INTER-SECTOR TRANSITIONS: AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES AND MANAGERS WHO TRANSITIONED BETWEEN THE PUBLIC, PRIVATE, THIRD AND ACADEMIC SECTORS

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Copyright statement

Abstract

This research explores the experiences and perceptions of senior executives and managers who have made one or more transitions between the public, private, academic and third sectors in the UK. The personal experience of inter-sector transition is an under-researched phenomenon, particularly in the UK.   This interpretative qualitative study aims to enhance understanding of inter-sector transition and to identify the challenges and enablers of a successful transition.

The context for this research is the increased blurring between the organisational sectors, as many parts of the public sector decline in size, the role of the private and third sectors in service delivery become more significant, and hybrid partnerships increase. The influence of New Public Management, which has introduced private sector practices into the public, academic and third sectors is also a factor in potentially reducing the difference between the sectors. In the researcher's work environment, recruitment of personnel from outside the academic sector is increasing. The professional implications for the study are to understand the factors which enable a smooth and successful transition, in order that individuals achieve job satisfaction and that the organisation benefits from their productivity as soon as possible.

The study adopts a qualitative methodology, drawing on grounded theory methods for the collection and analysis of data. Fifteen managers and senior executives from a range of professions and sectors participated in in-depth interviews. The findings suggest that enablers of a successful transition are familiarity with the destination sector prior to transitioning, work values which align with those of the destination organisation, appropriate professional skills, and mentoring support. The main challenges to a successful transition are organisational cultures, the questioning of professional identity and issues of self-esteem. In addition to enhancing the understanding of transition enablers and challenges, the contribution to professional practice is demonstrated through practical guidelines for line managers, which will assist with inductions of new starters from outside the sector. The key limitations of the research are identified as being the size and characteristics of the sample, together with the lack of triangulation from participants' managers or reports concerning the success of the transition. Recommendations for future research are to broaden the sample so that particular characteristics may be explored in more detail, such as age, gender and professional background. There is also scope for further research into the leadership characteristics which lend themselves to successful inter-sector transitions.

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Chapter 1 An introduction to the research

This research explores the experiences of managers and senior executives who have made one or more transitions between the public, private, academic and third sectors in the UK. It aims to enhance understanding of the transition experience and to identify the challenges and enablers of a successful transition. The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) and seeks to demonstrate an original contribution to knowledge as well as informing professional practice.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the research. Specifically it covers the context and rationale for the research; its relevance and timeliness, including its contribution to professional practice; the aims and objectives; the research approach and conceptual framework; and finally an outline of the thesis structure.

1.1 Context and rationale for the research

1.1.1 Genesis of the research

A number of strands came together to shape this research. At a conceptual level it grew from a general interest in the differences between the public and private sectors and in particular the motivations for working in each of them. At a practitioner level there were two drivers: the increasing adoption of private sector management practices in the university sector, and a growing awareness of the challenges facing employees joining the university sector from the private sector. And finally, the national political and economic situation provided the broader context for the study. These various strands are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Initial investigations suggested that the literature on people who transition between sectors was under developed, especially concerning the personal impact of the transition on individuals (see 1.2.2. below). For the researcher there were a number of potential questions to explore, such as: What are the personal experiences of people who transition between the public and private sectors? How much transition occurs between these and other sectors, such as the not-for-profit and higher education sectors? Is the transition experience different for employees as opposed to managers? Is the transition experience different nowadays to ten or twenty years ago? These are significant questions because they may impact on the success of the transition. Not only is it in employers' interests for new staff to adapt to their new organisation quickly (a process known as organisational socialisation – see Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and become economically

productive, but it is important for the wellbeing and motivation of the individual (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006).

The gap in the literature offered considerable scope to add to the body of knowledge. There were also important practical applications: by exploring individuals' experiences of inter-sector transition, it was hoped to identify both the challenges and the enablers of a successful transition, which would be of benefit to employers, Human Resources professionals, and to individuals intending to make the transition.

1.1.2 National context

The current political and economic climate in the UK is one in which large sections of the public sector are declining both in size and scope, with the private and third sectors expected to take over the provision of key public services. The intention of the Conservative Party in this respect was signalled in both their recent election campaigns (The Conservative Party, 2010; The Conservative Party, 2015) and has been enacted during their terms of office. UK public sector employment in June 2016 at 5.332 million, is at its lowest level since the current ONS statistical series on public sector employment began in 1999, whereas private sector employment, at 26.435 million, has risen every quarter since December 2011 and is the highest recorded figure (Office for National Statistics, 2016).

The current changes are arguably just the most recent manifestation of a movement which started in the 1980s, coined New Public Management, or NPM, which had at its core the aim to make the public sector more efficient through the adoption of private sector practices. NPM has gained consensus across the political spectrum and across the world (Flynn, 1990; Pollitt, 1993; Hood 1989, 1991). Some would regard it as the management movement which complemented the 'Third Way', a political doctrine which attempted to synthesise right wing economic policies of economic growth and entrepreneurialism, with left wing policies of social justice and egalitarianism (Giddens, 1999).

A perhaps inevitable consequence of the reduction in public funding is that new models of service delivery are required. The delivery of many core services is no longer undertaken by public sector bodies, with commissioning to private and third sector bodies increasingly common (this is discussed further in 2.7.2). Further changes to the remit of local government can be seen in primary and secondary education, where the growth of 'academies' (initiated by the Labour Government through the Learning and Skills Act 2000) is taking the control of compulsory

education away from local authorities. Careers and employability initiatives are increasingly being undertaken by social enterprises.

Given the changes outlined above, it could be assumed that where people are transitioning between sectors, the majority of the transitions would be in the direction of public to the private or third sectors. However this appears not to be the case, as demonstrated by the participants in the research. For a variety of reasons, which are explored further in this thesis, individuals are also transitioning from the private to the public, third and academic sectors, and indeed some participants make multiple transitions between the sectors.

Higher and Further Education has also undergone radical transformation over the last decade. For the university sector in England, the changes accelerated following the publication of a major review of higher education funding and student finance (Browne et al., 2010). The reform of funding models to Higher Education Institutions and the removal of the 'cap' on student recruitment have led to an increasingly competitive market. Universities have adopted management practices and techniques previously more familiar to the private sector (Parker, 2012) and students are now, controversially, considered 'customers' in some respects (Lomas, 2007). Student satisfaction with the quality of the student experience is of primary importance to national league tables of universities.

The third sector has grown and diversified significantly over the last twenty years in the UK, instigated in large part by the Labour administration under Blair (Alcock, 2012). It has doubled its income, particularly due to the increase in state-funded service delivery (Milbourne, 2013). A traditional view of the third sector would arguably focus on charities, but the social enterprises which have developed since the 1980's and 1990's combine both charity and business (Defourny & Nyssens, 2008; Kerlin, 2009). They are hybrid organisations, with goals to support social missions (previously the domain of the public or charitable sectors) but with a requirement for funding from both private and public sectors in order to deliver those goals. Further recent developments in the organisational landscape are Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), voluntary partnerships between businesses and local authorities, introduced by the government in 2011 to meet local economic priorities for growth and regeneration (Doyle, 2013).

The developments referred to above illustrate the ways in which boundaries between the organisational sectors are changing. Throughout the twentieth century, commercial businesses, public organisations and private charities had distinctive characteristics which aligned with the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. However over the last thirty years these characteristics have become less well defined and the boundaries between them more blurred (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Rainey & Chun, 2005).

So how does this changing sector landscape impact on individuals working within these sectors? The researcher took the decision to focus on the experiences of managers and senior executives, rather than the workforce across all levels. This focus was deliberate, on the basis that individuals working in management positions would probably be more affected by the differences between sectors, for example by differences in organisational culture and ethos.

The changing sector landscape suggests that managers who previously were employed in the public sector may now find themselves in the position of doing essentially the same job but working for a commercial company, for example where a service has been outsourced. Conversely there may be others whose career has been primarily within the private sector, but who choose to move into the public or third sectors, perhaps wanting to 'give something back' to society, or to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by social enterprises. The concept of the 'boundaryless career', defined as 'sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings' (Arthur, 2014, p.628) is a reality for many people, and spans not just employment changes within sectors, but across sectors too.

A number of studies have pointed to the differences in organisational culture between private and public sector (Ross, 1988; Perry & Rainey, 1988; Boardman, Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2010), suggesting that making the transition from one to the other could be difficult. This is borne out by studies on socialisation in organisational contexts, which examine the ways in which new members acquire the values and norms of the organisation they are joining (Jones, 1986; Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007), and by the limited number of studies which have looked at the personal experiences of inter-sector transition (Apfel, 2013; Liu, Engar-Carlson & Minchiello, 2011; Thompson & Flynn, 2014). This current study makes an important contribution to the body of knowledge on successful inter-sector transition.

1.1.3 Definition of key terms

This research concerns the experiences of individuals at manager and senior executive level who transition – in any direction – between the public, private, academic and third 'sectors'. Specifically it explores the factors which contribute to a successful inter-sector transition, by identifying potential enablers and challenges. But what exactly is meant by the term 'sector' and how does one define it, particularly, as alluded to above, when the boundaries between the sectors are becoming increasingly blurred? Similarly, there are numerous ways of defining a 'manager', who may operate at various different levels within an organisation, and a senior executive. The definition of the term 'transition' also requires explanation. This section therefore provides a brief

summary of the researcher's use of terms, in order to clarify the parameters of the research from the outset.

1.1.3.1 Definitions relating to 'transition' and 'sectors'

Inter-sector transition: This refers to the movement of people, in any direction, between the public, private, academic and third sectors. The term 'transition' is used to imply change from one state or condition to another (Paperback Oxford English dictionary, 2012, p.778).

The term 'sector' as used in this research relates principally to type of organisation. Over the last half century, sectors have been categorised in many different ways including according to ownership (Rainey, Backoff & Levine, 1976), according to employment (Smith, Wolstencroft & Southern, 1989) and according to purpose (Drucker, 1990). There is considerable overlap between these different classifications, and so this research adopts a pragmatic approach to defining the sectors, based largely on how sectors are recognised by the lay person.

Private sector. This sector comprises organisations which are run by private individuals and are not controlled by the state. The aims of private sector organisations include profit, growth, and increasing market share. Financing may come from a variety of sources depending on the type of business, including selling shares in the company, bank loans, personal savings and government grants. Examples of the private sector represented by participants in this research include multi-national corporations, professional services firms, legal practices and manufacturing companies.

Public sector. This sector comprises organisations that are owned and run by the state and is concerned with providing various government services. Funding is primarily provided by the state, through taxes, and the organisations are subject to public scrutiny. Examples of public sector organisations of relevance to this research are the Civil Service, local government, public corporations and the Police Force.

Third sector. This sector includes the not-for-profit and voluntary sectors which are non-governmental, but also social enterprises which receive funding from both private and public sources. Examples of third sector organisations reflected in this research are a social enterprise providing employment opportunities for disadvantaged young people and a professional membership organisation.

Academic sector. In the context of this research, the academic sector refers primarily to institutions in the higher education sector. Traditionally universities would have been designated public sector but arguably the changes to the funding models in the last decade render this

definition obsolete, particularly following the introduction of tuition fees and the reduction of the central teaching grant. Universities receive funding from a variety of sources including the UK government, overseas organisations, research councils, industry and private individuals.

1.1.3.2 Definitions relating to 'manager' and 'senior executive'

The title of this study incorporates the terms 'manager' and 'senior executive'. These terms are used generically for individuals who have responsibility for leading or managing a group of people within an organisational context. The term 'manager' implies a range of roles, including leading, administrating and fixing, with the proportion of time spent on each role varying according to seniority (Handy, 1993). The terms 'manager' and 'senior executive' are both used throughout the study, for convenience, but as the data analysis progressed it became apparent that there were three distinct levels of 'manager', each having the potential for different transition factors to come into play (discussed further in section 4.1.2). The three terms adopted during the data analysis were middle manager, senior manager, and chief executive officer (CEO), each of which is defined below.

Middle manager. This term is applicable to team leaders in large organisations. Middle managers are responsible for managing small teams, undertaking performance management and scheduling of duties. They have limited decision-making authority and report to a senior manager. In the current study, examples of middle managers were a team leader in a university and a team leader in a commercial company.

Senior manager. This term is applicable to head of large departments or units, with significant decision-making authority. They often manage large teams and lead on strategy development in their area of responsibility. They report to a CEO or equivalent. Examples from the current research include a managing director of a private company within a larger conglomerate, and the director of a professional service within a public sector organisation.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO is the top executive responsible for an organisation's overall operation and performance. They are the leader of the organisation, serving as the main link between the board of directors and the rest of the organisation, and are held responsible for the organisation's success or failure. In the context of the current study, examples of CEOs came from commerce, a social enterprise, a University and a local authority.

1.2 Relevance and timeliness of the research

1.2.1 Why now?

This research is timely because the organisational sectors are undergoing a period of significant change. As outlined above, the boundaries between sectors are becoming increasingly blurred, and the growth of hybrid organisations such as social enterprises is gathering pace (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Spear, Cornforth & Aiken, 2009), as is the non-profit sector (Rutherford, 2015). It seems inevitable to the researcher that we will see an increase in mobility between sectors, either because individuals choose to move or because they are forced to, for example through outsourcing or redundancy.

There is also a growing recognition of the value of cross-sector collaboration in the effective delivery of public services. According to Bryson, Crosby and Stone, recent research reinforces their previous conclusion that 'cross-sector collaboration is hardly an easy answer to complex public problems. Indeed, it is typically frustrating for participants' (2015, p.648) and arguably this frustration may be in part due to a lack of understanding about the cultures and operations of other sectors.

1.2.2 A gap in the academic literature

As noted above (1.1.1), the academic literature regarding the experiences of managers moving between sectors is under developed in the UK. A review of the literature relating directly and indirectly to inter-sector transition is provided in chapter 2, so what follows here is a brief overview. In recent years a small number of quantitative studies have been undertaken on 'sector-switching' in the USA and Denmark (Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009; Hansen, 2014: Su & Bozeman, 2009; Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman & Anker, 2008) but these provide little or no insight into the real-life experiences of individuals. In terms of qualitative studies of individuals' experiences, limited research has been undertaken in the USA, Canada and Australia concerning individuals who have moved from senior positions in the commercial sector into the public sector (Lane, 2006; Thompson & Flynn, 2014; Niedosik, 2014; Pittinsky & Messiter, 2007; Ross, 1988) and each study suggests challenges in making that transition.

Biographical material provides useful insights into specific individuals and organisations; take for example the memoirs of senior politicians, who started life in the private sector but then elected for a life at Westminster. Their autobiographies describe to various extents the machinations of government (examples include Blair, 2010; Thatcher, 1993), but there is little reflection on the

process of transition to a new sector. Newspapers and other media are also potentially valuable sources of information on this topic. A search for newspaper articles in the ProQuest database yields a small number of stories about people who have made, or are considering making, the move to a different sector (for example Daniels, 2007; Mundy & O'Connor, 2012).

Although the literature on inter-sector transition is sparse, there are related constructs which provide useful context such as the 'boundaryless' career (Arthur, 1994) and broader concepts such as the public-private sector debate. These are reviewed in chapter 2. What is clear, however, is that to date, there is a lack of qualitative research on inter-sector transition in the UK. This research therefore represents the first academic study in the UK to explore the experiences of managers who have undertaken transitions between one or more of the public, private, third and academic sectors. It also specifically seeks to identify the challenges and enablers of successful transitions.

1.2.3 Multi-sector skills in the twenty first century

Given the increase in cross-sector working as evidenced by public-private partnerships, multi-agency working and social enterprises, the researcher suggests there are significant advantages to broadening executive teams to include senior personnel with multi-sector experience. To be effective, leaders and managers would benefit from an understanding of private sector practices, for example lean business and customer relationship management, but also an understanding of how the public sector works, particularly with regards to bureaucratic processes and accountability. Recent research on cross-sector collaboration points to desirable high-level leadership skills such as creating a common purpose, communication, networking and negotiation skills (Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2015). This study demonstrates the experiences and transferable skills that are effective at senior level in complex working environments, building on previous findings (Denis, Langley & Pineault, 2000) as well as the new skills which need to be developed and the new knowledge which needs to be acquired.

In order to grow the number of managers with this blend of skills and experience, it is in the interests of all organisations across all sectors to make inter-sector transitions as smooth as possible. Having an understanding of the enablers and challenges to successful transitions is therefore critical.

1.2.4 De-bunking the stereotypes

Anecdotal and media evidence suggests an element of stereotyping which may militate against employing people from particular types of organisation or background. A study undertaken by the Hay Recruitment Company in 2010, for example, showed that 46 per cent of company bosses felt it was very important to have private sector experience when hiring new staff (Dawber, 2010). At a more local level, the author of this research has first- hand knowledge of a company director refusing on principle to employ anyone from the public sector because they felt that they lacked the appropriate work ethic.

Such stereotyping may be not only unwarranted, but could also serve to reduce the potential pool from which employees are recruited.

1.2.5 Implications for Human Resources professionals

Human Resources professionals will gain useful insights from this study into the factors which enable successful inter-sector transitions. There is a need to design and evaluate programmes which facilitate transition (Thompson & Flynn, 2014), for example induction or mentoring programmes for individuals. There may also be implications for organisations undergoing TUPE (The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations) in terms of easing the transition for the individuals affected.

1.2.6 Implications for Recruitment Agencies

This study will inform the work of recruitment agencies. Anecdotally the researcher is aware that some agencies provide practical advice to clients who are considering inter-sector transitions, but, as indicated above, there is very little academic research to inform such advice. The outcomes of this research will provide empirical evidence on the enablers and challenges to successful transition.

1.2.7 Impact on professional practice

The researcher has spent her professional career in further and higher education. Originally qualified as a librarian, her portfolio of responsibilities has grown to encompass library and computing services, printing, archives and special collections within her University.

The blurring of boundaries between the sectors and the rapidly changing UK University environment (1.1.2 above) is starting to impact significantly on the researcher's professional practice, at various levels. As a professional service, there is a strong focus on customer service, service improvement, and a requirement to meet stringent financial targets – all approaches originally emanating from the private sector. This change in culture, which started some years ago, impacts significantly on staff in terms of their required skill sets and attributes. Staff members are required to be not just technically proficient but also flexible, proactive, and possessive of a 'can do' attitude and highly developed interpersonal skills. Whilst these attributes are by no means the preserve of the private sector, they have traditionally not been associated with the public sector either. There are lessons to be learned from the private sector, and the leadership of professional services in the University sector should benefit from an understanding of many of the issues explored in the interviews in this study, particularly those issues associated with transitioning to a new organisational culture.

For the researcher, an appreciation of the motivations of, and the challenges for, people moving into the academic environment, will enable mechanisms to be put into place to ease the transition. In recent years, several people have joined the researcher's professional service at a variety of levels from the private sector. It is apparent that some of these transitions have been more successful than others, and although there may be multiple reasons for this, a greater understanding of the potential challenges faced by new colleagues would be enormously helpful. The shorter the transition period, the quicker a new colleague is able to become fully productive.

A further major area of impact concerns the development of new service delivery models and new partnerships between the academic and private sectors. The UK government is increasingly, via the higher education funding bodies, seeking to make Universities more efficient and to develop shared services (Universities UK, 2015). The researcher has been leading new developments in the academic library sector, at regional and national levels, through her professional associations. These issues are explored in more detail in the Impact Statement which forms part of the submission for the DBA.

1.3 Aims and objectives

This research critically explores the experiences and perceptions of senior executives and managers who have made one or more transitions between the public, private, academic and third sectors in the UK. It aims to enhance understanding of the transition experience and identify the challenges and enablers of a successful transition.

The objectives of the study are:

- To undertake a critical literature review, identifying areas where there is a dearth of research. The relevant fields for review include: inter-sector transition (sometimes referred to as 'sector-switching'); leadership in the public and private sectors; organisational cultures including the differences in culture between the sectors; organisational socialisation; and theories which may impact on transition such as motivation, self-esteem and public service ethos.

- To identify and explore emerging themes which are significant to individuals making inter-sector transitions at a management level. These themes may relate to and include prior experience, preconceptions, skillsets and values.

- To identify and explore the factors which contribute to a successful transition (the enablers).

- To identify and explore any factors which inhibit a successful transition (the challenges).

- Using the empirical data derived from the research, to develop practical guidance on inter-sector transitions. This guidance will take the form of 'hints and tips' for individuals considering a transition, as well as recommendations for employers, Human Resources and recruitment agency practitioners, and UK Business Schools.

1.4 Research design

'A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data' (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.40). The selection of the most appropriate research design requires consideration of several factors, including the researcher's philosophical worldview, the nature of the research problem, research designs and methods. These are all discussed more fully in chapter 3. What follows here is an overview of the rationale for the selected approach.

The underpinning philosophy of the researcher has a major bearing on the research design and methodology deployed, in any research study. The author of this research takes an interpretivist epistemological position, which holds the view that 'reality' is determined by people rather than by objective and external factors (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008). Interpretivism, or social constructivism as it is called in some disciplines, is commonly aligned with the social sciences, business and management disciplines. It provides an appropriate philosophical framework from whence to explore issues which have people at their core and which assume that people's actions influence the world around them.

As noted earlier, research in the field of inter-sector transition to date is in its infancy (Hansen, 2014; Thompson & Flynn, 2014), as is the theoretical underpinning on which the few existing studies have been based. Because of the underdeveloped nature of the field, an exploratory design was considered the most appropriate, and because the focus was to understand people's experiences and perceptions of inter-sector transition, a qualitative methodology was chosen. Qualitative studies are often exploratory in nature and are about generating theories rather than testing them; they aim to explore and understand phenomena.

There are a number of methodologies available to the qualitative researcher, including phenomenology, case studies, and ethnography, which are discussed further in chapter 3. However, having considered the options, the approach which provided the best 'fit' for this study was one drawing on grounded theory methods.

Grounded theory was first expounded by sociologists Glaser and Strauss in their seminal publication *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* (1967). They advocated that systematic analysis of qualitative data through coding would yield new concepts and theories. In other words, the theory would be grounded in the data. Over the last fifty years grounded theory has evolved considerably, and has been the subject of much academic debate. It may now be described as a set of principles and practices, rather than a prescribed methodology (Charmaz, 2006). These issues are discussed further in chapter 3 along with the rationale for the research design.

Data collection was achieved through in-depth interviews, from a sample of fifteen managers, who came from a variety of professional backgrounds and who each had a very different story to tell. The data was analysed through techniques associated with grounded theory - coding, memo writing and constant comparison – which led to the development of themes. These themes informed the development of models of inter-sector transition challenges and enablers, along with practical guidelines.

1.5 Conceptual framework

Unlike positivist approaches to research which tend to follow a linear, logical sequence, interpretative approaches, particularly where a qualitative methodology is deployed, are very often circular (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The figure below was developed by the author to conceptualise the framework in which the research took place.

Figure 1   A conceptual framework for the research
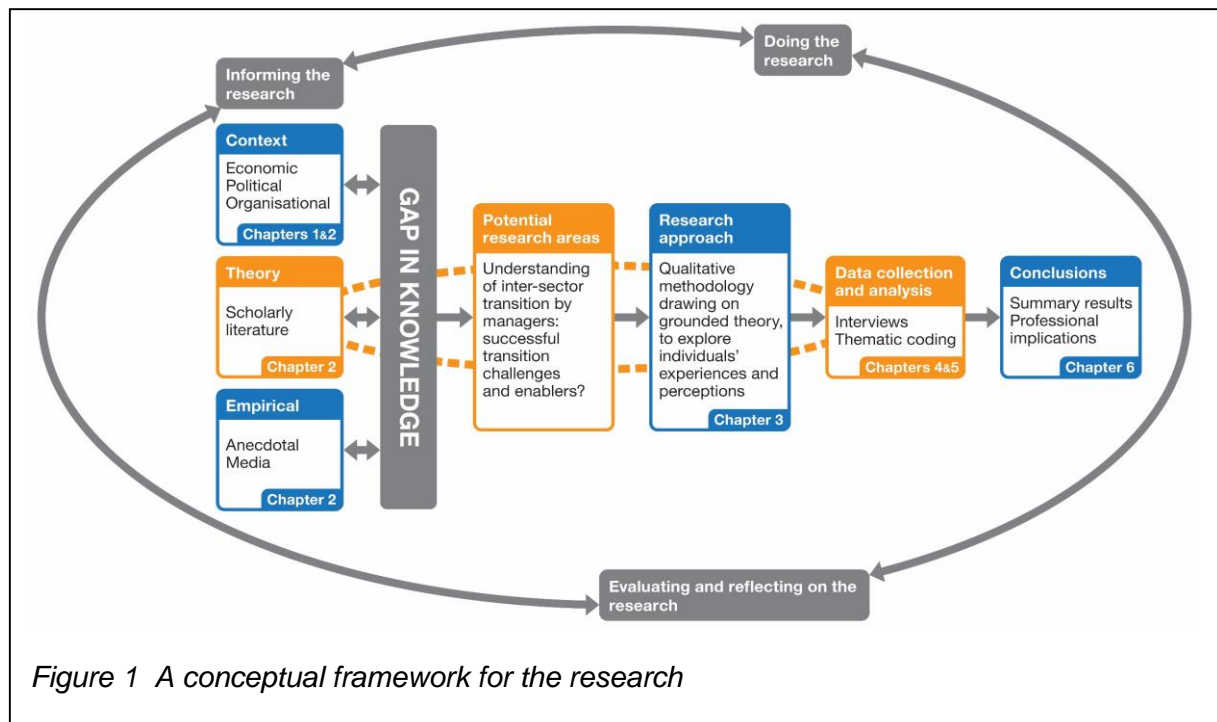
The outer oval represents the outer framework of the research and incorporates stages in the research cycle: informing the research (through the economic, political and managerial context, theory and empirical data), doing the research, evaluating and reflecting on the research. The arrows linking these three areas are two directional because each stage is dynamic, and can be impacted upon by developments in other parts of the cycle.

Within the outer framework are various building blocks. On the left are the blocks representing the different categories of knowledge which informed the research: the economic, political and organisational context, the relevant theory and scholarly literature, and the empirical data gained through media articles, anecdotes and non-scholarly literature. The combination of this information suggested gaps in the knowledge which in turn helped shape the potential research areas. The nature of the research pointed to a qualitative research methodology, which translated into data

collection through interviews, analysis of the results through coding, conclusions and recommendations.

The three blocks in orange (theory, potential research areas, data collection and analysis) are linked by a dotted orange line. These three areas were the most fluid and susceptible to development as the study progressed. Emerging issues from the data collection led to re-engagement with the scholarly literature and further clarification of the key areas to address; this iterative process is what finally led to nailing down what was at the heart of the research, namely the challenges and enablers of successful inter-sector transition.

1.6 Thesis structure

Chapter One has provided a brief overview of the research, outlining the context in which it is placed and its relevance to current organisational, economic and political activity in the UK. It has shown that the academic literature on the personal experiences of people who transition between sectors is under developed, and it has outlined the implications of the research for individuals making the transition, for organisations, and professional practitioners. Chapter One has also defined key terminology used throughout the study and has stated the aims and objectives and introduced the research design.

Chapter Two will explore the issues concerning the role of the literature review in grounded theory, and then critique the research which helped shape this study. The research relates not just to inter-sector transition *per se*, but to broader areas of literature including the public-private sector differences, organisational culture, work values and leadership.

In Chapter Three the research design will be discussed, including epistemological and ontological considerations, the rationale for the choice of methodology, and the methods deployed for data collection and analysis.

The results are discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four focuses on what are termed the 'background' factors, namely those factors which are relevant to individuals' experiences of inter-sector transition, but which do not appear to directly influence the challenges and enablers of a successful transition. The challenges and enablers are explored in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six summarises the research findings and points to the practical guidance for the various stakeholder groups: individuals making inter-sector transitions in the future, human resources professionals, recruitment agencies, employers, and Business Schools. The study's contribution to knowledge and professional practice is discussed, along with the limitations of the research and recommendations for future study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter reviews the theory and literature relevant to inter-sector transition. As this is an emerging area of study there is relatively little scholarly literature on inter-sector transition *per se*, however there are numerous more established conceptual areas which relate to inter-sector transition and impinge upon it. Indeed, one of the challenges in conducting this literature review was knowing when to stop and how to make conceptual sense of the literature in relation to inter-sector transition. A conceptual model of the review has been devised to try and provide clarity.

The chapter starts with a discussion of the role of the literature review in grounded theory, and how this was reflected in the researcher's experience of exploring the relevant literature. Although this study does not claim to adopt grounded theory in its entirety (an issue which is explored further in chapter 3), the debates on how and when to conduct a literature review are relevant to this chapter. The conceptual model of the literature review is outlined, followed by a critique of the literature itself. The starting point is inter-sector transition, followed by the literature on the key areas which arguably influence the success or otherwise of the transition, namely aspects of organisational culture and personal attributes. Next follows consideration of the literature on 'defining success', and the chapter ends with an overview of the literature on the political, economic and managerial context.

2.1 The role of the literature review in grounded theory

There is considerable debate about the role of the literature review in grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006; Heath, 2006; Tummers & Karsten, 2012; Urquhart, 2013). Some advocate leaving the literature review until data analysis is finished, so as not to unduly influence the thinking of the researcher. According to Heath, 'a fundamental principle of grounded theory, and indeed most qualitative approaches, is to avoid imposing predetermined understanding and existing frameworks on the investigation' (2006, p.519).

Glaser and Strauss expounded this view in their seminal book *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* (1967). However, their views modified over time. The following decade Glaser wrote about the researcher's 'theoretical sensitivity', namely sensitivity to what and how data inform the development of grounded theory: 'Sensitivity is necessarily increased by being steeped in the literature that deals with both the kinds of variables and their associated general ideas that will be used (Glaser, 1978, p.3)' . Strauss acknowledged that 'we all bring to the inquiry a considerable background in professional and disciplinary literature' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.35).

The research process itself suggests it would be almost impossible for a researcher to start with a 'blank canvas' because a certain amount of thought and conceptualisation will have taken place to arrive at even broad research questions, and this thinking will almost certainly have been influenced by engaging at some level with literature and theoretical frameworks. The researcher would also argue that, additionally, those individuals undertaking a professional doctorate are likely to have considerable experience in the workplace. The knowledge and experience gained over many years make the possibility of starting with a blank canvas even less likely.

The researcher's experience of undertaking this study is that the literature is never far away. This chimes with the work of Tummers and Karsten (2012), who reflected that literature has a role in the three phases of research: research design, data collection and data analysis. Their recommendation was to consciously acknowledge the opportunities and pitfalls of engaging with the literature at each stage. For example, in the data collection stage literature can provide a valuable additional data source, but there is also a danger that the researcher will select only the literature that supports his/her views.

In this study, an initial engagement with the literature helped identify key concepts and theoretical frameworks, and to understand where the literature was underdeveloped.   What started out as a personal, general interest in the differences between the public and private sectors, became over time a more focused interest in people who transitioned between them (see 1.1.1). As the research questions evolved, and as the study got underway, themes started to emerge from the empirical data which required further engagement with the literature. Sometimes this required an exploration of similar constructs from different discipline viewpoints. Take for example, acculturation, which is the process by which individuals modify their culture (defined loosely in this context as the customs and way of life followed by that individual) as a result of coming into contact with a different culture. Acculturation originated as a field of anthropology (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). Organisational socialisation, defined as the process by which a new organisational employee adapts from outsider to integrated and effective insider (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006), has been researched by the disciplines of psychology and management. Although the applications of both may differ – the theory of acculturation is often applied to immigration, whereas organisational socialisation is particularly relevant to human resources management - there is significant overlap between them. One of the lessons learned whilst critiquing the literature for this research, was to be open to the literature of multiple disciplines. This not only triggered additional conceptual questions but also helped ensure that potentially valuable insights were not missed.

Sometimes it was necessary to explore completely new areas of literature, as the research developed. For instance, two of the themes which emerged from the data were professional

identity and self-esteem; neither had been considered in the initial stages of the study, but both were evidently important issues for some of the participants in the study and contributory factors to transition success.

2.2 A conceptual model of the literature review

One of the challenges associated with this review was to pull the various themes together into a coherent framework, or conceptual model. The benefits of the model were two-fold: Firstly, to clarify the relationship between the multiple themes, and in particular to place inter-sector transition at the centre. Secondly, to assist with the presentation of the review in the current chapter, and specifically the order in which each section was discussed. Prior to the creation of the model, the researcher intended to start the review with a significant section on political and economic context. It soon became evident that this section was becoming disproportionately important compared with the elements influencing the success of the inter-sector transition (which, after all, was at the heart of the study). The model helped re-balance the priorities.

The model is depicted in figure 2 below. It shows that the literature on inter-sector transition is at the heart of the review, but that it is impacted by the literature on organisational culture and personal attributes, each of which has several strands. The political, economic and managerial context provide a backdrop to the study, but are outside the central core, and are therefore represented in a separate box. They are placed at the top of the model because they represent a 'macro' view of the world, and the arrows pointing to the Venn diagram below are intended to show the primary direction of influence. The concept of success, and how to define success for the purposes of this study, is considered at a more personal, 'micro' level. The arrow demonstrates the two-way relationship between inter-sector transition and success.
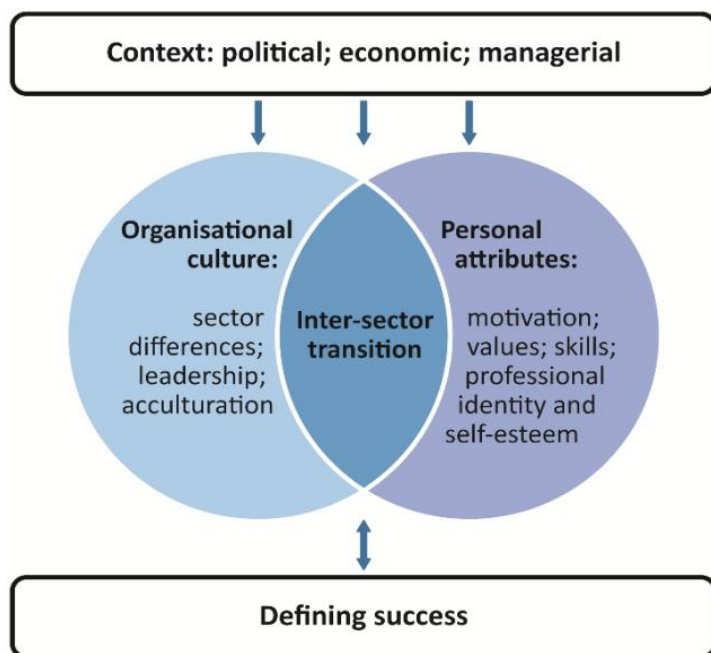
Figure 2   Model of the literature review on inter-sector transition

Application of this model leads to discussion of the literature under the following categories:

- Inter-sector transition
- Organisational culture (including sector differences, the role of leadership and acculturation)
- Personal attributes (including values and motivation, skills, professional identity and self-esteem)
- Defining success
- Political, economic and managerial context (including New Public Management).

2.3 Inter-sector transition

It has already been observed that the UK literature concerning inter-sector transition is under developed. The term 'inter-sector transition' itself appears to have been adopted first in Australia, as recently as 2014 (Thompson & Flynn, 2014), but other related terminology can be found in the literature such as 'boundary-crossing' (Austin, Dal Santo & Lewis, 2012), 'crossing sectors' (Pittinsky & Messiter, 2007), 'sector shifting' (Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman & Anker, 2008) and 'sector switching' (Frederiksen & Hansen, 2014). Sector switching has been defined as job mobility between the private and public sectors, which may be in either direction, from public to private or vice versa (Frederiksen & Hansen, 2014). In some studies the term has also encompassed transition to the nonprofit sector (for example Su & Bozeman, 2009).

