Welcome to the latest issue of the iROWE newsletter, in which we share with you our research and activities within the world of organisations, work and employment. Our ever popular evening seminar series has seen some lively debates. In January, Peter Harwood, Acas Chief Conciliator discussed the impact of social media on employment issues. April seemed a fitting time to discuss employment law and tribunal practice, with all the changes that were taking place. Oliver McCann, Employment and HR Partner at Napthens LLP, highlighted these developments and the likely implications. In May, Charlie Irvine, Strathclyde University will be discussing workplace mediation. Full details of which are available on the back page.

iROWE’s staff continue to be awarded funding to carry out their research, and throughout the newsletter members share their findings on: internal communications; workplace mediation; managing managers; learning partnerships; skills development; and the development of the CIPD.

We would also like to congratulate Dr. Constantinos Theodoridis who successfully defended his PhD in Retail Strategy.

**Learning partnerships reducing workplace conflict**

Tony Bennett has just published an article, based on six case study organisations in the North West, which highlights the added positive effect of union-employer learning partnerships on reducing collective and individual conflict in the workplace.

The full article is available on subscription:


Contact: Gemma Wibberley 01772 894674 gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk http://bit.ly/12Yp42G

iROWE seeks to encourage the conduct and dissemination of high quality academic research into organisations, work and employment. In addition iROWE works closely with employers, government and trade unions in order to inform the development of effective workplace practice and policy.

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**Social Media and Employment Relations Seminar**

In January, Peter Harwood, Acas Chief Conciliator discussed the impact of social media on employment issues. Peter discussed a wide range of cases, demonstrating both the positive and negative implications social media can have upon companies and their staff. He highlighted that social media such as Facebook and Twitter raises certain issues within the workplace including:

- New legal and ethical questions on what the acceptable norms of behaviour are in a new social space at an individual level
- Potential to both share information and consult employees in new ways
- Stronger collective voice of employees
- Change in the conduct of collective disputes and collective bargaining

There was a lot of debate from the audience, as many of our associates have experienced problems emerging from the use of social media in their workplace. Others were interested in emerging channels and the potential for improved employee engagement. This was an extremely popular iROWE evening seminar and also attracted a lot of attention via our social media channels!

The video of and slides from his presentation are available on the iROWE website under ‘events and news’, in the ‘iROWE evening seminar series’ at http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/environment/groups/institute_research_organisations_work_employment_irowe.php
Employment law seminar

In April, Oliver McCann provided an update on employment law, detailing recent and forthcoming changes. Oliver is employment and HR Partner at Napthens LLP, and was accompanied by some of his colleagues. He explained that we are currently in a ‘changing landscape’ with a shift towards regulations more in favour of managers and companies.

One of the main areas of changes surrounds employment tribunals. Oliver explained that fees have been introduced for employees who want to submit claims. Rules and procedures have been put into place to try to deter vexatious claims from employees and punish companies who behave unreasonably.

In addition the introduction of Pre-Claim Conciliation will make it mandatory for disputants to go to ACAS and consider conciliation before their case can go to tribunal. Further deterrents for disputants to end up in court are legislative changes that require employees to have longer service before they qualify for certain unfair dismissal protection. And the introduction of settlement agreements that allow managers to have ‘frank discussions’ with staff about them leaving an organisation.

Oliver quoted Ministry of Justice statistics that showed since these changes in employment tribunal rules and processes there has been “79% drop on number of claims in comparison with this time last year (October – December)”. This point created a lot of debate within the audience as to what are the reasons for this substantial decline. Some felt this indicated that previous claims may have been weak or vexatious, whilst others argued that employees are now facing barriers in accessing justice.

This was a very popular iROWE evening seminar with 60 attendees, and it was great to see new faces as well as regular iROWE associates.

We look forward to seeing you all at our May seminar on workplace mediation, see the last page for details.
A major study has just been completed by a team from iROWE into the Advanced Manufacturing and Energy sectors in the Fylde area. The report by Dr. David Vickers, Chris. McCarthy and Claire Ashworth covers the employers of around 10,000 employees across the 3 local authority areas - Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. The report was launched at an employers and education providers event held in Fleetwood on the 25th February. The research work was kindly funded and supported by a number of local employers and education providers.

