Is it sensible? Can one do it?" I consider myself also to be a practicing designer but there's so little time these days. We need now to be much more commercial than we have ever been.

I use key staff. One of my key roles is team building - defining objectives and constructing a team to deliver that. It's about project management and I build a team to deliver the project. There is a need to respond much more quickly than ever before - a need to be more responsive to the outside than ever before. I use staff and sometimes postgraduate students. I make up my mind about an issue then ask a group to look at it. I compare their views with my ideas and adopt the best solution.

My management style is 'consensus management' due to the size and complexity of the departments. I have about 60 academic staff and 12 distinct sub-units. I have had to recognise differing practices, personalities etc. 'Leadership' - yes. Management with a small 'm' but really persuasion.

Funding is also complex. About 40% of the Faculty's work is FE so it involves the FEFC as well as the HEFCE and, of course, external funding and overseas students. We go, as a faculty, to all of the British Council recruitment fairs abroad.

The job is so complex and stressful that you have to be physically fit to cope. Stress relief can't be achieved by just time-management or by delegation. I get out of stress by being a very active sportsman. I am a rower, a skulker. I train at 6.30 am every morning to provide stress relief. Without this, I would be unlivable with. One must have some means of getting rid of frustrations.
Qn 1 How would you define the role of the Head of Department?

A difficult question, like "How do you define God?". You assume he's always there.

The head of department should be a person who is in overall control of the resources and academic management of the department. This should include a detailed knowledge of and responsibility for technical and administrative staff as well as academic staff. It's comparable to the managing director in an industrial role but also with some pastoral input, for example like that of a personnel manager.

Qn 2 How would you describe the contribution which heads make to the university?

They must provide a link between all staff within their department and senior management within the University, from the dean to the vice-chancellor and all stages in between. They are there to champion the cause of staff - academic, administrative and technical - representing the views of staff. To be able to initiate new ideas; to make sure the department is in as strong a position as any other department. Also to keep a high profile in terms of publicity, progress etc.

Qn 3 From your point of view, what are the most important things Heads have to do?

To maintain a balance between management and academic leadership. They, therefore ought to come up with initiatives about what staff should do, to motivate and enthuse staff. Also to consolidate the strengths of the department, improve the weaknesses, inspire both academic and technical staff. To initiate and encourage external funding ventures and be prepared to discipline those who fall by the wayside.

Qn 4 What skills or abilities do you think are the most important for a Head to possess?

Legion! leadership, tact, diplomacy (they are not always the same thing), unflappability, understanding (sympathy and empathy). Very crucially, to make a decision - a correct decision - and stick by it but not be inflexible if circumstances change.
Qn 5 To what extent do you consider the Head to be a line manager and to what extent an academic leader?

I think they are both equally important. An inseparable task for any head of department. In an ideal situation, given a head of department responsible for both, a 50/50 split. You always get those who are committed more to one than the other. Therefore, we are asking a lot of them.

Qn 6 Do you think there are any incompatibilities between those two aspects of the Head's job? If so, how do they affect you?

Ideally, both roles should be evenly distributed but that is often impractical. One head may have a predilection for entrepreneurship, another for resource management and, finally, one that is a dyed in the wool academic.

It is the role of senior members of staff, working with the head to compensate for these inadequacies or preferences - a compensating role. Some heads do this well, others have a total blank about knowing what people are good at.

Qn 7 Do you think there is a case for having departments run by professional managers, allowing heads to concentrate on academic leadership?

No. But having said that, it is imperative that any head has an 'accountant' or business manager to undertake the day-to-day finances of the department. There are bound to be differences between department accounts and faculty ones, not an easy subject. Without someone to take responsibility for business management, there is a danger of being at the mercy of the Faculty finance office whose version of addition and subtraction is invariably at variance with departmental ones.

Suppl. Is someone doing that?

Yes - has done an incredibly good job sorting out allocations and budgets. Therefore, you do need somebody.

Qn 8 What are your specific expectations of your Head?

To offer leadership, support and to deal with matters or problems in a calm, collective and responsible manner.

Qn 9 Do you think that your expectations conflict with what others expect of the Head?

Because the expectations are so wide and the responsibilities of the head of department reflect the number of expectations, the question of conflict does not really arise, due primarily to delegation amongst senior departmental staff. Choosing/having the right people and making the right choice about who to delegate to can lead to a relatively simple and straightforward life for the head.

Qn 10 Whose expectations do you think have the most influence on the way Heads carry out their job?

It's top-down and bottom-up. The most important person in terms of influence must be the vice-chancellor the Pro-Vice Chancellors then the Dean then other heads of department within the faculty. Not necessarily in that order. Where the pressure to influence is from the top it is via the Dean. The head's secretary may also weald a certain amount of power and influence.
Bottom-up comes from the staff putting on pressure for resources (ET&M). The head is the 'jam in the sandwich' between two very strong economic forces.

**Qn11** Roughly how many hours per week do you think heads work, on average?

That's a very good question. I would say more than 60 hours, maybe up to 70. It depends what you mean by 'work', whether it includes travelling time, thinking time etc. I would say over 60.