The researcher chose to use the term 'inter-sector transition' because the word 'transition' implies a process of change. According to one definition, transition is 'the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another (Paperback Oxford English dictionary, 2012, p.778). It is therefore not just about the end-result of the transition (which in the current research equates to the destination job) but also about the process of getting there, including the motivations, challenges and enablers, as well as any changes or learning which took place in the individual as a result of making the transition. The term inter-sector transition as used by the researcher therefore encompasses the range of potential experiences and perceptions leading up to, during, and following an inter-sector transition.

The studies concerning the movement of individuals between sectors have, with a few exceptions, all taken place outside the UK, for example in the USA, Canada, Australia, Belgium and Denmark. One of the few UK based studies concerns the transition of probation managers who chose to move from the public to private sectors (Deering, Felizer & Holmes, 2014). The six participants in the study appeared satisfied with their transitions but there were however some challenges: one participant had to overcome philosophical misgivings about the profit motive of the private sector, and another found the responsibility for budget management challenging. Several of them commented negatively about aspects of the public sector such as bureaucracy, the difficulties of introducing change, and the attitude of employees; these perceptions were mirrored in the current study.

In the USA Drucker (1990) published an interview with a CEO of a successful media company who decided in his mid-forties to set up two not-for-profit organisations. It is evident from the CEO's reflections that his personal values and many of his leadership skills were suited to the not-for-profit environment. He cited visioning and supporting colleagues in their work as two key attributes which were transferable, but also observed that it had been necessary to reconsider his views on customers and specifically the priorities and values of his customers in the not-for-profit environment (Drucker, 1990). This interview also suggested to the researcher that people transferring to the third sector may do so at a stage in their lives when they want to 'give something back' to society, and that this therefore could be a key transition driver for transitioning to the third sector.

Pittinsky and Messiter (2007) identified the challenges experienced by forty men and women when they exchanged successful business careers for American politics. They made the observation that 'just because people want to make the change does not mean the transition will be easy or successful' (Pittinsky & Messiter, 2007, p.47). An Australian study of managers forced to transition careers as a consequence of job loss also highlighted the difficulties. Their experience suggested stereotyping by potential employers:

> Those who had previously worked in the public sector were finding it difficult to be considered for a private sector position. Those who had worked in a specific industry sector were finding it difficult to move to another sector, despite the appearance of having high level transferable skills (Clarke, 2009, p.46).

The research pointed to the need for more flexible recruitment practices, to encourage mobility between sectors. This observation resonated strongly with the researcher and reinforced in her mind the need for further study in the UK.

A recent study used ethnographic life-history interviews to explore the experiences of senior social work professionals in the USA and UK who transitioned between the public and non-profit sectors (Austin, Dal Santo & Lewis, 2012). The research suggested a tendency towards pre-conceived, often negative, ideas about sectors until an insider's perspective is acquired. One local authority employee referred to the people involved in the voluntary sector as 'middle-class do-gooders' (Austin et al, 2012, p.124); but once she transitioned to the sector herself acknowledged that it provided important, professional services working together with the public sector.

The studies cited above all deployed qualitative methodologies, but there have also been a number of quantitative studies of inter-sector transition. A quantitative study of MBA graduates in the USA found very little evidence of movement across sectors, with most graduates having a favoured sector which they remained in throughout their careers (Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman & Anker, 2008). The point was made however, that as multi-sector partnership working and exposure to other sectors increased, it was possible that more people would transition across sectors in the future.

At a more pragmatic level, there are guides on 'how to' transition between sectors, based on the personal stories of individuals. These are published in professional or trade journals, and by way of example include an American police officer who moved into the private security business (Quilter, 2013) and a British soldier who transitioned into private sector management (Herron, 2011).

In the UK, strategy decisions at national level have sometimes led to inter-sector transitions for specific professions. The 'National Agreement' of January 2003 (*Raising standards and tackling workloads*, 2003) aimed to reduce teachers' workload and led to the employment of school bursars and other support staff from outside the education sector. Many bursars were recruited from the banking and financial sectors, and their transition to schools was aided by government training programmes in school business management, as well as inductions and work experience opportunities (Joy, 2005). This support was presumably put in place in recognition of the potential challenges of transitioning between the sectors, and for the researcher this raised the question of what other supporting mechanisms and enablers might contribute to a successful transition.

A potentially productive source of research into the concept of inter-sector transition is careers theory. In the early 1990's the concept of the 'boundaryless career' was coined, and defined as follows:

> Put simply, the boundaryless career is the antonym of the 'bounded' or 'organizational' career that has dominated research in recent times. Within this general meaning lie several particular meanings, or emphases. The most prominent is when a career ... moves across the boundaries of separate employers (Arthur, 1994, p.296).

Arthur suggested that the 'old picture of stable employment and associated organizational careers' was disappearing, and that research into the new, much more dynamic employment market merited attention (1994, p.297). The ensuing two decades have seen a large body of research into the boundaryless career (for a summary, see Arthur, 2014) but there are sceptics. Rodrigues and Guest (2010) have challenged the claim that careers have become more boundaryless, citing a lack of empirical evidence. A Belgian study has found that most public employees prefer the traditional hierarchy, and less than 10% of the workforce would be willing to move between organisations (De Caluwe, Van Dooren, Delafortry & Janvier, 2014).

Whilst the term 'boundaryless' tends to be used to mean movement between organisations rather than sectors, the researcher would argue that inter-sector transition is in effect an extreme version of boundarylessness and is a concept which merits its own study. This is because the potential challenges of transitioning between sectors are, in the researcher's view, likely to be greater than moving between organisations in the same sector. Whilst acknowledging that this is a gross over simplification, a local authority and a National Health Service institution probably have more in common with each other (both being large, public sector, bureaucratic organisations working for the public good) than with a commercial company, which operates for profit and to satisfy shareholders.

Recent research has examined the applicability of the concept of 'boundaryless' careers in today's work environment. A study of European information technology professionals concluded that the parameters which describe boundaryless are broader than many studies have assumed, incorporating factors such as geographical mobility preference, i.e. an individual's willingness to relocate for a new job (Gubler, Arnold & Coombs, 2014).

Not all career moves are voluntary, and as alluded to in chapter 1, changes in government policy and withdrawal of public sector funding may force some individuals to look to other sectors for the next phase of their career. The psychosocial effects of midlife career transitions on male scientists and engineers have been explored in the USA. Whilst there were positive outcomes for many of the participants in the study, for others the transition resulted in a loss of self-esteem and professional identity (Liu, Englar-Carlson & Minichiello, 2012). Several participants noted that the

new work environment required good communication skills, flexibility and adaptability – all points which were reinforced by the current research.

Although there is a shortage of UK scholarly literature on inter-sector transition, what does exist in abundance is biographical literature, especially in relation to politicians. Many prime ministers and senior cabinet ministers had careers in the private sector before and after their sojourn into politics, and over the years many have published memoirs (for example Blair, 2010; Thatcher, 1993). Implicit in some of their writing is the challenge of moving into public-facing roles. Blair, for example, notes the 'chasm of bureaucracy, frustration and disappointment' in not being able to get on and 'do' things on being elected to government (Blair, 2010, p.10).

Also of relevance to this research is biographical and case study material relating to business entrepreneurs and senior executives; they may not have transitioned between economic sectors, but they do offer insights into organisational cultures and sometimes of working with different types of sector (for example Browne, 2010; Semler, 1993). Biographical publications provide interesting contextual information, and indeed interpretative biography is a recognised research methodology, involving 'the studies, use and collection of personal-life documents, stores, accounts and narratives which describe turning-point moments in individuals' lives' (Denzin, 1989, p.13). However, biographical analysis lies outside the scope of this current research. This is partly due to time constraints but chiefly because the researcher wished to focus on primary data collection.

This section has demonstrated the under developed scholarly literature on inter-sector transition in the UK. Careers theory provides relevant contextual literature, and there is continuing debate about the boundaryless career as a concept. Whilst barriers and enablers to successful transition are implicit in some of the studies, they are not a primary focus. The current study therefore has the capability of making a significant contribution to knowledge.

2.4 Organisational cultures

The issue of organisational culture was deemed by the researcher to be a significant factor in this study, even before the precise area of research was clarified. This was because any studies into the changing relationship between public and private sectors would inevitably entail consideration of the different cultures embodied (or perceived to be embodied) within the sectors.

Before embarking on a discussion of organisational culture per se, it is interesting to reflect on the relevance of culture to the study of organisations. Smircich (1983) asked what exactly was meant by a 'cultural perspective' on organisations, and noted that, as in anthropology (where the concept of culture originated), there was an absence of consensus on what culture means. She commends the introduction of culture into the study of organisations: 'the idea of culture focuses attention on

the expressive, nonrational qualities of the experience of organization. It legitimises attention to the subjective, interpretive aspects of organizational life' (1983, p.355).

There is a sizeable body of literature on the definition and characteristics of organisation culture. One of the seminal authors in this field is Edgar H. Schein who has described organisational culture as follows:

> The culture of a group can ... be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 2010, p.18)

Numerous authors have written about organisational culture (for example Drennan,1992; Drucker, 1990; Handy, 1993; Harris & Moran,1992; Schein, 2010) and the range of factors that may contribute to it, including the organisation's history and tradition, technology, information and control systems, policies and procedures, goals, values and beliefs. Schein advocates three levels of culture: artefacts (the tangible aspects of culture such as language, environment and technology), espoused beliefs and values (for example articulated by a manager but not engaged with by the workforce) and basic underlying assumptions, which are taken for granted and therefore difficult to change (Schein, 2010). These underlying assumptions will vary significantly according to organisation, and also between sectors (see 2.4.1 below). In the researcher's view, this will be one of the reasons why inter-sector transitioning may be challenging for individuals. A further challenge may be felt by individuals transitioning to large public sector organisations, which are likely to host 'sub-cultures', based on professional backgrounds, geographical location, or level in the hierarchy (Schein, 2010).

2.4.1 The relationship between organisational culture and sector

Using Schein's definition of cultural levels, referred to above, it would seem sensible to assume that many of the 'artefacts' associated with organisational culture will not be sector specific - all organisations, for example, will have policies and procedures to enable the core business to be achieved, whatever their sector. Other factors, however, might lend themselves to differentiation between sectors. The basic underlying assumptions of a public sector body are likely to be different to those of a commercial company. Public bodies provide services on behalf of the state and are non-profit-making, whereas the private sector's primary goal is to be commercially successful. Perhaps however, 'it is their ultimate subordination to politics rather than to the market which is the essential distinction between public and private organisations' (Farnham and Horton, 1999, p.45).

Various studies have pointed to the differences in organisational culture between private and public sector (see for example Boardman, Bozeman, & Ponomariov, 2010; Ross, 1988; Perry & Rainey, 1988). Case studies of organisations which have undergone transformation, for example the UK nationalised public organisations which were privatised in the 1980's, offer useful insight into cultures pre- and post- transition. In British Telecom, which was privatised in 1984, the transition led to new organisational characteristics including: less bureaucracy, greater autonomy, de-centralised decision-making, employee empowerment, and a more customer-focused approach (Lal, Pitt and Strachan, 2004).

Much of the recent debate about the merits of the public and private sectors has taken place in newspapers and trade publications, rather than in peer-reviewed academic journals. This may be partly because of the immediacy of journalistic publishing, compared with the relative slowness of conducting and publishing peer-reviewed research. Newspapers and trade publications provide useful contextual information and insights into the perceptions of the public – private sector interface. A search of the ProQuest database yields thousands of articles, with emotive titles such as '*Private sector's public failures'* (Kelly, 2012), '*Public sector pensions are a gigantic swindle on the next generation*' (Cowie, 2012) and *'Can the public sector keep pace?'* (Matthews, 2015). All these articles provide a commentary on public thinking about the public-private sector debate.

2.4.2 Leadership within the organisational sectors

Sector leadership was of interest to the researcher on a number of levels. Firstly, because most of the participants in the study were leaders (as well as managers) in some form; and secondly because of the potential relationship between the leader and organisational culture or sector. These two strands are considered in this section. A third strand, leadership skills, was also relevant because certain leadership 'skills' may be particularly relevant to inter-sector transition; this strand is referenced in section 2.5.2. below.

Leadership versus management

It is a commonly held view that leadership can exist at all levels of an organisation (DeChurch, Hiller, Murase, Doty & Salas, 2010; Leslie & Canwell, 2010; Mahoney, 2000). Whilst this may be true, the focus of this research is on senior executives and managers rather than junior level staff. Much has been written about leadership and management, and there is continuing debate about the difference between them (Kotter, 1990; Lunenberg, 2011). Kotter maintains that they have distinct features but are complementary, with leadership being about coping with change and management being about coping with complexity (Kotter, 1987). Leadership may be viewed as creating a vision and encouraging people in the organisation to follow that vision, whereas management is about planning, budgeting, organising and problem solving. However, in most

organisations, there is likely to be overlap between the two functions, and this study adopts the pragmatic approach advocated by Western in which the terms 'management' and 'leadership' can be used interchangeably (Western, 2008, p.35).

Leadership and organisational sectors

Several authors have written about the role of the leader and organisational culture (Brown, 1998; Handy, 1993; Harris & Moran, 1992, Schein, 2010). There are also studies into leadership styles in the context of different organisational types (see for example Perry, 2010, on non-profit and public leadership; Gallos & Heifetz, 2008, on business leadership) but relatively few compare leadership across the sectors. There are exceptions: Pinnington (2011) conducted an empirical study in Scotland into leadership development as applied to public, private and third sectors; a Danish study conducted by Hansen and Villadsen (2010) showed substantial differences between the leadership styles of public and private managers, even after thirty years of New Public Management; and a Swedish study by Andersen (2010) found significant differences in leadership behaviour between public and private managers. Dutch research has suggested that ethical leadership can be transferred across public, private and hybrid sectors (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). There appears to be a paucity of UK literature comparing leadership styles and effectiveness across the sectors.

A study in the UK of leadership of non-profit organisations suggested that effective leadership does not require different behaviours to those in the public or private sectors (Hamlin, Sawyer and Sager, 2011). Amongst the most effective behaviours were: showing genuine care and concern, speaking to people individually, saying thank you and recognising performance in an individual way. These behaviours are supported by a later study of leadership of social enterprises, which concluded that caring was a key attribute of successful CEOs, along with courage, calmness, strong values and high levels of self-awareness (Gravells, 2012). However, a more recent study has pointed to the 'paradoxical challenges associated with the simultaneous pursuit of social and financial goals', and identifies four areas of challenge: inconsistent demands, shifting boundaries, complex relationships and identity issues (Tian & Smith, 2014, p.42-43).

In the current study, the academic sector – and specifically the higher education sector – is considered by the researcher to have defining characteristics of its own which merit it being treated separately from the public sector. To quote from an article on leadership in higher education, 'HEIs are neither fully private nor public sector organizations but are tasked with the administrative requirements of both' (Bolden, Petrov, Gosling & Bryman, 2009, p.292). The changes in higher education over the last twenty years have led to a massive expansion of the sector and an increasing perception that it is a commodity rather than a social good (Peters & Ryan, 2015). These environmental changes may be bringing about changes to leadership and management

styles which are at odds with traditional academic values of collegiality. However, in the context of the current study, arguably those individuals who have had private sector experience may have an advantage over those who have not.

Recent literature on university leadership recognises the need for a global view.

> In a globalized world, organizations, including universities, interface with other organizations across multiple boundaries at many different levels, to access resources, share information or to work collaboratively or cooperatively to produce goods and services.

(Pilbeam & Jamieson, 2010, p.758)

Pilbeam and Jamieson have commented that the traditional hierarchical organisational structure of many public sector bodies is not suited to the new inter-connected world in which we operate, bringing challenges for leadership. Such challenges were reflected in the experiences of some of the participants in this study.

2.4.3 Acculturation and organisational socialisation

People who transition between sectors, and indeed between organisations within the same sector, will probably have to acclimatise to a new working environment and culture. The process by which this is achieved is another aspect of organisational culture which has generated its own conceptual frameworks. Acculturation and organisational socialisation are described below, and should not be confused with 'enculturation', which is the acquisition of one's own culture.

One of the earliest definitions of acculturation came from the discipline of anthropology: 'Acculturation ... has been defined as comprehending those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either, or both groups' (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936 p.145).

Since the 1930's the definition has expanded to encompass the merging of different cultures and the changes which may occur in value systems, relationships and personality traits (Chun, Organista & Marin, 2003). Much of the literature on acculturation comes from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and psychology (for example Berry, 2008; Skuza, 2007) but studies have also been undertaken in the disciplines of business and management. One productive area of business research concerns organisational acculturation in relation to mergers, acquisitions and foreign subsidiaries (for example Lin, 2014; Peltokorpi, 2006). Another area centres on consumerism and marketing (for example Gbadamosi, 2012).

In the context of inter-sector transitioning, acculturation concerns the aspects of the destination organisation's culture which may be assimilated by the individual making the transition, and also those aspects of the organisation's culture from which the individual came, which are retained and may even modify the culture of the destination organisation.

One of the assumptions in this research is that the ease with which acculturation takes place will to some extent depend on the culture of the organisations in which the subject has worked. A second assumption is that the more senior the person making the transition, the more impact they are likely to have on the destination organisation's culture. Individuals operating at CEO level or equivalent may be brought into an organisation specifically to bring about cultural change (Schein, 2010) whereas this is a less likely scenario for middle managers.

A different but related concept to acculturation is that of organisational socialisation. This is the process through which 'a new organisational employee adapts from outsider to integrated and effective insider' (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Organisational socialisation may incorporate a range of factors, such as the development of new skills and knowledge, and understanding the organisation's ethos and value system. Effective socialisation enables new recruits to quickly become productive in their roles and also contributes to greater job satisfaction (Allen, 2006; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Arguably these factors would therefore contribute to a successful inter-sector transition.

2.5 Personal attributes

The focus of this research is the individual, specifically the experiences and perceptions of each individual with regards inter-sector transition. It was important to the researcher therefore to try and identify the personal attributes which might influence the success of the transition. As issues emerged during the data collection, these personal attributes appeared to fall largely into three categories: values, attitudes and motivation; knowledge and skills; professional identity and self-esteem.

2.5.1 Values, attitudes and motivation

The literature on values is extensive, but there are two psychologists who, judging by the number of citations their work has attracted, have made particularly significant contributions over the last half century: Milton Rokeach and Shalom Schwartz. Rokeach defined values as follows:

> Values … have to do with modes of conduct and end-states of existence. To say that a person 'has a value' is to say that he has an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of

conduct or end-states of existence. Once a value is internalized it becomes, consciously or unconsciously, a standard or criterion for guiding action, for developing and maintaining attitudes toward relevant objects and situations, for justifying one's own and others' actions and attitudes, for morally judging self and others, and for comparing self with others. (Rokeach, 1968, p.160)

From this work he developed the Rokeach Value Survey, or RVS, which identified eighteen 'terminal' values and eighteen 'instrumental' values. Terminal values are those an individual wishes to achieve by their end of life, examples of which are equality, pleasure, social recognition and a sense of accomplishment. Instrumental values describe preferred modes of behaviour and include ambition, courage, honesty and responsibility (Rokeach, 1973). The researcher has highlighted these particular examples because they were apparent in the findings of the study.

Schwartz defined values as 'desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity …. [which can] motivate action – giving it direction and emotional intensity' (1994, p.21). The use of the word 'trans-situational' is especially relevant to the current research, implying as it does that values apply *across* situations. Translating this to the current study, trans-situational suggests that values apply across sectors, which then prompts the question, do people who move across sectors have a recognisable set of values? The researcher's review of the literature suggested an absence of research specifically focussing on the values of people who transition between sectors, and therefore the current study represents an opportunity to explore this concept further. At a more generic level, there have been studies which compare the values of public and private sector employees and found only limited differences (Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins, 2006; Van Steden, van der Wal and Lasthuizen, 2015), and other studies which suggest there is a more significant link between values and professional background than between values and sector (Lyons et al, 2006). One recent study has found that business leaders' personal values influence the development of organisational culture (Gao, 2015), and this is of interest to the current research given that a number of senior executives participated in it.

The link identified by Schwartz (1994) between values and motivation is also relevant to the current research. The researcher was keen to explore the motives for moving to other sectors, and whilst the link between motivation and values was not articulated at the onset of the research, it became apparent as the study progressed.

2.5.1.1 Work values and motivation

Work motivation theory is an established construct of organisational behaviour within the discipline of psychology. A major review of developments in work motivation theory noted the important research into needs, values and goals, as well as the 'fit' between the individual and their environment (Latham & Pinder, 2005). This would appear to be relevant to inter-sector transitions, where the individual's destination environment is likely to be very different from the one they came from.

Existing research on 'work' values stems from a number of disciplines, including psychology, management and career development. Work values may be defined as 'the values that individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their participation in the work role (a desired end state) and lead them to set directional goals' (Brown, 2002, p.470). Research suggests that values are an important factor in career satisfaction (Brown, 2002; Dawis, 2002; Leuty & Hansen, 2011; VanVoorhis & Protivnak, 2012) and there are a number of assessment tools used by professional careers counsellors which incorporate a values-based approach.

Values-based approaches provide useful examples of work values. One early study identified the importance of intrinsic characteristics such as exploiting one's educational background, opportunities for continued development, being respected by peers, and intellectual stimulation (Manhardt, 1972). Whilst there is no consensus on a typology of work values, there appears to be broad agreement that work values may be intrinsic (relating to the psychological satisfaction derived from working) or extrinsic (relating to the material aspects of work such as pay and conditions) (Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006).   Dawis (2002) noted the following six values which were identified in the theory of work adjustment (TWA), which incorporate both intrinsic and extrinsic values: achievement; altruism; autonomy; comfort; safety and status. These are referred to again in section 5.1.

The potential association between an individual's work values and the sector in which they work is a complex area, and has been the subject of international research. One study, for example, found that employees in the public sector valued contributing to society more than their private sector counterparts, whereas private sector employees valued prestigious work more than public sector workers (Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins, 2006). Research on work values overlaps with that of Public Service Motivation (PSM), a theoretical construct which originated from the discipline of Public Administration in the USA in the 1990's. Defined as 'an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organisations' (Perry and Wise,1990, p.368), PSM has evolved over the last quarter century (Kjeldsen, 2012; Perry and Vandenabeele, 2015). Much of the ensuing research has been concerned with measuring PSM

(for example Georgellis, Iossa & Tabvuma, 2010; Houston, 2000: Rayner, Williams, Lawton & Allinson, 2011).

A related body of literature on Public Values (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007) has developed separately, but the two concepts of PSM and Public Values 'cannot be totally separated, as values can be motivating, and motivation is often orientated towards something desirable e.g. values' (Andersen, Jorgensen, Kjeldsen, Pedersen & Vrangbaek, 2012, p.305).

In short, the literature on work values and related concepts is inconclusive and somewhat 'messy' due to construct overlap. However, consideration of the literature was valuable in the early phases of the research journey, in triggering potential research questions and helping to shape the final study.

2.5.2 Knowledge and skills

Knowledge and skills are both terms familiar to the layman, but require some clarification in the context of this study. According to one interpretation, knowledge is not just a collection of pieces of information.   Rather, it reflects a 'schematic organisation' of facts and principles within a particular domain. Effective leaders need different types of knowledge, relating to the task in hand, the organisation, and the people within the organisation (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs & Fleischman, 2000, p.20). A skill may be defined as: 'An ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills)' [1] In reality, there is likely to be overlap between knowledge and skills; the two terms are often used interchangeably, and in combination they contribute to an individual's career experience. Again, quoting Mumford, 'Knowledge and skills are developed capabilities that emerge over time as a function of education and experience' (Mumford et al, 2000, p.21).

The literature on the relationship between knowledge, skills and inter-sector transition, appears to be almost non-existent. An Australian study of managers attempting to make career (as opposed to inter-sector) transitions, found that despite considerable professional and managerial experience, their job searches were hampered. Potential employers tended to stereotype the skills and experience gained in their previous role as not being applicable to their new career (Clarke, 2009). An American study suggested that effective communication skills, flexibility and adaptability were critical in making the transition to a new career (Liu, Englar-Carlson and Minichiello, 2012). In both these studies several of the potential career changes also involved changing sectors.

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[1] *www.businessdictionary.com/**definition/skill.***

The data analysis in the current study suggested that professional knowledge and skills were significant factors in the success of the transition (discussed further in section 5.2). The concept of transferable skills, was particularly relevant given that all participants in the study changed not just their job role but also their organisational sector. The term 'transferable skills' has been deployed since the 1980s by employers, careers advisors, government agencies and educationalists. There appears however to be a lack of consensus on a definition or even what is encompassed by the term, and it is often used interchangeably with the terms generic skills, general skills or core skills. Indeed even the term 'skills' has invoked debate. Bridges (1993), reflecting on the difference between 'knowledge' and 'skills', acknowledged that

> 'The language of skills does ... embrace both activities with a relatively low, though still significant level of cognitive content (drilling a hole in a metal plate, starting up with a word processor, drawing a curved graph) and activities with a high level of cognitive content, such as chairing a discussion, negotiating a contract, teaching a class or removing a tumour.'   (Bridges, 1993, p.44)

For some, the whole concept of a transferable skill lacks philosophical or empirical support (Hyland & Johnson, 1998). Nor is there consensus on which specific transferable skills are most important (Bennett, 2002; Smith, Wolstencroft & Southern, 1989).   Whilst acknowledging the academic debate around the concept of transferable skills and knowledge, there have been practitioner studies to identify what these skills might be. One such study analysed the content of 1000 job advertisements to identify the personal transferable skills that employers looked for (Bennett, 2002). The most in-demand skills included communication, IT, motivation, leadership, numeracy, organisation, adaptability/flexibility, initiative and analysis. The same study noted the confusion over terminology, with many terms meaning different things to different people. This confusion adds to the problem of trying to define transferable skills.

The notion of transferable skills and knowledge as applied to senior executives is controversial. Some would argue caution in assuming that experience in one senior executive role will be useful in another context, on the grounds that skills and knowledge are context-specific and not necessarily transferable (Gray, 2012). Bridges introduced the concept of 'transferring skills', as 'meta-skills, the second-order skills, which enable one to select, adapt, adjust and apply one's other skills to different situations, across different social contexts and perhaps similarly across different cognitive domains' (Bridges, 1993, p.50).

Whether they are called transferable skills or transferring skills, it was apparent to the researcher that the senior executives interviewed as part of the study possessed a range of skills which they had transferred from previous sectors. A number of these 'second-order' skills have been identified in the literature on leadership skills. Political skills, for example, are defined as 'the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways

that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives' (Ferris et al, 2005, p.127). Political skills appear to be especially important for effective performance in complex jobs. Other examples are creative problem-solving skills to identify problems and generate solutions; social judgement skills to refine potential solutions and create implementation frameworks; and social skills to motivate and engage the colleagues who will be implementing the solution (Mumford et al, 2000; Connelly et al, 2000). A further example is Emotional Intelligence (EI) which may be defined as 'the ability to perceive and express emotion and thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others' (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, cited in McCleskey, 2012, p. 78). Although there is considerable academic debate about the validity of the construct (for useful review articles see Antonakis, Ashkanasy & Dasborough, 2009; McCleskey, 2012; Sadri, 2012), the relationship between leadership and Emotional Intelligence (EI) continues to be explored.

Some interesting research has been undertaken recently in the UK on leading public sector organisations in an age of austerity. It identified a number of desirable leadership capabilities including: developing the insights necessary for successful change within complex systems, and building the cognitive skills to manage effectively in demanding environments (Leslie & Canwell, 2010, p.297).

Trade literature is another source of information relevant to inter-sector transition skills, but often is restricted to professional members, as for example is the case with The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Trade journals such as *People Management* occasionally include relevant articles (see for example Deeprose, Roberts & Mills, 2011).

2.5.3 Professional identity and self-esteem

The concepts of professional identity and self-esteem were not considered in the early stages of the study; however they emerged during the data collection as issues which affected the smoothness of inter-sector transition for a minority of participants.

Although professional identity and self-esteem are different concepts, there is an overlap. Professional identity is one of the multiple social identities which an individual holds, providing ' a sense of stability, belonging and values' (Hotho, 2008, p.729). Although it can be difficult to distinguish between professional and personal identities, the following definition of professional identity is helpful: 'A professional identity is critical to a person's sense of self: it is about connecting with roles, responsibilities, values, and ethical standards unique to a specific profession' (Goltz & Smith, 2014, p.785). Much of the current literature about professional identity refers to specific professions, and the importance of retaining professional identity in times of change. The health sector, for example, is undergoing enormous organisational change with

health professionals being required to adapt to changing work environments, new lines of accountability and multi-disciplinary teams (Fitzgerald, 2014; Goltz & Smith, 2014; Hotho, 2008). The library sector similarly has undertaken a number of studies on professional identity (for example Sare & Bales, 2014; Wilson & Halpin, 2006), and in higher education there is continuing debate about academic identity and the role of professional services as universities become increasingly business-orientated (Feather, 2014; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010).

Self-esteem, on the other hand, can be an issue for individuals inside or outside the workplace. According to Leary and Baumeister (cited in Olthuis, Leget & Dekkers, 2007, p.65), 'at its core, self-esteem refers to how one feels about oneself. It is one's subjective appraisal of how one stands as a valuable, viable, sought-after member of the groups and relationships to which one belongs by choice.' Associations have been made between self-esteem and job performance (Ferris, Lian, Brown, Pang & Keeping, 2010), and whilst a detailed exploration of this phenomenon is outside the scope of the present study, it does have relevance because if an inter-sector transition results in a lowering of self-esteem, it may impact on the success of that transition (discussed further in chapter 5).

Examples of research which have specifically linked self-esteem with identities include Stets and Burke (2014) and Mancini, Caricati, Panari and Tonarelli (2015). If, as has been claimed, the 'need to belong' is a core part of self-esteem (Olthuis, Leget & Dekkers, 2007, p.64) then belonging to a professional group with which one is familiar enhances both self-esteem and professional identity.

For people who are made redundant, the issues of self-esteem and professional identity may be particularly pertinent. A UK study of executives who lost their jobs noted that 'In the event of redundancy it may be difficult to sustain a positive, successful self-image and the impact of redundancy can be quite traumatic' (Tyson and Doherty, 1991, p. 9). An Australian study noted that self-esteem did not always recover when employment was regained, especially if the new job was less challenging or prestigious (Parris & Vickers, 2010). These findings are relevant to the current study, and will also be discussed further in chapter 5.

Issues of professional identity in relation to social enterprise have also been noted. Tracey and Phillips, for example, have written:

> 'The hybrid nature of social enterprise leads to complex and difficult identity issues. Social entrepreneurs who have worked mainly in the non-profit sector may find it difficult to identify closely with the commercial side of the business; for entrepreneurs with a for-profit background, the problem may be a difficulty identifying with the goals and approach of the social side of the venture.' (Tracey & Phillips, 2007, p.267)

This issue is also relevant to the current study, and will be discussed further in section 5.1.5.

2.6 Defining success

As the focus of the research developed, it became clear that a key element would be the success or otherwise of the transitions made by individuals. This then raised the questions of how to define success and who should define it?

The literature on successful inter-sector transitions is negligible. However the literature on success in a more general sense is much more developed, and has featured in the disciplines of management, psychology and careers over many years. A number of writers have noted that traditionally, empirical research on success focused on the external manifestations of success, namely salary and position in the organisational hierarchy (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Sturges,1999). More recently, attention has turned to subjective or internal success, and tried to identify the criteria which individuals personally consider to be important measures of success.

The characteristics of successful leadership have been written about extensively, often in the context of specific professions (for example Hopen, 2010; McCarthy, 2015; Williams, DeMicco & Shafer, 2000). McCall and Lombardo (1983) identified a number of attributes which contributed to corporate executives' success, including diverse work experiences – a finding which seems particularly pertinent to the current research into inter-sector transitions. Lawrence and Kleiner (1987) examined the psychology of winners and found that high achievers had the ability to transform key attitudinal qualities (such as positive self-motivation, positive self-image and positive self-esteem) into actions. They found that winners in life had developed high levels of self-worth and self-confidence, and claimed that positive self-esteem 'is the single most important quality of a winning human being' (1987, p.45).

Of particular relevance to this study is the literature pertaining to career success. Until the 1990's career success tended to be evaluated in terms of objective, external criteria, particularly salary and position in the organisational hierarchy (Sturges, 1999). This view was perhaps understandable during much of the twentieth century, when the economy was dominated by large organisations offering careers for life (Dries, 2011). The economic and industrial landscapes have changed significantly since then, due to globalisation, technical innovation, and economic uncertainty, and from these changes new perspectives on careers have developed. As noted above (see 2.3) the concept of the boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994) focuses on mobility, and the need to move between organisations in order to progress. An alternative concept, the protean career, concerns self-directed behaviours to achieve career success, where the person and not the organisation is in charge (Hall, 2004). The two are not mutually exclusive and both imply an element of proactivity by the individual (Briscoe & Hall, 2005).

In recent decades researchers have started to develop constructs of what career success means to individuals (Dries, 2011; Parks, 2010; Sturges, 1999). Studies have considered the importance

of 'Person-environment' fit (Ballout, 2007), religion and ideology (Dries, 2011), and a sense of 'calling' to a particular career (Hall & Chandler, 2005). A study by Sturges (1999) focused on managers working at various levels in a UK telecommunications company and found that the criteria for success fell into three main categories: accomplishment (i.e. being an expert), personal achievement, and enjoyment. Other factors included acting with integrity, giving something back to the organisation, work-life balance, personal recognition, and having influence. These findings resonated strongly with those of the current research.

Another interesting perspective is that of gender. US research conducted some twenty years ago suggested that female managers rated personal fulfilment and security more importantly than their male counterparts (Parker & Chusmir, 1992). In the UK, Sturges (1999) found that female managers were more likely than men to focus on subjective criteria of success such as accomplishment, achievement, and personal recognition:

> While external criteria were not irrelevant to all the women, they were never central to any of their descriptions of career success … Pay was valued by them for its utility rather than the status which it might endow, and therefore was not a crucial part of their conceptions of success' (Sturges, 1999, p.247).

More recently, a Canadian study explored the definitions of success as voiced by men and women who had successful careers. It found that men tended to focus on material success whereas women were more concerned with relationships and work-life balance (Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

What is apparent from the academic literature is that career success is a complex phenomenon. There are so many potential criteria which constitute success, encompassing both extrinsic and intrinsic criteria. For the researcher, the following quotation sums up perfectly the reason why definitions of success should emanate from the individual, rather than be imposed by someone else. 'When viewed from inside the skin of the person pursuing the career, success by definition, has to be defined in terms of how it looks through that person's eyes' (Hall & Chandler, 2005, p.157). Accordingly, the researcher chose to allow each participant to define success in their own terms.

2.7 Political, economic and managerial context

2.7.1 Political and economic context

It was noted above (section 1.1.2) that the private sector in the UK is growing year-on-year whilst the public sector is shrinking. According to predictions by the International Monetary Fund, the UK

public sector will decline by a further 3% of GDP between 2015-2019, making it one of the smallest public sectors of all European countries (IMF, 2015).

