Testing a Team-Development Model: Partnership in Creating a Work-Integration Social Enterprise

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A model of team-based philosophy is applied to test the efficacy of a partnership between a university and a regional social enterprise development agency during the set-up and development of a work-integration social enterprise (WISE). The research had three data collection phases 'early', 'middle' and 'late'. Analysis of interview data collected during the 'early' phase of this research evaluation revealed five themes: 'Communication', 'Unity', 'Concept and Planning', 'Personalities' and 'Personal Perceptions'. These interim research findings are discussed in relation to the proposed model and its appropriateness for the evaluation task.

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the initial phase of a three phase longitudinal research study designed to examine the formation and development of a partnership between a UK regional social enterprise development agency (hitherto referred to as SEDA) and a UK University (hitherto referred to as UNI). The partnership was formed in order to set-up a work-integration social enterprise (WISE) with the support of grant funding and to test the notion of developing a financially sustainable WISE from a 'funded project'. Work on the set-up of the WISE began during the early part of 2008 and resulted in a bid for funding being submitted by SEDA to a funding body in August 2009. The funding bid was successful and the partnership between SEDA and UNI was formed, which ultimately led to the set-up of the WISE, which began trading in March 2010. The management structure of the WISE consisted of a board of directors, a steering group, CEO and company staff who administered and delivered three employment enhancement programmes to clients according to their age, qualification and prior experience. Client groups were young people not involved in employment education or training (NEET), unemployed graduates, and unemployed 'executives'. Members of the partnership between SEDA and UNI and the WISE staff were considered to be a 'team' collaborating to fulfil the monitoring requirements of the funding body in terms of delivering a funded project and creating income from trading to ensure the continuing financial sustainability of the WISE. In order to provide empirical evidence of the success of this 'team' venture the researchers reviewed team building literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior research conducted by Tuckman (1965) established a four stage, team-development model, based on four stages: forming, storming, norming and performing. Tuckman (1965) proposed that passing through this four stage process transformed a loose group into an effective team. Later research, Adair (1986), which examined group formation, postulated that groups of individuals share common needs that can be categorised into three basic elements (i.e. task, group and individual). Sheard & Kakabadse (2002) added a fourth basic element to the list of common needs (i.e. environment) based on the importance of organisation culture rooted in associated norms, routines and rituals. Sheard & Kakabadse (2002) argued that for a loose group to successfully transform into an effective team through the process of forming, storming, norming and performing, all four basic elements: task, group, individual and environment must be aligned. This alignment of the basic elements between individuals requires the management of any conflict between individuals in order to minimise negative aspects of the conflict. The developing nature of the management of conflict means that alignment of all the basic elements does not occur until the final stage (i.e. performing) which means during forming, storming and norming stages, alignment of the basic elements does not occur. Alignment of the basic elements evolves in three 'states', which can be assigned to each basic element at each stage of the team development process (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002). These three 'states' are:

(1)   understanding and acceptance of issues associated with the basic element by team members;
(2)   acceptance and understanding of issues associated with the basic element by some team members;
(3)   non-shared assumptions about issues associated with the basic element by team members.

It is the alignment of the basic elements of task, group, individual and environment, as indicated by statement (1) above, that signals the team's arrival at the performing stage of team development (See Fig.1).

Sheard & Kakabadse (2002) extended the integrated team development framework by adding a 'forming opt out' and a 'norming/storming cycle' to the original Tuckman (1965) forming, storming, norming and performing team development model (see Fig.1). The 'forming opt out' is taken by individuals who do not immediately enter the storming phase. The 'norming/storming cycle' is taken by individuals who do not progress to the performing stage. Deviation from the Tuckman (1965) direct route is because individuals are not prepared to accept decisions that would involve them in doing something differently and prefer to retreat into denial. It is essential for key individuals in the team to 'buy in' to what the team is attempting to accomplish in order for the team to reach the performing stage. If non-key individuals do not 'buy in' to what the team is attempting to accomplish, this won't necessarily prevent the team reaching the performing stage however greater efforts will be required from the others who do 'buy in' or the team will not perform as well as it could have done. However, without the support of key individuals the team will remain in the norming/storming cycle and fail to reach the performing stage.

In order to apply the above framework to determining the stage of development a team has reached, the basic elements of task, individual, group and environment were broken down into nine key factors that collectively differentiate a loose group from an effective team (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002). To transform a loose group into an effective team requires a task for them to engage in. A task requires a goal, which must be clearly articulated to the group. Also, because in any organisation there will be constraints of time, money and available resources, a set of priorities around the task must also be clearly articulated. An individual must be considered as a team member, which relates to roles and responsibilities within the team and the extent of self-awareness of the consequences of one's actions and behaviours on other team members. The group refers to the team's ability to function as a unit, which can be broken down into three key factors: leadership, group dynamics and communication. Environment is defined by infrastructure and organisational context where infrastructure encompasses: IT systems, HR support and

the ability of senior management to translate its strategy into a series of goals suitable for the teams to tackle and context is the organisation of the company.
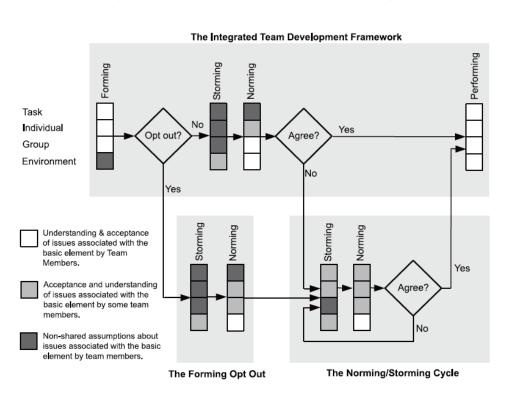
FIGURE 1
THE INTEGRATED TEAM DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
(SHEARD AND KAKABADSE, 2002, P.137)

It is proposed in the current research that elicitation of participant perception of these nine key factors will reveal the stage the partnership has reached in becoming an effective team in this 'early' phase of development.