**Qn12** Are there any other points you would like to make about the role of the Head of Department?

No.
Qn 1  How would you define the role of the Head of Department in your institution?

I think, first of all, you have to understand the nature of this Faculty rather than the University. Heads' roles differ across the University. In this Faculty, we have four sites and heads are site managers and have highly autonomous roles within their particular sites. They are responsible for the buildings including two large new buildings which cost £60 million each. Responsibility for personnel is very important and heads have a devolved academic responsibility for courses within their buildings, research and, increasingly, for the generation of external funding.

I think what I'd say is that my heads perform the functions not far removed from Assistant Deans in some other institutions but they have vertical responsibilities rather than horizontal ones. The reason is partly the four sites but also it's...the School of Jewellery, for instance, is one of very few in the country. It is a historic School and has existed since 1890. It is located in the Jewellery Quarter and has very direct vocational links. Therefore, Schools need to be directly related to what's going on around them. Also the School of Art has had an historical position since 1800. The centre at Bournville has always been our centre of foundation activities. Therefore, the three sites away from the main site are defined by their roles and this, to some extent, defines the roles of the heads.

The heads' role has increased over the past three or four years. It now varies from a controlling activity to international activity, consultancy and external income generation. It includes Teaching Company schemes and an increasing research activity.

In some universities, the role may be confined to academic responsibilities with, for example, assistant deans having other roles. Here they have vertical responsibilities across a broad range.

As I was saying, heads have different responsibilities on different sites, for example, training and education is a very important need in the Jewellery Quarter, hence the investment in a new School. The Head of Foundation has a direct responsibility for recruitment in schools. The Head of Art has a responsibility in Art Education. We have the only PGCE course in a School of Art; we have 90 students in schools. The Head of Visual Communications has a responsibility for overseas recruitment and links with overseas institutions.

Heads are encouraged to do their own things. They have developed very interesting roles for themselves.
Qn 2 How would you describe the contribution which heads make to the university?

I think I've answered that, to some extent, already. There's a diversity of role that heads play. As far as I'm concerned, heads run the Faculty at the operational level. I wouldn't expect to be involved in that at the detailed operational level.

Qn 3 Do your heads have formal job descriptions?

Yes. There is a University-wide job description which is tailored to fit the job. I'm not all that keen on fixed job descriptions. We have IPR which defines the job description each year. The job may change from year to year and I don't see any problem with that. In fact, in a fast-changing world, it has to.

Qn 4 Roughly how many hours per week do you think heads work, on average?

I would be very surprised if it wasn't 8.30 to 7.00 pm. Roughly about the same as mine. It varies - about ten hours per day.

Qn 5 What do you think are the most important things Heads have to do?

The first is the duty to students. Overall management of academic programmes within their area. Secondly the management and distribution of resources. Thirdly, management of research. I'm not sure where I'd put that at the moment. 1, 2 and 3 aren't necessarily in that order.

Handling and management of personnel is very important - team effectiveness. Increasingly to generate external activity across a broad range of issues.

A successful department has:

- a broad portfolio of courses
- good financial management
- a good research portfolio
- good external activity.

Qn 6 What skills or abilities do you think are the most important for a Head to possess?

Academic planning abilities. The understanding of the relationship between academic planning and employment to ensure courses are provided which provide the education students require.

They need to have very good personnel skills. Increasingly, very good financial management skills which most haven't got. They have to learn on the wing.

To be a subject leader, external examiner activities, involvement with national bodies, professional and vocational bodies. Some are very specific. For example, in Jewellery, they have to deal with the trade on an almost daily basis and run the School like a business. I think this should now be the case across the whole educational framework.

I still think academic planning and personnel management are most important but I suppose all are interconnected.
Qn 7 To what extent do you consider the Heads’ job to be one of line management and to what extent one of academic leadership?

Both. They have a direct responsibility for line management, all the personnel issues including disciplinary procedures, if required. They also play a major role in academic planning. That is a fine balance between heads and course leaders. Operational academic planning is mostly the responsibility of course leaders. Heads can’t specialise in all areas within their schools but they provide the structures and framework which allow it to happen.

Qn 8 Do you think there are any tensions between those two aspects of the Head’s job? What are they?

Yes. I think there is a tension between line management - personnel management - and academic planning. It works well at subject level but less well across the Institute. For example, we don’t have a modular structure and that’s very important for the way we run our departments. We certainly couldn’t run as we do now if we were modular. Therefore, an inhibitor to some academic development is the management structure. On the other hand, I’m sure that modularisation is not what Art and Design - especially Design - requires.

Suppl. How do expect your heads to deal with these tensions?

A number of management mechanisms. We have two-weekly management meetings at which we take on cross-faculty issues. For cross-institutional issues, we have institutional forums which provide arenas for debate - a pre-graduate forum, an undergraduate forum and a postgraduate forum. They are not specifically for the heads but they delegate issues to course leaders to deal with at the forum level. Ultimately there is the Institute Board.