Putting this into context, however, the size of the state has fluctuated over the last century, according to political ideology. By way of example, at least one industry, the steel industry, was nationalised and de-nationalised on several occasions depending upon the party in power (Myddleton, 2014). Inter-sector transition of employees between the public and private sectors is therefore a well-established phenomenon going back many years. However, it appears that the leadership and management of the affected remained very similar, irrespective of ownership. According to Pelling, the major disappointments of nationalisation were for the workers: 'Although conditions often markedly improved, the executives and managements largely consisted of the same people as under private enterprise, and the ideal of 'workers' control' seemed as far off as ever' (Pelling, 1960, p.173).

There has been significant academic study at a macro level of nationalisation and privatisation (for example Beesley, 1997; Myddleton, 2014), as well as case studies of individual companies (Cooper, 2004; Gratton, 2003).

One of the striking developments over the last few decades is that of public-private partnerships (PPPs), which combine the resources of government with those of private agents in order to deliver societal goals (Skelcher, 2005). The private agents may be businesses, not-for-profit organisations or charities, and the partnership may take many different forms, such as contracting out of services, franchising and joint ventures. One of the impacts of PPPs has been to create 'hybrid' organisations which have both public and private sector characteristics (Borys & Jemison, 1989). Evaluation of PPPs suggests there are tensions between public accountability and commercial interests (Thynne, 1998).

As noted earlier (section 1.1.2) there have been significant changes to the third and education sectors over the last twenty years. The third sector has grown rapidly, more than doubling its income. Public service delivery has become central to the third sector, with government funding now accounting for 38 per cent of total income for general charities (Dattani, 2013). However, as noted by Milbourne (2013), despite the increasing importance of the third sector's contribution to the UK economy and society, there is relatively little published research on the changes this has entailed for the sector.

The higher education sector has also been affected by changes in government policy. The Dearing Report heralded the end of free university education (Dearing, 1997), and the Browne Review (Browne et al., 2010) was responsible for a number of changes in terms of funding and student choice. The increasing competition between much of the university sector has, for many,

reinforced the move towards corporate management and away from traditional academic values (Bolden et al, 2009).

In summary, the political and economic environment in the UK is resulting in a changing balance between the sectors. This change affects not just the public and private sectors, but also the third sector and the academic sector.

2.7.2 New Public Management (NPM)

One of the first theoretical discussions of New Public Management (NPM) was published by Hood (1991). He described NPM as short hand for a range of doctrinal components, which included: professional management in the public sector; explicit standards and measures of performance; disaggregation of formerly monolithic units; greater competition; private sector styles of management practice; greater discipline and parsimony in resource use (1991, pp.4-5).

NPM is relevant to this study because arguably as public organisations began to adopt private sector practices, it led to a diminution of the differences between the sectors. There remain of course, significant distinctions between them (see 2.4.1 above), but NPM perhaps opened up for the first time, the potential for managers and executives, to transition between sectors on a significant scale.

Since then, much has been written about NPM (see for example Ferlie, Ashburner, Fitgerald & Pettigrew, 1996; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000; Williams, Rayner & Allison, 2011). Some authors consider NPM to be a reaction to a perceived lack of concern for customers and poor delivery of services by the public sector (Verhoest, Verschuere & Bouckaert, 2007). Others see NPM emanating from the drive by the Thatcher administration to reduce public spending during the 1980s (Jackson, 2014). Others view NPM as a practical manifestation of the New Right ideology espoused by Thatcherism, and an antidote to public choice theory, which may be described as follows:

> At the core of public choice theory was the concept of self-interested public bureaucracies, with a built-in incentive towards the growth and over-provision of public services (because these lead to bigger departmental budgets, higher salaries, more promotion opportunities) and an inherent tendency to become incompetent and inefficient (Massey & Pyper, 2005, p.45).

According to Pollitt (1993), a key principle of NPM is managerialism, which entails increasing efficiency, the use of sophisticated technologies, a labor force disciplined to productivity, clear implementation of the professional management role and managers being given the right to manage (pp.2-3). A second principle of NPM is indirect control, which includes continual

improvements in quality, an emphasis on markets and contracts, and performance management (Walsh, 1995).

NPM has been widely debated and is controversial for many reasons. Williams et al. (2011) noted concerns that private sector practices might threaten the public sector's collective culture, that engagement with private sector providers might threaten accountability due to uncertainty about responsibility for service delivery, and that the focus on short term results may be to the detriment of longer term objectives. It has also been speculated that the introduction of private sector management practices into the public sector may have an adverse impact on public integrity (Kolthoff, Huberts & Van Den Heuvel, 2007). According to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), early reformers underestimated the complexity of introducing private sector techniques into the public service. Whilst the report was largely positive about the impact of NPM it contained some cautionary comments:

> The contemporary problem is how to organise the public sector so that it can adapt to the changing needs of society, without losing coherence of strategy or continuity of governance values. Modernised governments are required to be responsive to various groups of citizens. But there is a cost in terms of capacity for collective action when the public service is differentiated and fragmented. New management approaches need to go beyond contracting and reporting to give renewed attention to connecting the public interest to individual motivation and values. (OECD, 2005, p.3)

The impact of NPM on the third sector appears not to have been widely researched. Milbourne has written about the incorporation of NPM into New Labour policies in the early 21st century, noting that the 'BestValue' agenda favoured the voluntary sector, because services could be provided more cheaply. However, BestValue processes introduced challenges for many third sector organisations because they had 'limited capacity, skills or resources' to face the 'bewildering requirements' relating to quality measures, benchmarking, and performance measurement (Milbourne, 2013, p.40). Dattani has noted the difficulties of applying the Balanced Scorecard, a tool which translates an organisation's mission and strategy into objectives and Key Performance Indicators, to third sector organisations. The Balanced Scorecard assumes a competitive strategy, whereas the third sector tends to focus on co-operation with other bodies in order to deal with social problems (Dattani, 2013).

The academic sector, traditionally regarded as part of the public sector, has also been affected by NPM, across the globe. It has not been accepted with open arms. Davies, writing in Australia, suggested that it would result in 'death to critique and dissent' and stated: '[New managerialism] may well involve the most significant shift in the discursive construction of professional practice and professional responsibility that any of us will ever experience' (Davies, 2003, p.91). The introduction of performance management, one of the features of NPM, into universities has been

evaluated by several international studies (Field, 2015; Lorenz, 2012; Sousa, deNijs & Hendriks, 2010).

One of the characteristics of the public sector over the last ten years has been the move away from service provision, to service commissioning across a number of different policy areas. Commissioning may be described as 'securing the services that most appropriately address the needs and wishes of the individual service user, making use of market intelligence and research, and planning accordingly' (Bennett, 2015, p.3). It is also '…an attempt to reduce the role of the state in the provision of services and instead promote the idea that public authorities should be an enabler' (Dickinson, 2014, p.14).

Commissioning has been promoted as a key component in the redesign of services, because 'it offers a means of joining up resources to focus on improving outcomes for citizens in the most efficient and effective way' (Local Government Association, 2012). It has been noted that effective commissioning requires different leadership and skillsets than in the more conventional public sector (Allen & Wade, 2011, Bennett, 2015; Dickinson, 2014) such as a mind-set which is open to new ways of operating.

2.8 Concluding comments

This chapter has discussed some of the challenges of the literature review in the context of studies drawing on grounded theory. It has introduced a conceptual model of the literature review for the current research, and critiqued the underdeveloped literature on inter-sector transition, including discussion of related constructs such as the boundaryless career. It has considered literature on organisational culture, leadership, and personal attributes including values, knowledge and skills, all of which may play a role in successful transition between sectors. The chapter has also discussed the literature on professional identity and success, and finally considered the political, economic and managerial context for the study.

The next chapter considers the factors which influenced the research design as well as the chosen methodology and practicalities of data collection.

Chapter 3 Research design

Introduction

This chapter provides a narrative of the research design, the purpose of which is to provide a framework for the collection and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Included in this narrative are the factors which influenced the development of the research proposal, the philosophical assumptions underpinning the study, positioning of the researcher, and ethics.   The chapter then discusses research methodology and the specific methods deployed in the study, before ending with consideration of the trustworthiness of the research.

3.1 Developing the research proposal

In the previous chapter (section 2.1, and also in the accompanying Impact Statement) reference was made to the researcher's personal interest in the differences between the public and private sectors. From this starting point, and largely as a result of exploring the scholarly literature, several potential strands of enquiry emerged. Chief amongst these was the process of transition at a senior level between the UK sectors, considered through the lens of acculturation. As noted above (section 2.4.3), the term acculturation was first coined by anthropologists, and refers to the process by which an individual (or group) modifies their culture as a result of working with a different culture over a period of time (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). The 'process' of modification may involve a number of elements, such as learning a new language, adapting behaviour or modifying personal values. Alongside exploration of this process of modification, the researcher was also interested in factors which might influence the speed and 'smoothness' of acculturation, and the degree to which 'non-cultural' attributes, such as skills and experience contributed to successful acculturation.

At the research proposal stage there were only two broad sectors under consideration, the public and private sectors, and a number of variables which the researcher felt merited exploration as potential contributors to the process of acculturation. These were attitudes, behaviours, skills, ethos and experiences.   At the proposal stage, the subjects of the research were designated 'leaders' (as opposed to senior executives or managers), on the basis that a leader was considered a generic term which could be refined as the study evolved.

Figure 3 replicates the model used in the research proposal. The model shows the overlap between public and private sector, with the shaded area representing the leaders who have

transitioned between the two. The researcher's assumption was that each of the variables represented in the smaller circles would apply to individuals transitioning between sectors to varying degrees. The lines connecting the circles demonstrate the potential inter-connectivity of the elements. The way an individual behaves, for example, may be linked to their attitude towards people or situations, their past experience, or the ethos which governs their approach of the world. Their attitudes might be influenced by the sector in which they work, or, conversely, they may have chosen to work in a particular sector because it aligned with their ethos. The picture is a complex one.
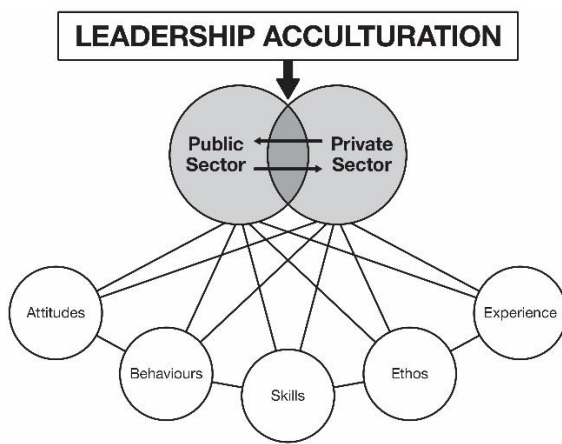
Figure 3 Model depicting potential contributory elements to acculturation of leaders who transition between sectors

As the research progressed it became apparent that there were a number of limitations to both the model and the proposal. Firstly, the public - private sector distinction excluded two significant sectors: the not-for-profit, or third, sector and the higher education sector, both of which were represented in the empirical data collection. As explained above (section 1.1.2), the boundaries between the sectors are changing, and a clear-cut distinction between public and private sectors is not sufficiently nuanced to capture the range of potential experiences of transitioning between sectors.

Secondly, the difficulty of defining and/or differentiating between 'attitudes', 'behaviours' and 'ethos' became quickly apparent once the data collection commenced. Rather than allocate each of these to a separate circle, as in the model, it seemed sensible to wait for themes to emerge from the data. Thirdly, the use of the term acculturation only represented part of the story. Acculturation implies the *process* of transition. Whilst this remained a significant part of the study, an equally significant part was the end result of the transition, and reflecting back on the challenges and enablers of a successful transition.

And finally, the term 'leadership' did not sufficiently capture the different levels at which the participants in the study were operating within their organisations. Whilst all participants were expected to demonstrate leadership qualities, their roles ranged from senior executives through to middle managers, and their experiences of transition varied accordingly.

The models created at the end of the research were significantly different from the one submitted with the research proposal (section 6.2).

3.2 Philosophical assumptions: ontology and epistemology

The relationship between philosophy and research design is an important one because the way an individual views the world will influence their choice of research design. To paraphrase Urquhart (2013), the two areas of philosophy relevant to this discussion are ontology (your perception of reality i.e. how the world is constructed) and epistemology (how knowledge is constructed in your discipline).

At the risk of over-generalisation, there are fundamental differences in the philosophies which underpin the approaches taken by natural sciences and the social sciences. Interpretivism takes the view that 'reality' is determined by people rather than by objective and external factors (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008), and is an epistemological position more commonly aligned with the social sciences, business and management disciplines. Positivism, on the other hand, takes the philosophical position that reality exists independently, and it can be measured. Table 1 below highlights some of the key differences between the philosophical positions.

This study of inter-sector transition is about understanding individuals' personal experiences of moving between sectors, and the sense that they make of those experiences. The researcher believes that the way inter-sector transition is experienced by individuals is dependent upon the actions of, and relationships with, other people (social actors). This view reflects the researcher's interpretivist ontological position. The interpretivist view is that reality is a social construct, and the way knowledge is gained (i.e. epistemology) is to study the phenomenon within its social context through in-depth exploration, from which constructs may be derived.

	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	Reality is objective; it exists independently of humans; it is measurable.	Reality is a social construct and dependent upon input from and between social actors
Epistemology	Researchers work in deductive way to discover unilateral, causal relationships. Theories must be testable.	Researchers study phenomena within their social settings; constructs are derived from the field through interpretations of practices and meanings
Disciplines	Natural sciences	Social sciences, business and management
The observer	Must be independent	Is part of what is being observed and to greater or lesser extent will influence the research
Human interests	Should be irrelevant	Are the main drivers of the research
Explanations	Must demonstrate causality	Aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progresses through	Hypotheses and deductions	Gathering rich data from which ideas and theories are induced
Concepts	Need to be defined so they can be measured	Should incorporate stakeholder perspectives
Generalisation through	Statistical probability	Theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	Small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

Table 1 A comparison of research philosophies: positivism and interpretivism (drawing on Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Urquhart, 2013)

At the level of the individual researcher, it is a feature of qualitative research to acknowledge not just philosophical assumptions, but also values and prejudices. This is a process known as 'positioning' (Cresswell, 2013) and is discussed in the next section.

3.3 Positioning the researcher: bracketing

Positioning recognises that consciously or not, philosophical assumptions and values will inevitably influence and contribute to the research process. The assumptions may change over time, particularly if the researcher embarks on multi-disciplinary research and is exposed to the traditions of disciplines that differ from their own. The philosophical assumptions of the researcher of the current study have most definitely changed since her undergraduate days. As a student of physical geography, the underlying approach was positivist, with an emphasis on testing and challenging existing theories, generally through analysis of large datasets (a good example would be meteorology and the myriad of theories about what causes particular weather patterns). The ontological assumption was that there was one objective reality and through a process of

deduction it would be discovered, then tested. A series of cause-and-effect relationships would contribute to the theory.

Over time, as engagement with the disciplines of leadership and management has increased (both in the academic and practitioner sense), and particularly compounded through the professional doctorate programme, the researcher's underlying assumptions have changed. Interpretivism enables a much more flexible approach to viewing the social world, where people are the dominant players. The researcher is struck, however, by comments on the need for qualitative inquiry to maintain a balance between art and science (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Whilst she would never advocate that qualitative research should emulate the rigour of scientific experiments, the researcher supports the need for alternative criteria to reliability and validity, such as trustworthiness (Bryman & Bell, 2011). An interesting question for the researcher, outside of the current study, is how her approach to scientific research might have changed were she ever to resume her studies in physical geography (please see the accompanying Impact Statement for a discussion of the transition from quantitative to qualitative).

Bracketing (also called reduction or epoche) refers to the desirability of setting aside preconceptions of the researcher's world, in order to focus purely on the phenomenon being studied. According to Gearing (2004), bracketing has evolved in an undefined manner and is often not articulated by researchers, but is applicable to all types of qualitative studies. Fischer (2009) suggests there are two types of bracketing. The first, initial bracketing is the researcher's identification and setting aside of assumptions at the study's outset; the second refers to the on-going reflection on the engagement with the data as the research progresses, and which is likely to lead to corrections of assumptions.

The researcher was particularly mindful of bracketing when undertaking the data collection and analysis. She came to the study with a background in the public and academic sectors, strong concern at government policy to undermine large sections of these sectors, and wary about private sector values and motivations. The researcher attempted to put these views aside, for example by asking open interview questions and trying not to pre-judge outcomes according to participants' sector background.

3.4 Ethical issues

'The ethical practice of social research with human participants is a complex and demanding responsibility' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.103). At a conceptual level, the moral outlook of the researcher must be considered so that any potential bias is acknowledged (part of 'bracketing', discussed above). During data collection, analysis and reporting, anonymity and confidentiality are

important issues. For this study the researcher hoped for in-depth, honest reflections by the participants on their personal experiences. Given their role as senior executives or managers, there were potential sensitivities to the information they might reveal. A guarantee of anonymity was therefore essential.

Diener and Crandall (cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011) have categorised ethical principles into four issues: whether there is harm to participants, whether there is lack of informed consent, whether there is invasion of privacy, and whether deception is involved. Cresswell (2013) advocates that ethical issues should be considered during all phases of qualitative research: prior to conducting the study, at the start of the study, during data collection, in the process of data analysis, reporting the data, and publishing the study. Using this categorisation, the table below summarises the ethical issues pertinent to this research.

Where the ethical issue occurred	Type of ethical issue	How the issue was addressed in this study
Prior to conducting the study	• Acknowledge values and moral outlook of researcher • Seek approval from appropriate Ethics Committee	• Values, outlook and experience reflected upon in Impact Statement and in thesis section 3.3 • Submitted Research Ethical Review form; outlined research and methodology; explained data storage, informed consent; levels of confidentiality and anonymity.
Beginning the study	• Disclose purpose of the study • Do not pressurise participants into signing consent forms	• Informed participants of study purpose • Ensured participants understood they were under no obligation to participate in study
Data collection	• Site for interviews should be comfortable for participants • Avoid deceiving participants • Respect potential power imbalances and exploitation of participants • Researcher reflexivity issues • Do not 'use' participants by gathering data and leaving site without giving back	• Offered choice of locations and in most instances researcher travelled to the participant's place of work • Discussed purpose of study and how data would be used • Avoided leading questions; emphasised role as researcher (as opposed to day job) • Researcher acknowledged feelings during interviews e.g. nervousness • Provided small gifts as a thank you
Data analysis	• Avoid siding with participants • Avoid disclosing only positive results • Respect privacy of participants	• Attempted to remain impartial • Reported multiple perspectives • Anonymised each participant's input
Data reporting	• Falsifying evidence, 'over claiming' data, findings, • Do not plagiarise • Avoid disclosing information that would harm participants • Communicate in clear, straightforward, appropriate language	• Reported data honestly • Used primary data (the researcher's) • Anonymised participants' data • Adopted jargon-free language to engage readers of research
Publishing the study	• Share data with others	• Thesis to be stored in university repository, on open access

Table 2 Ethical issues in qualitative research relevant to the current study (adapted from Cresswell, 2013, pp.58-59)

3.5 Methodology

The researcher's philosophical position combined with the topic of research pointed very strongly to a qualitative research approach. Before proceeding to discuss qualitative methodology, however, it is notable that a great many studies cited in the literature review (chapter 2) on related areas of research are quantitative (for example outlined in review articles by Arthur, 2014; Chun, Organisata & Marin, 2003; Frederiksen & Hansen, 2014). Such studies will appeal to researchers from positivist traditions who like to see large volumes of data supporting theory, and there is certainly a place for this type of research. It helps identify trends, patterns and potential causal relationships. It does not, however, lend itself to more exploratory studies, in which the constructs are unknown or highly complex. A qualitative methodology is ideal for gaining understanding of little-known or complex phenomena. It is fluid and flexible; the questions may change mid-project, for example, depending on the emerging data. The characteristics of qualitative research are that it is 'inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analysing the data' (Cresswell, 2013, p.22).

There are several approaches to qualitative research. Four of the commonly used approaches - Narrative, Phenomenology, Ethnography and Case Studies – were considered but discounted. A brief critique of each is provided in Appendix 1. A more detailed account of the approach that was chosen, which draws on grounded theory methods, follows below.

3.6 Grounded theory methods

The approach chosen for this study was a qualitative interpretivist one which draws on grounded theory. The words 'draws on' are used deliberately, because the study does not adopt the holistic approach as defined by Glaser and Strauss in their seminal book *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* (1967). Rather it adopts an 'a la carte' approach (O'Reilly, Paper & Marx, 2012), choosing a particular set of tools for data collection and analysis.

Grounded theory was developed as an alternative to the predominantly positivist approach to sociological research in the 1960's, which at that time focussed on verifying grand theory. Glaser and Strauss believed that new theory could be generated through the systematic analysis of qualitative data, in other words, new theory would be grounded in data. Although Glaser and Strauss were writing for sociologists, the impact of their work has been felt across a range of disciplines in the social sciences, health sciences, education, business and management. Indeed, grounded theory has now become the most prevalent framework for analysing qualitative data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Why is this? There are probably a multitude of reasons. Some would commend the insights gained from close analysis and coding of the data (Urquhart, 2013); others

would cite the potential for developing new concepts and theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008); many would point to its tried and tested techniques, such as theoretical sampling, coding, theoretical saturation and constant comparison (see 3.6.1 – 3.6.3 below).

Despite its popularity amongst qualitative researchers, grounded theory is not without its critics. Some have stated that the outcomes of grounded theory studies are not theory 'in any meaningful sense' (Thomas & James, 2006, p.767). Others consider that the term grounded theory is misleading, because it is more concerned with methods of data collection and analysis rather than theory generation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In a survey of articles in *Business Source Premier*, an international index of business journals, 83% of studies appeared to adopt selected grounded theory techniques rather than incorporating all tenets of the method as a holistic approach to research and theory building (O'Reilly, Paper & Marx, 2012). There is also confusion about terminology, for example the difference between concepts and categories (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

For the researcher, the appeal of drawing on grounded theory lies in the presentation of a framework, within which a range of approaches and techniques are acceptable. As noted by Urquart, 'there is no one way to do grounded theory' (2013, p.1). Similarly, Charmaz views grounded theory methods as 'a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages' (2006, p.9). The researcher therefore feels justified in adopting many of the techniques associated with grounded theory to explore an emerging phenomenon and to enhance understanding of that phenomenon, without aiming to develop new theory. These techniques are discussed in more detail below.

3.6.1 Theoretical sampling

Glaser and Strauss defined theoretical sampling as

> …the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges. The process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.45).

Whilst this study did not aim to generate new theory, the process of theoretical sampling worked effectively to build up a picture of different individuals' experiences of inter-sector transition.   It helped identify concepts for further exploration (for example individuals who changed roles as well as sectors), as well as potential gaps (such as people transitioning to social enterprises).

The strengths and weaknesses of alternative sampling designs for analysing 'publicness' have been considered by Rainey (2011). He noted the complexities of comparing public and private sectors, including the challenge of achieving sufficient sample sizes for valid comparisons. For him, 'the most desirable sample is a large, representative one, including many different organizational

types and settings' (Rainey, 2011, p.342). For the current study such an approach was impractical. Not only would there be a significant cost in designing and implementing a survey on this scale, but there would also be challenges in identifying the target population of senior executives and managers, as well as obtaining a reasonable response rate. Rainey notes a number of smaller surveys conducted primarily in the USA, each of which adds to the body of the knowledge but cannot claim to be representative or statistically significant. His paper illustrates one of the fundamental debates in business and social sciences research concerning the merits of quantitative versus qualitative methodologies.

According to King and Horrocks, the criterion most commonly proposed for sampling in qualitative studies is diversity. This is to try and secure a range of views on the research topic, which in turn should highlight 'meaningful differences' in experience (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.29). The empirical data collection for this study extended over a period of fifteen months, employing a mixture of opportunistic sampling and snowballing (both of which are defined below). Despite the potential limitations of these techniques, they produced a sample which represented diversity in terms of professional background, sector experience, age, gender, and length of tenure.

Opportunistic sampling simply means taking opportunities as they present themselves to explore new leads. For the researcher, these opportunities came via referrals from colleagues and peers, who knew individuals who had transitioned between sectors. These individuals provided a useful starting point for the research, and one in particular provided valuable data from a pilot interview (see 3.8 below). Snowballing is the practice of using participants in the research to recommend new participants who fit the criteria for the study (King & Horrocks, 2010). It is particularly useful when there is an absence of a known population from which to sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Snowballing occurred several times in the current study, and resulted in the researcher interviewing participants she would never have come across otherwise.

The potential danger of snowballing is that interviewees may recommend people similar to themselves (King & Horrocks, 2010). Only one instance of this occurred during the course of the research, when one interviewee recommended a colleague who had also transitioned from the private sector to the same public sector organisation. However, although there were similarities in professional background, their transitions had taken place some twenty years apart and so provided a useful source of comparison. Snowballing did not therefore emerge as problematic in this research study.

Before ending this section on theoretical sampling, the researcher wishes to address the justification of using a single method of data collection, namely the interview. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommended the selection of 'slices of data' by which they meant using different types of data to understand a phenomenon. Interviews could be deployed alongside a survey, for example,

providing two slices of data. For this study however, identification of sufficient subjects in the time available to undertake a survey, would have proved problematic. As the study in question was an exploratory one, which aimed to increase understanding of the phenomenon of transitioning between sectors, it was considered unnecessary to adopt more than one type of data collection. Rather, the use of interviews was considered the ideal way of extracting rich data from participants who had experienced the process of transitioning at first hand.

3.6.2 Theoretical saturation

Amongst the abiding questions in qualitative research are sample size and at what point to stop collecting data. Unlike much quantitative research, the purpose is not to make generalisations from representative samples of the population. Rather it is to 'elucidate the particular' (Cresswell, 2013, p.157). On this basis, the size of sample will vary according to each study. In grounded theory, the principle of theoretical saturation suggests that data is collected until no new theoretical insights emerge (Charmaz, 2006); however, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008), it is unlikely that total saturation is ever achieved. What is more likely is that sufficient data are obtained to provide breadth and depth of understanding about a phenomenon, and which clarify relationships between categories. The researcher adopted this approach, interviewing fifteen people who, as noted above, represented a range of professional backgrounds and experiences. It is possible that further interviews would have yielded new insights, but given that the emphasis of this study was on exploration of a relatively new phenomenon, the researcher felt fifteen interviews provided sufficient sampling.

3.6.3 Data analysis: constant comparison, coding, memo writing

The constant comparative method entails the simultaneous collection, coding (or labelling) and analysis of data and comparing data with previous data in order to constantly adjust theoretical categories. Through this process, theoretical underpinnings begin to form in the minds of researchers (O'Reilly, Paper & Marx, 2012).

Coding is the starting point for most forms of qualitative data analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and within the framework of grounded theory, coding is considered a first step towards the generation of theory (Glaser, 1978). Whilst the generation of theory was not the purpose of the current study, the process of coding was instrumental in developing the concepts and themes which led to a greater understanding of inter-sector transition. Coding may be defined as 'extracting concepts from raw data and developing them in terms of their properties and dimensions' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.159). Grounded theory purists advocate three types of coding - open, axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), but in the current study the researcher opted for a less structured

approach because it aligned better with the exploratory nature of the research. Following the guidance of key proponents of grounded theory (for example Corbin & Strauss, 2008), coding was started soon after the first interview was completed. This enabled the data derived to provide the basis for subsequent data collection and analysis.

Another tool associated with grounded theory is the memo. This may be described as a 'note to self' by the researcher to aid reflection on what might be unfolding from the data. Memos potentially help researchers crystallise their ideas and not lose track of their thinking on diverse topics (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher found the memo to be a highly useful tool to aid data analysis and the development of themes.

The definition of the term 'theme' varies amongst business researchers: for some a theme is similar to a code, whilst for others 'it transcends any one code and is built up out of codes' (Bryman Bell, 2011, p.572). This lack of consistency caused some internal debate for the researcher, but after consideration she settled on an approach which is perhaps best explained through an example.

Table 3 below shows a data extract from one of the interview transcripts. The template used was developed by the researcher having consulted various authors, including Charmaz (2006), King and Horrocks (2010), Kvale and Brinkman (2009). The initial coding was descriptive, to ensure that the content was fully understood and recorded. The analytical element of coding was developed through the memo writing and the emerging concepts, which were recorded in the third and fourth columns respectively. Although all four columns are shown as being fixed, in practice the third and fourth columns were fluid. There was a constant revisiting of the data with each subsequent interview: 'Analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.86). The memo column was added to, and the concept column began to fill up. As noted by Bryman and Bell, 'Coding in qualitative data analysis tends to be in a constant state of potential revision and fluidity' (2011, p.578). As the data analysis progressed, the concepts and themes started to become clearer, and over time the main themes became identifiable.

Source	Data extracts	Coding	Memo	Concept/theme
Interviewee G Page 17	If they feel that there are people in the organisation that are not doing enough, you tend to find that the leader of a private company will say ultimately this is my profit and ultimately this is my money and I will decide how to spend it and therefore if I don't think X is working hard enough to earn me a profit then I'm going to have issues. I mean an element of that will be in relation to size because in a smaller company someone is going to be in the spotlight far more than a bigger company. I don't think the spotlight is on people as much in the public sector, although at the moment there is a slight difference because budgets are getting cut, but if you look over the history of the last fifty years it's rare and I think that the people who do not have that 'can do' attitude can hide a bit more in public organisations and they do.	Private sector leaders concerned with profit and therefore want all employees to work hard. Easier to get away with poor performance in a larger company. Current budget cuts in the public sector mean it's harder to get away with mediocre performance	Poor performance management in public sector has been mentioned by several interviewees. Organisational size may be more relevant than organisational sector (replicates data from interview A) (check for any literature) Stereotyped view? Is this widely shared by private sector	Differences between private / public sectors. Organisational size Pressures on public sector Perception of public sector workers

Table 3 Example of data analysis deployed in this study

3.7 The interview in qualitative research

This section considers the use of the interview in qualitative research, factors which may affect the outputs from interviews such as bias and power asymmetry, and finally some reflections on the interview process pertinent to this study.

The interview was chosen as the primary means of data collection in this study. It is one of the most commonly used methods of data collection in qualitative research because it allows for rich, detailed responses by the participants, in a way that is not possible with other methods such as the survey questionnaire.

The research interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation. It is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009 p.2).

There are different types of interview, applicable to different situations. These include structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, non-directive interviews, telephone interviews, internet-based interviews, face-to-face interviews and focus groups (outlined in Robson, 2011). For this study, face-to-face, one-to-one interviews were selected because the researcher wanted to explore in-depth issues which would be personal to each individual. In order to encourage open disclosure it was important to build up a rapport with each participant, and this would have been difficult by telephone or email.

An unstructured interview, in which there may be just one question, would not have facilitated the discussion of the range of topics which the researcher hoped to explore. At the other extreme, a highly structured interview would not have allowed sufficient flexibility to capture the thoughts and experiences of diverse participants, nor to explore the emerging issues. The importance of flexibility in qualitative interviewing has been recognised repeatedly (Charmaz, 2006; King & Horrocks, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and the researcher's experience of the interview process in this study would strongly endorse that. The format chosen was an open semi-structured interview, which consisted of a series of prompts to cover key topics of relevance. The first pilot interview was at the more structured end of the semi-structured continuum, but the approach became less structured and adopted a more open format with successive interviews. These issues are discussed further in 3.8 below.

3.7.1 Factors which may influence the truthfulness of interviews

Whilst the more general issue of the trustworthiness of qualitative research is discussed towards the end of this chapter (section 3.9), this section looks at the truthfulness of interviews, or, put another way, the extent to which they are true to life. There are many factors which may impinge on the truthfulness of the qualitative interview process. The characteristics of the interviewer, for example, in terms of gender, socio-economic class or ethnicity, may influence the responses of the interviewee (Fowler & Mangione, 1990; Krumpal, 2013). The sensitivity of the questions may discourage truthfulness by the interviewer, for example if the questions are too intrusive, or if there is a perceived threat of disclosure to a third person (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). The interviewer him/herself may feel awkward about asking some questions, and end up avoiding them (Krumpal, 2013).

Evidence suggests that in some instances, respondents' answers to questions are influenced by what they perceive as being the most socially desirable response (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Krumpal, 2013; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). The concept of social desirability bias is an established phenomenon, and refers to the respondent's wish to conform to social norms, by presenting themselves in an overly positive light. The phenomenon appears to be particularly apparent when the interview questions concern ethical behaviour.

In the current study, there were a number of potentially sensitive and personal issues that the researcher wished to explore. The challenges of inter-sector transition at an individual level may have raised questions of doubt ('did I do the right thing?') and failure ('this was a disastrous decision'), for example. Responses concerning transition motivation may have been influenced by what the participants perceived as being socially acceptable – it is interesting that the motive to earn more money was rarely mentioned, whereas wanting to make a contribution to society was a recurring theme.

There are techniques to minimise bias in interviews. On a practical level, assurances of confidentiality, anonymity and data protection may all encourage more open disclosure, and these were certainly deployed in the current study. King and Horrocks (2010) note the importance of critical self-reflection by the interviewer, and to question what impact their presence might have on the interviewee, whether they said too much or subconsciously influenced the interviewee's responses, or conversely whether they said too little to establish a rapport. For the researcher, this was very much an on-going process, both during and after each interview. During the interview it was important to be sensitive to the way the conversation was going, so that adjustments could be made, for example to the prompts. After the interview, the researcher reflected on what had worked well and what could be improved upon next time. Perhaps the biggest learning point was to allow the participants to keep talking, even if the subject matter appeared irrelevant. Because the researcher fulfilled the role of attentive listener, this helped build rapport but also led to some interesting revelations. One participant spoke at length about his childhood, which initially appeared unrelated to his career choices. However it became clear as he continued that his father had been a strong influence on his approach to working life and his work values, which in turn influenced his inter-sector transitions.

Further reflections on the interview process are considered in section 3.9.2. One specific area to be particularly mindful of in qualitative interviewing is the notion of power relationships, and this is discussed in the next section.

3.7.2 Power asymmetry

A research interview should not be regarded as a 'completely open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners' (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.33). Sometimes the greater 'power' may lie with the interviewer, and sometimes it may rest with the interviewee. The interviewer defines the topics for discussion, asks the questions, ends the interview, and is perceived as having specialist knowledge. In these respects, the interviewer may therefore be considered the more powerful of the two people involved in the interview. In this study, there was the additional issue of the researcher's position within her organisation; her seniority could potentially have influenced the responses by two participants who were internal members of staff, and who may have felt they should modify any criticisms of their current employer. The researcher attempted to ameliorate this by restating the confidential nature of the discussion, and emphasising that her role in the study was as a researcher rather than a director.

The power relationship may have worked in the opposite direction in some instances. Several of the participants in this study were experienced chief executives. They held powerful positions in their organisations, were politically astute and highly knowledgeable. In qualitative enquiry parlance such people are classified as high status or 'elite' interviewees, who are used to being in control of their interactions (King & Horrocks, 2010) and for whom being interviewed is a relatively common experience. They are likely to be well practised at providing politically correct responses, and perhaps less comfortable with talking about the more personal issues that are the subject matter of qualitative studies. Several authors have noted the challenges of interviewing elites (for example Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Mikecz, 2012; Rice, 2010). The challenges include gaining access to them, acquiring trust and establishing rapport. The latter are particularly important in encouraging the elite to feel comfortable in divulging personal views, rather than more standard responses.