METHOD

Participants
The total number of participants was 20, (N=20) which consisted of the members of the board of directors, the CEO, the steering group and the administration and programme delivery staff. During this 'early' phase in the longitudinal study (March, 2010 - November, 2010), the board of directors consisted of 6 members (including 1 chair-person and the CEO/acting CEO) (n=6) the steering group had 7 members (3 of the 7 were also board members) (n=4) and 10 members of administration and programme delivery staff. The board of directors represented the two partners and consisted of 3 representatives from the UNI and 3 representatives from SEDA (one of whom was the chairperson). The steering group was made up of representatives of both partners and co-opted stakeholders. From time-to-time members of the steering group were seconded to the WISE administration and delivery programmes. At the time of data collection for this 'early' phase, there were 10 members of staff at the WISE: 2 involved with administration, 7 with programme delivery (2 working with NEETs, 2 with graduates 3 with 'executives') and 1 with responsibility for work placements across all programmes (for clarification of the WISE structure, please see Fig. 2 below).

TABLE 1
THE NINE KEY FACTORS
(ADAPTED FROM SHEARD AND KAKABADSE, 2002, P.137)

Basic element	Key factor	Loose group	Effective teams
Task	Clearly defined goals	Individuals opt out of goals not understood	Understood by all
	Priorities	Split loyalty of individuals to other groups	Cohesive team alignment
Individual	Roles and responsibilities	Unclear, with gaps and overlap	Agreed and understood by individuals
	Self-awareness	Individuals guarded	Social system established and accepted
Group	Leadership	Directive	Catalytic
	Group dynamics	Individuals guarded	Social system established and accepted
	Communications	Formal	Open dialogue
Environment	Infrastructure	Task focused	Stable support from organizational infrastructure
	Context	Task focused	Influenced, but not controlled by organisation

There were changes in personnel during this 'early' phase, although overall numbers of staff remained the same except for short periods of time when changes were made in response to specific circumstances that required extra temporary staff. These temporary members of staff were not included in the research as it was felt they did not have sufficient experience in the company to form longitudinal opinions. The original CEO resigned in August 2010 and a board director from UNI fulfilled this role on a temporary basis up to the conclusion of the 'early' phase. The original CEO was asked to contribute to the research study but declined to take part.
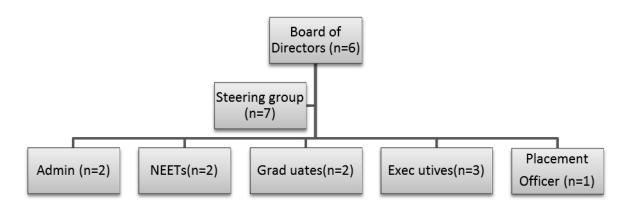
Procedure

For this 'early' phase of the longitudinal study, all 20 participants engaged in individual semi-structured interviews with a researcher. The interviews were conducted face-to-face (n=16) or on the telephone (n=4). The questions asked were open-ended in nature and were the same for all participants. As the interviews were semi-structured, the researcher asked additional supplementary questions when participants took the discourse in different directions. All interviews were recorded for future transcription and analysis. Interviews lasted from 20 minutes to 1 hour 47 minutes in length. The prescribed questions were constructed from the evaluation requirements of the funding bid and the nine key factors outlined above (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002). Six broadly based open-ended questions were constructed in order to give participants the opportunity to express their perception and evaluation of the success of the partnership project at the end of this 'early' phase.
These questions were:

1. What do you think is the purpose of the WISE (broadly philosophical with economic implications)?
2. How do you perceive your role in the company?
3. How do you feel you are you succeeding in your role?
4. How could you improve your contribution?
5. Describe what inhibits you from maximizing your role within the WISE?
6. What would you change to enable you maximize your role in the WISE more successfully?

Nine more specific, open-ended questions, grounded in the nine key factors that form part of the integrated team development framework (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002) provided the participants with the opportunity to express their opinions on those key factors. These questions were:

1. Please describe what you consider to be your specific goals.
2. Please explain how you prioritize your daily, weekly, monthly work schedule.
3. Please describe what you perceive as your roles and responsibilities.
4. Please describe the extent of your awareness of how your actions impact on others in the company.
5. Please describe your leadership style and how it impacts of the group dynamics of your team or please describe how your team leader's leadership style impacts on the group dynamics of your team.
6. Please describe and evaluate the group dynamics within your team, between teams and the company in general.
7. Please describe and evaluate the communication between members of your team, between teams and the company in general.
8. Please describe and evaluate the organisation of 3e in relation to IT systems and the context/environment in which you work.
9. Please describe and evaluate the ability of the senior management to communicate their strategies into specific goals for you to achieve.