The report identified between 300 and 500 additional jobs required over the next 5 to 10 years. In particular a number of specific engineering job roles were identified that need to be filled in the future in order for the region to remain competitive and to encourage other employers to move into the area. The key findings of the report were:

- Communal apprenticeship schemes (extending to engineers & older skilled workers);
- An on-going employers’ skills group forum;
- An HR manager’s forum to discuss careers, mentoring, & management development;
- Student placements (possibly extending to sponsorships and PhD linkages);
- Closer & early working by employers with local schools – including curriculum and career work;
- Collective collaboration through Local Economic Partnership/skills sub group to address schools & NEETS;
- Employers working together to attract funds (e.g. supply chain, Headquarters relocation, Higher Education).

For further details contact David at davickers@uclan.ac.uk.

An article on internal communication knowledge by Dr Mary Welch was published in December 2013 and has recently featured in blog posts on both sides of the Atlantic.

The article Mastering internal communication: Knowledge foundations and postgraduate education, was published in Public Relations Review (available via subscription at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.04.003).

Mary posted a summary of the article on the USA's Institute for Public Relations research conversations website (bit.ly/1ddsC0s).

The research was covered in Rachel Miller's AllThingsIC UK blog: http://www.allthingsic.com/mary/. And the work featured on Immediate Release - the Hobson and Holz Report via Rachel Miller’s AllThingsIC podcast of 24th February 2014: http://forimmediaterlease.biz/index.php?/weblog/C16.

Mary commented: “With expectations of internal communication rising and pressures on IC professionals mounting, continuing professional development is becoming more important than ever.

“The internal knowledge framework published in my article may help IC professionals audit their own knowledge base. They can use it as a checklist to highlight areas they have expertise in, and flag up topics to study in the future. So it could help with personal development planning.

“Internal communication is a dynamic communications practice, and the knowledge needed by practitioners won’t remain static. So I’m interested in hearing about additional topics communication professionals would add, and topics they’d delete from the framework.”

The Lancashire Business School’s part-time MSc Internal Communication Management course enables professionals to acquire specialist knowledge, and more information on the course is available at: http://bit.ly/ISMbvD.
iROWE staff have recently been conducting research into domestic violence and the support that trade union representatives are able to offer members experiencing this abuse. One of initial findings from the project was how rarely domestic violence is seen as a workplace issue.

However, as the poster above from the Welsh Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) clearly outlines, many employees (female and male) will be currently suffering from domestic abuse. Furthermore the abuse often continues while they are at work, with the perpetrator trying to enter the workplace, contact or assault the employee. This has serious health and safety consequences for both employees and employers. In addition absenteeism may increase and productivity may decrease as staff try to cope with abuse.

Many companies will want to take action to support their staff, and the EHRC provide guidance on appropriate steps (see above and http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/past-projects/your-business-workplace-policies-on-domestic-abuse-and-mental-health/domestic-abuse-is-your-business/). Full findings from the iROWE research by Carol Jones, Tony Bennett, Alison Hollinrake and Gemma Wibberley will be available shortly. For more information or support against domestic abuse see Refuge for women and children http://refuge.org.uk/ or Men’s Advice Line http://www.mensadvicecentre.org.uk
New Institutional Theory – making sense of events

Ruth Slater gave a paper at the 10th New Institutionalism Workshop, held on 20th and 21st March at LUISS Business School, Rome. The paper dealt with the relationship between the Institute of Personnel Management (IPM, now the CIPD) and the Privy Council about the IPM’s search for a Royal Charter between 1968 and 2000. Through the search for and eventual acquisition of a Royal Charter, many commentators observed that the IPM had a professionalisation agenda, modelled upon a frame of professionalism most usually associated with the Anglo-American professions of the law, medicine and accountancy. The paper showed that the IPM had no such ambitions but nevertheless did everything it could to satisfy Privy Council requirements, which were very strongly linked to the Anglo-American model. Tools and concepts from New Institutional Theory such as institutional work and institutional logics helped to analyse and frame events, as they unfolded from previously undisclosed documents from the Privy Council, other documentary sources and interviews with key informants.