For the researcher, securing access to the elites was enabled through opportunistic sampling, whereby the referrals came from an elite who was personally known to each of the chief executives. The extent to which trust was gained and rapport was established is more difficult to evaluate objectively, but from the researcher's perspective the participants appeared to give open, personal responses. Phenomenology offers guidance on how to achieve objectivity. According to Lien, Pauleen, Kuo and Wang (2014), good reflection on the part of the researcher should help support and explain rationality and objectivity. 'Rationality is built upon how well the researcher understands the experience and context of the interviewee, while objectivity is built upon the understanding of the interviewee's experience' (2014, p.195). The researcher came away from each interview feeling she had a good understanding of the participants' experiences and the context in which the inter-sector transitions had been made. This could not have been achieved without the necessary rapport.

Following the advice of others who have interviewed elites (in particular Mikecz, 2012), the researcher did her homework in advance, ensuring she was fully aware of the participants' professional background and experience. One of the advantages of interviewing elites is that they generally have a presence on the internet so are relatively easy to research. By demonstrating that advance preparation has been done, and by demonstrating expert knowledge on the subject matter through the line of questioning, the potential imbalance in power can be mitigated. The researcher suggests this is because the elite is more likely to regard the interviewee with respect, and on an equal footing with themselves.

The researcher's experience of working at a relatively senior level over many years was also probably helpful in mitigating power asymmetry in the elite interviews. She was not as fazed by talking to senior executives as perhaps an early career researcher would be. She also benefited from a generous endorsement by her own chief executive, which would have encouraged the elites to be well disposed towards her.

No two interviews in this study were the same, given the diversity of professional backgrounds, career journeys and experiences. Of the seven elite participants, two stood out in terms of their different approach to the interview. In one instance, the participant requested an indicative set of questions in advance of the interview, and also requested that his personal assistant attended the interview. The result was a slightly more formal interview than some of the others, and a stronger sense that the power relationship favoured the participant. In contrast, the interview with another elite participant developed into what felt like a conversation between equals, particularly once the audio recorder had been switched off.

3.8 Pilot interview phase

The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent upon the interviewer (Patton, 1987). The interviewer in this study (who was also the researcher) undertook three pilot interviews in order to practice her interviewing technique and to check that the questions yielded data relevant to the research topic. The researcher was also conscious that many of the interviewees would be senior people with limited time available, and so it was important to be prepared.

The participants in the pilot interviews met the criteria of working at a senior level and having transitioned between the public and private sectors in one or both directions. The researcher developed a relatively detailed interview schedule for the first pilot, based on the topics she felt merited exploration. These topics had been arrived at following a review of the literature (covered in chapter 2) combined with questions which the researcher intuitively felt might be relevant to

inter-sector transition. The interview schedule for the first pilot interview had fifteen separate elements and is outlined in Appendix 2.

The experience gained from the first pilot was invaluable. The estimated interview time of one hour appeared to be appropriate, allowing sufficient time to explore the key areas. However, there were some lines of questioning that felt awkward. The question about Public Service Ethos (PSE) for example came across as being judgmental on the part of the researcher. A more open question was adopted for future interviews, phrased as 'What is important to you in your working life?' The question asking how the interviewee felt he was perceived by their employer was a clumsy attempt to gauge how successful the transition had been. This was subsequently re-phrased along the lines of 'what does success look like for you?' A further learning point was that the schedule felt too prescriptive, and the questions were not sufficiently open to encourage meandering off topic.

An interesting outcome from the pilot was the interviewee's view that organisational sector was less relevant than organisational size and culture, in terms of adapting to new work environments. In order to explore this further, and to further refine interview techniques, the researcher undertook two further 'pilot' interviews. Without giving away too much detail of the findings (discussed in chapters 4 and 5), it is worth recording that the second interviewee believed that inter-sector transitioning posed considerable challenges, which had taken around two years to overcome. This response reinforced the validity of the research topic. The data from the three pilot interviews are all included in the findings, and contribute to the total sample of fifteen interviews.

The experience of the three pilot interviews led to a paring down of the main body of the interview to a series of prompts. It was clear from the pilots that several topics were relevant to inter-sector transition, but that they were not shared across all participants. A more fluid approach was adopted subsequently, which enabled participants to talk at length about those areas they felt were particularly important, and in the process to introduce new elements, or themes. Conversely, when it became apparent to the interviewer that some lines of questioning would be irrelevant, these could be avoided.

In contrast to the general relaxing of the interview structure, one 'compulsory' question was added for all participants. This asked for practical advice that the participant might give to others making a similar inter-sector transition. The combined responses would provide the basis for practical guidance of relevance to a range of stakeholders (articulated in the objectives, section 1.3). The revised, streamlined interview schedule comprising a series of prompts is indicated below in Table 4.

- Brief outline of project, scope, confidentiality
- Series of prompts, covering the following topics (not necessarily in this order): career background relevant to inter-sector transition; why did you move? What is important to you in your working life? What were your experiences of transition? Were there any challenges? Was there anything which helped? What does a successful transition look like for you? Would you consider moving back?
- What advice would you give to others making a similar transition?
- Thank you

Table 4 Interview prompts: post-pilot

3.9 The main body of interviews: method

Following the pilot interview phase, a further twelve interviews were undertaken, giving a total sample size of fifteen. The time frame for all the interviews was fifteen months between June 2013 and September 2014. As noted above (3.6.1) the sample was derived opportunistically and through snowballing.

The researcher contacted each potential participant via email. In most cases the participant had already been made aware of the study, through the person making the recommendation. The researcher's email outlined the purpose of the study and the value of the interviewees' contributions. It explained that the data gathered would be anonymised and used for research purposes only, that the interview would last approximately one hour, and, if the participant was agreeable, would be audio recorded. It was made clear that there was no obligation to participate. On the basis of the information given, the individuals were asked if they would be willing to participate, and thanked for their consideration of the request. With the exception of two non-respondents, all potential participants consented.

Once they had agreed to take part, further communications – either by email or telephone – took place to make arrangements for the interviews. Individuals were given a choice of venue, and in most instances the interview took place at the participant's place of work. All the participants worked in England, with the majority from across the Yorkshire and Humberside region, but with representation also from the North East of England, the Midlands and London. At the start of the interview, the researcher provided each participant with a printed information sheet which outlined the research (Appendix 3). She asked whether they were happy for the interview to be audio recorded (all participants agreed) and explained that once transcribed the data would be held securely. The researcher provided assurance of respondents' anonymity. The participant was also asked to read and sign a consent form (Appendix 4).

Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Some of the audio recordings were transcribed by a professional typist but the majority were transcribed by the researcher herself; the advantage of the

latter was in enabling an immediate familiarity with the data. The transcripts were analysed using a constant comparative method (3.6.3 above).

To preserve anonymity, names of individuals and organisations were avoided. Each individual was assigned a letter, and in all documentation referred to as 'Interviewee A', 'Interviewee B' and so on.

3.9.1 Sample composition

The following information was recorded for each participant: the number and type of inter-sector transitions; the level of posts held (middle manager, senior manager, and chief executive, as defined in section 1.1.3.2); length of tenure; professional background; gender. Participants were not asked their age because this was considered unnecessary for the study.

A summary of the career characteristics of the participants is provided in Appendix 5 and is discussed further in chapter 4. However, at this point it may be useful to note some broad characteristics of the sample. Of the fifteen participants, ten were male and five were female. Eight participants had made a single inter-sector transition (which included public to private sector; private to academic; public to academic; private to public; private to third sector), whilst the remaining seven had made more than one transition. In terms of the role levels, five participants had been involved in an inter-sector transition at middle manager level, thirteen at senior manager level, and seven at chief executive level. Length of tenure ranged from one year to twenty five years, and professional backgrounds included Management, Information technology, Engineering, Accountancy, Law, Catering and Education.

3.9.2 Reflections on the interview process

Although the researcher had extensive experience of interviewing in a practitioner environment, for example for recruitment and performance management purposes, the interviewing techniques required for gathering research data posed a different challenge. Recruitment interviews generally followed a prescribed format, complying with institutional policies and procedures; to ensure fairness the same broad questions are asked of each candidate; candidates' responses are often predictable, and deviation from topics apparently irrelevant to the post are discouraged. In contrast, the main purpose of the qualitative research interview is to explore another person's perspective of the world. There are no right or wrong answers and the role of the interviewer is to prompt, to tease out the experiences of the participants, and to listen.

The pilot interviews undoubtedly helped fine tune the researcher's interview skills. Throughout the pilot phase and then with each successive interview, the type of prompting changed. As recurring themes started to emerge from the respondents and from the coding process, the follow-up prompting became more specific. For example, as issues concerning organisational culture emerged, the researcher was able to prompt with particular questions to explore whether the same issues were experienced by multiple respondents.

One aspect of the interview process for which the researcher was unprepared concerned the sense of privilege afforded. Fifteen people gave up their time to talk about their personal thoughts and experiences, and the researcher felt honoured to be the recipient of these. Qualitative research imposes considerable responsibility to treat data like these with care and sensitivity.

For some, the interview appeared to be a cathartic process, enabling the participants to talk about negative personal experiences with a neutral person who was willing to listen. The disciplines of psychology and clinical sciences are familiar with the benefits of therapeutic interviewing (Drury, Francis & Chapman, 2007; King & Horrocks, 2010; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009), and whilst the aims of therapeutic interviewing are very different to that of research interviewing, there are similarities. Therapeutic interviewing aims, at the level of the individual, to increase understanding and to bring about change, whereas qualitative research interviewing is more concerned with increasing understanding of a phenomenon. Both however require the gathering of rich data, and good reflective listening skills by the interviewer (Drury et al, 2007). Rosetto (2014) argues that the qualitative research interview can be therapeutic and should be recognised as such. However she notes the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries to protect the researcher–participant relationship. 'The researcher's role is listener, learner, and observer, not counselor or therapist' (Rosetto, 2014 p.486).

This section is entitled 'Reflections on the interview process', and so it is appropriate to end with some thoughts on reflexivity. As noted by numerous authors (for example Bryman & Bell, 2011; King & Horrocks, 2010) there are many different uses of the term reflexivity in qualitative research. At the heart of reflexivity is the acknowledgement that researchers and the research approaches they use, are inextricably entangled with the social world and the knowledge they seek to create. This links back to the earlier discussion on bracketing (section 3.3), and in practical terms resulted in the researcher consciously having to set aside her own beliefs about the public and private sectors, in order not to influence – unwittingly - the participants' responses.

3.10 Trustworthinesss

This chapter ends with a discussion of the trustworthiness of qualitative research, in other words, the extent to which the research may be trusted. There are multiple terms associated with this concept, depending on ontological persuasion and subject discipline. From the quantitative positivist traditions come the terms reliability and validity; from the interpretivist standpoints we have terms such as credibility and dependability. For the purposes of this study, trustworthiness is preferred as the umbrella term.

The trustworthiness of findings from qualitative research has been widely debated (for example Bryman & Bell, 2011; Cresswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Robson, 2011). In the natural sciences reliability is demonstrated by the ability to replicate findings, and validity is concerned with the accuracy of findings. Some qualitative researchers have adapted the use of the terms reliability and validity so that they suit a qualitative enquiry. Mason, for example, talks about validity with regards to the interpretation of qualitative research data. She suggests that validity can be achieved by demonstrating how the interpretation was reached, which implies being able to trace and justify the steps leading to the interpretation (Mason, 1996). LeCompte and Goetz (1982), whilst recognising that no study can be replicated exactly because of the dynamic nature of human behaviour, suggest that external reliability can be achieved at least partially, particularly in ethnographic studies, by ensuring that researchers adopt a similar social role in each study.

For many qualitative researchers, however, the terms reliability and validity are avoided entirely because the 'canons of scientific enquiry' are deemed irrelevant (Robson, 2011). If the aspiration is to precisely replicate a study in order to prove its validity, there is a (positivist) assumption of a single account of social reality. Interpretivists, however, believe in multiple realities which are shaped by human agents, and so alternative criteria for evaluating qualitative research are required. Bryman and Bell (2011) outline several examples of these criteria. Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed the alternative criteria of trustworthiness (subdivided into credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) and authenticity; Yardley (2000) proposed four criteria: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, impact and importance; Hammersley (1992) emphasised relevance. A selection of these are summarised in table 5 below, along with a consideration of their application to the current study.

Criterion	Explanation	Application to this study
Credibility	Equivalent to internal validity – is the match between the researcher's observations and their theoretical developments credible or feasible? Ascertained by rigour of research design and through 'respondent validation' (participants in research confirm the researcher's understanding matches their own) or triangulation (using more than one method of data collection)	Research design draws on grounded theory and uses well established methods of data collection and analysis. Study is exploratory; neither respondent validation nor triangulation were considered necessary.
Transferability	Equivalent to external validity – can the study be replicated? Qualitative studies cannot be replicated precisely, however rich description can provide others with a basis for making judgements about the possibility of transferability of findings	Methodology is replicable; rich data collected and analysed
Dependability	Equivalent to reliability – how accurate are the findings? Demonstrated by detailed records of research processes which can be accessed by other researchers	Stages in the research process documented; thesis will be placed in University repository on open access
Confirmability	Relates to researcher not overtly allowing their values or beliefs to influence the research methods and findings	Values and influences documented in thesis (Bracketing)
Fairness (a sub-criterion of authenticity)	Does the research fairly represent different viewpoints amongst members of the social setting?	Study involved diverse selection of participants in terms of gender, age, profession, length of tenure
Sensitivity to context	Sensitivity to social context, ethical issues and theoretical positions	Literature review demonstrates sensitivity to context and theory; ethical issues were considered and evidenced
Commitment and rigour	Demonstrated by engagement with subject matter and researcher skills	Evidenced in thesis
Transparency and coherence	Clear explanation of research methods, clearly articulated argument, evidence of reflexivity	Evidenced in thesis
Impact and importance	Importance for advancing knowledge, impact on community on which research is conducted and for practitioners	Research fills a gap in the literature; impact can only be assessed in the future
Relevance	Contribution to literature	Will be evidenced by number of downloads and other dissemination

Table 5 Alternative criteria for assessing trustworthiness in qualitative research (drawing on works by Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Yardley, 2000; Hammersley, 1992)

3.11 Summary

This chapter has discussed the research design and the rationale for the approach taken. It has

outlined the interpretative philosophical assumptions which underpin the study, and described the

research methodology, which draws on a grounded theory framework. The main tool for data collection, the interview, has been considered, along with the lessons learned from the pilot interview phase. The chapter has concluded with reflections on the interview process and issues of trustworthiness.

The next chapter starts to explore the research findings. It focuses on what are termed the 'background factors' in the participants' inter-sector transition stories, such as the career characteristics, personal drivers for making the transition, and preconceptions of the destination sector.

Chapter 4 Results: Background factors in the inter-sector transition stories

Introduction

This research has explored the personal experiences of senior executives and managers who have transitioned between organisational sectors.   In particular it has sought to understand the factors that may contribute to a successful transition, and conversely what are the barriers or challenges. The interviews yielded rich data which have contributed new insights into inter-sector transition, and which will be presented in the remaining chapters.

Qualitative research has been described as messy and non-linear (Sinkovics & Alfodi, 2012), and this brings challenges in terms of presentation of the findings. After much deliberation, the chosen approach was to present the results in two main tranches. The first tranche explores what the researcher terms the 'background' factors in the participants' inter-sector transition stories. These include the career characteristics (demographics, professional background, sector transitions, length in post), the personal drivers for making a transition, and individuals' preconceptions about the destination sector compared with the 'reality' of their experiences. These factors are called 'background' because, although they provide useful context about the participants, they did not appear in the researcher's view to be the main influences on the success or otherwise of the transition. They are explored in the current, relatively brief, chapter. The second tranche of findings, considered in chapter 5, focuses on the enablers and challenges to successful transitions.

For the purpose of clarity, please note that all quotations from interviewees are in italics, whereas quotations from the literature are in Roman typeset.

4.1 Career and demographic characteristics of the participants

As indicated in the previous chapter (section 3.6.1) a mixture of opportunistic and snowballing sampling was deployed and this resulted in a moderately diverse sample. By way of a reminder, the following information was recorded for each participant:

- Inter-sector transitions (type of sector and the number of transitions)
- Role levels of each post (middle manager, senior manager or chief executive)
- Length of tenure
- Professional background
- Gender

Each of these is discussed in the following sections, and a summary is provided in Appendix 5. Participants were not asked to give their age, as this was felt unnecessary (and a little indelicate). However, the career outlines provided at the start of each interview enabled the researcher to build up a picture suggesting the points in an individual's career when the various transitions had been made. This provided some useful context for the researcher, and also helped explain the drivers for inter-sector transition.

4.1.1 Number and type of inter-sector transitions

The number of transitions experienced by each participant varied. Some participants had undergone multiple transitions and at least three individuals had worked in three different sectors (public/private/academic or public/private/third). For these particular individuals transitioning between sectors was not a 'big deal'. Indeed, although their transitions were not without challenges, they embraced career change. Interviewee N reflected:

> *I realised, if I'm responsible for our [family's] financial wellbeing, I've got to work until I'm financially independent or retired ... but I didn't see any reason why I couldn't enjoy working. So I made the decision I would do something as different as I could, as often as I could.*

Interviewee O stated '*People ought to be adaptable and be able to move and not be afraid of it'.* In contrast, eight participants had made just a single transition between sectors. These moves were Public to Private (one participant), Private to Public (three), Private to Academic (two), Public to Academic (one) and Private to Third (one).

Arguably a natural assumption would be that the more inter-sector transitions an individual makes, the easier the transition, because the individual becomes adept at adapting to change and to different work environments. Conversely if only one transition is made it might be more difficult. Whilst the first assumption did indeed appear to be the case, the second did not. Several of the 'single transitioners' experienced very successful transitions.

4.1.2 Role levels

The roles were categorised into three levels because the researcher suspected that different factors might come into play depending upon the seniority of the post, for example in terms of previous professional experience and skill sets. The levels adopted were middle managers, senior managers and chief executives. These terms were defined in section 1.1.3 but for convenience, condensed definitions are provided below in table 6.

Role level	Definition
Middle manager	Team leader in a large organisation; reports to a senior manager
Senior manager	Head of large department or unit with significant decision-making authority; reports to CEO or equivalent
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (or equivalent)	Leader in control of company or organisation

Table 6 Definition of role levels

In total, there were four transitions to middle manager level, twelve to senior manager level, and eight to CEO level (see Appendix 5).

One of the areas where role level did appear to impact on inter-sector transition was the motivation to move, or the transition driver. For example, the driver for making a transition amongst middle managers appeared to be determined as much, if not more so, by the job itself as by the sector in which it was situated. Interviewee C, a middle manager, moved from the private to the academic sector because *'the vacancy was there'*, whereas at more senior levels the reasons for moving were more complex. The expressed values of CEOs appeared to be a strong motivation for moving to the sector in which they worked, whereas for middle and senior managers this was less so. The role of values is explored in more detail in chapter 5.

4.1.3 Length of tenure

The participants had occupied their 'destination' posts (namely the posts to which they had transitioned) for varying lengths of time, ranging from one year to twenty five years. Of the twenty transitions that were alluded to during the course of the interviews, five had occurred in the previous two years, seven had occurred between three to five years previously, and four had taken place between six and ten years ago. Four transitions had occurred over ten years previously, and of these two had taken place over twenty years ago (see Appendix 5).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the recollections of recent transitions were stronger than those that had taken place many years previously. However, regardless of the time that had elapsed, participants generally had strong memories of what the transition had felt like. Although her transition from the private to the academic sector had occurred eleven years previously, Interviewee B still vividly recalled feeling like a '*fish out of water*'. Interviewee F, who had moved from the private to the public sector twenty two years previously, remembered immediately feeling '*much more suited to this type of environment'*.

4.1.4 Professional background

In terms of professional backgrounds, management, information technology, engineering, accountancy, law, education, catering, the police, and philosophy were represented. However, law and accountancy accounted for a relatively larger proportion, and the researcher suggests that this may be due to the effect of the snowballing sampling method, in which participants recommended colleagues from similar backgrounds as possible participants. An additional possibility may be that the knowledge and skills associated with these professions lend themselves to working across sectors. This is an interesting question which was not explored in the current study but may lend itself to future research.

4.1.5 Gender

Of the fifteen participants, ten were male and five female. Two of the five females were CEOs or equivalent. There was no correlation between gender and transition success, but gender was not a primary focus of the study and it is possible that further research would yield some interesting findings.

4.2 Transition drivers

The researcher was interested in the reasons underlying the participants' decision to transition between sectors, as they may have had some bearing on the success of the move.   For most participants, there was a combination of factors which prompted the move between sectors, and many of these drivers overlapped with the factors which impacted on the success of the transition. Utilising specialist knowledge in a different environment, work-life balance, alignment of values with the destination sector, and remuneration were all factors which influenced inter-sector transition success, and accordingly are discussed in chapter 5. Appendix 6 provides a summary of transition drivers.

Two drivers which appeared to fall outside the category of an inter-sector transition enabler or challenge, were redundancy and opportunity. These are both addressed briefly below. Appendix 6 provides a brief summary of the transition drivers. This summary provides a selective rather than a comprehensive picture of all the transitions experienced by the participants; where individuals had undergone multiple transitions the researcher asked the participant to focus on a small number, due to time constraints of the interview process.

Redundancy

Two participants (Interviewees E and O) had been forced to change jobs due to redundancy. Interviewee E had been made redundant from a senior post in the public sector, and he decided to join the academic sector in a radical career change. He described himself as *'a little bit sour from the experience'* and it is possible this impacted on the smoothness of the transition. His self-esteem and professional identity were undoubtedly affected (issues which are explored in section 5.4). Redundancy of a slightly different nature affected Interviewee O, who, along with the entire UK government, was ousted following the 2010 general election. She took time to think about her next move, and opted for the third sector, because it provided alignment with her values of doing good for society.

There is a small but growing body of literature on the personal experiences of redundancy (for example Davey, Fearon & McLaughlin, 2013; Gardiner et al, 2009; Parris & Vickers, 2010; Tyson & Doherty, 1991), but none of it relates specifically to sector change.

Opportunity

Four participants spoke about opportunities presenting themselves which had not been sought. Interviewee M cited '*being in the right place at the right time"* as his reason for moving from the private to the academic sector. He had not been considering a job change, but his blend of professional knowledge and experience made him an attractive choice for the recruiting organisation. He was head hunted by a recruitment agency and ultimately offered the CEO post. Another of the CEO participants (Interviewee O) and one of the senior managers (Interviewee D) were also headhunted.

Summing up

It was clear that each participant had different reasons for their inter-sector transition(s), and based on the interviewees' responses, the motivation for transitioning was largely realised. The only transition driver which appeared not to be consistently realised was an improved work-life balance. Three of the four participants who cited work-life balance (three moved to the public sector, one to the academic sector), felt that whilst they had more flexibility over their working hours in the public sector, they worked as many, if not longer hours, than in their previous private sector employment. This finding suggests a preconception about the public sector that was not entirely justified, a point which is expanded upon in the next section.

Taken out of context, many of the transition drivers could apply to a job change within rather than across sectors. Some, however, are arguably more relevant to inter-sector transition. The desire for a better work-life balance by people in the private sector was clearly a reason for transitioning

to the public or academic sectors. Achieving a better alignment of values also appeared to be a significant driver for participants moving to the public and third sectors in particular.

For three participants, a stated key driver was to do something different, and *'not just a little bit different, but out of the box different'* (Interviewee L). This desire for variety is perhaps also a characteristic of people making inter-sector transitions.

4.3 Preconceptions of the destination sector versus the 'reality'

The issue of whether participants had preconceptions about their destination sector is of interest for two reasons. Firstly, the nature and extent of the preconceptions may have predisposed the participants towards transitioning to the sector. And secondly, the extent to which reality matched preconceptions may have had a bearing on the success of the transition. Whilst there is abundant literature relating to public–private sector differences from organisational or motivation lenses (for example Bysted & Hansen, 2015; Perry & Rainey, 1988), the academic literature on individuals' perceptions (or stereotyped views) of the different sectors is under developed.

Appendix 7 provides a summary of the participants' preconceptions and their post-transition rationalisation of the reality. Where multiple inter-sector transitions had taken place, the participant was asked, due to time constraints, to focus on just one.

Of the fifteen participants, four participants had some familiarity with their destination sector, through previous consultancy jobs or having been employed in the sector many years ago. Their preconceptions were largely (but not entirely) realised once the transition was made. Three participants admitted to having had no preconceptions, and approximately half of participants had preconceptions which subsequently proved to be at least partially unfounded. Three participants alluded to issues which could be considered stereotypical of the public sector: 'staid and bureaucratic' (Interviewee F), employees having 'an easier ride' (Interviewee G); and 'frustrating governance' (Interviewee M).   The source of the preconception was not articulated, but the researcher assumes that newspapers and the media play a role. One participant who transitioned to the private sector commented

> *I was very wary when I went to that job because I had come with the baggage of the evil capitalists and actually I [now] have a much more nuanced view of that sort of corporate world I think.... it was dominated by the profit motive but by a whole series of other things too.*   (Interviewee O)

Interviewee K, a local authority CEO, acknowledged the stereotypical view held of the public sector but did not share them: '*My preconceptions weren't the stereotypical ones about the public sector being inefficient, and it having second class employees, and about overly bureaucratic processes*

and ways of doing things.' He did however admit to having a simplistic view of party politics before joining the public sector. Interviewee J transitioned from a senior position in a large multi-national private company, to lead a social enterprise. Although she knew there would be challenges, her preconceptions were that the partner organisations with whom she would need to work would be supportive, wanting to *'make things happen'.* This, it transpired, was an optimistic assumption.

All the above examples suggest a gap in knowledge about the sector to which participants transitioned, a point which will be considered in more detail in chapter 5.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the core characteristics of the participants, and briefly considered their transition drivers and preconceptions. Some of these points will be revisited in the next chapter, particularly those which appear to have an impact on the success of the transition.

Chapter 5 Discussion of results – challenges and enablers

Introduction

This chapter explores the factors which appear to contribute directly to the success of the transition. Sometimes these factors are enablers, acting to speed up the acculturation process; sometimes the same factors might act as challenges which need to be overcome. The factors which emerged as key themes from the analysis of the data and which are discussed in the following pages are: work values; knowledge and skills; professional identity, and organisational cultures. The chapter concludes with the participants' own perceptions about the success of their transition, followed by their advice to other people making similar inter-sector transitions.

Appendix 10 provides a summary of challenges and enablers, and participants' responses to the question of what success looks like for them.

As with the previous chapter, direct quotations from the participants are indicated by the use of italics.

5.1 Work values

This section considers the values which underpinned the participants' approach to working life. There are many definitions of work values but for the purposes of this study the following is used:

> Work values can be defined as generalised beliefs about the desirability of certain attributes of work (e.g. pay, autonomy, working conditions) and work-related outcomes (e.g. accomplishment, fulfilment, prestige). Like general values, work values act as the criteria that an individual uses in selecting appropriate work-related behaviours and goals.... work values are derived from broader general values (Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006, p.607).

As noted earlier (section 2.5.1.1), work values may be described as intrinsic or extrinsic, and there are numerous examples. A fairly simple typology is listed below in Table 7.

Work value	Description	Intrinsic/extrinsic
Achievement	The importance of using one's abilities, having a feeling of accomplishment, undertaking interesting and challenging work, learning	Intrinsic
Altruism	The importance of harmony with, and being of service to others; integrity and social justice	Intrinsic
Autonomy	The importance of being independent and having a sense of control	Extrinsic
Comfort	The importance of feeling comfortable and not being stressed; work-life balance	Extrinsic
Safety	The importance of stability, order, predictability and job security	Extrinsic
Status	The importance of recognition and being in a dominant position; pay and benefits	Extrinsic

Table 7 Typology of work values (adapted from Dawis, 2002, p.427)

It is clearly important for an individual's work values to be satisfied if they are to enjoy their job. This applies across all organisational sectors, whether private, public, third or academic sector. The relevance of work values to inter-sector transition is two-fold. Firstly, they may drive the motivation for the transition to another sector. Work values may be regarded as a sub-set of the values, or core beliefs, which guide the behaviour of individuals, and so inevitably there is some overlap with the transition drivers discussed in the previous chapter (section 4.2). For example, the stated transition driver by Interviewee J to '*make a difference to society'* by moving to the third sector could also be described as a work value – specifically the work value of altruism identified in Dawis's typology above. Secondly, having made the transition to another sector, the success of that transition may depend on the extent to which the individual's work values are met.

To gain a sense of the work values of each participant, they were prompted with the following question: 'What's important to you in your working life?'. The responses clustered around a number of themes: making a contribution to society (referred to as altruism in the Dawis typology), commitment to the organisation (arguably a more local form of altruism), job satisfaction (achievement, status) and work-life balance (comfort). Also raised, though to a lesser degree, were financial security (status) and integrity (arguably a form of altruism). These are discussed below, whilst a summary of the responses may be found in Appendix 8.

5.1.1. Making a contribution to society ('Altruism')

A number of respondents talked about the importance of making a contribution to society, for example by being part of an organisation that *'does good things for society'* (Interviewee C), or by being in a position to influence policy to impact '*positively on local people and businesses'* (Interviewee K) . This sentiment was not, as the researcher expected, limited to people transitioning to the public, third or academic sectors, but it also surfaced in the private sector. It also occurred at all three levels of Manager, Senior Executive and CEO. Interviewee N, a Managing Director of a private company, commented that '*what turns me on is doing something that's helping wider society'*. He achieved this through the manufacturing of products which helped people with health problems and through the provision of apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people. Interviewee O, who had made multiple transitions between sectors, talked about the importance of being part of an organisation *'where people are working for some common goals ...and that common purpose is for the public good'*. This realisation had come later on in the individual's career; she readily admitted to being '*incredibly happy and extremely well paid'* in the private sector, but ultimately it was not enough because it lacked the sense of doing something to benefit society. Her last three jobs, including the current one, had been in the public or third sectors. Interviewee J, who had enjoyed a highly successful career in the private sector, described an epiphany when undertaking volunteer work in a deprived inner city which led to her moving to the third sector to establish a social enterprise. A key driver for Interviewee F's transition to the public sector was his dislike of the private sector ethos: '*I kind of terribly naively imagined, even in the private sector, my job as a lawyer was to sort of help people, support them and stuff. Actually it turns out it was to take money off them'.* These moves support academic literature which points to individuals changing their priorities over time (Apfel, 2013; Brown, 2002; Drucker, 1990).

Two other participants who had experience of working at a senior level in the private sector spoke about the responsibility of hugely profitable companies to undertake charitable works for society. Interviewee A, a private sector executive, had helped establish a charitable foundation in the UK, whilst Interviewee M talked about the improvements in health care his commercial company had implemented. These findings support recent research which concludes that private sector employees are no less altruistic than public servants (Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006). It also reinforces earlier studies on Public Service Motivation (PSM) which acknowledged that any individual can exhibit PSM regardless of employment sector (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Brewer & Selden, 1998; Vandenabeele, 2007).

Without exception, all those participants who expressed a desire to make a contribution to society felt they were doing so in their current roles.

5.1.2 Commitment to the organisation ('Altruism')

Several participants cited their commitment to their organisation. There were two broad groups to whom this applied: firstly, middle and senior managers who transitioned to the public or academic sector; and secondly CEOs across all sectors. Interviewee B, a middle manager who transitioned from the private to the University sector, wanted a job where she could '*make a contribution'* to the development of her organisation. Interviewee F, a senior manager who transitioned to a large public organisation commented: '....*the advice that you give and the feeling that you have assisted the organisation in dealing with what it faces is what I find reassuring and rewarding.'* For Interviewee G, a middle manager transitioning from the private sector into a senior role in the public sector, what was important was how she could *'help move this organisation forward ... help it improve .... add value'.* All three of the above participants appeared content with their transition away from the private sector, and although they had some reservations about their destination organisations (see section 5.3 below), their work value of altruism was satisfied. Interestingly, this finding is somewhat at odds with an earlier study which found that public sector employees had significantly lower levels of organisational commitment than their private sector counterparts (Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006). One of the postulated reasons in that study was that public organisations are large and complex, and it can be difficult for employees to appreciate the overarching aims or where their individual roles 'fit in'. The researcher would argue that in the current study, the participants were all managers and therefore one would expect them to have an understanding of their organisation's mission.

At CEO level there was, as expected, a clear commitment to the organisations they led, and this was apparent across all sectors. Interviewee H, who transitioned from the private sector to lead a large academic institution, talked at length about his ambition and priorities and summed these up simply as: '*What I want to do is see the institution succeed'.* This contrasted with his lesser commitment to his previous organisation, which he perceived had a focus on financial returns at the expense of more important issues.

For Interviewee M, who also transitioned from a commercial company to lead a major academic institution in the UK, there was a strong alignment between his personal values and his commitment to the organisation. *'....I grabbed hold of its mission and I believe in it so much and people see it reflected in what I say and what I do, it naturally makes them feel better about being part of the [organisation] too'.* Similarly for Interviewee J, who set up a social enterprise, her commitment to the organisation stemmed from a strong belief that it could make a positive and practical difference to the lives of young adults. Interviewee N, who had made multiple inter-sector transitions over the course of his career, was a company CEO at the time of the interview. He had

first come across the company over twenty years previously when working in the Civil Service, and had been so impressed with the company '*and what it stood for*' that he decided to buy it should it ever become available.

The findings outlined above suggest that an individual's personal commitment to an organisation is a significant factor in achieving a successful inter-sector transition. Where the commitment was weaker, the transition appeared to be less successful, as for example in the case of Interviewee H's transition to the private sector. He quickly became dissatisfied with his employer, commenting that '*the ethos of the firm changed even in the short time I was there*'. The broader issue of organisational culture is discussed below (section 5.3), but it is worth restating at this point the apparent importance of a strong alignment of an individual's work values with those of the organisation.

5.1.3 Integrity and social justice ('Altruism')

This category of responses concerns the intrinsic values of honesty, fairness, respect and 'doing the right thing'. They are not identified specifically in Dawis's typology, but have been recognised elsewhere in work on personal values. Schwartz (1994), for example, identified honesty, social justice and equality in his studies on the universality of human values. For convenience, they are categorised under the umbrella term 'integrity and social justice' in the current study and they were articulated particularly by the participants working at CEO level or equivalent.

Interviewee L, for example commented:

> *I guess for me there are three or four things which - I wouldn't necessarily call them values but which are part of the cocktail - a genuine belief in doing the right thing - it might not be popular but it's the right thing, so recognising that sometimes in life there are things called inconvenient truths; a degree of transparency and honesty; fairness but firm; what's on the tin is in the tin – authenticity.*

Interview M stated '*I fundamentally believe that human beings are human beings and everybody has the right to be treated with respect and dignity no matter who they are, what they do*'.

Arguably the reason that CEOs were more articulate on this element of work values than middle or senior managers was due to their years of experience. Most of the participants at this level were mature, experienced individuals who had had ample opportunity to reflect on themselves and their careers. Their leadership role also enabled them to influence their organisation's culture and to impose their own work values on their organisations in a way which participants working at senior and middle manager level were not.

5.1.4 Personal job satisfaction ('Achievement')

A third category of responses related to personal job satisfaction, and included elements such as variety, challenge and a sense of achievement. It could be argued of course that these elements are important in any new job irrespective of inter-sector transition. The researcher would agree that 'variety' can be found in jobs in any sector. It may, however, act as a transition driver simply because moving into a different sector provides variety through a new environment and perspective on working life. Conceptually there may also be a link between variety and challenge.