FIGURE 2
STRUCTURE OF THE WISE DURING THE 'EARLY' PHASE
MARCH-NOVEMBER 2010

ANALYSIS

Data

The data collected for analysis in this 'early' phase of the research evaluation was 20 semi-structured interviews conducted by a researcher with the participants outlined above. The researcher also attended (as an observer only) a series of board and steering group meetings held during this 'early' phase of the group project. The researcher was also engaged in the evaluation of all three employment enhancement programmes delivered by the WISE. This combination of data collector and 'insider' experience combined to give the researcher a unique perspective on the development of the partnership, which informed the interpretation of the data.

Procedure

The method employed to analyse the 20 transcripts of the participant's individual semi-structured interviews collected for this 'early' phase in the research, was 'Constant Comparative Method' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Constant Comparative Method (CCM) is an iterative procedure designed for the qualitative analysis of text and is based on 'Grounded Theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant Comparative Method has been successfully applied in previous studies across a wide range of disciplines from social venture creation (Haugh, 2007) to music composition strategies (Seddon & O'Neill, 2003) and musical communication (Seddon, 2004 & 2005). This method of analysis focuses on a process where categories emerge from the data via inductive reasoning rather than coding the data according to predetermined categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Constant Comparative Method involves five main stages:

1. Immersion, 'units of analysis' are identified;
2. Categorisation, 'categories' emerge from the 'units of analysis';
3. Phenomenological reduction, 'themes' emerge from the 'categories' and are interpreted by the researchers;
4. Triangulation, support for researcher interpretations of 'themes' is sought in additional data;
5. Interpretation, overall interpretation of findings is conducted in relation to prior research and/or theoretical models (McLeod, 1994).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When interpreting the results of the data analysis it should be taken into consideration that during this initial phase of the research (March, 2010 - November, 2010) the original CEO resigned in August 2010 and the position was temporarily undertaken by one of UNI's representatives on the board of directors. The original CEO refused to be interviewed as part of the current evaluation process so her perspective is not represented in this analysis. Analysis of the interviews: Stage one (i.e. 'immersion') revealed 55 units of analysis (e.g. 'complex hierarchy', 'conflicting loyalties', 'empathy' and 'lack of clarity of thinking'). Stage two (i.e. categorisation), 12 categories emerged from the 55 units of analysis, which were: 'the initial concept of WISE', 'the economic future of WISE', 'awareness of personal impact', 'partnership tensions', 'communication', 'direction and motivation', 'change of CEO', 'unity of purpose', 'company structure', 'group dynamics and teamwork', 'perceptions of board member impact' and 'personal reflections'. For a unit of analysis to be included in a category it had to fulfill the rules of inclusion, expressed in a propositional statement for each category. During this categorisation process, if a unit of analysis did not fit into an existing category, a new category was created facilitating the emergence of categories during analysis based on a continuous iterative process. Stage three (i.e. phenomenological reduction) five themes emerged from the 12 categories, which were: 'communication', 'unity', 'concept and planning', 'personalities' and 'personal perceptions'. As with the emergence of the categories from the units of analysis, for a category to be included in a theme it had to fulfill the rules of inclusion expressed as a propositional statement for each theme. During this phenomenological reduction process,

if a category did not fit in an existing theme, a new theme was created facilitating the emergence of themes during analysis based on a continuous iterative process. A diagrammatic version of this process of analysis is provided for further clarification (see Figure 3).
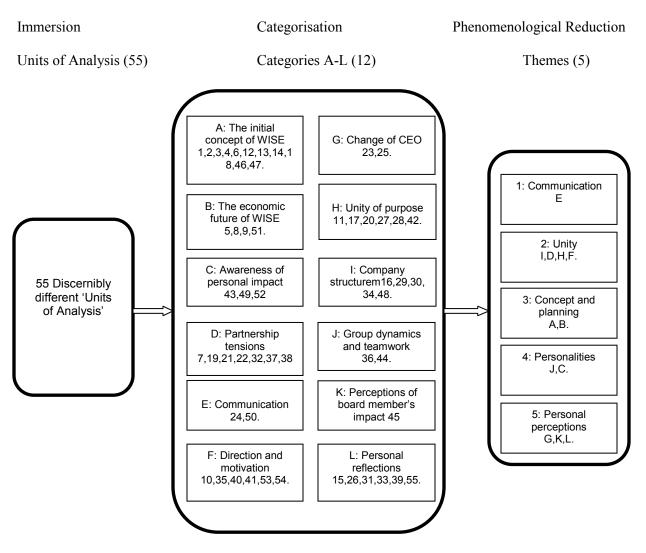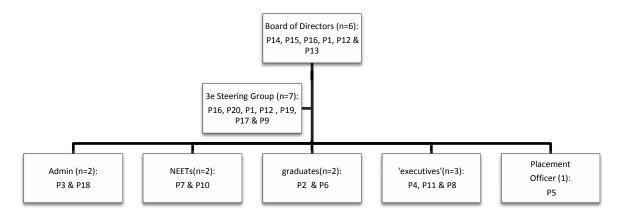
FIGURE 3
CCM ANALYSIS AT 'EARLY' PHASE

Immersion   Categorisation   Phenomenological Reduction

Units of Analysis (55)   Categories A-L (12)   Themes (5)

