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. iROWE’s staff continue to be awarded funding to carry out their research, and throughout the newsletter members share their findings on: disputants’ perspective of workplace mediation; union organising campaigns; skill shortages in the engineering sector; lean management in the public sector; CIPD’s battle to achieve chartership; supporting victims of domestic violence in the workplace and the changing nature of unions.

We are pleased to announce that the REF (Research Excellence Framework) for UCLAN has now been submitted and members of IROWE’s publications feature in two returns - Ian Ashman Tony Bennett and Gemma Wibberley (Lancashire Business School) & Steve Willcocks (School of Health). iROWE projects have also been utilised to demonstrate successful research impact and activities. REF is the system for assessing the quality of research in the UK universities.

Our ever popular evening seminar series has been relaunched. In May to recognise the 100th anniversary of the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development, Jonny Gifford, CIPD Research Adviser came and reflected on the personnel profession and outlined the future directions of Human Resources. October’s seminar was given by Philip Dyer, Chairman of nxo and UCLan Entrepreneur in Residence. He talked about people management and the entrepreneurial mindset, highlighting the important but often much forgotten role of the people in growing organisations. We look forward to the forthcoming talk by Peter Harwood, Acas Chief Conciliator and Head of Profession, on the impact of social media on employment issues. Full details of which are available on the back page.

The very successful ESRC Seminar Series on workplace conflict has now come to an end, and we would like to thank all of the irowe associates who participated in these seminars. The presentations and reviews from the seminars are available on our webpage. We are now working on outputs from the series, and hope to be able to announce these in the next newsletter. The series would not have been possible without the dedication and drive of Dr Richard Saundry, and we wish him well in his new role at Plymouth University.

There have been other staff changes recently, as Richard has now become an honorary member of iROWE, Dr Ian Ashman is now the Director of iROWE and hopes to continue to grow the institute. Hayley Cooling, our marketing intern has left, successfully obtaining a graduate job in the private sector. We also welcome new staff members including: Claire Ashworth Cheryl Gordon, Dorota Marsh, Judi Morgan, and Cath Toase. They bring with them a wide range of expertise including: HR in the justice sector; international leadership; the banking sector; retail management and leadership development.
In April iROWE travelled, on a very turbulent flight, to Belfast for our fourth ESRC seminar on workplace conflict. This seminar examined the potential of different strategies designed to manage conflict and dispute resolution. In particular, the seminar included keynote presentations from leading US scholars, Alex Colvin and Ariel Avgar who looked at the development of innovative approaches to conflict management and dispute resolution in the USA. This provided the context for assessing the potential of integrated conflict management systems for workplaces in Ireland and Great Britain.

Kieran Mulvey (Chief Executive, Labour Relations Commission, Dublin and Honorary Professor, Queen’s University Belfast) discussed new developments in conflict management in Ireland, including the government’s proposed move to a more inquisitorial adjudicative system. Nevertheless, Bill Roche (Professor of Industrial Relations, University College Dublin) suggested that at present innovation beyond the use of workplace mediation was very limited. Instead, organisations almost universally relied on conventional grievance procedures and informal line management led approaches to conflict management.

Professor Paul Teague and Liam Doherty (Queens University Belfast), found a deep antipathy to the notion of managing conflict in their research. Respondents saw no need for conflict management to be part of an overall strategic approach to managing human resources and were generally resistant to the argument that there was a ‘business case’ for innovative workplace conflict management practices. Moreover, HR managers were hostile to any idea that the discourse of ‘conflict’ should be accepted as an unavoidable part of organisational life. From a practitioner prospective, David Liddle (TCM Group) also made a strong argument that businesses needed to adopt a holistic and strategic approach to conflict management.

However, according to Alex Colvin (Professor of Labor Relations and Conflict Resolution, Cornell University) even in the US the diffusion of innovative approaches is uneven and context specific. This is partly explained by the lack of any central policy framework or steer from central or state government. Perhaps the greatest growth in innovative conflict management in the US has been found in the non-union sector, due to trade union avoidance, high costs of litigation or more positively as part of a broader move towards high commitment human resource strategies.

John O’Dowd (John O’Dowd Consultants Ltd) discussed cases of interest-based bargaining, highlighting that the outcomes of these are highly depended upon contextual factors and the actors involved. Furthermore, perspectives on the effectiveness of the method often varied greatly between management and unions.

Ariel C. Avgar (Assistant Professor, University of Illinois) found clear evidence that the avoidance of conflict can have a negative impact on the generation of social capital which it could be argued is fundamental in underpinning collaboration, co-operation between staff and effective organisational performance.

A practitioner roundtable exploring ‘improving workplace conflict management’ with speakers from CIPD, LRC, LRA, IBEC, ICTU and Acas further debated the issues raised in the presentations. The seminar suggests that it is imperative for conflict management to start to feature greatly in debates over improving organisational performance.

For more information: www.uclan.ac.uk/workplaceconflictseminars and click on ‘events’ and if you scroll down you should be able to find materials from each seminar.
June saw the fifth of our ESRC seminars take place in the midlands at the University of Warwick. iROWE and over 40 participants discussed the impact of employment law upon workplace conflict, and there was fierce debate as to what impact the changes in regulation are likely to have upon organisational life.

Mel Simms (Associate Professor of Industrial Relations, University of Warwick) discussed the impact of collective bargaining decline upon employee rights. Noting that without union presence it can be very difficult for workers to enforce their employment rights, due to the complexity and costs of the legal systems, and it is predicted this will become more challenging.

Ed Heery (Professor of Employment Relations, Cardiff University) examined ‘civil regulation’, in which civil society organisations (CSOs) or employer forums try to encourage firms to voluntarily adopt best practice on certain workplace issues, such as the ‘living wage campaign’. He notes civil regulation has attracted a substantial amount of interest, however, there are risks that it has limited impact, and can only address issues that have demonstrable greater benefit to employers or rewards existing best practice.

Steve Williams (Head of Equality, Acas) argued that regulation is generally viewed negatively, and deregulation is promoted as enabling growth. However, Acas argue that regulation can actually often promote positive benefits, as employers want good practice guides, principles and codes as this gives them confidence, and enables them to understand how they should be implementing rules.

Hugh Collins (Professor of English Law, London School of Economics), discussed the intention of employment law review, which was to reduce the impact of regulation upon industry. This is premised on the assumption that less employment regulation is beneficial for the UK, as it is proposed deregulation will increase employment rates and productivity. However, evidence from Germany contradicts this assumption, with more extensive regulation and lower unemployment rates than the UK.

Sue Corby (Professor in Employment Relations, University of Greenwich) and Paul Latreille (Professor of Management, University of Sheffield) described the shift in employment tribunals from “easily accessible, informal, speedy, inexpensive [to...] increasingly become like the civil courts”, with decreased accessibility and claimants actively discouraged from pursuing a tribunal.

The practitioner perspectives roundtable was chaired by Ed Sweeney (Acas) and participants included: Mike Emmott (CIPD), Fiona Hobbs (EEF), Matthew Percival (CBI), Hannah Reed (TUC). This range of backgrounds led to some very lively debate about the role of regulation in the workplace and the impact of recent changes. There was a lot of uncertainty about what the future holds for industrial relations.

David Coats (Founder and Director of WorkMatters Consulting) argued that the UK needs some form of institution that provides workers with a powerful voice, as currently there is a substantial power imbalance in favour of managers. He raised concerns about the unitarist agenda of many managers and HR practitioners that does not accept conflict as legitimate or inherent, instead perpetuating the ideology that ‘we’re all one team’

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Richard Saundry began the day by outlining the key themes from the series: factors shaping the pattern of individual workplace conflict; line managers’ capacity to resolve conflict; the role of employee representation, employee engagement and other voice mechanisms; can organisations and governments achieve a balance between efficiency and workplace justice?; the impact of recent reform to the tribunal system; the potential of workplace mediation; and do organisations see conflict management as a strategic issue and if not how can this be addressed?

John Forth (Principal Research Fellow, National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)) used the latest statistical data to explain ‘The state of workplace employment relations in Britain’. He noted that despite the growth in employment tribunals there has been “no marked deterioration in the state of employment relations”. However, there are relatively high levels of distrust in management and this hides sectoral differences as relations have deteriorated in the public sector.

A range of expert panels enabled the seminar discussions to focus on specific aspects of workplace conflict. These were very lively sessions, as each speaker briefly outlined their views on the topic, which tended to vary greatly from their counterparts due to their respective positions, and then the floor was opened up to invite the audience to participate in the debate. The panels included:

**Do we need a new approach to Employment Tribunals?** *Chair – Andrew Wareing (Acas).* Pete Burgess (University of Greenwich), Kieran Mulvey (Chief Executive, Labour Relations Commission), Ian Moss (Citizens’ Advice), Matthew Percival (CBI), Gillian Morris (Matrix Chambers), Hannah Reed (TUC).

**Employment regulation and dispute resolution – help or hindrance?** *Chair – Prof Linda Dickens (University of Warwick)*. Michael Mealing (FSB), Bill Wells (BIS), Ben Patrick (UNISON), Trevor Colling (University of Warwick), Robert Wapshott (University of Sheffield)

**Line managers – the key to conflict resolution?** *Chair – Prof Paul Teague (Queen’s University Belfast)*. Prof John Purcell (University of Warwick), Katherine Graham (CMP Resolutions), Jeff Neild (EEF), Prof Greg Bamber (Monash University), Andy Cook (Employee Relations Institute)

**Does mediation work?** *Chair – Prof Paul Latreille (The University of Sheffield)* Carolyn Graham (Consensio Partners), Sarah Messenger (Local Government Association), Kim Frost (Director of HR, University of London), Prof Charlie Irvine (University of Strathclyde)

**Making conflict a strategic issue?** *Chair – David Liddle (TCM group)*. Prof Bill Roche (University College Dublin), Prof Ron Seeber (Cornell University), Mike Emmott (CIPD), Stephen Overell, Prof Abby Ghobadian (Henley Business School)

**Employee representation, engagement and voice – facilitating informal resolution?** *Chair – Dr Richard Saundry (Plymouth University)* Joe Dromey (IPA), Sarah Veale (TUC), Prof Tony Dundon (NUI, Galway), Pete Monaghan (Acas)
The seminar then turned its attention to international approaches to resolving workplace conflict. Prof David Lipsky, (Anne Evans Estabrook Professor of Dispute Resolution, Cornell University) outlined his latest findings on how large U.S. corporations manage disputes. He found that there has been ‘Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) revolution’ in America, leading to a privatisation of the system out of the courts. Many companies now use mediation, arbitration and a wide array of ADR techniques to save costs, time, avoid litigation and keep disputes out of the public eye. However, the use of ADR is not universal and David suggests “there is a substantial and possibly growing divide between companies that rely heavily on ADR and companies that do not”

Returning back to the UK, Ed Sweeney (Chair, Acas) asked what are the future challenges for dispute resolution? He felt there needs to be new ways to deal with workplace conflict, and that it needs to be addressed by all organisational stakeholders. Mediation is a very interesting approach, but that we need to better understand its impact and how it could be embedded in workplaces. It is important to explore new forms of and causes of conflict – i.e. social media. The devolution of conflict handling from HR to line managers has created a gap in resolving disputes, which needs addressing. Employee voice, needs to be a central focus, with an understanding of the role of employee representatives and employee engagement. Whilst employment regulation undoubtedly requires regulation, the type of and quality of regulation are key.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in the seminars and made it such a successful series. With special thanks to the ESRC for funding the events; our sponsors Acas, CMP resolutions, Consensio, and the TCM Group; the co-investigators and their universities: Charlie Irvine (University of Strathclyde), Paul Latreille (The University of Sheffield/ Swansea University), Paul Teague (Queen’s University Belfast), Linda Dickens (University of Warwick) and Peter Urwin (University of Westminster); all the staff at Uclan who ran our seminar and the series as a whole, especially Gemma Wibberley; and Richard Saundry for managing it all.

For more information: www.uclan.ac.uk/workplaceconflictseminars and click on ‘events’

iROWE’s ESRC seminar series makes the news

The ESRC seminar series also featured in Personnel Today. Ed Sweeney (Acas) and Richard Saundry (iROWE, Plymouth University) discussed the key topics that emerged from our series. They argued that “conflict is an inevitable feature of organisational life, but too often it is pushed down the business agenda”. In particular they called for senior managers to recognise the problems that disputes can cause in their organisations, and to take action to enable early and effective resolution of disputes.

From the series, strategic steps organisations can take to improve their handling of workplace conflict were identified, such as: “ensure that conflict resolution is seen as a core competency for managers”; and “building positive relationships with trade unions and/or employee representatives”

The article “Is it time to see conflict management as a strategic issue?” is available Personnel Today, and was released 1st October 2013. http://www.personneltoday.com/articles/01/10/2013/59680/is-it-time-to-see-conflict-management-as-a-strategic-issue.htm
Richard Saundry and Gemma Wibberley recently conducted a detailed analysis of a union organizing project. The campaign initially focused on the development of rank and file leadership and the engagement of members and workers in order to revitalise the union. However, half-way through the 12-month campaign, the project changed its approach, focussing explicitly on recruiting new members. This change raised questions within the union as to whether the introduction of a more recruitment-focussed approach is compatible with sustainable organizing. It also created tension and confusion between union officials. Furthermore, recruitment campaigns were not suitable in all workplaces. However, without increased density, the union would struggle to increase its ability to influence industrial issues and to effectively support its members.

The evaluation illustrates the strategic choices facing unions, and we explore these in detail in our forthcoming paper in Labor Studies Journal (details TBC).

Recent irowe research on the disputants perceptive of mediation was the focus of the latest Acas Employment Relations Comment piece. The article ‘Mediation – whose story is it anyway? was published in October, by Adrian Wakeling, Senior Policy Analyst.

The article notes that while there is a growing interest and popularity in mediation, little is known about how it feels to take part in mediation as a disputant. iROWE research is credited with starting to address that gap in knowledge, and the report is discussed in depth.

Adrian states that “By considering and learning from the experiences of the participants in this report, lessons can be learnt about how and when mediation works best and the support and training employees and managers need to make it a success. “

For the full Acas Employment Relations Comment piece:
http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/p/h/Mediation-whose-story-is-it-anyway.pdf

For the original iROWE research, funded by Acas:

Our research on mediation inspires Acas

Evaluation of Union Organising Projects

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Exploring trade unions’ role in supporting victims of domestic violence in the workplace.

iROWE researchers are currently interviewing trade union officials to explore their experiences of and views about the support given to victims of domestic violence in the workplace. The objective is to develop our understanding of what is effective and to better inform trade union officials and members and others, such as line managers and HR professionals, regarding the complexity of responding to victims of domestic violence.

Trade unions have had a long-standing interest in domestic violence but to date there has been little research in the UK that has explored domestic violence specifically in the context of the workplace. Carol Jones, Tony Bennett, Alison Hollinrake, and Gemma Wibberley are currently conducting this pilot study. Findings from this research will be discussed in later newsletters.

Mediation workshop available now for law professionals!

Interested in knowing more about how mediation can resolve disputes in your workplace?

Interested in understanding how mediation can also offer an alternative to expensive litigation cases?

For law professionals the opportunity to gain 8 CPD points for the year

This new workshop will help delegates to better understand the key issues of:

- Why conflict occurs
- How mediation can help us resolve conflict
- When mediation may be a better route than more confrontational approaches to litigation
- The tools and techniques needed to effectively mediate
  - On behalf of clients
  - Between colleagues in the workplace

For further information on the workshop, please contact Tony Bennett ajwbennett@uclan.ac.uk
Supporting the engineering sector

A team of researchers from iROWE (Dr. David Vickers, Claire Ashworth and Chris McCarthy) have produced a report for the Manufacturing and Process Industries in the Fylde Skills group (MPFS).

The iROWE researchers were commissioned to conduct a study that covers the 3 local authority areas that make up the Fylde Coast – Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre.

The manufacturing and process sector employs around 15,000 people on the Fylde Coast and interview and questionnaire responses covered the employers of around 10,000 of these employees. As well as identifying key job and behavioural skills the report considered current and future skills shortages and educational and social issues.

Dr. Vickers presented the report to the MPFS group in October and the report was accepted by the group. The report will inform some of the groups future interventions and actions on skills and education. The report forms a part of UCLAN’s involvement in the Energy and Engineering sectors in Lancashire.

For further information contact Dr. Vickers at davickers@uclan.ac.uk.

Award winning learning resources on conflict management

Congratulations to iROWE’s Tony Bennett, who came 2nd in the 2013 Teaching and Learning Prize Winners from the internationally renowned University Forum for Human Resource Development (UFHRD).

His learning and conflict resources will be invaluable for managers seeking an alternative way of successfully managing conflict in the workplace. Tony’s materials are available as below:

- Do learning partnerships reduce conflict in the workplace? (2013) Joint report for the University Forum for HRD and TUC Unionlearn http://www.ufhrd.co.uk/wordpress/category/research-archives/
- The learning and conflict project: A tutor’s guide (2013) Joint teaching resource for the University Forum for HRD and TUC Unionlearn http://www.ufhrd.co.uk/wordpress/teaching-learning/
Conferences presentations
Douglas Martin presented “It’s been a prolonged period of misery, but I think it’s really intensified now”: the impact of lean production management systems on the UK Civil Service, British Universities Industrial Relations Association (BUIRA), Strathclyde University 27 to 29 June 2013

Richard Saundry and Gemma Wibberley gave their evaluation of a union organising campaign, at several union events

David Vickers presented a paper entitled "Inside Out – Self-ethnography and the story of Burnsland" at the Critical Management Studies Conference held at Manchester University on 10th to 12th July. The paper focused on using ethnographic or participant observation research methods in the researchers' own work place.

Barbara Menara was invited to present her work on trust and career at the University of Manchester, 1st Oct. 2013


Forthcoming presentations
Barbara Menara will give a conference presentation in Lisbon (Portugal) 28-30 Nov. 2013 organised by ISA RC52 Professional groups. Paper to be presented "Interaction dynamics among professional groups and organisational outcomes"

Recent iROWE publications

A review of the ESRC seminar series written by Virginia Branney, iROWE PhD student, 'Grievance procedures and workplace mediation: the case for peaceful coexistence'. [www.uclan.ac.uk/workplaceconflictseminars, click on ‘events’ and under ‘ESRC Seminar Series 2012-2013 ’]


New iROWE research investigates the perceptions and experiences of participants in workplace mediation. The project explored why and when disputants participated in mediation; their views of the effectiveness of mediation and the sustainability of outcomes. It also examined the broader impact of mediation on the individuals and organisations involved.

This research provides crucial insights into mediation processes and outcomes. While it identifies a number of positive benefits, it also underlines the impact on those who participate and points to the complexity of the issues that mediators confront and the ambiguity of consequent outcomes. In doing this it suggests that organisations and mediation providers need to ensure that participants are supported and also that careful consideration is given to when mediation is used and how it is designed. Furthermore, this small study highlights the need for more detailed research which not only seeks to assess the longer term sustainability and consequences of mediated settlements but also explores the way in which mediation interacts with conventional disputes procedures and broader processes of conflict management.

For further information about the project please contact Gemma Wibberley gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk. This research was kindly sponsored by Acas and the report is now available on their website: http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/t/j/Workplace-mediation-the-participant-experience.pdf

**Staff successes**

Hayley Cooling, iROWE’s marketing assistant was the winner of UCLan’s On Campus Student Employee of the Year award.

She was nominated for the award by her iROWE colleagues. The team ‘are incredibly proud of her results and the substantial positive impact she has made’ and for confounding low expectations of student staff “

The award is a great achievement, and well deserved recognition of her hard work. Her success has enabled her to go on to secure a graduate management position, sadly leaving iROWE, but we wish her all the best in her new role!
The iROWE evening seminar series got off to a great start this year. Philip Dyer, Chairman of nxo and UCLan Entrepreneur in Residence, came and spoke about ‘People Management and the Entrepreneurial Mindset’.

Philip described cases from nxo in which focusing on the people within organisations had enabled companies to flourish. He explained that for many entrepreneurs their passion for their company can override people issues, for instance not appreciating worklife balance of their staff when trying to grow an SME. Recognising and addressing their people management problems can therefore be very powerful.

This was a very lively seminar, with a diverse audience including students, local business owners, support services for sme’s, HR practitioners and academics. This made for great discussions, both in the room and online.

We look forward to our next seminar on ‘social media and employment relations’ by Peter Harwood, Acas Chief Conciliator. See the last page for details.

‘The MHRG is an annual, friendly and informal gathering concerning management history (broadly defined), including ideas affecting the management history community of researchers’ (Bill Cooke, Lancaster University Management School).

This year there were keynote contributions from Professor Gibson Burrell (Leicester University) and Professor John Wilson (Newcastle University).

IROWE was very pleased to provide two speakers at this important international event that showcases the on-going and increasing relevance of management and business history for today’s practitioners and researchers. Both papers were well-received by delegates.

Ruth Slater delivered a critical reflection on the long, complex and challenging process CIPD undertook in order to achieve Chartered status entitled ‘A clash of intent: The case of the Privy Council and the occupational association for personnel management in Britain, the Institute of Personnel Management (IPM) 1968-2000.

Tony Bennett’s paper reflected on the lessons for management through a historical analysis of the creation of UNISON, twenty years ago this month, in terms of the drivers for, and challenges and outcomes of merging three organisations in the creation of a union with over 1.3 million members.
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 will be 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 7, November 2013
Social Media and Employment Relations

- what are social media?
- the impact of social media on Individual employment issues
- the impact of social media on collective employment issues.

Guest Speaker:

Peter Harwood

Acas Chief Conciliator and Head of Profession. He is also an Honorary Visiting Professor to the Business School at Cardiff University.

Tuesday 28th January 2014 - 5.30pm until 7pm
Room TBC, UCLAN

Refreshments available from 5pm

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