Adopting the definition of challenge as ' the situation of being faced with something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability' (Cambridge dictionary, 2016[2]), it would seem to the researcher that the actuality of transitioning between sectors implies a major change for an individual, requiring considerable mental effort. It was apparent from the interviews that people working at CEO level embraced these challenges, and even sought them. Interviewee L, before becoming a CEO, made a conscious decision to '*do something different, not just a little bit different but out of the box different'.* Interviewee N, who had undertaken multiple transitions between sectors, talked about his philosophy to work:

> *I realised, if I'm responsible for our [family's] wellbeing, I've got to work until I'm financially independent or retired.... but I didn't see any reason why I couldn't enjoy working. So I made the decision I would do something as different as I could, as often as I could.*

This participant appeared to thrive in different working environments and embrace both variety and challenge. For him, transitioning between sectors seemed a natural course of action which held no anxiety. Interviewee J, the CEO of a third sector organisation, talked about needing challenge and variety in her working life. She had never felt bored in her current role because each day was different. This chimed with another CEO who admitted:

> *I am very bad at being bored, and I think that operates on two fronts: intellectual challenge, so problem solving of difficult problems is really important, but also lack of routine. I don't particularly enjoy doing the same thing over and over again. (Interviewee O)*

These examples suggest that people working at CEO level who choose to transition between sectors, embrace variety and challenge, from which they derive job satisfaction.

Some participants talked about the importance of having a sense of achievement. Interviewee I, who had transitioned from the private sector twenty seven years previously, stated: '*I want to do my thirty years and have that personal satisfaction of knowing that actually I've been a police officer for thirty years'.*

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[2] http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/challenge

According to the Dawis typology above, 'achievement' encompasses the importance of using one's abilities. For at least one participant (Interviewee A), the job had changed to the point where it no longer provided a sense of achievement. He talked about '*disillusionment'* with the changing role of local government from one of service provider to service commissioner. He believed that a move to the private sector, working in the area of which he had extensive experience, would allow him to reconnect with his professional expertise (the literature on professional identity in section 2.1.5 is relevant to this). Some studies have noted that effective commissioning requires different leadership and skillsets to those more traditionally associated with the public sector (Allen & Wade, 2011; Dickinson, 2014; Glasby, 2012) and the researcher speculates that this maybe a contributory factor in the decision of experienced public sector managers to move away from the sector. Interviewee K, the CEO of a local authority, also felt that *'some public servants increasingly don't want to be part of large organisations where their own influence is constrained'* and therefore opt to leave the public sector.

Using one's abilities to the full was exemplified by three CEO participants as leading a company or organisation (and would be classified as an 'Autonomy' work value by Dawes). Interviewee N stated he had *'always had an ambition to be in charge of my own destiny'*. Interviewee H's career plan was to lead an academic institution, and Interview O wanted to lead a small organisation. At the levels of middle and senior manager, several participants cited wanting to broaden their experience and enhance their CVs. For Interviewee B, one of the attractions of moving to the academic sector was the support for management and professional development.

5.1.5 Professional identity and self-esteem ('Status')

The issues of professional identity and self-esteem emerged part-way through the programme of interviews. Although not a significant factor for most of the participants, for some it was critical in the transition process. Those for whom it was important underwent not just transitions between sectors, but radical changes to their role which appeared to cause, at least initially, low self-esteem.

As previously noted, Interviewee J was an experienced private sector professional who transitioned to a leadership role in a social enterprise. When she first moved sector, she felt she was perceived as *'a charity worker'* by the partner organisations with whom she needed to work. She found it difficult to engage with them or to attract their interest in what she was trying to achieve. In her view, only when they appreciated her previous professional status did they start to engage with her and take her seriously. To bring about this change in other people's perceptions she changed her style of dress (*'I took to wearing suits'*) and started dropping the names of

influential friends into conversations. She admitted to finding this part of the transition process both unexpected and upsetting.

The literature on identity theory suggests that self-esteem depends on the relationship between one's successes relative to one's pretensions, illustrated in the following equation:

Self-esteem = $\dfrac{\text{successes}}{\text{pretensions}}$ (Stets & Burke, 2014, p.412)

According to this theory, low self-esteem is likely if one's pretensions or aspirations are greater than the successes. In the case of Interviewee J, her aspirations were possibly unrealistic because she had failed to anticipate antipathy towards her social enterprise, and she had perhaps underestimated how differences in organisational culture between the sectors. Further explanation may be offered by the following definition from the nursing world: 'At its core, self-esteem refers to how one feels about oneself. It is one's subjective appraisal of how one stands as a valuable, viable, sought-after member of the groups to which one belongs by choice' (Olthuis, Leget & Dekkers, 2007, p. 65). The participant, in making the transition, had chosen to leave her previous 'group' and join a very different one where she did not feel valuable or sought after.

Her experience was mirrored to some extent by Interviewee E, who had held a senior public sector role prior to his career change.

> *I had a high profile role. When I used to read the [local] press and see your [sic] name and picture, even though there wasn't anything positive to say about me, at least it was there and it was a reminder that you were being quite successful in your career. You go from that to virtual anonymity.*

This participant, like Interviewee J had also transitioned away from his previous group where he was valued for his expertise. It could be argued, of course, that any career change is likely to impact on professional identity, but the experiences of these two participants suggests that the change of sector caused additional challenge.

For at least one participant the transition appears to have resulted in enhanced self-esteem. Interviewee F who transitioned from the private to public sector felt that his skillset was much more valued and better suited to the destination organisation. He spoke about the importance of self-esteem to him personally and said he cared what people thought about him: '*I suppose what's important to me is having people's respect, having credibility as a lawyer ...... it would be curious if [being held in esteem] wasn't important it would kind of suggest you didn't care*' .

5.1.6 Work-life balance ('Comfort')

Work-life balance, which in Dawis's typology would be categorised under the work value of 'comfort', was identified in section 4.2 as a transition driver. Work-life balance may be defined as 'the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities' (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p.326). It was important for several participants who transitioned to the public and academic sectors, and occurred at all levels – middle managers, senior managers and CEOs. It also appeared to be an issue as important to recent transitioners as those who had made the move decades ago.

Interviewees H and K both moved from the private sector to CEO positions in the academic and public sectors respectively. Interviewee H spoke about the long working hours in the private sector: *'I felt if I carried on working at [that company] [my children's] teenage years were going to pass me by and that was it, it was going to be too late.'* Interviewee K wanted to be *'less peripatetic in terms of focus on a place'* and to spend more quality time with his family. Interviewee G, who also transitioned from the private to the public sector, talked about the flexibility that's offered in public organisations:

> *I want to have a career and I'm passionate about it but equally I absolutely love my children to death and I want to be a good parent .... so I thought if I come to the public sector .... there would potentially be more flexibility.*

Her intuition was correct, as her destination employer embraced family-friendly policies. The public sector has long been recognised for its innovative initiatives in this area (Bennett, 2002), but interestingly, academic studies have found that private sector employees do not systematically have a poorer work-life balance than their public sector counterparts (Dex & Bond, 2005).

It is also interesting to note that for one participant at least (Interviewee E), work-life balance may not have been a key driver for the transition, but subsequently he appreciated the improvements to his health and wellbeing:

> *… you know the work and pressure that I was under before and the time that was taken out of my personal life compared to now. I've got all these additional hours now. I'm still doing a full time job but I've got all this additional space for me that I didn't have.*

5.1.7 Remuneration ('Status')

Only three participants mentioned remuneration as being important. Two of these (Interviewees B and I) moved from the private to the academic and public sectors, and cited not just salaries but the beneficial employment terms and conditions (It should be noted that both these transitions occurred over ten years' previously, since when the relative generosity of public sector benefits

may have diminished). Interviewee N, who made multiple transitions, cited financial independence as a personal driver.

A number of individuals working in the public, academic and third sectors cited the higher salaries they would be able to command in the private sector. Interviewee J, for example, took a salary cut of 75% to transition into the third sector, and she commented that her former colleagues thought she had suffered '*some sort of breakdown*' by doing so.   Interviewee O reflected on her move to the third sector:

> *When I left the [private sector company] I took a 40% pay cut, and I was earning then more than I earn now, when I left. And (I know, mental), I did it deliberately and I did it with a great deal of fear .... and I so agonised about it. I so wanted to do it but I so didn't want a 40% pay cut at the same time. I decided to do it ... and I didn't regret it at all.*

Interviewee E commented: '*If you'd asked me five years ago ....you would have got a completely different answer to the one you'd get now. Now my primary drivers are around job satisfaction, more so than financial reward'.*

There is always the possibility, of course, that in an interview situation of the kind employed in the current study, the interviewee presents a rosier picture of themselves than perhaps would be the case using an anonymous data collection format. When posed the question 'What is important to you in your working life?' it is perhaps unlikely that the participant's first response will focus on money, as it risks creating an impression of someone who is mercenary and self-centred. As noted earlier (section 3.7.1), studies have suggested that respondents' answers may be influenced to provide what the respondents perceive to be the most socially desirable response (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Krumpal, 2013; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Notwithstanding this caveat, the responses suggest that financial matters were not uppermost in the participants' minds when considering what was important to them in their working lives.

5.1.8 Work values as inter-sector transition challenges or enablers

Having considered the different work values as expressed by the participants, what now can be surmised from the findings about the impact of work values on the success of the individuals' transition? How do work values enable a successful transition; what are the challenges if work values are not aligned with the ethos of the destination organisation?

All the participants appeared to be content that their work values were being satisfied at their current place of work, and so it seems reasonable to assume that the alignment of work values acts as an enabler. In many instances, individuals had chosen to work in their destination sectors because they perceived their work values would be met. Interviewee B, for example, moved to the

academic sector in part because she valued opportunities to continue learning. Interviewee O wanted to do something '*for the public good.*' However for some there had been a mis-alignment in previous roles. Interviewee H talked about how the ethos of his previous company changed and his lack of work-life balance, saying ' *and you think, well, is that a way to live?'*

Concerns about work-life balance in previous roles in the private sector were expressed by at least three other participants. For all these participants, achieving a suitable work-life balance was a sufficiently strong work value to prompt transitioning to another sector.

In at least two instances there was a suggestion that work values had changed over time. Interviewee E, who transitioned to the academic sector, stated

> *On balance [my new role] ticks all the boxes but those boxes are different boxes to the ones that I would have wanted ticking five or six years ago when it was all about career, career progression, job enhancement, chasing the dollar, seeing how far I could get up the greasy pole.*

Interviewee A also demonstrated a change. His response to the question about what was important to him in his working life, was '*to create jobs'*, and this would only have been possible on a large scale in the private sector to which he had transitioned.

One of the questions posed in the literature review (section 2.5.1) stemmed from Schwartz's use of the term 'trans-situational' in the context of values. Translating this to the current research, trans-situational suggests that values apply across sectors, which then prompts the question of whether people who transition between sectors have an identifiable set of core values. Notwithstanding the limitations of theoretical sampling and snowballing (discussed in section 3.6.1), there do appear to be some similarities in the expressed values of the participants. Altruism and personal job satisfaction featured in many people's responses across all levels of management and all sectors. The specific value of variety (part of personal job satisfaction) was important to several senior managers and CEOs, and would appear to act as a transition driver.

A brief summary of participants' work values is provided in Appendix 8.

5.2 Knowledge and skills

As noted previously (section 2.5.2), 'Knowledge and skills are developed capabilities that emerge over time as a function of education and experience' (Mumford et al, 2000, p.21).

The participants all brought their unique experiences and skillsets to their roles each time they transitioned to a new sector. Some of these appeared to be significant in assisting with a successful transition, and could be termed 'transferable'. Of equal interest to this study were the

knowledge and new skills which had to be acquired in order to function effectively in the new role. In some instances, the lack of these capabilities acted to slow down the transition process.

The knowledge and skills which were commonly transferable, and were applied in some form in the destination sector, fell into five broad categories: specialist, professional or sector knowledge; leadership and management; communication skills; customer service; personal qualities. These are discussed below in section 5.2.1.

The new knowledge and skills which had to be acquired in order to be effective are categorised as follows: learning about the destination organisation e.g. culture, processes; skills associated with running a business e.g. banking, marketing, sales, customer relations; partnership working. These are discussed below in section 5.2.2.

A summary of the knowledge and skills applicable to inter-sector transitions, as identified by the participants, may be found in Appendix 9.

5.2.1 Transferable knowledge and skills

The academic debate about transferable skills was acknowledged in section 2.5.2 and will not be revisited here.   Bridges' definition of 'transferring' skills, however, merits re-stating because it relates to the higher order skills which may be expected in managers and senior executives. He described transferring skills as 'the meta–skills, the second order skills, which enable one to select, adapt adjust and apply one's other skills to different situations, across different social contexts and perhaps similarly across different cognitive domains' (Bridges, 1993, p.50).

Specialist, professional or sector knowledge

The prior possession of some degree of knowledge which was relevant to the destination sector featured strongly in participants' responses. For Interviewee A, it was in-depth knowledge and experience of welfare service delivery, gained in the public sector, which made him an attractive proposition for a private company wishing to develop new services in that area. He commented:

> *…and that's one of the things about public sector knowledge. As things are externalised [i.e. as services are outsourced], yes, there is a requirement for business skills to drive efficiency, delivery, quality … and practice, but there is also a requirement to understand the purchaser, and that is one of the reasons why there is a relatively fluid transition in some ways between sectors now.*

Interviewees B, C and D all had professional backgrounds in information technology, which enabled them to transition from the private sector to middle and senior IT management roles in the

academic sector. Interviewees F and G were both practising solicitors in the private sector, whose knowledge and experience of the law enabled their transition to the public sector to provide legal advice services.

Two participants admitted to having had a strategic plan for their career paths, wanting to utilise their professional expertise in different environments in order to broaden their experience and enhance their employability. Interviewee L took a prolonged secondment from his private sector company to the Civil Service, and in the process gained invaluable insights into the workings of government. The benefits of his cross-sector experience ultimately positioned him for a future role in leading public-private partnerships. Interviewee H admitted '*I went into that job [in the private sector] with the deliberate objective of getting better experience around the country, to have more credibility in applying for [my next role]'.* In both cases their plans worked, and their cross-sector experience enabled progression to CEO level posts.

At CEO level it is notable that three of the participants who transitioned from the private to the public or academic sectors had prior knowledge of (though not necessarily direct experience of working within) the sector to which they transitioned, along with knowledge of the specialist services that those sectors required. Interviewee H had worked in the academic sector before transitioning to the private sector and then back again to academia. Interviewee K, who transitioned to the public sector, commented that:

> *My role in [private sector company] when I left was selling services to the public sector, universities, local government, colleges, the NHS, and actually throughout my career, despite a very long time in the private sector, I have worked in and around public services.*

A similar experience was noted by Interviewee M, who transitioned to the academic sector:

> *The role I had immediately before this one was in [private sector company] where I was responsible originally for making sure that [the] products were appropriately positioned within primary, secondary and higher education institutions around the world... then my role morphed a bit into really helping [the company] to decide how technology could fundamentally make a difference to education.*

In contrast, Interviewee J appeared to have no direct experience of the third sector to which she transitioned, beyond acting as a volunteer in a community programme. Her transition appeared to be less smooth and to take longer than those of the other CEOs, because she had to learn things from scratch. She described *'a very steep learning curve'* to become familiar with the ways in which social enterprises and the public sector worked together. Interviewee L had experience at a senior level of both the private and public sectors before his CEO role in a social enterprise. He therefore had some familiarity with the ethos and working practices of both sectors. Interviewee E, despite

having relevant transferable technical expertise, had no prior knowledge of the sector and this appeared to be one of the factors which contributed to a relatively long socialisation period of one year.

The findings relating to CEOs suggests that some level of familiarity with the destination sector is an enabler of a smooth transition. The benefits of this familiarity appear to relate to organisational culture and are discussed in more detail below (section 5.3). With regards to middle and senior managers, in general (and with the exception of Interviewee E) their technical or product knowledge appeared to be more enabling than their lack of sector knowledge was disabling.

Leadership and management

Two thirds of the participants perceived that they had transferred management or leadership skills to their roles in their destination sector. These ranged from strategic leadership skills such as developing strategy through to problem solving and people management skills.

Interviewee D, an IT professional recollecting his transition from the private to the academic sector, commented that

> *It was that balance between the knowledge, skills and experience they were looking for, and the skills were broader than just the IT and technical. You had to be able to demonstrate that you knew about the softer stuff, you knew about managing people, you knew how teams worked, you knew the importance of communication…*

Interviewees F and G, who both transitioned from the private to the public sector, cited transferable management skills. Interviewee F talked about his ability to prioritise what was important so that the appropriate levels of staffing and resource could be applied; Interviewee G referred to her organisational skills and effective time management. Interviewee I who had also transitioned from the private to the public sector, cited team leadership, taking responsibility, planning and organising skills. Team work skills were also cited by Interviewee N, whose most recent transition was to the private sector: '…*the team working skills, getting people engaged, listening to them, giving them a damned good listening to every now and then, that is something that the public sector is much better than the private sector at'.*

Interviewee J, who had moved from the private to the third sector, felt that her professional experience in a legal practice carried with it a number of transferable skills, such as problem solving and financial management. Likewise, Interviewee L felt his financial management skills had transferred across sectors, along with an ability to manage difficult situations. Reflecting on his transition from a private sector role to a position in the Cabinet Office, he perceived a number of

similarities: '... *managing stressful business situations, dealing with financial difficulties, things going wrong, how you bring stability out of a crisis .... '* (Interviewee L).

At CEO level there was a greater emphasis on strategic skills. In response to a question about identifying their most transferable skill, the response from Interviewee O was immediate: '*Strategising. Completely.'* Interviewee L talked about the ability to create a vision, and Interviewee M spoke about what he called rational transferable skills:

> *The rational is how you analyse problems, how you develop an evidence-based strategy, how do you set up the execution of that strategy with the monitoring, the evaluation, how you constantly refine that, how you get organisational structures set up to be effective, how you recruit the right talent and performance manage them.*

He also cited his expertise in business finance, and described the multi-million pound efficiency savings he had made, saying: '*If I hadn't come from the private sector I wouldn't have been as innately paranoid about needing to get costs down.'* Interviewee K packaged his transferable skills as 'those *which are about understanding how people tick; organisational theory - but more important applying it – [and] having several approaches to leadership that can be deployed in different situations.*'

Few participants commented overtly on their leadership style, but analysis of the interview commentary suggested that some leadership traits may be particularly conducive to successful inter-sector transitions. Interview M for example, who transitioned to an academic CEO position, appeared to be highly collaborative and had introduced various governance mechanisms to encourage engagement from across the organisation.

The ability to communicate and form effective working relationships are often regarded as important leadership traits, and the researcher would suggest that these are particularly significant in inter-sector transitions. A senior executive joining an organisation from a different sector may be regarded by some employees with suspicion, perceived as lacking vital knowledge about the destination sector. That senior executive should be sensitive to employee concerns and be prepared to work hard to develop effective relationships. This sensitivity and awareness may arguably be considered components of Emotional Intelligence (EI), a concept introduced two decades ago which refers to 'the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships' (Goleman, 1998, p.317) . As noted previously (section 2.5.2) there is considerable academic debate about the validity of the construct of EI, but there is a growing body of research (for useful reviews of the literature see McCleskey, 2012; Sadri, 2012).

Based on the researcher's observations, the senior executives in particular exhibited high levels of EI. Interviewee J, for example, observed that '*people have got to see you for who you are: flaws,*

faults, failings as well as capabilities, qualities and talents.' He also talked about having to '*kind of judge people quickly and trust them. Doing that over a number of years hones that instinctiveness.*' Interviewee M spoke about the impact on people of difficult decisions:

> *....you can't lose sight even though tough decisions have to be made you've got to be aware of the impact that's having on individuals, and you've got to at least be there for them even if you can't mitigate the impact.*

Other leadership qualities that were mentioned by CEOs were adaptability and flexibility. Interviewee L cited the importance of being able to adopt different behaviours in different situations: '*Being successful is [knowing] when to use that chameleon approach, blending in and out.*' Interviewee O spoke about the importance of being adaptable: '*People ought to be adaptable and be able to move and to not be afraid of it.*' Interviewee K believed it was going to be increasingly important to have people with multi-sector experience in the future, as the boundaries between the sectors become less distinct.

The leadership qualities referred to in this section are certainly not the sole domain of people who have transitioned between sectors. However, the current research suggests, tentatively, that senior executives who have moved between sectors possess particular characteristics: they tend to be collaborative, they value engagement of staff, and they are adaptable. They also recognise the importance of good communication skills, which are discussed in the next section.

Communication skills

Communication skills are cited as being amongst the most desirable skills in recruitment exercises, across all sectors (Bennett, 2002). It is not surprising therefore that over half of the participants in the current study referred to transferable communication skills.

The skills took different forms, for example Interviewee E perceived he had a particular skill in public speaking, which contributed to his decision to transition into a lecturing role. Interviewees J and O both cited their skills in debating and arguing a case; Interviewee I was a qualified hostage negotiator so had specialist communication skills which equipped her to deal with difficult situations. Writing skills were also mentioned. Interviewee N talked about '*the power of the written word*' and went on to explain:

> *One thing you learn pretty soon as an engineer in the Civil Service is that unless you write perfectly crafted letters, everyone assumes you're an idiot. But when you come into the private sector and you write perfectly crafted, persuasive letters, emails whatever, it can be very, very powerful.*

Interviewee M spoke about various techniques he used to enable communications and build a sense of community. He focused on the people whom he could influence directly, relying on them to influence other groups.

As with the leadership skills, these transferable communication skills are not the preserve of people who have transitioned between sectors, but it is reasonable to assume they are enablers. Without them, their socialisation into their destination sector would probably have been more difficult.

Customer service

Several participants talked about customer-related skills and focusing on service delivery. This emphasis on the customer was one of the characteristics of New Public Management (NPM), which was discussed earlier (section 2.7.2). It is perhaps notable that all bar one of the participants who spoke about client relations had worked in the private sector at some point in their careers.

Interviewee B talked about the importance of providing a good service which in her view was just as important as the technology she enabled. Interviewee A, whose current role was to provide services to the public sector, spoke about the requirement to understand the client.

Interviewee F commented:

> I want to be as welcoming as I can to people and I want them to ask me questions so if there is a problem we deal with it …. I want everyone to feel that they can rely upon me and my team for support.

Interviewee D also had a strong ethos of customer service: '*We are here to provide a service and we provide that service to whoever.*' He had developed his customer service skills in the private sector and transferred them to the academic sector, with a philosophy that whatever one's level in the organisation you were entitled to high quality service.

5.2.2 Gaps in knowledge and skills

Having explored above the knowledge and skills which appeared to be transferable across sectors, this section now considers the gaps in knowledge and skills where they were identified by the participants. They may be loosely categorised as knowledge of the organisation, business skills, and collaborative and partnership working. Appendix 9 provides a brief summary.

Knowledge of the organisation

Eight of the respondents referred to a lack of knowledge about the destination organisation and its organisational culture. Because organisational culture emerged as such a strong theme in terms of transition challenge, it is discussed separately in section 5.3. However there were a number of comments made by participants which were not necessarily about 'challenge', but rather the practical aspects of learning about their new place of work, such as roles, responsibilities and procedures. Interviewee B recalled that the procedures for procuring a new IT system were very different between the two sectors in which she had worked. Interviewee G talked about needing to learn about '*the hierarchy and the managerial set up.*'

Participants acquired their knowledge of the organisation in different ways. For Interviewee I, the induction and formal training were key to learning about the organisation. She recollected:

> *I think you had a week [for basic induction] then you went off to training school with all the other Forces for ten weeks ... then you came back and you had a tutor for twelve weeks who basically puppy walked you and showed you the ropes.*

One particularly effective method appeared to be through a mentoring relationship. Interviewee G, when asked what had assisted her transition, responded: '*It's definitely the mentoring from people like [line manager], who over time [has] worked closely with me*'. Interviewee E also spoke about a supportive head of department who had '*come from a similar background*' to himself, and reflected on the value of having someone to ease him '*into the culture and values of academia*'. These findings support a recent study on the relationship between mentoring and career success which notes the importance of mentoring for understanding the organisational environment (Bozionelos et al, 2016).

Business skills

Of the six participants for whom business skills was as an area they needed to develop, four had transitioned to the private sector from either the public or third sector. The skills largely related to finance, marketing and customer relations.

Interviewee A talked about the challenges of generating capital:

> *It was far and away my biggest learning requirement, how to deal with senior lenders at the bank. It's not about dropping into your local branch. Commercial banking is an entirely different kettle of fish, and even understanding the language [was a challenge]... I was at a dinner with [a banker] and his starting point was 'what is your exit strategy?' And that took me back. I thought 'I haven't got one'.*

In large parts of the public sector, income is received from the state and there is little requirement to go out and generate it. Commercial banking was an entirely new area for this participant, along with marketing and sales:

> *I do think there is a much more acute marketing and sales ... awareness which never really existed in the local authority. It was a 'I am local authority therefore I am' approach and 'we do what we do and that's how it is' with the occasional communication about bad news. And if I was going to take something back [to the public sector] I'd certainly take a stronger focus on what is our message, how we are trying to communicate it, what creative channels we can use, are we communicating with people across the range of approaches as effectively as we possibly could. (Interviewee A)*

Skills in sales and marketing were also identified by Interviewee H, when he transitioned to the private sector:

> *I had targets in terms of winning new business as well. This was the aspect of the job that I was least comfortable with and where prior to starting [my new job] it had been downplayed. And then two days in.... I had a half million pounds annual sales target. Well, I'm not a salesman, so some of that was difficult to adapt to.*

Interviewee N also cited marketing and sales as areas he needed to develop: '*I think when you work in the public sector you're not exposed to the requirement to sell. When you give grants away like I used to, everyone makes you feel very welcome.*' He proceeded to talk about the very different relationship he now had with 'customers' in the private sector. *'Here, the customer says "jump" [and] you "jump".'* Interviewee D talked about the requirement to learn how to manage a client base, when he moved to the private sector. In contrast, participants who came from a private sector background had no problem understanding the client relationship, summed up simply by Interviewee O as '*You have these clients and you need to keep them happy.*'

It is recognised in the literature that the private sector has skills in marketing which are absent in much of the public sector. By way of example, an American study explored the contribution that private sector marketing capability could make to public health partnerships. The study showed the importance of having an in-depth understanding of customer motivations and habits (Curtis, Garbrah-Aidoo & Scott, 2007). Such in-depth understanding was missing from Interviewee E's skillset when he transitioned into the academic sector. He had not appreciated, prior to starting his new role, that some of his students might not be wholeheartedly committed to learning: *'Day One I was quickly put right about that and it's just a microcosm of society isn't it. You get the people who are really interested and the people who really aren't interested'.* Interviewee M, working at CEO level in the academic sector, reflected:

> *That's perhaps one of the things coming in from the private sector, it's a very different relationship you have with the student than what you have with the customer, a customer is someone you have a fiscal transaction with and they have rights and you respect those rights, it's a transaction. It took me a while to figure this out.*

All the participants had apparently acquired the necessary skills to do the job effectively, and one of the interesting follow-up lines of enquiry concerned how participants had achieved this. There were a variety of methods, including in-house training, working closely with a senior manager, learning from peers and learning 'on the job'. The issues of training and mentoring are considered as enablers of inter-sector transition and are discussed further in section 5.5.

Collaborative and partnership working

The skills associated with collaborative and partnership working were identified by participants working at CEO level. As noted earlier (section 4.3), Interviewee J, who transitioned to the third sector, had expected organisations to be collaborative and supportive because what she was trying to achieve was good for society. Instead, she found that organisations were even more competitive than in the private sector, and it took several years for her to learn about how the public and third sectors worked and the skills needed for effective collaboration. Interviewee O admitted she was still learning collaboration skills*: 'I am not yet very good at making that complex partnership thing work. I do feel I have to row back on my natural capacity to say 'just get on with it ....'*

Collaborative skills of a slightly different nature were identified by Interviewee K. He talked about politics *('with a small "p"')* and having to learn rapidly about the ways in which politicians at various levels impacted on his role. He spoke about three components to politics:

> *One is about community outcomes; one is about personal influence and power; and the third is about ... thinking and dogma. And how those things come together in individual politicians can be very, very different, and much more different than I had envisaged.'*

Political know-how was also mentioned by Interviewee D who said he learnt

> *an awful lot … about dealing with different types of people and the politics that go on as well, so I was much more attuned to internal politics and stuff like that than I ever was when I started at [the previous organisation].*

Political know-how and the ability to work collaboratively may be key skills for effective inter-sector transition. Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2006) in a study on leadership of complex public organisations wrote that 'leadership is fundamentally about engaging others as partners in developing and achieving the shared vision' (p.302). Schein (2010), postulated that leaders of the future needed to be 'learning leaders' able to cope with constant change, requiring skills appropriate to working across boundaries and in different organisational settings.

5.2.3 Knowledge and skills as inter-sector transition challenges or enablers

The findings suggest that prior knowledge and skills were enablers of successful inter-sector transitions. It is unsurprising that the knowledge and skills associated with particular professions are transferable, and this was particularly evident in middle and senior managers. The professional backgrounds of CEOs was less relevant, as noted by Interviewee K who said*: 'I'm an accountant, although that becomes less relevant the more senior you get in an organisation I think – whatever your profession actually.'*

Leadership and management skills appeared to be transferable across all levels. Interviewee O made the comment that core skills did not come from any one sector. *'Most of the skills that senior people have are immensely transferable. They may not know it but they are'*. Interviewee N acknowledged that his *'exposure in the Civil Service to a wide range of experiences'* was very valuable for his future role as CEO of a private company.

The perceived gaps in knowledge or skills all appeared to be successfully overcome, so may be regarded as short-term challenges rather than challenges which had a serious impact on the transition.

5.3 Organisational cultures

Adapting to a new organisational culture was a significant issue for several participants. As noted earlier in section 2.4, organisational culture may be defined as 'a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group' (Schein, 2010, p.18). All organisations, regardless of sector, will have their own distinct culture, according to their purpose, size and leadership, and therefore any transition to a new organisation will require a degree of acclimatisation by the newcomer. However, as discussed in 2.4.1 research has shown there are differences in culture between the public and private sectors, which suggests that transitioning between them may be challenging.

The sector differences in organisational culture, as perceived by the participants, are discussed below. Also considered are the issues of organisational size and acculturisation.

5.3.1 Sector differences in organisational culture

Participants commented on a number of differences in the cultures of the organisations in which they had worked. These included language; organisational structures, governance and decision-making; performance management of staff and staff attitudes; and internal politics. The participants who appeared to find the differences most challenging were those who transitioned from the private sector to public or academic organisations.

Language

Language would be defined by Schein as a cultural 'artefact', namely 'the phenomena that you would see, hear and feel when you encounter a new group' (2010, p.23). Six participants spoke about the challenges of language or jargon. Jargon comprises 'special words and phrases that are used by particular groups of people, especially in their work'[3]. It is recognised as being a barrier for people outside the group to understanding information (see for example O'Connell, 2015), and this was certainly the case for participants. Interviewee E commented on the academic sector: *'People talk in acronyms … I'm still coming to terms with 90% of what people throw out in everyday conversation …for the first six months I had no idea what most of them were talking about.'* Interviewee L said '*when I went to the Cabinet Office, an environment completely alien to me, they spoke English but I didn't understand the language.'* Interviewee H considered that '*there tends to be in the public sector a greater reliance on jargon and three letter acronyms that can be quite hard to get your head around'.*

A slightly different example of a problematic artefact was email protocol. When she joined the public sector, Interviewee G was taken aback by the terseness of emails between colleagues. She noted an absence of salutation or thanks, and people never signed off with a 'best wishes' or 'kind regards'. She has however persisted with her previous practice of incorporating the 'niceties' and gradually other people have started changing their email style to match hers.

Organisational structures, governance and decision-making

Several participants had been used to relatively quick decision-making in the private sector, often from a single senior executive. In their destination organisation they were met with complex hierarchical committee structures and decision-making processes. Interviewee B likened decision-making in the academic sector to *'turning an oil tanker.'* Interviewees F and G also talked about slow decision-making in the public sector, but ascribed this to the requirement for accountability. Interviewee J, who transitioned from the private to the third sector and was reliant on working with local authorities in her new role, said her main challenge was to understand how the public sector worked. She was frustrated by the slowness of decision-making and by what she perceived as people's aversion to change and to risk-taking.

In contrast Interviewee A, who transitioned from the public to the private sector, enjoyed the streamlined decision-making: '*You can do things without committee ... there is an acceptance of we'll move at pace.'* The stereotypical views of the public and private sectors were not always borne out by the participants' experiences however. Interview I, who transitioned to the public

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[3] http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/jargon

sector, had a different view: '*I guess in the private sector they don't do things at such a speed as we do, we can make a decision where something will be changed the next day, and that wouldn't happen in [name of private company]'.* This agility is possibly a reflection of the adoption of more private sector practices in many public sector organisations (for a discussion of NPM see 2.7.2) , and the impact of austerity measures by central government (2.7.1.).

Participants at CEO level alluded to the complexity of public sector organisations compared with the private sector. Interviewee N felt the agendas were clearer in the private sector: '*In the public sector you have these conflicting things [to focus on].'* Interviewee A posed the issue of accountability in local authorities, and who really is in charge: '*Is it the Executive Cabinet Member, is it Cabinet, the Leader [of the Council], is it Council or the Chief Exec, is it the public?'* In the private sector, he said, accountability was much clearer.

A final comment in this section concerns the challenges of dealing with multiple organisational cultures at once. Interviewee O in a private sector consultancy role worked with five or six clients, '*each of those has their own corporate culture, some of which are pleasant, some of which are really not.'*

Performance management and staff attitudes

There was a perception amongst several participants that some public sector workers had a poor attitude to work and the issue of staff performance management was cited by several participants, particularly those who had transitioned from the private sector. Interviewee D admitted '*I didn't know how difficult it was to get staff changes in the public sector ... that was a shock'.* Interviewee F complained there was a tendency for managers to avoid performance issues in the public sector which '*you wouldn't dare'* do in the private sector. Another participant said his previous private sector company had been '*quite ruthless at getting rid of staff ... and were probably less tolerant of lower levels of performance*' (Interviewee H). These views are reinforced by a recent study of managers who transitioned to the private sector, and who commented on the 'inability or unwillingness of the public sector to address alleged poor performance' (Deering, Feilzer & Holmes, 2014, p.248).

Two participants spoke about public sector employees' resistance to change, and there were other comments on poor staff motivation. Interviewee F made the following observation:

> *The other thing I've found in the public sector, people are very 'it's not in my job description'. This has happened this week and there was a really important matter. I was on a train trying to get a job done. It was really urgent and I needed a document changing and the office when I rang them said 'it's not in my job description'.*

Interviewee G expressed similar sentiments but also said *'I think there will be more people with a can-do attitude now because money is being cut, everyone is being scrutinised.'*

There is a significant body of literature on the differences between public and private sector workers, but it is inconclusive (Rainey & Chun, 2005). Bullock, Stritch and Rainey (2015) found that, contrary to their expectations, higher levels of organisational commitment were found in public sector workers than their private sector counterparts.

The challenge of dealing with Trade Unions was also mentioned in connection with the public and academic sectors.

