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# Internationalisation Strategy Implemented through Faculty Exchange: Strategic Entrepreneurship in a “new” United Kingdom University

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**Abstract:** The promotion of international staff mobility is a founding principle of the ‘Bologna Process’, designed to create a converged system of higher education across Europe as it is subjected to increasing globalisation. Many UK ‘new’ (ie post-1992) universities are engaged in the development of internationalisation and globalisation strategies which include staff exchange. Meanwhile, the failure to execute strategy is increasingly acknowledged as a major problem in organisational performance. Using a first-, second and third-person Insider Action Research (AR) approach, six chronological cycles of AR were enacted over a 28 month period in order to organise and implement an international staff exchange between universities in the UK and France. Data generated were subjected to a double process of analysis – four phase analysis and a meta-cycle of enquiry - in order to propose aspects of strategy execution through strategic entrepreneurship within the constraints of a post-1992 university business school in the UK. Concepts from the theoretical literature in three domains - entrepreneurship in higher education, globalisation of higher education and strategy execution through strategic entrepreneurship – are combined with the research analysis to propose that ‘strategic entrepreneurs’ can execute the riskier elements of an internationalisation strategy, such as staff exchange. This work broadens AR from education into strategic management. It goes beyond the common, well-intentioned and yet vague statements involving the ‘encouragement’ of international staff exchange to propose the elements of execution through strategic entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** globalisation, strategy execution, strategic entrepreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship, staff/faculty mobility, higher education

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows:

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## 1 Introduction

Many authors in the domain of higher education (HE) internationalisation / globalisation strategy espouse the virtues of staff exchange. Few, if any, actually tackle how this is to be achieved in practice and even fewer under the operational constraints of a post-1992 UK (“new”) university. Those who do focus on strategy **execution**, as opposed to development/formulation, go no further

than a recommendation to ‘encourage’ or ‘promote’ staff mobility. Playing the role of ‘disruptive questioner’ (Tucker & Edmondson, 2003), this paper questions the ‘pet explanation’ (Greenwood & Levin, 2007) for a lack of international staff mobility (see the Analysis section) in the UK and suggests a better one. Such questioning of established practice may have organisational benefits when an entrepreneurial ‘step-change’ is required (Blackwell & Blackmore, 2003).

Going beyond the intentions to ‘encourage’ staff mobility so often found in UK HE strategy documents, this paper reports how staff exchange for an extended period of time (as opposed to a short-term teaching mobility) can actually be implemented in Europe while working within the constraints of a post-1992 UK university, which are explained below. It reports uniquely an analysis of an Action Research initiative: the organisation and implementation of a direct staff exchange of six-month duration. In the context of ongoing globalisation of HE and the new managerialism evident in UK HE, it explores an entrepreneurial approach to the execution of internationalisation / globalisation strategy. Through the analysis of various emergent themes surrounding implementing staff mobility, autonomous strategic behaviour (ASB) (Burgelman, 1983b) by a strategic entrepreneur is proposed as a feasible approach in a “new” (ie post-1992) UK university business school and the limitations of such an approach are discussed.

### *1.1 Issues in the Globalisation of Higher Education*

Welch (2002) links the decreased public funding of HE and resulting ‘new managerialism’ (Clarke & Newman, 1994) to regional integration, such as in Europe, and thereby to globalisation. This link results in the treatment of education as a commodity to be traded in international marketplaces by universities functioning as enterprises and students acting as consumers (De Vita & Case, 2003). Such marketisation paradoxically militates against ‘genuine’ internationalisation (including staff mobility) by universally imposing culturally-specific quality and accreditation standards and by transferring so-called ‘best practice’ from one country to another. Welch argues that contextualising globalisation as an “*extension of global capitalism*” (p.438) is most useful in understanding current internationalisation strategy in universities. Defining globalisation commercially using Slaughter & Leslie’s (1997) terminology, ‘academic capitalism, commodification and marketization’ he positions it in opposition to ‘internationalism’, which involves “*genuine mutuality and reciprocal cultural relations*” (Welch, 2002, p.439). He sees them as opposing forces, pulling HE in opposite directions. One is predicated on global market forces and aims to integrate universities into deregulated global business. The other is based on the values and the ideals of international co-operation, aiming for a world order of peace and social justice. It will be increasingly difficult for universities to reconcile the two because the contentious character of globalisation affects them more acutely than other organisations (Vaira, 2004).