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                    ┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  ┌─────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐ │     ┌───────────────────────┐
                    │  │ A: The initial  │  │ G: Change of CEO│ │     │ ┌───────────────────┐ │
                    │  │ concept of WISE │  │      23,25.      │ │     │ │ 1: Communication  │ │
                    │  │ 1,2,3,4,6,12,13,│  │                 │ │     │ │        E          │ │
                    │  │ 14,18,46,47.    │  │                 │ │     │ └───────────────────┘ │
                    │  └─────────────────┘  └─────────────────┘ │     │ ┌───────────────────┐ │
                    │  ┌─────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐ │     │ │     2: Unity      │ │
                    │  │ B: The economic │  │ H: Unity of     │ │     │ │     I,D,H,F.      │ │
                    │  │ future of WISE  │  │ purpose         │ │     │ └───────────────────┘ │
                    │  │    5,8,9,51.    │  │ 11,17,20,27,28, │ │     │ ┌───────────────────┐ │
┌─────────────────┐ │  └─────────────────┘  │ 42.             │ │     │ │  3: Concept and   │ │
│                 │ │  ┌─────────────────┐  └─────────────────┘ │     │ │     planning      │ │
│  55 Discernibly │ │  │ C: Awareness of │  ┌─────────────────┐ │     │ │       A,B.        │ │
│ different 'Units│─┼─▶│ personal impact │  │ I: Company      │ │  ──▶│ └───────────────────┘ │
│  of Analysis'   │ │  │   43,49,52      │  │ structurem16,29,│ │     │ ┌───────────────────┐ │
│                 │ │  └─────────────────┘  │ 30,34,48.       │ │     │ │  4: Personalities │ │
└─────────────────┘ │  ┌─────────────────┐  └─────────────────┘ │     │ │       J,C.        │ │
                    │  │ D: Partnership  │  ┌─────────────────┐ │     │ └───────────────────┘ │
                    │  │ tensions        │  │ J: Group dynamics│ │    │ ┌───────────────────┐ │
                    │  │7,19,21,22,32,37,│  │ and teamwork    │ │     │ │ 5: Personal       │ │
                    │  │ 38              │  │   36,44.        │ │     │ │ perceptions       │ │
                    │  └─────────────────┘  └─────────────────┘ │     │ │   G,K,L.          │ │
                    │  ┌─────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐ │     │ └───────────────────┘ │
                    │  │ E: Communication│  │ K: Perceptions  │ │     └───────────────────────┘
                    │  │    24,50.       │  │ of board member's│ │
                    │  └─────────────────┘  │ impact 45       │ │
                    │  ┌─────────────────┐  └─────────────────┘ │
                    │  │ F: Direction and│  ┌─────────────────┐ │
                    │  │ motivation      │  │ L: Personal     │ │
                    │  │10,35,40,41,53,54│  │ reflections     │ │
                    │  └─────────────────┘  │ 15,26,31,33,39, │ │
                    │                       │ 55.             │ │
                    │                       └─────────────────┘ │
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NB. The numbers displayed above in Fig. 3 in the 'categories' boxes correspond to the relevant units of analysis contained in that category. The numbers in the 'themes' boxes correspond to the relevant category contained in that theme.

All participant quotations cited below are taken from units of analysis and serve to exemplify specific aspects of the overall themes of: 'Communication', 'Unity', 'Concept and Planning', 'Personalities', and 'Personal Perceptions'. In order to maintain participant anonymity, participants are referred to only by their participant number. In order to provide the context for the participant's perspective, Figure 4 indicates the participant's number in relation to their position in the partnership/company (CEO refers to any references made by participants to the original CEO who resigned and did not take part in the evaluation process).

FIGURE 4
KEY TO PARTICIPANT NUMBER IN RELATION TO POSITION IN THE WISE AND THE PARTNERSHIP

Theme 1: 'Communication'

Communication was a recurring emerging concept at the first three stages of this analysis. Communication was a unit of analysis (No. 24) and this unit of analysis subsequently emerged as one of the units of analysis forming the Category E (Communication). The category 'Communication' subsequently emerged as Theme 1 'Communication', indicating the importance of this concept of communication from the participants' perspective (please see Figure 3). Participant comments about communication referred to both the quality and quantity of communication occurring both within and between groups. The specific role of ICT in the communication process was also commented on as this played a large part in the emergence of a crisis that was instrumental in the resignation of the original CEO. The quotations from board members cited below exemplify the perceived quality of communication between board members as being 'distant' and 'formal' and the quantity as 'infrequent' and often focussed on 'confronting a crisis' rather than 'trying to establish a strategy'.

> *"So yeah we communicate with each other but I wouldn't say it's close. I did pick up the phone once to speak to P15 and after, he spoke to the CEO because at that stage I was concerned. I was concerned for the organisation, for WISE and for the risk of what appeared to be a poorly functioning but probably rather dissatisfied and maybe a damaged chief executive."* P13

> *"I would say communication is OK but distant. I mean we communicate via emails, we don't have frequent meetings and in an ideal world we ought really to set aside some time to meet not when we're confronting a crisis but when we are actually trying to establish a strategy".*P15

Communication between members of the Steering Group was also perceived as problematic as can be seen in the following quotations:

> *"I personally think it comes down to communication. Having time to do all the tasks but also communicating with all members of the steering group. And I think there were times were we had to make decisions within the programme and say P1 and I had met, we would sometimes forget, and I believe it was my role as chair of the steering group to communicate it out to all the other partners."* P16

"I don't want to lay all the blame on CEO because she's not here but there were discussions, certainly in steering group, as to what the numbers were and there were meetings with CEO separately to go through outputs and things. So she should have understood what the outputs [funding body requirements] were and how she communicated those to the staff team and that seems to be where it broke down." P20

From the above quotations it would appear that communication of important information about the funder's requirements, which should have been passed to the CEO and then to the staff team wasn't effectively communicated. This breakdown in communication was a major contributory factor leading to a crisis that threatened the funding and precipitated an important change of motivational emphasis for WISE programme staff. Communication within the staff employed to deliver the employment enhancement programmes was perceived by the staff themselves to be good.

"I think me and P10 we just kind of work alongside each other quite nicely. Me and P10 we are like an old married couple. Cos there are times when I think we really wind each other up but we've got a very open relationship. And that's kind of why I really like P10. I hate it, people bitching behind each other's back. I'd rather, if I'm bugging somebody or they're bugging me, I'd rather just get whatever the problem is out in the open. And that's what me and P10 are like, that's kind of how we deal with stuff" P7

"Whereas because me and P2 communicate really well and we work really well as a team together like it makes it a lot easier. We can just concentrate on doing things that we need to do." P6

"Excellent, P4 and I speak in evenings, we speak at weekends, and we speak regularly. I've no problems with communication between P4 and I." P11

However, external perception of communication within the 'executives' team [P4, P8 & P11] by P1 does not support their internal perception.

"Three out of the four teams communicate really effectively amongst themselves and I think because they have got that level of communication, I'm seeing a real step change in what they are doing. I think the other team, the executives programme team, don't effectively communicate and that becomes apparent in everything that they do. It's just so blatantly obvious that they do a lot of talking but they don't communicate with each other." P1

When examining the overall communication that took place between all groups the following quotations exemplify individual's perceptions.

"I don't think CEO actually accurately understood because I think maybe there was a communication issue there in relation to her being fed information that was accurate and up to date. So, I mean to some degree she was constantly running around chasing her tail with that sort of stuff. She should never have been in that situation because she should have been the one feeding the information through to us and it should have been accurate and precise and we should have known what we needed to be doing, and we didn't always." P5

"I think the communication isn't as good as it could be. And again that's within the board itself but also between the board and the staff; if there is communication from the board, who takes on the responsibility for moving that to staff?" P14

From the evidence presented it would appear that there was a breakdown in communication between the directors of the company and the programme staff. Often the conduit for communication between the board and staff was assumed, by the board of directors, to be the CEO. However, it became apparent that the CEO didn't fully comprehend the detail of what was required to ensure adequate record keeping. This situation contributed to a crisis point that could have resulted in the loss of funding. Subsequently, the CEO resigned in August 2010 and an acting CEO was appointed internally to instigate procedures to rectify the crisis situation. A further contributing factor to the crisis was rooted in many of the programme delivery staff's lack of competence in the use of the company's IT system [ACT], which was designed to record this vital record keeping information.

"Prior to August, IT was crap; it doesn't work, I can't access my email, I can't access this, I can't access remotely. When I do access remotely it is really slow. ACT is rubbish it doesn't do this, it won't do that, I can't use it; it is not user friendly blah, blah, blah.... Every single problem with IT was because we didn't know how to use it. And it wasn't that the system was crap; it was because they didn't trust it, they didn't like it, they were impatient with it and it didn't work in the way that they wanted it to work or they just didn't know how to use it." P1

The quotations cited below exemplify the remedial action taken to resolve the lack of IT competence but it seemed there were still some issues around understanding exactly what information was required to be recorded.

"The pair of them [P2 & P6] said "Do you know what, what's the point in keeping all the spreadsheets that everyone is keeping? ACT does it." So we gave them some ACT training. The pair of them use it as it was supposed to be used and now teach everybody else how to use it. So that's had a fairly significant impact as well." P1

"I know a lot of people had big problems with ACT but if you just sit down and actually focus on what you need to do and how you need to work it, it's very, very easy and I've helped quite a few people figure it out and now they're fine with it." P20

There were also issues regarding the lack of clarity of information and the constantly changing administrational procedures that existed during this 'early' phase of the development of the WISE.

"You know you can write your forms and they should be done, sorted, before you have even got it up and operational really. All your paperwork and your systems should be in place; we never had that. We constantly changed and adapted and manipulated the systems and the processes all the way along. I think we are kind of there now with it but it should have been there from day one really." P5

"After going through reams of forms and speaking to over a hundred people and filling in over a hundred forms for instance, it was found out that there were seven different styles of this one particular form on the company hard drive and nobody had gone in every time one was amended and deleted the old one off." P4

The acting CEO instigated training procedures to ensure ACT was being used correctly and the information required by the funder was being accurately recorded on the database.

"The staff members weren't sure on how to use the ACT system and that was part of my role to come in and train everybody on that system so hopefully now everybody is fully aware. We have aligned it to the [funding body's requirements] so we can easily pull off information. So I think the IT system is there now and if it continues to stay in place then it should help the staff instead of being a hindrance, which I think it was a few months ago." P20

Collectively, the above quotations taken from the theme 'Communication' reveal the quality and quantity of communication from the perspective of all participants in this 'early' phase of evaluation. The next theme to emerge during analysis was 'Unity'.

Theme 2: 'Unity'

The theme 'Unity' emerged from the data as both a positive and negative concept that broadly pivoted around the crisis point that was reached during August 2010. As revealed in the theme 'Communication', the staff did not appear to have received clear directions on how to record vital information required by the funders. In addition to this, the staff team was experiencing problems with the company database. This difficult situation was exacerbated by differing viewpoints being expressed by P1 and the CEO over various aspects of the management, which also contributed to a lack of clear direction to the staff team. Also, some staff's individual perception of a hierarchical structure in the company contributed to poor overall team cohesion. There were also some emerging issues around the unity of the board that centered on board member's levels of commitment to the company. The change of CEO seemed to have a positive effect on the unity of the board and the staff team, resulting in a cooperative effort to resolve the immediate crisis situation.

"CEO would say something that was completely and blatantly wrong and I would contradict it without knowing what she had said. The complexities of this she never actually got to grips with. I think she found herself in a position where she was out of her depth because the paperwork wasn't set up. It was set up but then it changed for some reason." P1

"While CEO was there, she boosted P19 up to be, I think it was senior consultant and we [P7 & P10] were both a bit cheesed off with that to be honest because we are doing a senior consultant's [job]. So that's a gripe, yeah it's definitely a gripe. To be honest there was no need to call her a senior consultant." P10

"My title is Senior Careers Consultant and I do work with clients first hand. I consider my role as well, as one of the more mature members of the team, to be a bit of an ambassador; perhaps with a bit more work background, work experience. There are some very young members in that team who haven't had experience of the workplace or how to conduct in front of clients." P11

"We knew he P13 was going to act in the way he does because, quite reasonably from his point of view, he acts in what he sees to be the interests of [particular school at UNI]. And I think he sometimes misunderstands the role of the director, which is to act in the best interests of the company. I think he sometimes finds it difficult to separate the two." P12

"It's really a question of time. I need to be on that board ensuring that the university's interests are met and that any potential crises are avoided if at all possible. That is

different from P12 and P1's role. P1 quite rightly, his sole role is the best interests of the WISE." P13

After the appointment of P1 as acting CEO there was a change in management style, which resulted in a new direction being given to the WISE staff. The management style was more directive and the focus of attention was shifted to focusing primarily on ensuring that the information required by the funder was collected and entered on the ACT data base. These changes produced clarity of overall objective for the staff and contributed to them adopting a more cohesive team mentality. A collective perception of an overall WISE team emerged and for a while the staff found this to be a positive and unifying experience.

> *"But now when we talk about participants it's as a whole. When we talk about the graduates programme and when we talk about the executives programme and we talk about the NEETs programme yeah, we are still there but it's collectively as a whole company now, which is pretty good it gives us clear direction or clearer direction than we had before."* P10

> *"So, whenever I am going out promoting the WISE I don't just talk about the executives' programme I talk about all three projects."* P4

However, in spite of this overall increase in staff unity, there was still factional disaffection from the executives programme team that was contributing to overall disunity. For this group, the change in management style was not perceived as a positive one.

> *"P4 and I are both mature members of the team. We've had prior experience of the workplace and different management roles. Understanding that vision and that overall objective would explain some of the management decisions that have taken place; but I don't have sight of that so it's very difficult to justify the management style at times."* P11

Overall there was evidence of a general lack of unity between members of the board of directors. There was also evidence of some confusion among members of the WISE staff, regarding the funder's auditing requirements that contributed to a level of disunity within the staff team. The temporary appointment of P1 as acting CEO appeared to create staff unity around a specific cause (i.e. resolving the crisis), which created a unity of purpose around achieving the target figures required for the funder. However, this co-operative activity could be described as a form of crisis management providing temporary unity rather than the company moving forward in a united way to achieve sustainability. The problems faced by the company are summarised below.

> *"I think it comes down to the fact that it is quite difficult to set up a relatively large organisation with complex activity through funding, which then allows you to employ a number of people who have to then function collaboratively and then to look at how to sustain that activity beyond the period of funding when perhaps the activities have been designed around a funding stream rather than necessarily around a business approach that would allow you to be able to sell some of those services in the open market or public sector market."* P17

Nevertheless, the company was now seeking to fulfil the targets contained in the original funding bid but sustainability tended to become sidelined in the pursuit of those specific targets. This change in emphasis characterised the next emergent theme.

Theme 3: 'Concept and Planning'

As difficulties with 'Communication' and 'Unity' emerged, which contributed to the crisis already discussed, there was a shift in emphasis towards achieving numerical targets in order to satisfy the funder's demands. This meant that planning for a sustainable future for the WISE was sidelined in order to address more immediate financial problems.

> *"When the bid was written it was anticipated that rather than providing placements we would actually be providing employment opportunities for NEETs and for persons made redundant. Then the economic climate changed and it was changed to placements alongside the training elements and education."* P17

Also, some of the more altruistic aspirations of management and staff of the WISE suggest a certain naïveté and disregard for the necessity for profit making in order to achieve post funding sustainability. However, this naïveté was not widespread, especially among board and steering group members and in spite of the underlying naïveté among WISE staff members there was a general awareness of sustainability issues:

> *"So, I like that side of it, that we are not just there to like bring money off people; we are there for help for the community as well as our thing. It is important to me, I love that, it feels like a more meaningful company than just a for profit thing."* P2

> *"Well, WISE has a number of purposes. At one level I think it's in some ways, its most important level, is to provide a service to customers and to the community and you can argue at the moment they're not customers because they are not paying."* P12

> *"In my view, the purpose of WISE is to try to assist people to engage with the labour market and find employment. So that's the primary task of WISE but in doing that it needs to sell the services that it offers. I'm slightly concerned that may actually be difficult to achieve."* P15

> *"The sustainability, obviously we don't have that unless we make our programmes as they are now profitable, which I don't really think is possible with all of the.....we aren't really sustainable and we do rely on either getting more funding from the same source or finding something else to do."* P6

> *"So, I think there is that gap [in the market]. We have begun looking at different markets that will buy what we are doing. I think the future is about what any other business has to do, get your products right, understand your customers, package your product up so your customers will buy it and then sell it with a real focus on customer service and quality."* P1

A further contributing factor to the problems the WISE was facing was rooted in the individual personalities across the partnership and the staff team, which form the basis of the next theme.