Internal politics

Internal politics was an issue for a few participants. Defined as 'the relationships within a group or organisation that allow particular people to have power over others'[4], the challenge was to understand who within the destination organisation held power, and how this impacted on decision-making. Interviewee I, a female, spoke about her perceived barriers to women's progression caused by the old boys' network in her public sector organisation. '*For me, there is quite a lot of nepotism still, there is the old boys' network.'* Despite a career in the organisation spanning over ten years, this was still problematic for her.

5.3.2 Organisational size

For several participants the organisational culture was a function of size rather than necessarily the type of sector. Their perception was that larger organisations had more complex governance and decision-making structures, they had hierarchical or multi-layered staffing structures, and tended to be political (with a small 'p'). Examples were given of internal power struggles and people vying for position in order to be considered for the next promotion. Handy has stated that the size of an organisation is often proved to be 'the single most important variable in influencing a choice of structure or culture (1993, p.192). He notes that larger organisations tend to be more formalised and comprise specialist groups, pushing the organisation towards a role culture in which bureaucracies develop in order to support and maintain the different roles that are required (1993, p.185).

This would appear to match the experience of at least two of the participants, who transitioned from relatively small private sector companies to much larger public sector bodies. Both found the changes in organisational culture significant. Interviewee G stated

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[4] http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/politics

> *...in an organisation this size it's easy for people to not even realise what you are there to do and how you can help them ... the governance and the chains of authority are very different [from the private sector] and that was quite a challenge.*

The issue of size was also relevant to the private sector. Interviewee O had worked in a private company which increased significantly in size during her tenure and which appeared to bring out differences in employees' behaviour.

> *And I wonder about size. Because if you've got twenty five people you can all fit in a room and you can all look each other in the eye ... and I think as the company grew, once it was at 120, the distance from management to staff became sufficient for people to pull the wool over people's eyes. So in a sense I think size matters much more than I would have expected.*

Interviewee N who had made multiple transitions stated:

> *It's more about size of organisation than public/private sector... if you go to a government department or a local authority or a big multi-national company, there are certain people whose careers matter... it's not about the performance of the organisation, it's about their career ... and so things get political.*

Based on the perceptions of these participants, organisational size may indeed be a significant factor in inter-sector transition success. However there were other participants with experience of working in large organisations across sectors, who did not allude to the issue of size. There may be scope for further research into this question.

5.3.3 Acculturation

Acculturation and organisational socialisation were defined earlier (section 2.4.3). Two assumptions were postulated in that section: firstly that the ease with which acculturation takes place will to some extent depend on the culture of the organisations with which the individual is already familiar; and secondly, that the more senior the person making the transition, the more impact they are likely to have on the culture of the destination organisation.

The findings discussed in 5.2.1 suggested that some sort of prior familiarity with the sector made the transition easier, particularly at senior executive level. For example Interviewees K and M had both, in their private sector positions, worked with the public and academic sectors prior to transitioning to CEO positions, and therefore had a good idea of what to expect. Conversely, Interviewee J whose exposure to the public and third sector had been minimal, found the transition more difficult.

The leadership role of the senior executive was clearly articulated by the participants, and although none of them stated specifically that they had been brought in to change the organisational culture, that did appear to be the case in some instances. Interviewee M brought a private sector focus on

lean business management and evidence-based strategy to his academic institution. He also made major changes to his senior executive team, and talked about '*bringing some new people in and reshaping quite an unusual executive for [this type of organisation].*' Interviewee O had been employed to develop a more strategic focus to the work of her third sector organisation. Likewise Interviewee D was brought into a professional service in the academic sector to introduce strategy, targets and a service ethos. He spoke of the *'slow cultural change'* but felt he had achieved it by the time he moved on. Interviewee K spoke about making his organisation more business-like:

> *Public organisations are very bureaucratic ... they can be inefficient and you have to keep an eye out for that, because there isn't a profit motive, but the public sector can be business-like .... one of the things I've done over the last four years is to make it more business-like.*

In contrast, none of the middle managers spoke about changing the culture.

The sample provided two opportunities to explore acculturation to the same organisation, but in different time periods. Interviewees F and G had both moved from the private to public sector, but with twenty years separating their transitions. Despite the difference of two decades, there appeared to be similar challenges and enablers. Both had struggled with the perceived levels of bureaucracy in their early days, and also had concerns about staff attitudes (see 5.3.1 above). It appeared that both participants derived job satisfaction from their roles, but whereas Interviewee F appeared to have settled into his role relatively quickly, Interviewee G admitted that the transition was harder than she expected. The main reasons seemed to be acclimatising to a very different organisational culture, complex decision making and lack of performance management of under-performing employees. There may be a number of reasons why Interviewee F appeared to settle more quickly than Interviewee G. Firstly, his father had worked in a similar organisation and so he had some knowledge, albeit second hand. Secondly, he considered that his personality and values were more attuned to the public than private sector. In contrast, Interviewee G appeared to have had no exposure to the public sector before applying for the job, and so may have been a greater 'shock to the system'.

The second pairing of participants had both transitioned from a private company to a higher education institution. A period of ten years separated their transitions. In common with the previous example, the participant with the longer tenure (Interviewee C) appeared to have settled into his new job quickly. Arguably this was partly due to his prior experience of the sector, and partly because of his altruistic work values, which were fulfilled by working at an academic institution. In contrast, Interviewee B had no prior experience of working outside the private sector. She experienced a number of challenges, relating to complex organisational structures and procedures, educational jargon, and lack of performance management. She also cited numerous positive aspects to working in her new organisation, and over time she had adapted to the organisation's

culture. These two examples suggest that the process of transitioning between sectors may be no easier now than it was many years ago, despite the adoption by the public sector of private sector practices, and despite the 'blurring' of the sectors (Rainey & Chun, 2005).

5.3.4 Organisation culture as an inter-sector transition challenge or enabler

The findings discussed above suggest that for a number of participants, adapting to very different organisational cultures to those with which they were familiar posed a challenge. For some, there were tangible 'artefacts' such as language and protocols which acted as barriers initially. For others, the complexity of hierarchical structures and decision-making, particularly in the public and academic sectors, were problematic, along with perceived ineffectual practices of performance management of staff. However it is notable that the majority of participants overcame their reservations, and have remained in their destination sector, arguably because they enjoy job satisfaction and an alignment of their values with those of their organisation.

Some participants felt that organisational size was more of a factor than a public-private sector distinction, whilst at least one other regarded his transition as just *'a different place to work'* rather than an issue of organisational sector. Interviewee C felt the job was more important than the sector: '*It's about understanding what the job is, what kind of person you are, what kind of organisation it is and making sure those things articulate properly.'* However as noted above the experiences of CEOs strongly suggested that some sort of familiarity with the destination sector was an important enabler.

An interesting comment was made by one of the CEOs (Interviewee L) who had made multiple transitions: '*A lot of the private sector think when they get involved with the public sector, they'll just make it like the private sector rather than accepting it is different.'* This sentiment echoes the observations of an American study (Pittinsky & Messiter, 2007), but is not borne out by the participants in the current study. With one exception (Interviewee J), the CEOs appeared to understand the environment to which they transitioned.

5.4 Perceptions about transition success – challenges and enablers

The evaluation of the literature (section 2.6) suggested that career success is a complex phenomenon encompassing a range of criteria. Whilst the current study focuses on inter-sector transition success rather than career success, there are similarities between the concepts, with both incorporating elements of job satisfaction and career mobility. In the current study, the definition of success was left to each individual to determine, following the approach advocated by

Hall and Chandler (2005): 'When viewed from inside the skin of the person pursuing the career, success by definition has to be defined in terms of how it looks through that person's eyes' (p.157).

All fifteen participants felt their transitions had been successful, but for some there were significant challenges. Comments ranged from '*I love the move to be honest with you*" and *'I took to it like a duck to water*' (both interviewees who had transitioned to the private sector), to '*Oh my God what have I done*' (an interviewee who transitioned to the public sector).

Interviewee A talked about his new-found private sector freedom to make decisions and to grow the business as he wanted, whilst at the same time making a difference to people's lives through the services his company provided. His challenge had been to learn business skills (noted in 5.2.2) but this appeared not to have been problematic. He had adapted to the private sector quickly, in contrast to Interviewee B who estimated it had taken two years to acclimatise to the academic sector. Despite the challenges of the organisational culture, she regarded her move as successful and derived considerable satisfaction from her job. She particularly appreciated the opportunities for learning and professional development, as well as the relative job security. Several participants cited job satisfaction as a key indicator of success. For Interviewee E job satisfaction meant feeling that he was doing a good job:

> *How do I measure my perception of a successful transition? I think you kind of know whether you are doing a decent job, [my line manager] says I am and I get positive feedback .... and I am enjoying it. It's only a success if you're enjoying it and I'm still enjoying it.*

This participant's transition had not been straightforward, in part due to lack of familiarity with the sector and in part due to professional identity issues, but there were several enablers which appeared to have helped. These included the support of a line manager who had made a similar transition some years previously; informal peer support; an induction programme; and advice from a friend who had knowledge of the sector.

Arguably advice and support would have helped Interviewee J make a smoother transition to the third sector. She stated she was unaware of any network, organisation or body that offered advice to people transitioning between sectors, and in her personal experience people just had to *'learn the hard way, sink or swim.'*   A different kind of support acted as enablers for at least two participants (Interviewees D and N), namely the support from spouses when making the decision to move sectors. Academic studies have noted the importance of supportive relationships in career transitions (for example Liu, Englar-Carlson & Minichiello, 2011).

Having a good 'fit' with the organisation was important for many participants, so having work values which aligned with those of the organisation was an enabler. Interviewee F felt he was '*much more suited to this sort of environment*' whilst Interviewee A commented '*I've been lucky in*

the way that I approach things seem to fit.' Interviewee G encapsulated her perception of success as '*adding value'* to the organisation through her specialist knowledge, and '*making a difference'.* Interviewee I, who transitioned to the public sector, measured her success in terms of her career progression and the positive perception of her profession by the public.

Several participants, particularly those at senior and CEO level, appeared to gauge their success in terms of their impact not just on their organisation but on wider society. Interviewee M spoke about his successful advocacy work in the academic sector:

> *I know I've done well in positioning the [organisation] across all the major [political] parties as an agent of good, and that's not necessarily an easy thing to do. I know I've done that, I feel really, really good about that.*

Interviewee N said his transition to the private sector was '*the best thing I ever did'* and cited several manifestations of his success: a programme of training for young people to assist with employability; a stable, well-paid workforce; the manufacture of medical products which contribute to people's health and wellbeing; and his company's annual contribution to the economy of around half a million pounds in tax. He summed up with:

> *What we're doing, our economic activity, is directly contributing to the NHS in a big way, it's contributing to the whole infrastructure of the country, as well as keeping people employed. So I feel that a successful company is a great thing for society.*

Interviewee J spoke about the doubling of staff numbers as well as the numerous children helped via her social enterprise. However, she also said her perception of her success would have been very different a few years previously, and acknowledged there had been '*many ups and downs',* with the 2008 recession being particularly tough because organisations stopped investing in her company's services.

Another notable theme in participants' perception of their success was that of recognition. This recognition occurred at various levels, ranging from national honours to acceptance by the sector and appreciation by peers. Interviewee M stated that '*success for me was first and foremost being accepted by the institution ... and I think not only did my institution accept me but I think the sector accepted me and I'm really proud of that.'* Interviewee I talked about the recognition from outside her organisation of her role, saying '*people are kind of in awe of what I do.*'

The participants' responses demonstrate that success for most of them was multi-faceted, with a mixture of personal satisfaction and a sense of having contributed to the success of their organisation or sector. Perhaps this is best summed up by Interviewee O who said success for her was '*a mixture of personal happiness and feeling like you're achieving the objectives of the organisation.*'

All participants were asked whether they would consider a transition back to their previous sector, or to a different sector. The responses were mixed, but could be put into broad categories.

i.   Participants who had transitioned into the public or academic sectors over ten years ago were less likely to want to move. They enjoyed high levels of job satisfaction, felt comfortable with the direction and values of their organisation, and felt valued for the role they undertook. They also enjoyed the financial benefits of a relatively secure salary and pension scheme.

ii.   Participants who had transitioned into the public, academic or third sectors less than five years previously were open minded about transitioning to other sectors. For some, the attraction of returning to the private sector was largely financial, particularly for those whose professions attract large salaries.

iii. Participants who had made multiple transitions throughout their career were, unsurprisingly, open to moving between sectors in the future. Several of them hinted that they might move to the third sector, particularly as they approached the ends of their careers.

5.5 Advice to others making a transition

The final prompt to the participants in the interviewees concerned any advice they would give to people considering moving to a different sector. This question aimed to elicit practical hints and tips for assisting a successful transition, based on the participants' personal experiences.

Approximately half of the participants talked about the importance of finding out about the destination sector and/or organisation before making a decision. Interviewee E advised:

> *If you are moving into a completely alien environment like this I would seek out the opportunity to try to put your toe in the water ...[or find someone] who will give you a warts and all down to earth view of what it's all about.*

This was echoed by Interviewee K who advocated *'trying to talk to people involved in the sector you're going into, at a relatively junior level, to find out what the reality of life is like.'* Interviewee O also advised: *'Understand the culture you're going into, research it, go and talk to people who are in it.'* This advice was mirrored in an American paper on the challenges of inter-sector transitioning: 'talk to people on both sides of the aisle that have done it, because they'll understand what you're going through' (Pittinsky & Messiter, 2007, p.50).

Several participants advised thinking carefully about one's motivation for moving sectors, a point which related strongly to work values. Interviewee J for example was clear that her transition to the

third sector was to make a difference to society, and arguably it was this strongly held conviction that helped her through some difficult times. Interviewee F cautioned others to think about '*the extent to which that public service element is important'* because there were financial implications to giving up a lucrative job in the private sector. Interviewees J and O also highlighted that people should be prepared for a significant loss of income by moving to the third sector.

A number of participants talked about being open minded and not afraid of what the transition might bring. Interviewee I said '*don't go in with preconceived ideas, go in with an open mind ... I'm a great believer in taking your opportunities*.' Interviewee L advised people '*not to be fearful' but* also to ask themselves about their capacity to adapt to a very different environment. By inference he suggested that not everyone has the capability to make successful transitions, which may be the case but is not supported by the current study.

At a practical level, other participants advised patience. Interviewee N, reflecting on his transition to the Civil Service, commented on some of the frustrations: '*I would say you just need some patience ....you're not going to change the institution greatly, so you've got to change what you can.*' Interviewee B talked about allowing sufficient time to adjust, noting that she took two years to acclimatise to the academic sector. These comments resonate with the literature on organisational socialisation referenced earlier (section 2.4.3; for example Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006).

Finally, there was a group of responses that put the job itself at the forefront. For these participants, the sector in which the job was located was irrelevant. Interviewee C, a middle manager, commented '*I think you need to be guided by what the job is and what you think the job can give to you and what you can give to the job – I think that is the most important thing.'* Similarly, Interviewee D said '*At junior level it is about your career development. Personally I don't [think] private/public matters'.*

Appendix 11 provides a summary of the advice offered.

Summary

This chapter has considered the findings from in-depth interviews with fifteen participants, and discussed the factors which appear to act as inter-sector transition challenges and enablers. These factors include work values, professional identity, knowledge and skills, and organisational cultures. The participants' thoughts on successful transitions have been outlined, along with their advice to people thinking about making a similar transition.

The next and final chapter will draw together the conclusions and recommendations arising from the study, along with a discussion of the study's limitations and proposals for future research.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

This chapter will demonstrate that the research achieved its aims and objectives and through two simple models will illustrate what is at the heart of this study, namely the inter-sector transition challenges and enablers. A critique of the study's trustworthiness will be followed by a discussion of its contribution to knowledge and professional practice. The chapter will end with consideration of the study's limitations and recommendations for further research.

6.1 Meeting the research objectives

This study set out to explore the experiences and perceptions of managers and senior executives who had transitioned, in any direction, between the public, private, academic or third sectors in the UK. Within this overarching aim were five objectives, which were outlined in section 1.3. The first objective was to undertake a critical literature review, and this is written up in chapter 2. What became apparent early on in this process was the paucity of literature in the UK on inter-sector transitions, a phenomenon sometimes termed sector switching (Frederiksen & Hansen, 2014), sector shifting (Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman & Anker, 2008), or boundary-crossing (Austin, Dal Santo & Lewis, 2012). The dearth of literature underlined the need for exploration of this phenomenon, and through in-depth interviews to identify any emerging themes arising from individuals' experiences of inter-sector transitions. This was the second of the study's specific objectives.

The third and fourth objectives were to identify and explore any factors which contributed to a successful transition (the enablers) and any factors which inhibited a successful transition (the challenges). These factors have been explored in the previous chapter through analysis of the rich qualitative data. The issues which are relevant to successful inter-sector transitions are complex, but it is possible to distil the key themes which emerged, and to represent them diagrammatically in models. These are shown below in section 6.2. The fifth and final objective was to develop practical guidance on inter-sector transitions. This guidance is discussed below in section 6.5. In summary then, the key objectives of this study have been achieved.

6.2 Inter-sector transition enablers and challenges

The factors which appear to contribute to a successful inter-sector transition (the enablers) are indicated in Figure 4 below. These factors are: the possession of at least some sector familiarity; professional knowledge and skills; training and/or mentoring; personal attributes and values, and for CEOs, multi-sector experience.

Figure 4 Summary of factors which contribute to a successful transition - Enablers

The factors which appeared to delay or inhibit a successful transition (the challenges) are shown in Figure 5. These factors are: a lack of familiarity with the destination sector; challenges in adapting to organisational cultures; issues of professional identity and self-esteem; and an absence of mentoring or support.
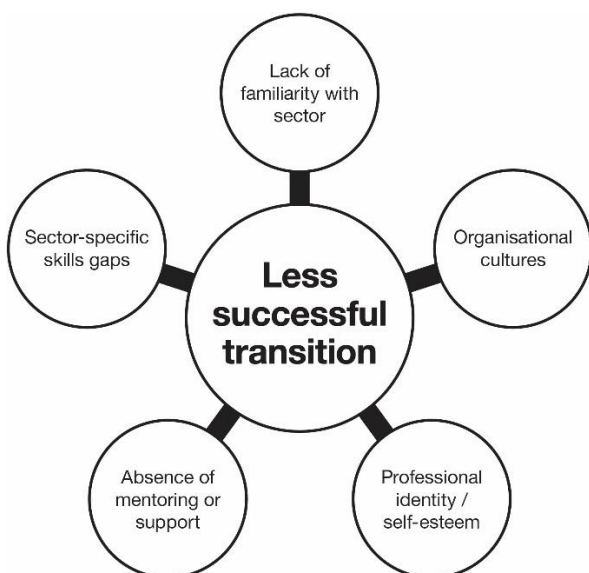
Figure 5 Summary of factors which may contribute to a less successful transition - Challenges

The detail was discussed in chapter 5 and will not be repeated here; what follows, therefore, is a synthesis of the key findings. In terms of enablers, knowledge and skills appeared to be transferable across the different sectors, be that professional knowledge (as evidenced by the lawyers and information technologists), high level leadership skills or generic communication skills.

Where there were skills gaps, for example the business skills required by individuals transferring to the private sector, these were rectified fairly quickly and therefore did not pose a long term problem. However, the acquisition of these new sector-specific skills is identified as a challenge in the model, largely because the skills gap did not appear to have been anticipated by the participants in advance of the transition, and so in the early stages of their new roles they represented a challenge.

Prior familiarity with (or knowledge of) the destination sector appears to be a highly significant enabler, and conversely, lack of familiarity with the destination sector represents a challenge. Of the participants at CEO level, all bar one had some prior familiarity with the sector to which they transitioned, achieved for example through previous consultancy work. One CEO lacked familiarity with the third and public sectors, and she readily acknowledged that her transition experience had been both long-drawn-out and testing. The researcher concludes that for people working at a senior level, being able to adapt to different sector cultures appears to be a key attribute of a successful transition. And related to this point, multi-sector experience is considered an enabler. Those participants who were the most sanguine in their approach to inter-sector transition were the people who had made more than one transition.

The importance of training, including an induction to the new organisation, as well as on-going mentoring were considered enablers of a successful transition by a number of participants. However the degree to which this type of support was available to participants varied. Those for whom it was available found it beneficial, but at the other end of the spectrum was an individual who appeared to feel isolated in the early stages of the transition. This participant said she would have appreciated being part of a network of people who had been through similar experiences.

Compatibility of an individual's work values with those of the destination organisation appeared to be an important enabler of a successful transition, particularly for those moving to the public, third or academic sectors. All the participants were content that their work values aligned with those of their current organisation, and indeed several participants had chosen to move to their destination sector in order to achieve a better alignment of their work values, particularly those relating to altruism and work-life balance.

Another potential challenge to making a successful transition is the loss of professional identity or self-esteem, which may result from a dramatic change in career going hand-in-hand with a change in sector. It is of course difficult to assess whether the career change was potentially more significant than the sector change, but the two in combination resulted in a major challenge for two of the participants. Each felt their professional status had been lost in the early stages of the transition, and it took some time to regain a sense of professional identity. A third participant reflected that one of his pre-transition anxieties had been whether he would be accepted by the

destination organisation, due to his private sector background. In the event his anxieties appeared unfounded, which the researcher suggests was due to his strong leadership qualities and values which aligned with those of the institution.

The final potential challenge to successful inter-sector transitions concerns organisational cultures. It was clear from several of the participants that they struggled initially to adapt to very different organisational cultures from those they were used to. Most of the cultural challenges occurred for participants transitioning from the private sector to the public, academic or third sectors, and they related to organisational structures, decision-making processes and procedures. However, what is less clear is whether the size of organisation was more significant than the type of sector. Large organisations are more formalised, and they tend to develop specialist groups or sub-cultures, which can be alien to a newcomer from a different background.

Many of the challenges and enablers identified in this study may be applicable to transitions between organisations as well as sectors. The findings from this study however provide sufficient evidence that for some people the change in sector exacerbates those challenges.

6.3 The trustworthiness of the research

All qualitative research potentially suffers from the charges levelled by quantitative researchers that it is unreliable and lacks validity, because the findings are not generalizable or replicable (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, as discussed in section 3.10 (and summarised in table 4) qualitative research adopts alternative criteria for determining its trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). One of these is credibility, which in this study has been demonstrated by its use of established grounded theory methods which have evolved over a period of fifty years. The methods are replicable, and although the data would be different due to participant uniqueness, the ways in which the data were collected and analysed could be repeated.

A second criterion of trustworthiness is dependability, which concerns the accuracy and reliability of the findings. This is demonstrated by the transparency of the research process, which will be accessible to other researchers via an open access repository. Thirdly is the criterion of confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), which relates to the researcher not overtly allowing their beliefs to influence the research methods and outcomes. In section 3.4 the researcher addressed this issue through 'bracketing', in which her values and influences were articulated, thereby providing transparency to readers of this research. The researcher was particularly mindful not to 'over claim' the significance of findings.

Other criteria which demonstrate trustworthiness include relevance (Hammersley, 1992) and impact (Yardley, 2000).   Whilst the long term impact of this study will have to wait until it has been

made widely accessible to the research community, its practical impact on individuals who transition from the private sector to the researcher's own workplace, will be felt immediately through the practical guidance (section 6.5 below). Its relevance is considered below (section 6.4) in terms of its contribution to knowledge.

6.4 Contribution to knowledge

Given the underdeveloped literature on inter-sector transition and sector-switching, particularly regarding qualitative studies in the UK, this study provides an important contribution to knowledge. It is unique in its consideration of transitions between the public, private, third and academic sectors, and it has provided intriguing insights into the personal experiences and perceptions of individuals who have made transitions. It has also explored the factors – both enablers and challenges – which impact on successful transitions, and articulated them for the first time in terms of models (Figures 4 and 5). The rare extant studies have largely adopted narrative or ethnographic approaches (for example Apfel, 2013; Liu, Engar-Carlson & Minchiello, 2011), whereas the approach of this study, drawing on grounded theory methods, has enabled the development of models which may in time contribute to new constructs.

6.5 Contribution to professional practice

An understanding of inter-sector transition challenges and enablers will arguably facilitate a smooth transition, which will benefit both the individual and the organisation. The individual will settle into their new role more quickly and feel able to contribute productively to their new organisation, whilst the organisation will realise a speedier return on what can be a costly and time consuming recruitment process.

At a practitioner level, the research has led to the creation of guidelines for line managers, to assist new starters transitioning from other sectors. These guidelines were developed in association with a recent 'incomer' to the author's department. They focus on what Schein (2010) would call the artefacts of organisational culture and are designed to cover the practicalities of adapting to an academic institution; they are included in Appendix 12. It is anticipated these guidelines, adapted as appropriate for specific circumstances, will also inform personnel induction procedures for Human Resource practitioners. The findings more generally will be of potential benefit to recruitment agencies, so that they can advise clients on the realities of inter-sector transition.

The research highlighted a lack of support networks for individuals planning or undergoing inter-sector transitions. Business Schools, who educate thousands of potential leaders through their

management and leadership programmes, may have a role to play in providing such networks. It is hoped this research will prompt discussion in Business Schools for this purpose.

At a personal level, the research has encouraged a more informed view of the different sectors, and to quote one of the participants, a more 'nuanced' view of the private sector. This undoubtedly contributed to the author's inclination to help develop a new service in conjunction with a private company (an issue which is addressed in the Personal Impact Statement accompanying this thesis).

6.6 Limitations of the research

This is an exploratory study and therefore the findings cannot be generalised. A broader sample of participants would add depth and breadth. The organisational sectors categorised as public, private, third and academic sectors in this study mask a myriad of variations. Large public sector organisations such as local authorities, police forces and the NHS all operate differently from each other. This study is not representative of the diversity within sectors, but neither does it aim to be. Similarly, there are a multitude of characteristics which may describe managers and senior executives, including age, gender, ethnicity, and professional background. The sample used in this study does not represent all characteristics.

The assessment of transition success was exclusively made by the participants, with no triangulation by, for example, direct reports, line managers, or board members.

As with much qualitative research, it is difficult to isolate causal relationships. Some of the findings on challenges and enablers may relate to organisational size as much as to sector type; the criteria for success may include additional variables relating to personality, for example.

6.7 Scope for further research

The researcher believes the justification for further research in this area is strong. The on-going reduction in the size of the state, the increasing role of the private sector in the delivery of services, and the growth in public-private partnerships, social enterprises and new models of service delivery, have implications for leadership and management. It will be increasingly important that people in senior positions have experience, or at least a good understanding, of different sectors. An editorial for the British Journal of Nursing, noted that

> A blended approach is what may be needed – a combination of both private and public-sector managers. The managers from both sectors bring with them their own wealth of

expertise, and by recognising this potential contribution and using it in the best possible way, it could work to the advantage of both patients and staff. (Peate, 2014, p.349)

The importance of cross-sector collaboration has been noted in other countries as well. Research in Slovenia, for example, has demonstrated that collaboration between the public and private sectors can increase innovation by utilising the knowledge, skills and experiences of all parties (Cankar & Petkovsek, 2013).

There are numerous avenues for further research. Broadening the sample would allow focus on particular characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity. The question of professional background is also of interest. In this study accountants and lawyers featured prominently and it is possible that certain professions foster transferable skills which facilitate cross-sector working, such as advocacy or negotiation skills. There may also be particular leadership behaviours which are more successful in inter-sector transitions, which would add to the body of literature on leadership in a complex world.

6.8 Final thoughts

Despite the apparent blurring of the sectors (Rainey & Chun, 2005), there remain some challenges to transitioning between them. However there also many enablers, and managers should not feel daunted by the proposition. Transferable knowledge and skills, coupled with thorough research into the destination sector, will help ensure a successful transition.

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Appendix 1: Approaches to qualitative research: a brief critique of four common approaches which were considered but discounted for the current study

Narrative

Narrative research takes many forms, but essentially it concerns collecting stories about individuals. The data may be secured through interviews, observations, documents and pictures. According to Cresswell (2013), examples of different types of narrative study include biographical study, in which the researcher records the experiences of an individual's life; autoethnography, in which the story is written by the individual; life history, which portrays someone's entire life; and oral history. Narrative analysis has been deployed in organisational research (for example Boje, 1991) and storytelling is increasingly used as a tool for management development (Carr & Ann, 2011).

Riessman (2008, cited in Cresswell, 2013) notes that narrative research is appropriate for capturing detailed stories or life experiences of a single individual or a small group of individuals. It is most effective when there is active and prolonged collaboration between the researcher and the individual(s) concerned.

Whilst the current study required outline knowledge of the participants' careers, and benefited from the thoughts and experiences of the participants on a range of issues, it did not require in-depth knowledge of the participants' life histories. Nor did it require the development of a relationship between researcher and participant, which is another characteristic of this form of research. It was therefore discounted.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophy concerned with how individuals make sense of, and interpret, the world around them (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It draws on the work of Schutz (1962) who in turn was influenced by Max Weber and Edmund Husserl, and concerns the world of daily life, or social reality. A primary characteristic of this philosophy is 'that this world is taken for granted' (Gurwitsch, 1962, p.51). Translating this philosophy into a research methodology, it can be summarised as attempting to see the world in the same way that the subjects of the research see it, or in other words, a 'common-sense world as social reality' (Gurwitsch, 1962, p.50). The phenomenologist considers the input from multiple participants, in terms of both 'what' and 'how' they experience the phenomenon, and then collates the data to describe the common experience. In the words of Moustakas (1994, cited in Cresswell, 2013), this common experience is the 'essence' of the experience.

This methodology was potentially an appropriate one for the current study of inter-sector transition. However, the focus on 'common experience' was felt by the researcher to be overly restrictive. Prior to commencing the study, it was unclear whether there would be any common experiences of inter-sector transition and therefore a more exploratory, flexible approach to the study was considered desirable.

Ethnography

Ethnography and participant observation are terms often used interchangeably, because both require the researcher to immerse him/herself into the group being studied, for an extended period (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This allows detailed observation of actions, behaviours and language, and sometimes interaction with the participants. Ethnography had its roots in cultural anthropology, but as with so many disciplines, has been adapted and applied in different fields. It is a recognised method in studies of organisational culture (for example Van Maanen, 2011; Watson, 2011) and indeed a plea has been made for more use of organisational ethnography in business and management research (Ethnography in the Context of Management and Organizational Research, 2011).

It was not, however, an appropriate approach for the current study, because ethnography relies on the study participants having a shared culture or behaviours. The researcher anticipated that the participants in the inter-sector transitions study would be unlikely to have shared cultures. Ethnography also requires an extended period of time for the research, and, as noted by Cresswell (2013), a thorough understanding of cultural anthropology.

Case Studies

As the term implies, a case study is a detailed analysis of a single case – which may be a single organisation, an individual person, or a single event. The focus is on a bounded situation, 'an entity with a purpose and functioning parts' (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 60). The aim is to present an in-depth understanding of the case, so is likely to entail the collection of many different types of data, which many include interviews, video recordings and even quantitative data.

According to Cresswell (2013), one of the challenges of case study research is deciding on the boundaries of the case, or indeed whether to use more than one case. He notes that generally researchers use no more than five case studies in a multiple case study approach. Larger numbers would enable generalisation across the studies, but for most qualitative researchers, generalisation is not a requirement.

Whilst conceivably the researcher could have opted for a multiple case study approach to inter-sector transition by choosing up to five individuals to examine in depth, this did not seem intuitively to be the appropriate approach. Firstly, there would have been a challenge to select the most appropriate case studies; given the aim to explore multiple transitions between multiple sectors, a limit of five (or whatever number was chosen) units would have been too restrictive. Secondly, the emphasis in the case study approach appears to be on description (Cresswell, 2013). Whilst description is undoubtedly important, the researcher hoped to go further in the study of inter-sector transition, to identify potential themes and constructs.

Appendix 2: Interview schedule: version 1 (first pilot interview)

1. Brief outline of project, scope, confidentiality
2. Please summarise your current role (in private sector) and previous roles (in public sector), and indicate your professional background
3. What was your motivation to move between sectors?
4. Did you have any preconceptions? What was the reality like?
5. Were there any challenges in adapting?
6. How would you describe your values and ethos? Would you say you had a Public Service Ethos? Did these values influence your decision to move here? Do you feel comfortable that your values match those of your new organisation, or is this not an issue for you?
7. Questions about your new organisation's culture – how it differs from your previous organisation e.g. in terms of leadership style, decision-making, bureaucracy, attitudes of employees?
8. Can we talk about your skill set when you made the transition? Which ones were transferable? Did you have to learn new ones?
9. How important was your previous experience in securing your current role? Which aspects of that experience have been most relevant?
10. Have you noticed a difference in the attitudes and skill sets of employees between sectors?
11. How do you think you are perceived by current employer / previous employer?
12. What do you like /dislike about the private sector?
13. Would you ever go back to the public sector?
14. Any final reflections on new role?
15. Thank you

Appendix 3: Information sheet given to each participant prior to interview

Information sheet

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. This information sheet explains what the study is about and what the role of participants is.

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of leaders and senior managers who have made the transition between public and private sectors. Of particular interest is whether attitudes, values, and experiences enable a successful transition between sectors, and also whether the perceived organisational culture has a bearing. To assist in this study, a series of interviews with senior managers will be undertaken.

You will be interviewed by myself, Sue White, currently studying for a professional doctorate at the University of Huddersfield. If you agree, the interview will be audio recorded and will last approximately one hour.

The information provided by you in the interview will be used for research purposes. It will not be used in a manner that would allow identification of your individual responses.

The study has been considered by the Ethics Committee of the Business School, University of Huddersfield, and has been given a favourable review.

I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. If you have any questions about the research at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sue White
Director of Computing and Library Services
University of Huddersfield
HD1 3DH
Tel: 01484 472039
Email: s.a.white@hud.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Consent form

- I, the undersigned, have read and understood the Information Sheet provided.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the Study.
- I understand that taking part in the Study will include being interviewed and audio recorded.
- I have been given adequate time to consider my decision and I agree to take part in the Study.
- I understand that my personal details such as name, current employer and previous employers will not be revealed to people outside the Study.
- I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports and other research outputs, but my name and other personal details will not be used.
- I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any material related to this Study to Sue White (Researcher) at the University of Huddersfield.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the Study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer wish to take part. Any personal data will be destroyed on my request.