Harris (2008) asserts that the university has been international since medieval times and Teichler (2004) invites us to consider that HE is going through a process of ‘re-internationalisation’ given that universities have always been international institutions. But Marginson & van der Wende (2007) claim that economic and cultural globalisation has “*ushered in a new era in higher education*” (p.3). Altbach & Lewis (1996) observe that international scholarship has followed the blurring of national boundaries and increasing national interdependency, and perhaps more than any other area or industry (Vaira, 2004; Bartell, 2003; Torres & Morrow, 2000). Many policy makers and scholars asseverate the need for HE institutions to internationalise in order to prepare students for a globalised world (Adams & Carfagna, 2006; Friedman, 2005; Green, 2003; Grünzweig & Rinehart, 2002; Sigsbee, 2002; van der Wende, 2001; Mestenhauer & Elingboe, 1998). Meanwhile, increasing globalisation enhances entrepreneurial opportunities (Ireland et al., 2001) and international entrepreneurship, or border-crossing innovative behaviour, can create value for organisations (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). International staff exchanges are innovative in the UK for the reasons set out below.

## 1.2 Entrepreneurship in UK Higher Education

There is an increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship in HE in the UK (Binks & Lumsdaine, 2003). Tasker & Packham (1990) agree that entrepreneurialism has become a common theme in HE but warn that entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are often viewed “*with scepticism or even open hostility*” (Grigg, 1994, p.296). According to Smith (1990), the role of a university is to foster creativity and responsiveness to change. This suggests that universities need to be entrepreneurial organisations if they are to fulfil this role. In academic literature, the attitude towards entrepreneurialism in HE can be described as negative, based as it often is on a narrow, understanding of the concept (e.g. ‘academic entrepreneurship’), a confusion with commercialism (e.g. in Deem, 2001) and an unproven (and contradictory) equation with ‘new managerialism’ (e.g. in Vaira, 2004 and Turner & Robson, 2007) and therefore globalisation (e.g. in Slaughter & Leslie, 1997 as evidenced by Deem’s (2001) critique), which is sometimes defined in purely economic terms (e.g. in Welch, 2002). There is an ignorance of strategic management and a related prejudice against ‘a business ethos’ (Vaira, 2004). This necessitates the use of the original Schumpeterian definition of entrepreneurship as “*the doing of new things or the doing of things that are already being done in a new way*” (Schumpeter, 1947, p.151)

There exists a mistaken belief that innovation exists only in the private sector (Zampetakis & Moustakis, 2007). However, entrepreneurship can flourish in public sector organisations (Zerbinati & Souitaris, 2005; Borins, 2002) and indeed Drucker (1985) asserts that the promotion of entrepreneurship in public organisations is the “*foremost political task of this generation*” (p.187). Thornberry (2001) claims that “*it is the large, slow-moving, bureaucratic organization operating in an increasingly turbulent environment that needs to do the most amount of entrepreneurial soul-searching*” (p.530) while Kuratko & Goldsby (2004) have found entrepreneurship even “*in the most stifling of bureaucratic organisations*” (p.17), such as a ‘new’ UK university.

## 1.3 The Unique Aspects of the ‘New’ UK University Experience

This case emerges from a “new” university (a former polytechnic) business school in the UK. Historically, UK polytechnics have not enjoyed the autonomy and independence of traditional universities in the UK, USA and Europe and have operated under greater financial constraints and public scrutiny and a more hierarchical and rule-bound local authority tradition (Deem, 1998; Parsons & Fidler, 2005). Any professional autonomy and discretion disappeared with the removal of polytechnics from local authority control in 1989 and they became corporations (Deem, 1998). Since their re-designation as universities in 1992, they have faced the same issues of positioning, image and identification of alternative revenue streams as the existing universities (Liu & Dubinsky, 2000) with some different challenges.

“New” UK universities are reliant on income from student fees, forcing them to focus on teaching and thereby reducing the flexibility of academics to engage in research, sabbaticals, guest lecturing and faculty mobility (Groves et al. 1997). It is this resource constraint which determined the research on which this case is based to focus on **direct faculty exchange** rather than simply short periods of teaching abroad, staff mobility, sabbatical leave or career break common in traditional universities in the UK, Europe and USA. The **direct exchange** of teaching staff between institutions overcomes a major barrier to (extended) international mobility in the post-1992 university: the need to engage all academic staff in a relatively high level of class contact, management and administration at all times, minimising ‘slack’ (Burgelman, 1983c) and operating costs through staffing levels.