Theme 4: 'Personalities'

Following his appointment as acting CEO, P1 brought his own personality and management style to the crisis management task, which seemed to be appreciated by the majority, if not all of the staff.

> *"I don't want a new CEO because I think everything is working a lot better since P1 like took charge and I think we are a better team. It will feel strange having somebody new come in [potential new CEO] and maybe they won't understand our routine. We had*

goals before P1 was CEO but we didn't notice them as much. We were just focused on our own individual team performance. We weren't focused on the whole of the WISE performing beforehand I don't think." P2

"Before, I didn't feel like any of us were working as one big team at all. I felt like we were like very individual on our projects. We were all really blinkered by our own targets what we had to achieve. And since P1 has taken over, we are much more, we have regular team meetings. So we interact with each other a lot better." P7

The above quotations characterise the way P1's management style and personality enabled him to generate a sense of teamwork among the staff. However, as effective as P1 was with the majority of the staff, the individual personalities of a small group of individuals seemed to conflict with P1. This group consisted of three members of the executives programme team, P4, P11 and P5, who became a discontented 'faction' that were becoming increasingly isolated from the other staff and discontented with P1's management style. In addition to isolation from the overall team, the personalities within the executives programme team itself, did not lend themselves to the creation of a cohesive and collaborative team. This personality clash was apparent to other staff and the members of the executives programme team themselves.

"We [P4 & P11] *do have moments where we don't get on. We do have moments where we disagree but we are both adults and we both move on from it and learn from it"* P11

"I just see one group of people now who are working together but I do see this small group, who I think is the executives programme bunch, where they just seem to be a little bit out of the loop. I am trying to pull that in." P1

"I think the group dynamics and the harmony within the executives programme has fallen apart, utterly fallen apart. And I am sure that P4 and P11 would crucify me for saying that. But I don't think that it's either of their faults at all. But it has, the cohesion there is......it's been undermined [by P1] to a point where it is just collapsing." P5

As has been indicated previously, during this 'early' phase in the development of the WISE a crisis emerged, the original CEO resigned, P1 was appointed as acting CEO, prior to the appointment of a new CEO, administrative procedures around the reporting of information for the funder were changed and targets were put in place to motivate the staff. This sequence of events is not disputed by any of the participants in this evaluation study. However, personal perceptions of how the crisis emerged and the actions taken to resolve the crisis created divisions within the WISE staff.

Theme 5: 'Personal Perceptions'
    The personal perceptions of the actions taken to resolve the crisis fall into three main groups:

1)   The perceptions of P1, before and after he was appointed as acting CEO;
2)   The perceptions of some of the 3e staff who became disaffected as a result of P1s changes and management style;
3)   The perceptions of the members of staff who supported the management style and measures taken by P1.

Although the chronology of events is not in dispute, the personal perceptions of the individuals and groups involved are of primary importance because they impact upon the development of an 'effective team', which is the basis of this research. Perceptions are not formed within a vacuum but within an overall social environment constructed by the individuals and groups involved. For the research purpose,

the veracity and uniformity of the perceptions is less important than how the individual and group perceptions impact on the overall team development. Prior to August, P1 was employed by the university in addition to being a director on the board. Becoming acting CEO of the WISE presented problems for P1 because his role in the university involved line management responsibility for some of the WISE staff who had been seconded from the university to work in the WISE. The following quotations exemplify his personal perceptions of the conflicting pressures of his three roles:

> *"All the time wanting to keep out of staffing issues but having the university staff coming to me as their line manager, I had one coming to me in tears saying I can't cope with this, it's doing my head in. So, there was a lot of conflict in my role because I am a line manager of staff, I'm a director of the WISE, so I can't ignore it. I have a responsibility under contract."* P1

> *"But I think, I think there is a real kernel of truth in the fact that my role [as director] and maybe me personally did contribute to that crisis situation and I think that the majority of that, was that I assumed a number of roles that were required to be done. I have questioned whether, as the founder of this, did I want to control it, No, I didn't want to control it because I have got enough on my plate, why would I? Because actually it is my vision, people have bought into this because of the work I have been doing over 5 years."* P1

The personal perceptions of the 'disaffected' group, discussed in the previous theme, were influenced by P1's management style and their prior relationships with the original CEO. This group had aligned themselves with the prior CEO much more so than the other members of staff. Regardless of the veracity of their personal perceptions, it seems clear that the individuals involved felt they were being treated badly and this perception would prevent effective teamwork developing.