Name of participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 5: Interviewees' inter-sector transition characteristics

Interviewee	Role level	Transitions (start /destination post)	Length in destination post	Professional background	Gender
A	S/S	Public / private	4 years	Management	Male
B	M/M	Private / academic	11 years	Information Technology	Female
C	M/M	Academic / private	3 years	Information Technology	Male
	M/M	Private/academic	20 years		
D	M/S	Public / private	12 years	Engineering; Information Technology	Male
	S/S	Private/academic	15 years		
	S/S	Academic/private	2 years		
E	S/M	Public / academic	1 year	Accountancy	Male
F	S/S	Private / public	22 years	Law	Male
G	M/S	Private / public	1 year	Law	Female
H	S/S	Academic / private	3 years	Accountancy; Management	Male
	S/C	Private/academic	6 years		
I	S/S	Private / public	10 years	Catering; police	Female
	S/S	Public / private	5 years		
J	S/C	Private / third	10 years	Law	Female
K	S/C	Private / public	4 years	Accountancy	Male
L	S/S	Private / public	3 years	Accountancy	Male
	S/S	Public/private	25 years		
	S/C	Private/third	1 year		
M	S/C	Private / academic	5 years	Education	Male
N	S/C	Multiple transitions ending in Public / private	10 years	Engineering	Male
O		Multiple transitions including		No specific background	Female
	S/C	Private / third	5 years		
	C/S	Third /public	2 years		
	S/C	Public /third	4 years		

Key

Role levels:
M - Middle Manager (team leader responsibility in a large organisation)
S – Senior Manager (head of large department or unit with significant decision-making authority)
C – Chief Executive or equivalent (in control of company or organisation)

Sectors:
Public sector
Private sector
Academic (further and higher education) sector
Third sector

Examples of transition
S/S – Transitioned from one senior manager role to another senior manager role
M/S – Transitioned from a middle manager role to a senior manager role
S/C – Transitioned from a senior manager role to a Chief Executive or equivalent

Appendix 6: Summary of transition drivers

Inter-viewee	Level	Transitions (start/destination post)	Transition drivers
A	S/S	Public/private	• Disliked changing function of local government • To utilise specialist knowledge in a different environment
B	M/M	Private/academic	• Job sounded interesting • Financial: salary and job security • Opportunities for learning and development
C	M/M	Academic/private	• Opportunity arose (career progression)
		Private/academic	• To improve work-life balance • Disliked previous company
D	M/S	Public/private	• Opportunity arose (headhunted)
	S/S	Private/academic	• Geographical location • Exciting, challenging job
	S/S	Academic/private	• To try something different • To utilise specialist knowledge in a different environment
E	S/M	Public/academic	• Redundancy • To try something different • To utilise specialist knowledge in a different environment
F	S/S	Private/public	• To improve work-life balance • Disenchanted with previous company • Job sounded appealing, utilised specialist knowledge
G	M/S	Private/public	• To improve work-life balance • Job sounded appealing, utilised specialist knowledge
H	S/S	Academic/private	• To broaden experience and enhance CV
	S/C	Private/academic	• To lead an organisation • To improve work-life balance
I	S/S	Private/public	• Salary, employment terms and conditions
	S/S	Public/private	• To utilise specialist knowledge in a different environment
J	S/C	Private/third	• To make a difference to society
K	S/C	Private/public	• To make a difference to the community • To improved work-life balance
L	S/S	Private/public	• To broaden experience and enhance CV (secondment)
	S/S	Public/private	• Secondment ended
	S/C	Private/third	• To make a difference to the community
M	S/C	Private/academic	• Opportunity arose
N		Multiple transitions	• Variety and challenge, regardless of sector • Financial independence
	S/C	Public/private	• To lead own company
O		Multiple transitions including	
	M/S	Private/private	• To try something different • Job sounded appealing
	S/C	Private/third	• Opportunity arose (headhunted)
	C/S	Third/public	• Opportunity arose (headhunted)
	S/C	Public/third	• Redundancy • To lead a small organisation

Appendix 7: Summary of preconceptions and post-transition 'reality'

Inter-viewee	Level	Transitions (relevant to this question)	Preconception	Reality
A			[Not explored]	• N/A
B	M/M	Private/academic	• No preconceptions	• N/A
C	M/M	Private/academic	• Familiarity with sector	• As expected
D	S/S	Private/academic	• No preconceptions	• N/A
E	S/M	Public/academic	• No preconceptions	• Experience has been generally positive
			• Expected bright, motivated students	• Disappointed. Wide range of student motivation and ability
F	S/S	Private/public	• Underpowered, staid, bureaucratic	• Partially upheld with regards employee attitudes and bureaucracy. • Working environment better than expected.
G	M/S	Private/public	• Scale of change would be small. Expected to do same job but in different organisation • People work less hard in public sector • Public sector has an 'easier ride'	• Transition was major change - different culture and priorities. • Reputation of destination organisation very important. • People work as hard in public as private sector
H	S/S	Academic/private	• Some familiarity with sector having been a client previously	• Job changed shortly after arrival; became hard edged, target-driven, focused on financial performance
I	S/S	Private/public	• Anticipated tough job	• As expected
J	S/C	Private/third	• Everyone would be helpful and supportive	• Environment was very competitive
K	S/C	Private/public	• Some familiarity with sector • Simplistic view of party politics	• Multiple dimensions to party politics and politicians' motivations
L	S/C	Private/public	• Civil Service would be full of 'Oxbridge types'	• Partially upheld
M	S/C	Private/academic	• Frustrating governance • He would not be accepted by peers • Internal matters would take most of his time	• Not upheld • Not upheld • Not upheld
N	S/C	Public/private	• Some familiarity with private sector	• Underestimated dependency on customers
O	M/S	Public/private	• Private sector full of evil capitalists	• Now has a more nuanced view

Appendix 8: Summary of work values and what's important in working life

Interviewee	Level	Transitions	Stated values/what's important in working life (not linked to specific transitions)
A	S/S	Public/private	• Creating jobs
B	M/M	Private/academic	• Making a contribution to the organisation • Influencing organisation's development • Providing high quality services • Lifelong learning
C	M/M	Private/academic	• Being part of an organisation which does good for society
D	M/S S/S S/S	Public/private Private/academic Academic/private	• Sense of achievement • Influencing organisational or individuals' development • Public duty – contributing to society
E	S/M	Public/academic	• Job satisfaction
F	S/S	Private/public	• Professional credibility • Being respected • Working towards shared goals • Influencing outcomes
G	M/S	Private/public	• Making a difference to individuals • Providing a good service • Having an impact on the organisation
H	S/S S/C	Academic/private Private/academic	• Personal satisfaction • Progressing the institution
I	S/S	Private/public Public/private	• Making a difference • Helping people • Managing people and having responsibility • Job satisfaction • Being valued • Variety and challenge
J	S/C	Private/third	• Adding value • Variety and challenge • Success
K	S/C	Private/public	• Positively impacting on local people • Positively impacting on local businesses
L	S/C	Private/public Public/third	• Doing the right thing • Honesty, fairness • Authenticity • Making good decisions
M	S/C	Private/academic	• All people deserve to be treated with respect and dignity • Openness, honesty
N	M/S/S S/C	Multiple transitions between private/public/academic Public/private	• Making a contribution to society • Variety • Enjoyment • Financial independence
O	M/S S/C C/S S/C	Private/private Private/third Third/public Public/third	• Sense of common purpose (esprit de corps) • Variety • Doing something for the public good

Appendix 9: Knowledge and skills applicable to inter-sector transitions: pre-existing (transferable) and required (gaps)

Interviewee	Role level	Transitions (start /destination post)	Transferable knowledge and skills (relevant to destination post)	Gaps in knowledge and skillsets
A	S/S	Public / private	Product knowledge; understanding the customer; public sector knowledge; leadership	Income generation; commercial banking; running a business; marketing
B	M/M	Private / academic	Team management; technical expertise; project management; customer service	Learning about the new organisation (culture, processes)
C	M/M	Academic / private	None stated	None stated
	M/M	Private/academic	Technical expertise	None stated
D	M/S	Public / private	Technical expertise	None stated
	S/S	Private/academic	Technical expertise; people management; communication skills; problem solving; service delivery	Performance management; organisational politics
	S/S	Academic/private	Academic sector knowledge	Managing a client base
E	S/M	Public / academic	Training; public speaking; technical expertise	No experience of the sector; understanding students
F	S/S	Private / public	Technical expertise; business skills (e.g. prioritisation, focus on what's important); client skills; some sector knowledge	Organisational culture
G	M/S	Private / public	Technical expertise; good business practice ; time management ; organisation skills; client skills	Organisational culture, decision making
H	S/S	Academic / private	Sector knowledge	Sales, marketing
	S/C	Private/academic	Management; sector knowledge	None stated
I	S/S	Private / public	Taking responsibility; communication skills; people management; planning and organisation skills	Learning about the new organisation; technical skills; legal skills
	S/S	Public / private	Communication and negotiation skills	None stated

Appendix 9 (continued): Knowledge and skills applicable to inter-sector transitions: pre-existing (transferable) and required (gaps)

Interviewee	Role level	Transitions (start /destination post)	Transferable knowledge and skills (relevant to destination post)	Gaps in knowledge and skillsets
J	S/C	Private / third	Problem solving; persuasion; presenting a case; business skills e.g. financial management	Understanding how the public sector works; partnership working; grant applications
K	S/C	Private / public	Leadership skills; ability to apply organisation theory; sector knowledge	Politics (with a small 'p') – working with politicians who each have different agendas
L	S/S	Private / public	Technical and financial knowledge; managing stressful business situations; achieving stability	Organisational culture; bureaucracy
	S/S	Public/private	None stated	None stated
	S/C	Private/third	Leadership skills; team-building; creation of a vision; communication skills	None stated
M	S/C	Private / academic	Leadership skills; advocacy; external liaison; problem-solving; strategy; evidence-based decision making; governance; lean management; sector knowledge	Understanding of relationship between an academic institution and its students
N	S/C	Multiple transitions ending in Public / private	Communication skills; report writing; team working; exposure to different sectors/organisations	Sales; understanding customer relationships
O	S/C	Multiple transitions ending in Public/third	Strategy development; communication skills; debating; human relationships	Complex partnership working; collaboration

Appendix 10: Perceptions about transition success – challenges and enablers

Inter-viewee	Role level	Transitions (start/destination post)	Challenges	Enablers	Length of acclimatis-ation	What success looks like
A	S/S	Public/public	Organisational culture	Not stated	Not stated but found it challenging	Not stated
	S/S	Public/public	Developing commercial relationships; new language; lack of admin backup; lack of marketing skills	Professional experience; product knowledge; personal attributes e.g. good organisational and leadership skills; autonomy; clarity of objectives	Not stated but settled in very quickly	*"I love the move"* Freedom to make decisions and progress the business as he wants; making a difference to people's lives
B	M/M	Private/ academic	Organisational culture; jargon; lack of decision making; goal clarity; ineffective performance management	Transferable skills e.g. team management, customer focus, project management; professional experience;	2 years	Found it hard to adjust but now enjoys role – variety, challenges, dynamism, fast pace; opportunities for professional development; relative job security
C	M/M	Academic/ private	Organisational culture – hierarchy	Good training available	Not stated	Developed new skills which allowed career progression elsewhere
	M/M	Private/ academic	None stated	Organisational culture (already familiar with) technical skills	A few weeks	Working for an organisation which aligns with personal values and does good for society

Inter-viewee	Role level	Transitions (start/destination post)	Challenges	Enablers	Length of acclimate-isation	What success looks like
D	M/S	Public/private	None stated	Mentoring; technical skills	Not stated	
	SS	Private/ academic	Ineffective performance management; internal politics; organisational culture (importance of status; lack of staff motivation; divisions between staff); delegation; Trade Unions	Executive level support; mentoring; technical skills; management experience; private sector traits e.g. customer focus, target setting; experience of multiple clients; service ethos; problem solving; attitude – wanting to push oneself	A few months	Job satisfaction and sense of achievement, having led or influenced activities which benefited the organisation and/or individuals. Achieved targets which were set by CEO.
	S/S	Academic/ private	Managing the client base	Mentoring; family support; peer support; experience of cross-sector working; attitude – wanting to try something different	Settled down very quickly	His services are in demand; job satisfaction; sense of achievement, having developed new services
E	S/M	Public/ academic	Organisational culture; no experience of sector; adjusting to new (lower) status; jargon	Professional knowledge and experience; (pre-transition) advice from peer with knowledge of sector; line manager support; induction; mentor	1 year (implied)	Job satisfaction; enjoyment; good feedback from managers and peers; not worrying at night
F	S/S	Private/public	Some employees attitudes ('jobs worth'); ineffective performance management; Trade Unions; more accountability;	Professional knowledge and experience; high calibre staff; high calibre leadership; training; business skills; customer focus; service ethos;		Enjoys job. Good 'fit' with organisation – better use of skills.Respect; professional credibility; contribute to outcomes and development of the organisation

Appendix 10 (continued): Perceptions about transition success – challenges and enablers

Inter-viewee	Role level	Transitions (start/destination post)	Challenges	Enablers	Length of acclimatis-ation	What success looks like
G	M/S	Private/public	Organisational culture; size of organisation – time to build relationships and gain trust; governance, layers of decision making; hierarchical; less autonomy; attitude of some employees (jobs worth); expected to broaden role	Professional knowledge and experience; private sector experience (focus on efficiency, streamlining business processes) good people skills; organisational skills; mentoring from line manager; supportive peers; informal induction to team (but no induction to wider organisation)	1 year	Having an impact; making a difference; helping shape organisation; feeling valued; flexible working hours. Initial doubts '*Oh my God what have I done*' Transition harder than expected. Now more comfortable.
H	S/S	Academic/ private	Sales culture (and lack of training in sales); challenging performance targets; hard edged working environment; culture of fear; poor leadership	Professional knowledge and experience; some familiarity with private sector; mentor; training schemes (but not necessarily the right ones)	Not stated	*"I don't think I failed to adapt. No-one was trying to get rid of me…"* Achieved his target i.e. experience in a prestigious private company
	S/C	Private/ academic	Market forces in academic sector; staff attitudes e.g. resistance to change; jargon	Professional knowledge and experience; familiarity with academic sector; autonomy	Not stated but appeared to be quick	Personal satisfaction; able to progress the institution; development of other people.
I	S/S	Private/public	Organisational culture: old boys' network, hierarchical structures; discipline; gender imbalance; lack of leadership development.	Professional knowledge and experience; management skills e.g. team leadership, planning, organising; focus on customers; induction and training.	Not stated	Yes, made a successful transition. Rose through the ranks to a senior level. Measured success by meeting KPIs and happy team.

Inter-viewee	Role level	Transitions (start/destination post)	Challenges	Enablers	Length of acclimatis-ation	What success looks like
J	S/C	Private/third	Understanding public sector-slow decision-making; resistance to change; competitive nature of third sector; self-esteem ; reliant on others for progress	As CEO able to set the agenda and create the culture	She is' *still learning'*	Measures success in terms of the number of children her company has supported, and the size of the staff (which has doubled). Achieved national recognition.
K	S/C	Private/public	political know-how (with a small 'p') Remuneration; reputation; kudos	Professional knowledge and experience; familiarity with public sector; familiarity with the specific organisation; knowledge of private sector practices e.g. achieving efficiencies	Not stated, but relatively quickly due to previous role	Having a positive impact on the community, making a difference.
L	S/S	Private/public	Organisational culture; language; (potential) reputational risk	For all transitions: Professional knowledge and experience; business/finance skills; supportive colleagues; problem-solving; analytical skills.	Not stated	For all transitions: Feeling valued, achieving the almost impossible, clear vision, advocacy
	SS	Public/private	None stated	Personal attributes (adaptability and self-confidence); management and leadership skills-communication, advocacy, team building, strategy.	Not stated	
	S/C	Private/third	Adapting to non-executive i.e. less hands-on		Not stated	Achieving a strategic economic plan

Appendix 10 (continued): Perceptions about transition success – challenges and enablers

Inter-viewee	Role level	Transitions (start/destination post)	Challenges	Enablers	Length of acclimatis-ation	What success looks like
M	S/C	Private/ academic	Language; different understanding of term 'customer' Remuneration; governance	Familiarity with sector; leadership and management skills; private sector practices e.g. evidence–base, making efficiencies; governance arrangements; strategic review; personal attributes e.g. external liaison and lobbying	Not stated – but seemed to be fairly quick	Positively impacting people's lives
N	S/C	Multiple transitions ending in public/private	Selling; underestimated dependency on customers	Family support; increasing familiarity with different sectors (as career progressed); personal attributes e.g. innovative	Not stated	Achieving good for society; personal enjoyment; control over destiny; financial independence. Providing workforce with stable well-paid jobs; providing training and development opportunities for young people; Contributing to national economy through taxes; manufacturing products which improve people's quality of life.

Appendix 10 (continued): Perceptions about transition success – challenges and enablers

Inter-viewee	Role level	Transitions (start/destination post)	Challenges	Enablers	Length of acclimatis-ation	What success looks like
O	M/S	Private/private	Working with several different organisational cultures through clients; dealing with clients (especially male egos)	Working in small teams encouraged sense of obligation to work hard; robust decision-making to provide clarity	Took to it *"like a duck to water"*	
	S/C	Private/third	Financial (salary reduction)	Professional knowledge and experience; skillset e.g. communication skills, strategisation		Autonomy; achieving objectives; contributing to society
	C/S	Third/public	Internal politics (with a small 'p')	Professional knowledge and experience		Happiness; better work-life balance; autonomy
	S/C	Public/third	Organisational culture e.g. politeness	Professional knowledge and experience; skillset e.g. communication skills, strategisation	2 years	

Appendix 11: Summary of advice to people considering an inter-sector transition

Interviewee	Advice
A	[Not asked – pilot interview]
B	Think about organisational culture and diversity that is offered by larger organisations; be aware there is less support in smaller organisations; avoid preconceptions; give yourself time to adjust
C	Be guided by the job. Make sure the following articulate properly: understanding the job, understanding yourself; understanding the organisation
D	Be guided by the job; heed the advice of your partner
E	Find out about the sector – try and sample the new environment first e.g. with part time work; manage your expectations and don't get frustrated
F	Consider how important public service and remuneration are to you; get private sector experience
G	Consider your motivations for moving; be aware that private sector is less flexible but higher paid; public sector has benefits but you need to be adaptable
H	Find out about the organisation; suss out the culture before you move; talk to a trustworthy recruitment agency
I	Consider your ambition and skillset first; be aware of organisational cultures; avoid preconceptions; take your opportunities
J	Be clear about your motivation; consider practical implications e.g. salary reduction; if possible, find a network of likeminded people
K	Talk to people in the organisation beforehand; contact head-hunters and recruitment agencies for advice; consult academic research if it exists
L	Don't be fearful; question your ability to adapt
M	Avoid preconceptions; (as a CEO) don't try and change things straightaway; go in with your eyes wide open
N	If you're going into business, build a good team around you; if moving to the public sector, be patient, don't expect to change everything
O	Don't be afraid; go in with an open mind; be aware of financial implications of working in third sector

Appendix 12: Guidelines for line managers to assist new starters transitioning from other sectors

All organisations have their own 'culture' and ways of doing things, and it takes time for new staff to adapt to their new organisation. Staff structures, policies and procedures, and decision-making mechanisms may be very different from their previous place of work. Organisational culture may be defined as

> *'a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members' (Schein, 2010).*

> The role of the line manager is key to helping new members of staff settle into their new role and feel comfortable in their new organisation. This support is desirable for all new starters, but is especially important for colleagues who have worked in very different organisations to our own, such as private companies. The following guidelines provide suggestions to be used in the induction period.

1. Talk to your new colleague about the culture of their previous organisation. Understanding the culture they have come from will help you identify the differences with our own.

2. Explain the culture of our own organisation. Whilst by no means exhaustive, the following checklist may be useful:

Feature of organisational culture	Implications
History / tradition	Understanding when and why an organisation was established may help appreciate its mission and structures
Values and beliefs	Impacts on the ethos of an organisation – e.g. its approach to recruitment, staff development, staff engagement
Goals – long and short term	Long term goals indicate direction of travel, which helps the new starter appreciate organisational priorities. Short term goals will give focus and possibly an appreciation of where the new starter fits in.
Organisational structures – at organisational and departmental levels	An overview of structures helps the new starter appreciate how each department contributes to the organisation as well as their role in it.
Leadership style	Leaders operate at all levels within the organisation but the style and tone tends to be set by the CEO. Explain that in our organisation the style is consultative and open and we expect all managers to participate in leadership programmes at the appropriate level.

Language / jargon	Any specialist terminology and acronyms need to be explained to new starters. Attending meetings and not understanding what's going on can be bewildering and should be avoided. Consider creating a list of commonly used acronyms relevant to your team.
Policies and procedures	At a practical level, the new starter needs to know where to find the various published policies and procedures. The nature of the policies is a reflection of the type of organisation, e.g. its approach to diversity
Decision-making processes	Questions to consider include: Who/ which committees are responsible for decision-making? Delegated decision-making at what level? How long does it take? Note that decision-making in the private sector is likely to be quicker and often by a single person rather than by committee.
Use of technology	This ranges from an understanding of the IT systems to the etiquette concerning emails. Refer the new starter to appropriate policies and guidelines, but more importantly explain in person what is regarded as good behaviour. Make arrangement for any formal training required.

3. **Meetings with colleagues in key roles**: arrange for your new starter to meet with colleagues in key roles, both within the department and external to it. This is particularly important for new managers, in helping them understand both the organisational context and where areas of expertise lie. It also helps manage expectations e.g. in terms of priorities. Your new starter might have a list of priorities which requires working with colleagues in other departments, but their priorities may be different.

4. **Location:** one very practical action which can smooth the settling-in process is to ensure that the new starter is located in an office with colleagues working in related professional areas. This enables informal questions and discussion, outside the line manager relationship.

5. **Mentoring:** consider whether a mentor might be beneficial to the new starter. Colleagues who have transitioned from the private sector may value a mentor who has had a similar experience, and who can recommend strategies for speeding up the transition process. The central Staff Development Unit or members of your senior management team will be able to advise on potential mentors.

Schein, E. H. (2010) Organizational culture & leadership, 4th ed. San Francisco, California:Jossey-Bass.

JOURNAL ARTICLE

INTER-SECTOR TRANSITION: ENABLERS AND CHALLENGES TO SUCCESS

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Submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

The University of Huddersfield

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Inter-sector transition: enablers and challenges to success

This article is intended for submission to *Career Development International*, a multi-disciplinary journal which has previously published papers on topics related to inter-sector transition including the boundaryless career and career success.

The submission adheres to the required manuscript requirements, e.g. length is between 5000-7000 words; the title is no longer than eight words; the structured abstract is set out according to the prescribed sub-headings; keywords are provided. First level headings are presented in bold format and subsequent sub-headings are in medium italics; references are in Harvard style.

For ease of presentation for DBA assessment purposes, the table and figures are incorporated into the main text. For submission to the journal, the table and figures would be included in separate files.

A note about the author is included as an addendum:

Author – Susan White is Director of Computing and Library Services at the University of Huddersfield. Her professional interests include leadership and management, service innovation and cross-sector collaboration. The research outlined in this paper emanated from a Doctor of Business Administration undertaken at the University of Huddersfield.

The total word count of the journal article is 6411 words.

Inter-sector transition: enablers and challenges to success

Abstract

Purpose - This paper explores the experiences of senior executives and managers who have transitioned between the public, private, third and academic sectors. In particular it identifies a range of enablers and challenges to successful transition.

Design/methodology/approach - Using a qualitative methodology drawing on grounded theory methods, the author conducted in-depth interviews with fifteen participants. The data were coded and analysed thematically.

Findings - Both enablers and challenges to successful transitions may be identified. Key enablers include having some prior familiarity with the sector, for example through consultancy work, a range of transferable knowledge and skills, and work values which align with those of the destination sector. Factors which delayed successful transitions included a lack of knowledge about the destination sector and adapting to different organisational cultures.

Research limitations/implications – As an exploratory study this cannot be generalised, nor can causal relationships be identified. A broader sample would add breadth and depth; there is scope for additional in-depth study on specific attributes for example gender, professional background.

Practical implications – *S*uccessful transitions benefit both the individual and the employer. Human Resource practitioners, employers and recruitment agencies will benefit from this research which highlights factors which will ease the transition process. The importance of tailored organisational induction programs is noted.

Originality/value - The research fills a gap in the literature on UK sector-switching; the models representing enablers and challenges provide a new tool for representing this information.

Key words - Sector-switching; inter-sector transitions; public-private sector employment; career progression; organisational culture; transferable skills; values

Article classification - Research paper

Introduction

The boundaries between the public, private and third sectors have for some time been becoming less distinct (Rainey and Chun, 2005). The current political and economic climate in the UK is one in which large sections of the public sector are declining both in size and scope, with the private and non-profit or third sectors expected to take over the provision of key public services. Local government employment in September 2016 at 2.18 million was at its lowest level since comparable records began in 1999, whereas private sector employment, at 26.32 million, has risen almost every quarter since December 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2016). At the same time the growth of hybrid organisations such as social enterprises is gathering pace (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Spear *et al*, 2009), as is the third sector (Rutherford, 2015). It is a reasonable assumption that we will see an increase in career mobility between sectors, either because individuals choose to move or because they are forced to, for example through outsourcing or redundancy.

There has been relatively little research into the personal experiences of people who transition between sectors (noted by Apfel, 2013; Austin *et al*, 2012; Frederiksen and Hansen, 2014; Thompson and Flynn, 2014). However it is important from both an individual and an organisational perspective that inter-sector transitions are successful. An individual is more likely to enjoy greater job satisfaction and higher levels of motivation if their transition is successful; the organisation will want to see a return on their investment. The smoother the transition, the faster the individual is likely to become effective in their new role.

The research outlined in this paper explores the experiences of senior executives and managers who have made one or more transitions between the public, private, third and academic sectors in the UK, in any direction. The paper enhances understanding of the transition experience and identifies the challenges and enablers of a successful transition.

Definition of terms

The term 'inter-sector transition' refers to the movement of people, in any direction, between the public, private, academic and third sectors. 'Transition' may be defined as 'the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another (Paperback Oxford English dictionary, 2012, p.778). It is therefore not just about the end-result of the transition but also about the process of getting there, including the motivations, challenges and enablers, as well as any changes or learning which took place in the individual as a result of making the transition.

The term 'sector' as used in this research relates to type of organisation. The 'private sector' comprises organisations which are run by private individuals, are not controlled by the state, and whose motives include profit, growth, and increasing market share. The 'public sector' comprises organisations that are owned and run by the state and are concerned with providing various government services; funding is primarily provided by the state, through taxes, and the organisations are subject to public scrutiny. The third sector includes the not-for-profit and voluntary sectors which are non-governmental, but also social enterprises which receive funding from both private and public sources. The final category of sector is the 'academic sector', which in the context of this research refers primarily to institutions in the higher education sector. Traditionally universities would have been designated public sector but arguably the changes to the funding models in the last decade mean that Universities are hybrid public-private sector organisations (Bolden et al, 2009; Peters and Ryan, 2015).

Theoretical background

Inter-sector transition is an emerging area of study and the scholarly literature is underdeveloped. The term 'inter-sector transition' was adopted first in Australia (Thompson & Flynn, 2014), but other related terminology can be found in the literature such as 'boundary-crossing' (Austin *et al*, 2012), 'crossing sectors' (Pittinsky and Messiter, 2007), 'sector shifting' (Tschirhart *et al*, 2008) and 'sector switching' (Frederiksen and Hansen, 2014). Sector switching has been defined as job mobility between the private and public sectors, which may be in either direction (Frederiksen and Hansen, 2014). In some studies the term has also encompassed transition to the non-profit sector (for example Su and Bozeman, 2009).

The studies concerning the movement of individuals between sectors have, with a few exceptions, all taken place outside the UK, for example in the USA, Canada, Australia, Belgium and Denmark. Many of these are quantitative studies, for example a study by Bozeman and Ponomariov (2009) concluded that recent private sector job experience impacted positively on promotion and the number of employees supervised in the public sector; Hansen (2014) found that salary and the desire for more creativity were stronger motivators to move to the private than the public sector, whereas the value of altruism was stronger amongst individuals who moved within the public sector. A quantitative study of MBA graduates in the USA found very little evidence of movement across sectors (Tschirhart *et al*, 2008), whereas a Danish study by Frederiksen and Hansen (2014) suggested an increase in sector switching.

Qualitative studies on inter-sector transition are rare. Pittinsky and Messiter (2007) identified the challenges experienced by forty men and women when they exchanged successful business careers for American politics. They made the observation that "the move from the private to the public sector can entail a whole host of changes in your work, personal, and family life" (2007, p.49). Apfel (2013) explored the motivations of Americans to transition to the government and third sectors, and found tensions between individuals' expressed motivations about prosocial values, and how this translated into actual job preferences. The experiences of senior leaders in Australia who transitioned primarily from the private to the public sector, were explored by Thompson and Flynn (2014). They identified a number of factors which contributed to a successful inter-sector transition, such as transitioning at CEO rather than a lower level (therefore having more authority to effect change); enjoying government-level support; effective inductions; and adopting personal strategies for managing stress. They concluded that to increase the likelihood of inter-transition success, greater investment was required in structured induction and support processes.

One of the few UK-based studies concerns probation managers who chose to move from the public to private sectors (Deering *et al,* 2014). The six participants appeared largely satisfied with their transitions, however there were some challenges: one participant had to overcome philosophical misgivings about the profit motive of the private sector, and another struggled with financial management. Several of them commented negatively about aspects of the public sector such as bureaucracy, resistance to change, and employee attitudes.

A study of senior human administrators in the USA and UK who transitioned between the public and non-profit sectors suggested a tendency towards pre-conceived, often negative, ideas about sectors until an insider's perspective was acquired (Austin *et al*, 2012). Although not articulated as "challenges" and "enablers", a number of factors which impinged upon the transition process may be deduced from this work. Amongst the challenges of transitioning from the non-profit to the public sectors were adjusting to the "politics, policy and service delivery pressures" (Austin *et al*, 2012, p.126), whilst amongst the enablers were sector knowledge, prior experience, prosocial motivation and teamwork skills. Lewis (2012) explored the experiences of people working in the UK, Bangladesh and the Philippines who straddled the public and third sectors. He found a range of motivations for transitioning across sectors and suggested that transitioning across sectors has become increasingly common in both developed and less developed countries.

Careers theory
A potentially productive source of research into the concept of inter-sector transition is careers theory. In the early 1990's the concept of the "boundaryless career" was coined, suggesting that increasingly careers involved movement across organisations rather than staying within one organisation (Arthur, 1994). The ensuing two decades have seen a large body of research into the boundaryless career (for a summary, see Arthur, 2014) but there are sceptics. Rodrigues and Guest (2010) cite a lack of empirical evidence for the construct. A recent Belgian study has found that most public employees prefer the traditional hierarchy, and less than 10% of the workforce would be willing to move between organisations (De Caluwe *et al,* 2014).

Whilst the term "boundaryless" is used to mean movement between organisations rather than sectors, inter-sector transition is arguably an extreme version of boundarylessness and is a concept which merits its own study. This is because the challenges of transitioning between sectors are potentially greater than moving between organisations in the same sector, due to sectoral differences in purpose and ethos.

Not all career moves are voluntary. Changes in government policy and withdrawal of public sector funding may force some individuals to look to other sectors for the next phase of their career. The psychosocial effects of midlife career transitions on male scientists and engineers have been explored in the USA. Whilst there were positive outcomes for many of the participants, for others the transition resulted in a loss of self-esteem and professional identity (Liu *et al*, 2012). Several participants noted that the new work environment required good communication skills, flexibility and adaptability – all points which were reinforced by the current research. An Australian study of managers forced to change careers as a consequence of job loss also highlighted the difficulties of gaining new employment in other sectors. Their experience suggested stereotyping by potential employers: "Those who had previously worked in the public sector were finding it difficult to be considered for a private sector position. Those who had worked in a specific industry sector were finding it difficult to move to another sector, despite the appearance of having high level transferable skills" (Clarke, 2009, p.46). The barriers to finding suitable new employment, as perceived by the job seekers, included age (with individuals as young as their mid-forties perceiving they were too old for the job market), and the feeling that recruiters regarded the skillsets and experiences gained in one organisation as non-transferable. One of the key enablers was a strong network of recruitment agencies and potential employers.

There are a number of constructs which impinge upon inter-sector transition, each of which has its own literature. These include organisational culture, transferable skills, work values and professional identity. For reasons of space these are not critiqued here.

Method

Qualitative research is used when an issue needs to be explored (Cresswell, 2013), and was therefore considered appropriate for this study on inter-sector transitions. There are a number of methodologies available to the qualitative researcher, but the approach which provided the best "fit" for this study was one drawing on grounded theory methods. Grounded theory was first expounded by sociologists Glaser and Strauss in their seminal publication *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* (1967) and at its core was the premise that systematic analysis of qualitative data through coding would yield new concepts and theories. One of the factors which distinguishes grounded theory from other qualitative methodologies is "the movement from relatively superficial observations to more abstract theoretical categories [which] is achieved by the constant interplay between data collection and analysis that constitutes the constant comparative method" (Suddaby, 2006, p.636). Over the last fifty years grounded theory has evolved considerably, and it may now be described as a set of principles and practices, rather than a prescribed methodology (Charmaz, 2006). This study adopts a number of these practices, particularly the constant comparison method and "memo" writing to aid reflection and analysis.

Data collection was achieved through individual interviews with fifteen participants, who came from a variety of professional backgrounds and who each had a very different story to tell. Sampling was opportunistic, taking the opportunity to explore new leads as they arose. Initial leads came from the researcher's doctoral peer group, and on several occasions used "snowballing", namely the practice of using research participants to recommend new participants who fit the criteria for the study (King and Horrocks, 2010). As noted by Bryman and Bell (2011), snowballing is particularly useful when there is an absence of a known population from which to sample. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was guided by a series of prompts which encompassed: What transitions have you made between sectors? Why did you move? What is important to you in your working life? What were your experiences of transition? Were there any challenges? Was there anything which helped? What does a successful transition look like for you? What advice would you give to others making a similar transition?

Findings

Career and demographic characteristics

The number of transitions experienced by each participant varied from just one to multiple transitions. At least three individuals had worked in three different sectors. In contrast, eight participants had made just a single transition between sectors. These moves were public to private (one participant), private to public (three), private to academic (two), public to academic (one) and private to third (one).

The participants in this research fell into three categories: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), senior manager (typically the head of a large department) and middle manager (typically a team leader in a large organisation). The differentials between role levels did not generally appear to correlate with particular inter-sector transition experiences.

Participants had occupied their 'destination' posts (the posts to which they had transitioned) for varying lengths of time, ranging from one to twenty five years. They came from various professional backgrounds including: management, information technology, engineering, accountancy, law, education, and catering. Accountancy and law accounted for a larger proportion, possibly due to the effect of the snowballing sampling method, or possibly because the knowledge and skills associated with these professions lend themselves to working across sectors. Of the fifteen participants, ten were male and five female; two of the five females were CEOs.

The table below summarises the career and demographic characteristics. The participants' data were anonymised and each individual assigned a letter from A to O.

Interviewee	Role level	Transitions (start /destination sector)	Length in destination post	Professional background	Gender
A	S/S	Public / private	4 years	Management	Male
B	M/M	Private / academic	11 years	Information Technology	Female
C	M/M	Academic / private	3 years	Information Technology	Male
	M/M	Private/academic	20 years		
D	M/S	Public / private	12 years	Engineering; Information Technology	Male
	S/S	Private/academic	15 years		
	S/S	Academic/private	2 years		
E	S/M	Public / academic	1 year	Accountancy	Male
F	S/S	Private / public	22 years	Law	Male
G	M/S	Private / public	1 year	Law	Female
H	S/S	Academic / private	3 years	Accountancy; Management	Male
	S/C	Private/academic	6 years		
I	S/S	Private / public	10 years	Catering; Police	Female
	S/S	Public / private	5 years		
J	S/C	Private / third	10 years	Law	Female
K	S/C	Private / public	4 years	Accountancy	Male
L	S/S	Private / public	3 years	Accountancy	Male
	S/S	Public/private	25 years		
	S/C	Private/third	1 year		
M	S/C	Private / academic	5 years	Education	Male
N	S/C	Multiple transitions ending in Public / private	10 years	Engineering	Male
O		Multiple transitions incl.		No specific background	Female
	S/C	Private / third	5 years		
	C/S	Third /public	2 years		
	S/C	Public /third	4 years		

Table 1 Inter-sector career and demographic characteristics of the fifteen participants

Enablers and challenges

All fifteen participants felt that the transition to their current role had been successful. However in some instances the transition had taken far longer than anticipated, and in at least two instances a previous role in a different sector had been unsatisfactory and had posed challenges for the individual.