The concepts within New Institutional Theory are developing all the time, as is the range of research sites to which they can be applied. As well as being useful to explore and explain past events at both the macro and micro level of society, scholars in the field are interested in applying the tools to present day issues in organisation and to practices across the social world, whether this is at the government, organisational or individual level of society.

The tools of new institutional theory have been applied to organisational practices, organisation behaviour and impact, and the tools have the potential for application to wider societal problems. A recent contribution to the development of fresh understanding on the Holocaust, as organization appeared in Organization Studies (Marti and Fernandez 2013 “The Institutional Work of Oppression and Resistance – learning from the Holocaust”, Organization Studies 34(8): 1195-1223). The tools have also been applied to understanding failures in corporate ethics – for an interesting explanation of the importance and potential of new institutional theory, readers might like to see this short video of Professor Royston Greenwood explaining the underpinning reasons for the failure of Parmalat:  http://youtu.be/KdMe-gNcbbk. At the New Institutionalism in Rome, Professor Greenwood explained how these tools could be applied to provide a better understanding of many societal and organisational issues in the present, rather than learning the lessons from the past.

For more information contact Ruth Slater@uclan.ac.uk

Crowdfunding – your experiences please!

iROWE is currently exploring the potential of ‘crowdfunding’ research, and we’d love to know your thoughts, experiences or opinions?

Crowdfunding is a method for raising finance for a project by inviting the community to invest. If large numbers of people each contribute a small amount it can generate substantial funding. Depending on the type of crowdfunding, those contributors may receive various rewards such as exclusive new products or services. This method has been used widely from developing new products, launching charitable campaigns and supporting local services.

We wanted to find out if you had any experience of using crowdfunding, either as an organiser or supporter? If so, is it something you would recommend? Any thoughts would be appreciated, please contact gemma on gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk
Join iROWE on Social Media

We regularly post updates about our research activities and events via social media channels. There is also opportunity for discussion with other people interested in employment issues. If you would like to be connected to iROWE via social media, then please email Gemma Wibberley at gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk or you can find us on:

like – IROWE Seminars

The iROWE Facebook has been re-launched to offer a new way to access us and our activities.

Follow – IROWE Uclan

The iROWE twitter has all the latest information about research, awards and events

Join – IROWE

The linkedin account has a group where there are regular discussions with other iROWE connections

Become an associate member

iROWE is a research institute located within Lancashire Business School at the University of Central Lancashire. It provides a forum for the development and dissemination of high quality research into organisations, work and employment. Its work has a particular emphasis on policy and practice—in short research that has an impact and makes a difference.

Therefore, iROWE brings together academics, managers, HR professionals, union representatives and policy makers. If you would like to be part of this exciting institute and kept at the forefront of research then become an ASSOCIATE MEMBER. This FREE membership is open to all those with a professional interest in organisations, work or employment. Benefits include: research e-newsletter, regular free seminars by key speakers in the field, consultancy opportunities for your organization, and networking.

To Join just email Gemma Wibberley at gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk

Issue 8, May 2014

‘Do You See What I’m Dealing With Here? Biases and Heuristics in Conflict’

Guest Speaker:

Charlie Irvine

Visiting Professor, Strathclyde University

“No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched.” (George Jean Nathan)

We know that our thinking is affected by conflict; this applies to groups and organisations as much as to individuals. HR professionals and mediators are at the sharp end of this phenomenon, and those we work with often find each other’s behaviour at best inexplicable and at worst malicious. Professor Charlie Irvine, Course Leader on Strathclyde University’s Masters in Mediation and Conflict Resolution, explains how biases and heuristics (mental shortcuts) can exacerbate employment disputes. Using real-life case studies he paints a clear picture of the step-by-step mechanics of conflict. He also presents a range of de-biasing techniques to boost the self-awareness of people in conflict and those who work with them.

Wednesday 14th May 2014 - 5.30pm until 7pm

Room BB008, UCLAN

Refreshments available from 5pm

Attendance is free, but places are limited. To book a place please contact Gemma: gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk