



Institute for research into organisations, work and employment



University of Central Lancashire

Lancashire Business School

Welcome to the second issue of the iROWE newsletter, in which we share with you the latest research and developments within the world of organisations, work and employment.

It's been a busy time for iROWE, Ian has been successful in recruiting downsizing 'envoys' for his study and presented his initial findings to great interest at the ACAS Lancashire Employment Relations Forum. Richard has been exploring the impact of mediation in the public sector, and is currently examining the extent to which this has been undertaken in the retail sector. Also, the first meeting of the Advisory Board took place in February, and the members made some valuable suggestions as to the future direction of iROWE's research.

We've had some fascinating seminars, including an informative presentation from ACAS on Pre-Claim Conciliation; *and an illuminating* overview of the forthcoming report on union learning representatives by Alison Hollinrake (see <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/policy/learn-3926-f0.cfm>). These talks have been followed by lively question and answer sessions, where HR practitioners, trade union representatives and researchers have discussed their own experiences of the issues raised, shared best practice and sought advice from the other associates. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our speakers, and we look forward to the seminars to come in the summer term.

Our team has grown, and we'd like to welcome Dr Steve Willcocks whose background in public sector health management will be an invaluable addition, and Gemma Wibberley who will add to our understanding of the employee perspective at work. They can be contacted on SGWillcocks@uclan.ac.uk and gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk respectively, see page 2 for their full profiles.

ACAS fund research into downsizing 'envoys'

Ian Ashman's research into downsizing 'envoys' – the people who deliver face to face the news of downsizing decisions to the 'victims' – which was reported in the last iROWE newsletter, is proving to be of interest to researchers and practitioners.

ACAS are sufficiently interested to fund an extension to the existing research that concentrates on 'envoys' in the public sector.

"Given the extensiveness of Government spending cuts we are witnessing the beginnings of restructuring and downsizing programmes across the public sector the likes of which may never have been experienced before. The perception is that the public sector has been largely immune to such activities for the best part of a generation and in a way that the private sector never can be."

ACAS are concerned to know how downsizing and redundancy can best be managed in these difficult times, particularly given the lack of experience in the public sector, and Ian's research will help contribute towards our understanding.

Already some interesting themes are developing from the interviews with HR and non-HR managers from across nine public organisations that seem to have particular significance for the sector. For instance, the politicisation of decisions that exacerbates uncertainty; the often drawn out procedures that prolong the demands on an 'envoy'; the concern of 'envoys' and 'victims' not only for them but also the vulnerable client groups they may serve; and the perceived fairness of how downsizing may disproportionately affect 'support' staff in comparison with 'front line' staff.

A full report of the findings will be published by ACAS in due course.

There are many interesting avenues for the research and Ian hopes to conduct an in depth case study of a single organisation as well as conduct further interviews in the private and third sectors that will generate useful comparative data.

Many organisations and individuals (including a number of iROWE associate members) have assisted with the research so far and Ian would like to extend his thanks and appreciation to all of them.



Research Highlights Role of Representatives

A new paper to be published in the Industrial Relations Journal has highlighted the key role that effective employee representation can have in resolving difficult disciplinary and grievance issues.

It also argues that high-trust relations between representatives and managers are essential. Researchers, Richard Saundry, Carol Jones and Valerie Antcliff based their findings on a study (funded by Acas) of eight organisations in both the public and private sector where they interviewed HR specialists, operational managers, trade union representatives and employees who had acted as companions for colleagues in disciplinary and grievance hearings.

The paper, 'Discipline, representation and dispute resolution – exploring the role of trade unions and employee companions in workplace discipline' reports that in organisations with well-established structures of employee representation, individual disputes were more likely to be handled in an informal manner with a view to resolution. According to one of the researchers, Richard Saundry, 'We found that in highly unionised workplaces, managers and HR professionals tended to have good working relationships with union representatives. Crucially this gave them a channel of communication through which they could explore the issues they were dealing with and sometimes pursue ways of resolving the case without resorting to formal procedure or handing out harsh penalties such as dismissal. This is interesting because often managers see union representatives as a hindrance. But we found that where managers trusted unions and vice-versa, they were actually seen as playing a very constructive role'.

However, the team also found that in organisations with low levels of union organisation, managers tended to react defensively to the involvement of trade union representatives, often adopting a relatively formal approach. This in turn was mirrored by representatives who were more likely to handle cases in an adversarial manner. Interestingly, employees who acted as companions for colleagues, and who had no formal training and little experience, had little impact. In most cases they were unaware of their role and played little part in proceedings. Importantly, none of the organisations that took part in the research had trained non-union employee representatives. According to Richard Saundry, the message of the research is clear – 'employee representatives are crucial in underpinning effective processes of dispute resolution – but this in turn must be founded on trusting relationships with managers and HR professionals'

The paper is currently available online via subscription through the Industrial Relations Journal: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2338.2010.00600.x/pdf> For further information e-mail Richard Saundry on rasaundry@uclan.ac.uk.

New members of iROWE

Hello everyone. My name is Gemma Wibberley and I've just joined the iROWE team. I am interested in employees' experiences at work, and I have just finished writing up a PhD on the complex and invisible work of domiciliary care workers at Lancaster University. Previous research has focused on occupational segregation, and dignity at work. I have also undertaken various non-research roles, such as HR and administration within both the public and private sector.



In iROWE I will be working with Richard Saundry on 'exploring the management of individual conflict' in the retail sector. I will also be responsible for this newsletter and the website, so please feel free to contact me with any feedback on gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk

I look forward to getting to know you all at the seminar series.

Steve transferred to the Business School in January, 2011, from the School of Public Health and Clinical Science. He started his academic career at Salford Business School in 1989, moving to UCLAN in 1995.

Prior to his academic career, Steve worked in the NHS in a variety of roles in general management.

He completed his PhD in 1996 at Lancaster Management School in the department of Management Learning and Leadership. The thesis was a qualitative case study, exploring managerial effectiveness in relation to doctors working in three NHS hospital trusts. Steve has since published many articles about doctors and management, and in recent years has written on different aspects of leadership in the NHS. He has also presented his work at conferences such as the British Academy of Management.

He is currently working on a funded research study evaluating the implementation of the medical leadership competency framework in two general practices in East Lancashire (with Dr Paul Milne GP, and John Doherty).

He is looking forward to working collaboratively with colleagues in the future development of iROWE and can be contacted on sgwillcocks@uclan.ac.uk



Join iROWE

iROWE is a new 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 will have a particular emphasis on policy and practice—in short research that will have an impact and make 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

Rethinking internal communication measurement

The government commissioned 2009 MacLeod Review, *Engaging for Success*, positions internal communication as a critical factor for enhancing performance through employee engagement. It confirms that good quality internal communication enhances engagement in public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Unsurprisingly, it cites poor communication as a barrier to engagement and a cause of disengagement.



Kevin Ruck is in the second year of his part-time PhD at UCLan, investigating *what* employees require from internal communication and *why* such requirements are evident. Kevin argues that internal communication should be considered as *the* underlying process that leads to a state of "engagement" in a new text book, *Exploring Internal Communication* that he edited last year.

Despite a plethora of internal communication and employee engagement surveys, empirical research in this area is reliant on instruments developed in previous eras characterised by different expectations and methods of communication. Contemporary 21st century researchers and managers need research instruments which recognise the complexity of communication inside organisations and distinguish between different types of internal communication.

As part of his research, Kevin will test a new research instrument, currently being developed by his lead supervisor, Dr. Mary Welch, to investigate employee needs, preferences and uses of internal communication. The instrument will:

- enable the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from employees concerning their preferences for, and use of, internal communication methods and content:
 - Determine factors that influence employee needs for internal communication
 - Identify elements that impact employee preferences for internal communication
 - Examine influences that affect employee uses of internal communication
- distinguish employee preferences for four different dimensions of internal communication: internal line manager communication; internal team peer communication; internal project peer communication; and, internal corporate communication
- study the relationship between these preferences and the goals of internal corporate communication which are: contributing to internal relationships characterised by employee commitment; promoting a positive sense of belonging in employees; developing their awareness of environmental change; and developing their understanding of the need for the organisation to evolve its aims in response to, or in anticipation of, environmental change
- examine the linkages between internal communication and employee engagement.