The factors which appeared to contribute to a successful inter-sector transition (the enablers) are indicated in the model in Figure 1 below. These factors are: the possession of at least some sector familiarity; professional knowledge and skills; training and/or mentoring; personal attributes and values, and for CEOs, multi-sector experience.
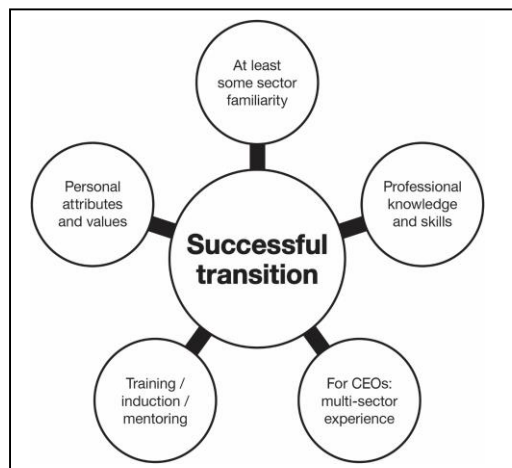

Figure 1

Factors which contribute to a successful transition - Enablers

The factors which appeared to delay or inhibit a successful transition (the challenges) are shown in the model in Figure 2. These factors are: a lack of familiarity with the destination sector; challenges in adapting to organisational cultures; issues of professional identity and self-esteem; an absence of mentoring or support; and sector-specific skills gaps.
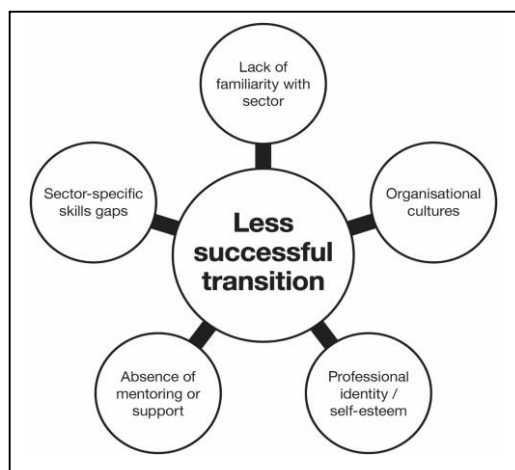

Figure 2

Factors which may contribute to a less successful transition - Challenges

Knowledge and skills

In terms of enablers, knowledge and skills appeared to be transferable across the different sectors, be that professional knowledge, high level leadership skills or generic communication skills. One senior manager recollecting his transition from the private to the academic sector, commented that

> It was that balance between the knowledge, skills and experience they were looking for, and the skills were broader than just the IT and technical. You had to be able to demonstrate that you knew

about the softer stuff, you knew about managing people, you knew how teams worked, you knew the importance of communication…

Some sector-specific skills gaps were identified, particularly amongst those who transitioned to the private sector, and they related to business skills and customer relations. For one of the participants, learning how to deal with commercial banks "was far and away my biggest learning requirement". He also talked about the need for better sales and marketing skills, a point picked up by another participant, who said "When you work in the public sector you're not exposed to the requirement to sell…. Here the customer says 'jump' and you 'jump'." A participant who transitioned in the opposite direction, from the private to the academic sector, commented on the different customer relationship:

> That's perhaps one of the things coming in from the private sector, it's a very different relationship you have with the student than what you have with the customer, a customer is someone you have a fiscal transaction with and they have rights and you respect those rights, it's a transaction. It took me a while to figure this out.

Sector-specific skills gaps appeared to be rectified fairly quickly and therefore did not pose a long term problem. However, the acquisition of these new skills is identified as a challenge in the model, largely because the requirement for these skills appeared not to have been anticipated by the participants in advance of the transition, and therefore initially represented a challenge in their new roles.

Sector familiarity
Prior familiarity with, or knowledge of the destination sector appears to be a significant enabler (supporting the findings of Austin *et al*, 2012; Deering *et al*, 2014), and conversely, lack of familiarity with the destination sector represents a challenge. Of the participants at CEO level, all bar one had some prior familiarity with the sector to which they transitioned, achieved for example through previous consultancy work. One CEO lacked familiarity with the third and public sectors, and she readily acknowledged that her transition experience had been both long-drawn-out and testing. She lacked the understanding of public sector decision making processes which were very different in the private sector from which she originated. Multi-sector experience is identified in the model as an enabler of successful inter-sector transition. Those participants who were the most sanguine in their approach to transition were the people who had made more than one transition. One CEO talked about the importance of being adaptable: "If [you have] good adaptability skills, perhaps thought about some of the things that might go astray and perhaps have some plans, some strategies, then there's nothing to be fearful of."

Training and mentoring
Training, effective inductions, and on-going mentoring were considered enablers of a successful transition by a number of participants. Of particular value was mentoring from people who had been through a similar inter-sector transition. One participant described the support provided by her mentor:

> …handholding, in terms of when you are not sure who to go to, or the right approach, particularly for example me going from a private sector organisation to this type of organisation where there is a lot of hierarchy.

However the degree to which this type of support was available to participants varied, and at the other end of the spectrum was an individual who had felt isolated in the early stages of the transition. This participant said she had to learn the hard way, "sink or swim", and would have appreciated being part of a network of people who had been through similar experiences.

Personal attributes and values
Compatibility of an individual's work values with those of the destination organisation appeared to be an important enabler of a successful transition, particularly for those moving to the public, third or academic sectors. Work values are derived from broader general values, and may be defined as

generalised beliefs about the desirability of certain attributes of work and work-related outcomes (Lyons *et al,* 2006, p.607). The participants' work values clustered around a number of themes: making a contribution to society and/or the organisation, job satisfaction and work-life balance.

All the participants were content that their work values aligned with those of their *current* organisation, and indeed several participants had chosen to move to their destination sector in order to achieve a better alignment of their work values, particularly those relating to altruism and work-life balance. A number of respondents talked about the importance of making a contribution to society, for example by being part of an organisation that *"does good things for society"*. This sentiment surfaced in all sectors and at all three levels of Manager, Senior Executive and CEO. One private sector CEO commented that "what turns me on is doing something that's helping wider society", which he achieved through the manufacturing of health-related products and through the provision of apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people. Another CEO who had made multiple transitions between sectors, talked about the importance of being part of an organisation "where people are working for some common goals ...and that common purpose is for the public good". Her three most recent jobs had been in the public or third sectors. The CEO of a social enterprise who had enjoyed a highly successful career in the private sector, described an epiphany when undertaking volunteer work in a deprived inner city which led to her third sector transition. Such moves support academic literature which points to individuals changing their priorities over time (Apfel, 2013; Brown, 2002; Drucker, 1990). Two other participants who had experience of working at a senior level in the private sector spoke about the responsibility of hugely profitable companies to undertake charitable works for society. One individual, for example, had helped establish a charitable foundation. These findings support research which suggests that private sector employees are no less altruistic than public servants (Lyons *et al,* 2006; Vandanabeele, 2007).

Several participants spoke about the importance of job satisfaction, exemplified by elements such as variety, challenge and a sense of achievement. One participant made a conscious decision "to do something different, not just a little bit different but out of the box different". It is not essential, of course, to transition between sectors in order to achieve variety and challenge, but undertaking inter-sector transitions possibly increases that likelihood and therefore will be appealing to individuals who embrace change.

Work-life balance, defined as the perception "that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities" (Kalliath and Brough, 2008, p.326), was both a transition driver and a work value. Managers at all levels aspired to a satisfactory work-life balance, and several participants transitioned to the public or academic sectors for this reason. One senior manager spoke about being passionate about her career "but equally I absolutely love my children to death and I want to be a good parent …I thought if I come to the public sector … there would potentially be more flexibility". Her intuition was correct, as her destination employer embraced family-friendly policies, but interestingly, academic studies have found that private sector employees do not systematically enjoy a poorer work-life balance than public sector counterparts (Dex and Bond, 2005).

Professional identity and self-esteem
Another potential barrier to successful transition is the loss of professional identity or self-esteem, which may result from a dramatic change in career going hand-in-hand with a change in sector. Professional identity may be defined as contributing "to a person's sense of self: it is about connecting with roles, responsibilities, values and ethical standards unique to a specific profession" (Goltz and Smith, 2014, p. 785) whereas self-esteem describes a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. It is difficult to assess whether in the current study the career change was potentially more significant than the sector change, but the two in combination resulted in a major challenge for two of the participants. Each felt their professional status had been lost in the early stages of the transition, and it took some time to regain a sense of professional identity. One talked about being perceived as a "charity worker" despite being CEO of a social enterprise, and in order to change people's perceptions "took to wearing suits and name-dropping". This supports research which has found that "the hybrid nature of social enterprise leads to complex and difficult identity issues" (Tracey and Phillips, 2007, p.267).

Organisational cultures

The final potential challenge to successful inter-sector transitions concerns the process of adapting to organisational cultures. Organisational culture may be defined as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group" (Schein, 2010, p.18). All organisations, regardless of sector, will have their own distinct culture, according to their purpose, size and leadership, and therefore any transition to a new organisation will require a degree of acclimatisation by the newcomer. However, research has shown there are significant differences in culture between the public and private sectors (for example Boardman *et al,* 2010; Perry and Rainey, 1988), arguably suggesting that transitioning between sectors may be more challenging than transitioning between organisations within the same sector.

Several of the participants appeared to struggle initially to adapt to very different organisational cultures from those they were used to. Most of the cultural challenges occurred for participants transitioning from the private sector to the public, academic or third sectors, and they related to organisational structures, decision-making processes and procedures. However, what is less clear is whether the size of organisation was more significant than the type of sector. Large organisations are more formalised and they tend to develop specialist groups or sub-cultures, which can be difficult to navigate for newcomers. One participant commented, "There is a lot more to understand and learn about in the public sector … I never anticipated what a big change it would be." Several individuals mentioned the issue of jargon, and having to learn what seemed like a new language. One participant observed, "For the first six months I had no idea what most of them were talking about."

Practical implications

An understanding of inter-sector transition challenges and enablers will always facilitate a smooth transition, which will benefit both the individual and the organisation. One of the key practical outcomes of this research is the recognition that organisations should support new starters transitioning from other sectors with a tailored induction programme. This reflects a similar recommendation in the Australian study by Thompson and Flynn to "design and evaluate inter-sector transition programs designed to facilitate the transition of senior leaders into the public sector" (Thompson and Flynn, 2014, p.91). A tailored induction programme should acknowledge and address the differences in sector culture. An initial conversation between line manager and new starter should surface these differences, followed by a programme that includes organisational history/tradition; values/ethos; long and short term goals; organisational structures; leadership style; language/jargon; policies and procedures; decision-making processes; use of technology. Also recommended is the assigning of a mentor or coach, who ideally has had a similar inter-sector transition experience.

At a broader level the findings from this study will be of potential benefit to careers advisors, human resources managers and recruitment agencies, to provide insight into the personal realities of inter-sector transition. This insight will help reinforce the benefits to the "transitioner" of thorough research into the destination sector or organisation, and development of the knowledge and skills (such as professional knowledge, team working, financial management) which are transferable.

The research has also highlighted a lack of awareness of support networks for individuals planning or undergoing inter-sector transitions (one such network is the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations[5] which provides mentoring support). There may be a role for Business Schools, which educate thousands of potential leaders through their management and leadership programmes, to enable such networks or to increase awareness of existing networks.

Research limitations and recommendations for further research

This study makes an important contribution to the emerging qualitative literature on inter-sector transition and sector-switching. It is, however, exploratory in nature and like many qualitative studies cannot be generalised. Additional, similar studies would help test the models of enablers

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[5] https://www.acevo.org.uk/

and challenges and a broader sample of participants would add depth and breadth. The participants in this study were mainly professionals operating at high levels within their organisations, so there is scope to explore non-professional and non-managerial populations, as well as the professions not represented in this study. Related to this point, there are a multitude of characteristics which may describe managers and senior executives, including age, gender, ethnicity, and professional background. The sample used in this study does not represent all characteristics, thus providing avenues for further research.

The research encompassed four different organisational sectors, categorised as public, private, third and academic sectors. However these broad categories mask a myriad of variations, for example large public sector organisations such as local authorities, police forces and the NHS all have different cultures and modes of operation. A further limitation, common to qualitative research, is the difficulty of isolating causal relationships. Some of the findings on challenges and enablers, for example, may relate to organisational size as well as to sector type, and it is possible that some of the challenges and enablers identified in this study are applicable to transitions between organisations as well as sectors.

Conclusions

The findings from this study suggest that despite the apparent blurring of the sectors (Rainey & Chun, 2005), transitioning between them poses challenges. The factors which may impede or impair a successful transition (the challenges) include: limited knowledge about the destination sector; organisational culture; professional identity and self-esteem; absence of mentoring or support; and sector-specific skills gaps. However there also many enablers, namely: sector familiarity; professional knowledge and skills; training and mentoring; personal attributes and values; and for CEOs, multi-sector experience. This study has articulated these challenges and enablers in the form of models which are offered as a contribution to the development of constructs in this emerging field.

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IMPACT STATEMENT

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Submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial acknowledgement of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

The University of Huddersfield

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Impact statement

Contents

Introduction

This Impact Statement is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration (DBA). It is a reflective piece that covers the researcher's background and motivations for undertaking the DBA, the challenges of the research journey, thoughts on methodology, the value of action learning, and professional impact.

For clarity, quotations from participants in the research are written in italics, whilst those from the scholarly literature are in non-italics.

1. Personal background

My current role is director of a converged computing and library service within a UK University, a role undertaken for the last six years. My remit is broad, encompassing IT infrastructure, library services, front line customer services (library, IT, and a cross-service integrated student support team), printing services, the University Press, the Repository for research outputs, archives and special collections. There are approximately two hundred staff in my directorate, from diverse professional backgrounds. My professional background is librarianship and I have spent my entire career in the academic sector, at either further or higher education institutions. I have enjoyed a rich and varied career to date, and amongst the achievements which have given me the greatest satisfaction are the introduction of a customer service ethos across my department, and the development of a staff competency framework to aid personal development and performance management. I mention these two particularly because they arguably are private sector practices which have been adopted by public organisations (a strand very relevant to my thesis). In recent years I have particularly enjoyed a role in developing collaboration across the university library sector.

My first degree was in geography, which as I explore later in this statement, influenced my philosophical view of the world for many years.

Alongside my day job, I have for many years engaged with professional activities at both regional and national levels. These "above campus" activities (i.e. those beyond my own institution) are important to me on several fronts. They provide opportunities for acquiring knowledge about current issues and future trends, which in turn inform policy development at my own institution; they provide personal stretch and challenge, for example in terms of leadership; and they enable the on-going development of professional networks.

2. Motivation for undertaking a DBA

It was not a requirement of my job to undertake doctoral level study, and many people – particularly outside the work environment - have asked why I elected to do it. The DBA requires considerable commitment and hard work; the responsibilities associated with my day job, coupled with the external professional activities mentioned above, were already time-consuming. There were a number of reasons, however, for embarking on the journey.

Firstly, my University was going through a period of transformation, from a teaching-led institution to one with ambitious targets for research. This, I knew, would have far reaching implications for my areas of responsibility. My department would need to support this new agenda in many ways, ranging from the provision of appropriate research data storage and new journal subscriptions, through to the development of library research skills and support for scholarly publishing. I felt it was important to understand the process of research from an insider's point of view. Not only would I feel better qualified to shape services to support researchers in practical ways, for example in terms of research data management or information retrieval, but I would also gain the personal experience of a research journey and all that it entails.

Secondly, and closely linked to the changing agenda within the institution, I felt it was important to be authentic and have credibility with academic colleagues when conversing about research issues. Going through the research process myself and attaining a doctoral level qualification was a demonstrable way of achieving that authenticity.

Thirdly, having worked in the education sector throughout my career I have been exposed to, and strongly influenced by, the concept of lifelong learning. I fully subscribe to the notion of continuous professional development, and have continued to learn and to develop myself throughout my career. Before commencing the DBA, however, some twenty years had passed since previous formal, accredited study. Part of me was curious to see if I was capable of doctoral level work. Another part wanted the intellectual challenge, the stretch that would be entailed.

Finally, the DBA offered a structured route to a doctorate with in-built peer support, achieved through action learning sets. The format appealed to my preferred, collaborative approach to learning.

3. The research journey

3.1 A convoluted route

The process of choosing and defining a topic, collecting the data, writing up and reflecting on findings has been fascinating. Contrary to my expectations, conducting research – certainly in the

fields of business studies and social sciences - is not a linear process (represented below in Figure 1).

Decide topic ➡ Decide methodology ➡ Literature review ➡ Data collection ➡ Data analysis ➡ Conclusions ➡ Write up

Figure 6 Preconceptions of the research journey

At times the research journey has felt like using an out-of-date satnav, going round in circles, missing the turning, coming up against dead ends, having to reverse and start again, and getting increasingly panicky as you fear you will never find your way out . Miraculously you do find the road again, and get back on track (illustrated in Figure 2 below). However the chances are the road looks slightly different from what you envisaged at the start – indeed, my own experience was of a constantly changing landscape.
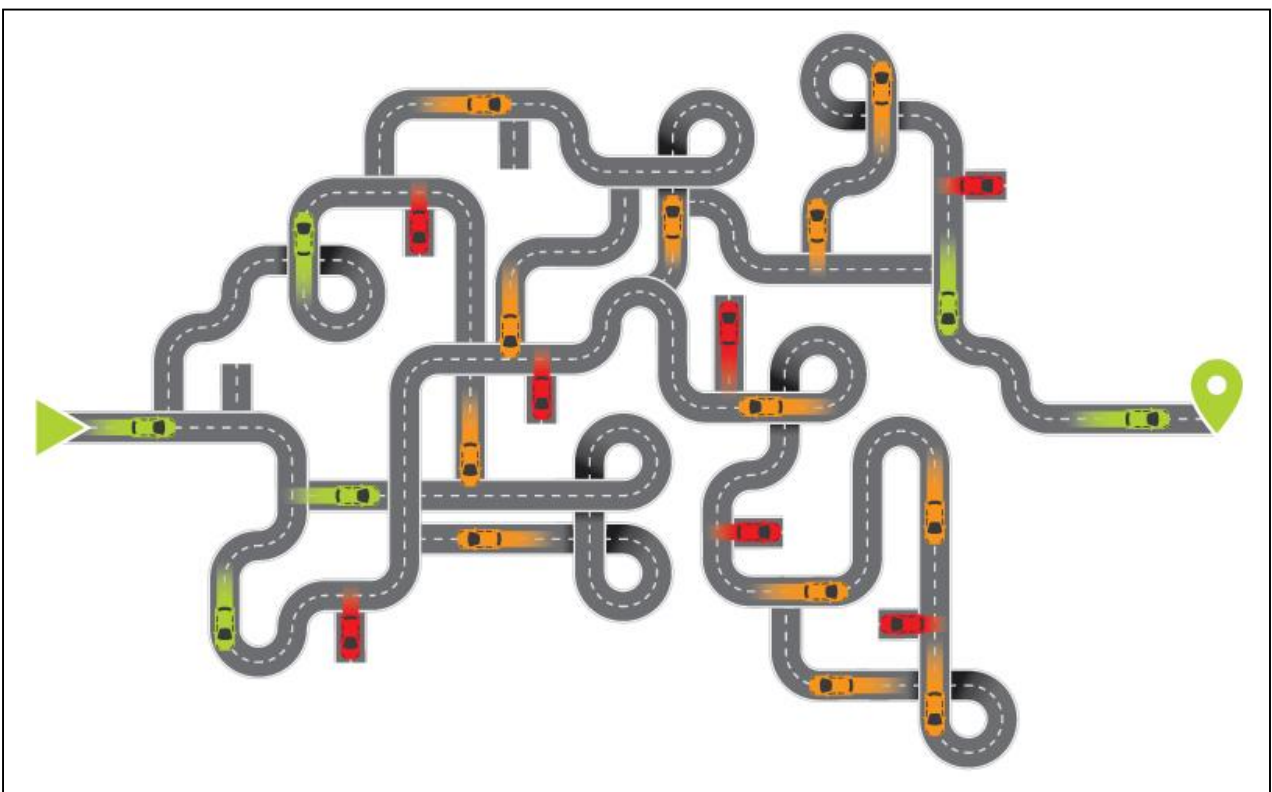

Figure 2 The reality

3.2 Defining the question

My initial thoughts on the area for research enquiry was public service ethos, due to a curiosity about the motivation of people working in the public sector, and whether there were different characteristics which distinguished them from their private sector counterparts. I was particularly enthused by the work of the American James Perry on Public Service Motivation (PSM), which was

effectively the US equivalent of Public Service Ethos. He proposed a model that sought to measure PSM (Perry, 1997), and which was subsequently refined and tested by others in the field. Perry's approach appealed to my academic roots as a geographer, a discipline with strong roots in quantitative methodologies.

An early proposal was to apply a version of the Perry model in the UK, taking my lead from a study which aimed to develop a generic measure of Public Service Ethos (Rayner, Williams, Lawton & Allinson, 2010). I went so far as to test out an abbreviated version of the measurement tool on my DBA peer group, before experiencing a critical incident. A colleague on the DBA programme, herself a senior partner in a private practice, stated with no hint of apology or embarrassment, that she would never employ anyone from the public sector because they did not possess the right attitude to work. For someone like me who had worked in, and supported, the public and academic sectors throughout my career, this statement represented a considerable challenge to my values. It made me question the validity of public and private sector stereotypes and to question whether people could successfully transition from one sector to another. From this point on the research question started to take shape, and I am exceedingly grateful to that colleague for sowing the seeds.

3.3 Methodology: the move from Quantitative to Qualitative

My undergraduate discipline was Geography, studied at a time when quantitative methodologies were considered superior to qualitative. Indeed, when I reflect back on the various modules studied, even those with a strong leaning towards Human Geography required statistical analysis and had at their core a positivist approach. My undergraduate experience perhaps inevitably influenced my behaviour in my professional career of librarianship. Practitioner-led research in which I was involved tended to focus on large scale surveys of library users, the results of which were then analysed using a software package and presented with varying levels of statistical significance. The data were useful in giving an overview of a particular situation (satisfaction with library services, for example), and to identify areas for service improvement, but after repeating these surveys annually it became clear that nothing new was being learned from them. From tentative beginnings in the 1970's (the earliest paper I found advocating a phenomenological approach to library research was by Joseph Natoli in 1976), an appreciation of the value of qualitative methods began slowly to develop in librarianship throughout the 1980's and 1990's (see for example Gorman, Clayton, Rice-Lively & Gorman, 1997). I recall attending practitioner workshops in the early 1990s and feeling sceptical about the value of the data derived from qualitative methods. However, as noted in the librarianship literature at the time, "qualitative

research is emerging within library and information studies as a serious methodological paradigm with practical benefits for the library manager" (Jacobs, 1996, p.139).

Following those workshops in the 1990's, I began to adopt qualitative methods to complement the harder statistics, for example incorporating sections for free text comments in questionnaires and conducting focus groups to explore particular issues. The DBA has reinforced for me the value of qualitative methods and taken me even further down the qualitative route. At the end of year 1, I planned to use mixed methods for my research, because there was still a part of me which felt the need for numbers and statistics. As my research topic took shape, however, I began to realise the limitations of quantitative techniques for my particular study, which required in-depth conversations about people's thoughts and experiences. My final methodology was entirely qualitative.

My increasing use of qualitative data in professional practice is outlined in section 5 below.

4. Action Learning

Action learning was a feature of the DBA throughout the four years of the programme. This was not my first encounter with action learning, having been a participant in an action learning set several years previously on a leadership development programme. The two experiences were rather different, for reasons I will explore below, but first, a brief explanation of what action learning is. Action learning may be defined as "a continuous process of learning and reflection that happens with the support of a group or 'set' of colleagues, working on real issues, with the intention of getting things done" (McGill and Brockbank, 2004, p. 11). The development of action learning is credited to Revans in the 1940's, when he suggested it as a mechanism for manager development in the British coalmining industry. He noted that

> Action learning differs from normal training (education, development) in that its primary objective is to learn how to ask questions in conditions of risk, rather than to find the answers to questions that have already been precisely defined by others.

(Revans, 1980, p.65)

The DBA action learning set comprised eight people initially, facilitated by the course tutor. They were held monthly throughout the academic year and on reflection, the sessions in the first year felt awkward. As noted by Boak (2011), individuals may embrace the action learning process to different degrees, with some people fully engaged but others more reticent. The importance of a positive psychological climate for effective action learning has been noted by several writers (for example Edmondson, Higgins, Singer & Weiner, 2016; Yeadon-Lee, 2015), and – in my view - it took most of that first year for the set to feel comfortable with each other. The elements of trust, honesty, reciprocity, confidentiality, all of which are considered important for effective learning (Yeadon-Lee, 2015) took time to achieve, but there was also a sense of uncertainty about the

purpose of the set, referred to as a 'healthy scepticism' by McGill and Brockbank (2004, p.19). Revans commented that "nobody should try action learning unless they are deadly serious about the need for getting out of some present mess" (1980, p.69). Perhaps one of the reasons for the awkwardness of the first year's action learning set was that none of us had sufficiently serious problems to resolve – or perhaps that we were not prepared to share them.

The action learning sets became increasingly valuable from the second year onwards, particularly when the focus of the problems for discussion became individuals' research topics rather than more generic management problems. Each member was allocated time to talk about progress on their research, and to present any problems. Through constructive questioning by colleagues in the set, problems were explored and new perspectives offered. This was helpful on many occasions, for example in pinning down my research questions. Being challenged with Socratic type questions made me fine tune my thinking and bring focus to what started as a fairly nebulous set of ideas.

I referred above to my two different experiences of action learning. My first foray was with a group of professionals in similar roles to myself as part of a leadership development programme. The set members were strangers to each other prior to the programme, and all working at roughly the same level within their respective institutions. There quickly developed a collegiate sense of "being in this together" and generally participants appeared to be open and honest. In the DBA action learning set several of the members were internal staff of the University, working in different roles and at different levels within the organisation. For me this raised issues, largely unarticulated at the time, about loyalty to the institution and a reluctance to be *too* open and honest.

There are challenges to evaluating the value of action learning (Pedlar & Trehan, 2010; Edmonstone, 2015). Arguably the benefits occur at both a personal and organisational level. At a personal level, action learning encourages critical thinking and provides important time and space for reflection and problem solving. The input from colleagues outside my immediate area of work brought valuable, alternative perspectives to my own. At an organisational level, action learning encourages a collaborative approach to the resolution of complex problems and to organisational improvement, as well as more effective inter-team working.

I apply the principles of action learning regularly in the workplace. For example, a termly "themed meeting" for up to forty managers from diverse teams in the directorate provides an opportunity to explore difficult questions, such as increasing manager effectiveness and developing effective working relationships with external partners. It is pleasing to note the levels of engagement with the

process and the practical solutions that emerge, reinforcing the notion that action learning is about getting things done.

5. Professional impact and contribution to professional practice

5.1 Professional identity: relationship between academics and professional service managers

My appreciation of the different sub-cultures of academia and professional services has been enhanced, and this has reinforced my belief in the benefits of collaboration between these different staff groups. There is a growing body of literature on professional identities within further and higher education (Feather, 2016; Lewis, 2014; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010), and there have been a number of studies concerning the identity of my own profession, the library and information profession (for example Wilson & Halpin, 2006).

There has also been a lively debate in the press about the tensions between academics and professional services. Laurie Taylor, writing in the Times Higher Education, claimed "what used to be a mildly patronising relationship between dons and their administrative servants has now become more like a battle for control" (Taylor & Underwood, 2015, p.36). Some academics evidently feel their voice is becoming weakened as the number of managers increases, but to my mind the role of professional services staff is to support the academic process and to make the life of academics easier rather than to undermine it. What is required are strong and effective relationships between academics and professional services staff, working together to enable high quality learning, teaching and research. Writing a decade ago, Whitchurch noted that "commentators are beginning to recognise that the delivery of extended academic agendas in complex environments can only be achieved through equally valued, but different contributions from a range of staff" (2007, p.57), and that view is even more relevant today, given the uncertainties and increasing complexity faced by the higher education sector.

My emersion in the research process has been invaluable to understanding some of the differences between academia and professional services. As a practitioner-researcher for example I have gained insight into the practical challenges facing an early career researcher in terms of accessing IT and library systems. I have also experienced at first hand the academic "mind set" which is in many respects very different from that of the professional services manager. Take, for example, writing. The type of writing undertaken by professional services managers includes report writing, action plans and strategy documents. Brevity and succinctness are valued. Academic writing in many disciplines, on the other hand, is discursive and reflexive. The aim of

academic writing is not to summarise key points in a series of bullet points, but rather to demonstrate breadth of understanding and critical analysis.

Having now undertaken doctoral level study I have a greater understanding of the research process and the language of research (epistemology, ontology etc.), which in turn enables more effective communications with researchers. I have first-hand experience of some of the big issues facing researchers today, such as Research Data Management, and I am in a better position to develop new library and IT services to support researchers.

5.2 A different view of the private sector

A suspicion of private sector motives and practices is perhaps not uncommon in my professional peer group, who have largely followed career paths in the public and academic sectors. I admit to having had that suspicion. The exploration of inter-sector transitions undoubtedly raised my awareness of the characteristics of different organisational sectors, and in particular the positive attributes of the private sector, such as agility and responsiveness to change. This new awareness has influenced my recent professional activities at regional and national level. In my capacity as Chair of the Northern Collaboration of University Libraries[6], and as Chair of the SCONUL (Society of National and University Libraries)[7] Shared and Collaborative Services Strategy Group, I was able to influence and contribute to the development of partnerships with external and commercial organisations. These new collaborations are enabling the exploration of new models of service delivery, efficiency savings, and better use of existing resources – all of which are being actively encouraged by the government and higher education funding councils.

As a result of the DBA, my suspicions surrounding the private sector have been at least partially dispelled. Through the interviews afforded by this research I have gained new insights, not least into the values and motivations of senior people working in the private sector. The CEO of a private company was as keen to make a contribution to society as the CEO of a local authority, but it was manifested in different ways. The company director perceived that his contribution was demonstrated through providing employment to scores of people and paying large sums of corporation tax which would ultimately be spent on public services. For the public sector CEO it was about using his authority and influence to have a positive impact on people's lives.

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[6] www.northerncollaboration.org.uk

[7] www.sconul.ac.uk

5.3 Leadership and management

One of the motivations behind my choice of research topic was a growing appreciation that the University sector can no longer be defined as purely public sector. In recent years changes to the higher education regulatory environment and the steady withdrawal of HEFCE funding (for a summary of the higher education context see Peters and Ryan, 2015) have resulted in increasingly business-like approaches to managing Universities. Vice Chancellors, one could argue, are expected to behave like Chief Executive Officers as well as academic leaders. The VC in my own institution has introduced strategy maps, KPIs, balanced scorecards - all traditionally associated with the private rather than public sector, and illustrative of the features associated with New Public Management (Hood, 1991). Within my areas of responsibility the pace of change is rapid, particularly with regards to technology, but also concerning the emphasis on the customer which influences the way we develop services. There is additionally a requirement for managers at all levels to be more proactive in performance management of their teams and the individuals within those teams, and to encourage a positive attitude towards change.

As someone who has spent their entire career in the public or academic sectors, I was curious to explore at first hand the experience of other managers and leaders who had worked in different sectors. The opportunities afforded by the DBA allowed me to do exactly this. It became increasingly clear to me during the research interviews that whilst there are undoubtedly differences between the sectors, for example with regards organisational culture, there are also areas of commonality, for example in terms of leadership skills. I was honoured to interview some highly distinguished leaders, whose reflections in turn encouraged me to reflect on my own practices as a senior manager and leader.

One of the points which came across strongly from the CEOs was the importance of their values in shaping not just their choice of role but the way in which they ran their organisations. The values of integrity, fairness, authenticity, and making a contribution to society, all featured in our conversations. A particularly powerful statement from one participant resonated with me, and reminded me of the privilege and responsibility attached to leadership:

> *I fundamentally believe that ... everybody has the right to be treated with respect and dignity no matter who they are, what they do. I think if you start with that premise the rest of the values become quite easy because then you have values of open and honest communication, you have values of what you see is what you get, you have values of concern for the individual even when tough decisions have to be made.*

Another participant said that he regularly asked himself the question: "why should anyone want to be led by you?" It is a question I try and ask myself on a regular basis; it mitigates against complacency and encourages continuous improvement.

5.4 Increasing use of qualitative data

In section 3.3 I referred to a growing use of qualitative data in my professional practice. This can perhaps be illustrated through the following examples. The first example concerns staff training. A recent strategic target for my directorate was to gain the external, government sponsored, standard of 'Customer Service Excellence'.[8] Engaging all two hundred staff with the concept required them to have an understanding of diverse customer groups and the types of services those 'customers' wanted from my department. On my instigation a series of interviews with different types of customer were recorded on video and played back at each training session, providing real insight into the everyday experiences of service users.

The second example concerns the use of qualitative data to inform service improvement. My expectations are that business cases for the development of new services should be accompanied by statistical evidence, but there is also an important role for qualitative data. I want a sense of what the proposal will mean for individual service users. One of the most effective ways of demonstrating this is through direct quotations from service users. A proposal to create additional group study space in the library, for example, is much stronger when backed up with real-life stories from students about the difficulties of undertaking group assignments.

Within my directorate I encourage consultation and dialogue with all service users, for example through focus groups and liaison meetings. The annual National Student Survey[9] (NSS) contains a wealth of qualitative data which provide far greater insight into the real concerns of students than statistics alone, and each comment relating to library and IT services is heeded and acted upon as appropriate. The current directorate 'action plan' arising from the most recent NSS draws equally on quantitative evidence and qualitative feedback.

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[8] www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com

[9] www.thestudentsurvey.com

5.5 Practical guidelines to assist people making inter-sector transitions

One of the outputs of the research was a series of hints and tips from the participants, to assist others in the process of transitioning between sectors. I have converted these into practical guidelines for my directorate, to be used as part of the induction process for individuals joining the University from the private sector. I will also share it with colleagues in Human Resources, with a view to further dissemination.

6. Final reflections

6.1 Imposter syndrome

One of the challenges of becoming a post graduate researcher, whilst at the same time continuing in the day job, is wondering whether you are capable of the intellectual rigour and discipline required. Plunged into a different world, the novice researcher would be excused from suffering from imposter syndrome, characterised by a feeling of "I'm a fraud and shouldn't be here" (Mount, 2015). Whilst I would not subscribe to quite that level of insecurity, in the early stages of the DBA experience, particularly when grappling with the intricacies of epistemology and ontology, there were moments! Now as I approach the end of the DBA, I feel I have acquired greater confidence in my intellectual capability. I also have enormous respect, born from personal experience rather than viewed from the outside, towards academics and researchers.

6.2 What next?

I have been asked on several occasions what difference the DBA would make to my career. My feeling in the early stages was that it would enrich my existing career rather than leading me to embark on a different one. However, as the end of the DBA approaches, it is not inconceivable that I would continue with research in some capacity. There is definitely scope for further research into inter-sector transition, but equally, I could see the possibility of utilising my new-found research skills to explore pertinent issues in librarianship and other areas of my professional expertise.

Watch this space!

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