Qn 9 Do you think there is a case for having departments run by professional managers, allowing heads to concentrate on academic leadership?

No. I don’t believe that professional managers would be appropriate. The Vice-chancellor has talked about deans being interchangeable but I think that would be less affective. It doesn’t actually work. The closer you get to the subject, the less well it works.

With professional managers, you would have a double layer of management and there would be tensions between the resource manager and the academic leader. Also, it would be an even more costly structure.

We may have it anyway. Course leaders run courses and the head has the ultimate devolved management responsibility in any one area.

Qn10 As Dean, what are your specific expectations of your Heads?

I think we’ve already dealt with that, there’s not much to add. I do expect them to have a responsibility to the Faculty, an understanding of the Faculty good. I don’t think it always happens. Part of my role is to develop an overall responsibility to the Institute. To the Institution, the responsibility is through me. We have a very high level of devolution.
Qn11 Do you think that your expectations conflict with what others expect of the Head?

I don't think they do, no. I think heads have difficult roles and you need particular kinds of people to enact those roles but I don't think there's conflict. Perhaps staff have a higher expectation of the pastoral role than I do.

Heads are very well paid here, part of their role is to take the shit and if they can't handle it, they need to look for another line of work (laughter).

Qn12 Whose expectations do you think have the most influence on the way Heads carry out their job?

I don't know - a dialectic between me and the staff. It depends on the context. Heads have to take account of my views, staffs' views, the trade's views and the University's views. In general, it's students and staff, the Dean and, faintly behind that, the University.

Qn13 Are there any other points you would like to make about the role of the Head of Department?

No, I think we've covered it. I have to say we don't have an institutional consensus of what heads do which is the same in every case - that's an important point. An overall structure might be neater but I get better operational delivery for letting heads get on with it.

It's a balance between 'go your own way and develop the subject area' and an overall view of the Faculty and University good.
UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION                   Robert Smith

The Roles of Heads of Department in 'New' Universities

Interview Notes                              Admin Staff 3       16 July 1996

Qn 1 How would you define the role of the Head of Department?
(What does the head do?)

Responsible for the co-ordination of courses and the implementation of new
courses, Decision-making, academically, financially and in relation to
personnel. Responsibility for liaising with other heads within the Faculty.

To improve and develop internal systems which are then confirmed or approved
by the Dean. Ultimately responsible for all actions of academic staff. He's the
sole person in the Department who should know every detail of what's going
on from student affairs to new course development.

Specific to Paul, the face of the University for external bodies, the marketing
figure for the Department.

Qn 2 How would you describe the contribution which heads make to
the university?

To implement current systems and procedures; to ensure high standards of
quality of teaching, quality services, marketing his courses. But ultimately he
represents the University.

Qn 3 What are the most important things Heads have to do?

Decision-making, staff selection procedures, developing new courses or,
rather, co-ordinating the development of new courses. The allocation of
finances. Acting as a personnel officer for the Department in the Appraisal
System, personal development recommendations for academic staff.

Qn 4 In your experience, what do heads spend most of their time
doing?

Meetings 70% of the time at least. Dictating letters, memos administration
20%. Generally sorting problems 10%. I'm sure he works at home. He
comes in the next day with work done, ideas etc.

Qn 5 Roughly how many hours per week do you think heads work, on
average?

Approximately 55 - 60.
Qn 6 What do you think causes most problems for heads?

That would be conflicts with other departments or with internal systems already implemented which work against the grain of the Department. Relationships with deans of faculty.

Qn 7 Do you think that the different expectations people have of the head cause her/him problems?

Because he's new...the head before was very assertive. People now treat the Department differently, there's a more relaxed environment. There is a problem with that. They do feel he's very diplomatic, which he should be, but not assertive enough. He has to sign every form and there's a problem when the Dean disapproves requests from staff through the head. The head has to be assertive enough to fight for staff requests.

Qn 8 If so, who are the main parties who have these conflicting expectations?

The Dean and the academic staff. Also the admin. staff - we're the ones caught in the middle. We are responsible to the Faculty but the head depends on our support and has to feel that he can depend on us.

Qn 9 If so, how does your head deal with this?

In some cases he may suggest alternatives. Of course, arrange a meeting (laughter) to sort it out. Seek alternatives to solve the problem.

Qn10 Whose expectations do you think have the most influence on the way Heads carry out their job?

His own. He wants to reflect well for the Department. I would have said the Dean first but the Dean is more of an academic boss who lays down the procedures the head works through. The Dean doesn't see how the head goes about his daily tasks, she doesn't see how the head is admired by the staff.

Qn11 What skills or abilities do you think are the most important for a Head to possess?

Diplomacy, flexibility, confidence. Able to handle crises in a calm manner, openness, approachability. Standard of spoken and written English and marketing acumen, that he is up-to-date with business factors. The ability to cope with stress.

Qn12 Are there any other points you would like to make about the role of the Head of Department?

I think they should be line managers for the admin. staff. We work together, have contact on a daily basis, we're dependent on each other for information.

It's a very pressured position.
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