> *"At times, it almost seems, seem as though that certain areas of what we are doing, the work we are doing, are wanted to fail. They are wanted to fail by senior people and I mean board level down. The one that immediately springs to mind is the executives programme, you know. This is no way a direct insult or anything towards P4 or P11 but at the moment, they are being put through an absolute living hell. They really are; no other way to describe it. They have done a lot of work to turn it round but are getting beaten senseless. I just don't see the logic in it at all."* P5

> [Pre-change of CEO] *"Very, very supportive, very helpful always, always willing to sit down and have the time to explore avenues and look at different ways.* [Post-change of CEO] *a lot less supportive. I think what had been the WISE's main problem is that it's kind of been fire-fighting all the way really; lastminute.com all the time."* P4

> *"I am uneasy about some of the management decisions and tactics that he [P1] adopts. I'm not aware of the reason why that management style is adopted. I would like to say the amount of paperwork that we have had to get re-signed and re-printed and filled in from scratch again has just been mammoth. I think that has taken up an immense amount of time. A necessary thing to do but if it had been set up in the right way in the beginning; we wouldn't have had to do that. And I'm personally quite angry about that. To me it seems madness."* P11

However, the personal perceptions of P1's management style by other WISE staff provide an alternative interpretation to the executives programme team's perception.

"I think P1 and the team [executives programme] are feeling the pressure. You know something has got to change but we have got to do it in a positive way. I think it is P1's management is conflicting cos it just feels like he just wants to say to the executives programme team "Come on guys we've got to change something" but the way that that's being received is also not right so maybe both of them need to take a look and say "Come on let's sit down as a team." P8

"All of the targets are improving and also everybody is working in the same sort of way and everyone is thinking in the same sort of way. And everybody seems to be much more focused on what seems to be right and it just feels better. Everyone seems happier." P7

"Now, I actually love coming in, in the morning whereas before I could quite easily have not bothered. But now, recently it just feels like everything has been uplifted and everything is just changed to how I believed it was going to be when it was first started." P3

The majority of the WISE's staff member's personal perceptions of P1's procedural changes and management style were positive. Their personal perceptions enabled them to respond positively to given specific targets and a more direct management style. This resulted in a greater sense of cohesion for the 3e staff with the exception of the executives programme team as described above. However, the disaffection of the executives programmes' group and P5 clearly impacted to some extent on the overall cohesion of the WISE staff team.

SUMMARY

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the twenty participants revealed five themes, which were interpreted by the researchers as: 'Communication'; 'Unity'; 'Concept and Planning'; 'Personalities' and; 'Personal Perceptions'. The above discussion of those emergent themes provides evidence of poor communication between the management and staff of the WISE. There was also evidence of poor communication between staff members involved in the delivery of the three employment enhancement programmes. Poor communication was a contributory factor in the lack of 'Unity' across the partnership and the WISE staff team, which was shown to impact upon the 'Concept and Planning' of the social enterprise. The 'Personalities' of some individuals, at all levels of the partnership and staff team, were revealed as often conflicting and detrimental to cohesion within the company. Individual 'Personal Perceptions' of the actions taken by the acting CEO to resolve the crisis, contributed to the disaffection and isolation of the executives programme team, which was not conducive to overall effective teamwork.

If the findings of the research are triangulated with the Sheard & Kakabadse (2002) model [please see Figure 1], it can be argued that at the end of this 'early' phase the WISE was locked into the 'Norming/Storming Cycle' section of the model. By examining the basic elements of task, individual, group and environment in relation to their nine key contributory factors [please see Table 1] it can also be argued that during this 'early' phase of the research evaluation, the partnership and WISE staff were still operating as a 'loose group' and not performing as an 'effective team'. As the results of the analysis of the interview data demonstrates, some individuals in the WISE were opting out of goals they failed to understand or did not agree with and there was evidence of split loyalty in both the partnership and the WISE. This meant that the group as whole did not understand the goals being set nor which ones to prioritise and they were therefore not an effective team in relation to the 'task' element of the model (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002). In relation to the basic element 'individual' the results of the current research revealed that roles and responsibilities were unclear with gaps, overlap and a social system that left individuals guarded, again highlighting the WISE team's 'loose group' status (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002). In addition, results from the current research in relation to the element 'group' revealed that the

majority of the WISE staff indicated that they preferred a leadership style that was directive. In the partnership (i.e. the board of directors and steering group) the style of communication was described by directors themselves as 'formal' with little open dialogue. Finally, and in relation to the 'environment' element the results from the current research revealed that the infrastructure was far from stable as there were many changes of personnel, office space and problems with the technology. In an effective team, the 'context' should be influenced but not controlled by organisation (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002). Results of the current research revealed that in the WISE the 'context' seemed to lack effective organisation and staff were encouraged to be task focused.

A team, consisting of a newly formed institutional partnership and a WISE in its 'early' phase of development is likely to experience difficulties as it tries to successfully complete a funded project and develop income from trading to support a financially sustainable future. The current research, conducted during the 'early' phase of a three phase longitudinal study, provides empirical evidence that the team had not yet reached the 'performing' stage in the 'Integrated Team Development Framework' proposed by Sheard & Kakabadse (2002) and was still performing as a 'loose group'. The findings of the current research indicate that by mapping the results of this 'early' phase of a longitudinal research study, against the criteria from the basic elements and their relationship with the Sheard & Kakabadse (2002) model, it was possible to reveal whether or not the team was performing as an effective team. When the results of the 'middle' and 'late' phases are available, this research method will provide empirical evidence of whether or not, and at which stage, the team were able to reach the performing stage of the model.

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