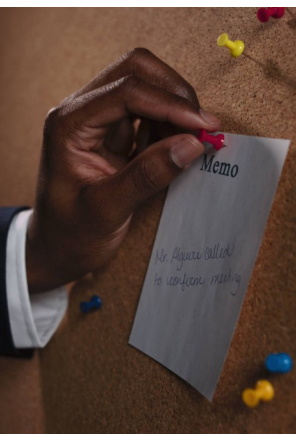
The project will draw on underpinning theory to explore variables which may impact employee communication preference including: attributes of communication methods such as: degree of *media richness* ; content factors such as needs for *uncertainty reduction* information; the *uses and gratifications* employees derive from internal communication media, including identity, surveillance, diversion and relationship needs; *opportunities for upward feedback* and *employee voice*.

The project is funded by the 2009 UCLan Arnoux part-time PhD Bursary Scheme. The competitive Arnoux scheme provides academic staff an opportunity to bid for part-time studentship funding in their own research area. Arnoux PhD programmes complement, build upon and enhance the current research interests of the Arnoux award holders. In this case, the project builds on Dr Mary Welch's internal communication research (Welch and Jackson 2007, Welch 2008, Welch and Jackson 2010).

Kevin can be contacted at KSRuck@uclan.ac.uk.

Exploring Internal Communication has an accompanying web site and blog: www.exploringinternalcommunication.com

Help design our new Internal Communication Masters



Internal communication is an important area of study at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). The university's Business School already has specific undergraduate and postgraduate modules and a PhD research project on internal communication. Now, plans are in place to develop a new postgraduate course in internal communication which is expected to run from 2012.

The new masters course is being specifically designed around the needs of communication professionals who want to study part-time. We are currently gathering views to inform the content and design of the course and would appreciate you completing an online questionnaire available at: <http://www.survey.bris.ac.uk/uclan/newicmasters>

The questionnaire asks your opinion on topics you would like to see included in a masters course on internal communication; how you would like such a course to be delivered; your expectations of postgraduate study; and, the benefits you would expect to result from studying for a masters in internal communication. For more information please contact Dr Mary Welch, MWelch@uclan.ac.uk

FREE Seminar Programme—Summer 2011

11th May 2011 '(Not) Consolidating Strategic Imaginaries: The Case of Business Transformation Outsourcing'

Anthony Hesketh (University of Lancaster)

Dr Anthony Hesketh is a Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor at the University of Lancaster. He is a leading researcher in the field of HR Leadership and Strategy. Anthony will be discussing his current research into business transformation outsourcing in HR. In particular he will be exploring the case of one firm of consultants and the strategies that they have used to try to develop and retain the support of organizational leaders for their offering.

8th June 2011 'Managerial organization and professional autonomy: playing doctors and managers in the NHS'

Jan Hewitt and Pete Thomas

This paper analyses professional change in the NHS, and in particular recent changes in the role and autonomy of General Practitioners in the UK, following the implementation of the Clinical Governance system. It examines the negotiated nature of professionalism, and explores the relationship between managerialism and professional autonomy and status

All seminars will be held in Greenbank Building Room 348. They will start at 5.30 pm and finish at approximately 7pm. Free teas and coffees will be provided. If you wish to book a place at any of the above, please don't hesitate to contact Gemma Wibberley at gwibberley@uclan.ac.uk.

A new series of seminars are currently being developed for the Autumn and we welcome your proposals on speakers or topics that would be of interest. We would also like to invite any associate members who wished to speak about their own experiences the opportunity to do so, and we would be happy to support you in this.

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

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