Formalising Partnerships in Occupational Psychology: Process, Benefits and Challenges

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Academic-Practitioner Debate

Within the profession:

- Evidence-based practice in I-O psychology (Briner & Rousseau, 2010)

Outside of the profession:

- Strategic-level bridges (Anderson,2007)

'bridging mechanisms need to be thought of as externally driven, not merely as work psychology researchers communicating their findings to fellow psychologists working in consultancy settings'

Anderson (2007, p.175)

Strategic-Level Bridges
(Anderson,2007)

1. Government commissions and working parties
2. Boards of directors and industry commissions
3. Research council involvement
4. Conferences, CPD events and keynote addresses
5. Research consortia – establish industry-university research linkages in a formal structured way..
6. Editorial board memberships
7. Consultancy sponsored strategic fund

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Partnerships

- 1997 - SPHERE (Shared Police and Higher Education Research Enterprise)
    - University of Worcester with West Mercia Constabulary

- 2010 - SFHERE (Shared Fire and Higher Education Research Enterprise)
    - University of Worcester with Hereford and Worcester Fire Service

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Process

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Core Group
  - Senior Personnel
  - Scheduled regular meetings (3 x year)
- Project Managers
- Student and staff projects
- Annual UG and PG prize

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SPHERE

- 48 projects
- 60+ students and staff
- 4 match-funded PhD studentships
- 21 publications
- 26 conference papers
- 18 theses

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Recognition

University	Police
'best practice' SCOP Lambert Review 2003	Queen's Award for Innovation in Police Training and Development 2003
hefce Knowledge Transfer Best Practice 2005 case study	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Best Value Training Review 2005

Example Projects

- Virtual Alchemies: Can new learning technologies transform Police training? (PhD)
- The Impact of Self-Efficacy Beliefs on Training Effectiveness in a British Police Force (PhD)
- Applying Career Competencies in Career Management (PhD)
- Measuring career anchors and investigating the role of career anchor congruence (PhD)
- Reflective Practice in Firearms Instruction
- Delivery of Instructional Techniques training to firearms officers
- Evaluation of a Beat Manager scheme
- Tensions Between Ethical Policing And Performance Measurement
- Development of a competency framework for police officers
- Issues in Recruitment and Selection of Special Constables
- Exploration of factors affecting police training

Benefits to Police (WMC)

- Access to specialist skills and experience
- Cost-effective research into day to day policing issues
- Objective, independent analysis and evaluation of police practices
- Application of current knowledge and research techniques leading to improved performance
- Enhanced reputation as an innovative force

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Benefits to University (UW)

- Valuable workplace experience and heightened commercial awareness
- Development of knowledge and skills
- Enriched intellectual activity
- Increased research outputs
- Enhanced reputation as a source of expertise
- Enhanced teaching and learning
- Income

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Benefits to Students

- Access to 'real' projects

- Work experience

- May be possible to use as a first step to chartership

- Annual prizes

- Employability

- Awareness of how universities and organisations can work together

Challenges

- Project management skills of students
- Managing client expectations of under-graduate work
- Communicating PhD level outputs
- Focusing theses on the theory aspects of the work
- Maintaining focus on the innovative research angle for staff
- Potentially slow outputs- loss of relevance for organisation
- Confidentiality and IP issues
- Potentially conflicting definitions of 'research'
- Engaging academics – motivation, reward, support
- Changing personnel and priorities

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SFHERE

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Additional Collaborations

- Consulting Tools
- Chrysalis Performance
- Spark Machine Tools Ltd, China

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What do *we* get out of this?

- Foot in both camps!
- Variety of work
- Knowledge of current issues in a range of organisations
- Enhances teaching
- Motivating
- Passionate about the discipline

(See - motivations of academics engaging in KT (Bicknell,Francis-Smythe & Arthur,2010)

Benefits for OP
'Within and Outside' the Profession

- Robust research influences professional practice within OP and other professions e.g. HR and management (Anderson,2007)

- Helps organisations become more 'evidence-based' (Briner & Rousseau, 2011)

- Practice stimulates and drives research (Anderson, 2007)

- Demonstrable efficacy of OP interventions makes our services more desirable to clients

- Organisations are required for research into Occupational Psychology-partnerships are essential!

- OP is stronger as a unit- if academics and practitioners work together we have a louder voice with which to promote the profession

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