Subject to the forces of globalisation and ‘collaborator drag’ (Howe & Martin, 1998) and implicated in the Bologna Process (EU HE standardisation), the university in this case was newly engaged in the development of a specific internationalisation / globalisation strategy. In fact, their internationalisation reflected Mestenhauser’s (1998) critique: “*minimalist, instrumental, introductory,*

*conceptually simple, disciplinary-reductionist, and static*” (p.7) and matched Bartell’s (2003) ‘low-end’ example. The organisation suffered from ‘Gresham’s Law’ (Kaplan & Norton, 2008), according to which management discusses operational problems rather than strategy. Referring to former polytechnics in the UK, Harris (2008) laments the “*impoverished*” attitude towards education evident in the neo-liberal and progressive (as opposed to traditional) universities she regards as both products and agents of globalisation, where internationalisation matters only economically. Turner & Robson (2007) find that it exists also in the ‘traditional’ sector, in which they conducted their work. Designing ‘international’ courses without building a true multicultural curriculum in various traditions, **delivered by internationally sourced and experienced staff**, is internationalisation without meaning (Harris, 2008). De Vita & Case (2003) name this a piecemeal ‘infusion approach’. Business academics are unlikely to have completed their education internationally and the UK appears to value international contacts far less (Welch, 1997). Implementing ‘genuine’ internationalisation in an age of globalisation, encompassing staff mobility, is therefore a challenge.

## 2 Literature Review: Strategic Entrepreneurship in Higher Education

### 2.1 Origins in Corporate Entrepreneurship

‘Corporate entrepreneurship’ (Burgelman, 1983c) and ‘umbrella strategy’ (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) are brought together in Mintzberg et al.’s (1998) ‘Learning School’, in which strategy formation and implementation are regarded as an emergent process. This school of thought is one which attempts to describe how strategy **is** actually managed, as opposed to how it **should be** managed (as in the prescriptive schools) and it was initiated by Lindblom’s (1959) article *The Science of Muddling-Through*. From this developed the concept of ‘disjointed incrementalism’ (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963) and the ‘piecemealing remedial incrementalist’ (Lindblom, 1968). These ideas were later developed by Quinn (1980) into ‘logical incrementalism’. Other writers identified the middle-management ‘champion’ and the ‘strategic venturing’ of internal entrepreneurs (hence Pinchot’s (1985) ‘intrapreneurship’) “*deep within the hierarchy*”, (Mintzberg et al., 1998, p.186), resulting in Burgelman’s (1983a) ‘autonomous strategic behaviour’ (ASB) which he calls “*the motor of corporate entrepreneurship*” (p.241). ‘Autonomous’ is as opposed to ‘induced’ strategic behaviour i.e. that directed and managed through the strategy. So influential are the autonomous initiatives of ‘strategic entrepreneurs’, when successful, that Burgelman (1983b) proposes that “*strategy follows autonomous strategic behaviour*” (p.62), which is maintained by Grigg (1994) as a possibility under an ‘umbrella strategy’ (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

Burgelman (1983a) studied the process through which a diversified major firm transforms R&D activities into new businesses. Since universities are diversified major organisations, this work can shed light on how to diversify without readily available competencies, such as in globalisation. He identified the role of entrepreneurial activity in providing the required diversity for continued survival. Because of their nature, autonomous initiatives will encounter difficulties in resource procurement in the diversified firm because they attempt to achieve objectives that have been categorised as impossible. Internal entrepreneurship involves “*new resource combinations nested in the larger resources of the firm*” (Burgelman, 1983c, p.1352), a phenomenon termed ‘piggybacking’ in the analysis of this research. Entrepreneurs often have to “*do more with less*” (Kyrgidou & Hughes, 2010, p.45) using minimal capital and maximal ingenuity, or they pay little attention to the available resources (Ireland et al. 2001). This mirrors the new environment in which universities must ‘do more with less’.

While ASB cannot be planned (Burgelman, 1983c), once recognised and valued “*it needs a “home”, so to speak, for its further nurturing and development*” (p.1362) and this is a question of organisational design. Hutt & al. (1988) suggest that organic structures are more likely than

bureaucratic to produce autonomous strategic initiatives (ASI). Indeed, Thornberry (2001) asserts that corporate entrepreneurship can be an oxymoron that is impossible to reconcile with the careful planning and structure of large institutions. Kyrgidou & Hughes (2010) use Birkinshaw & Gibson’s (2004) concept of ‘organisational ambidexterity’ to describe the internal conditions facilitating the switch between apparently contradictory activities: corporate strategy-making and entrepreneurship. They claim that ‘duality’ is required by simultaneously pursuing innovative opportunity and controlling strategic practice. This is worth linking to Gewirtz et al.’s (1995) observation of ‘bilingualism’ in universities.

Thornberry (2001) characterises corporate entrepreneurship as part of culture and Burgelman (1983c) claims that successful companies have a strong culture supporting clear strategic goals concerning entrepreneurial activity. His model (see Figure 1) maps four different types according to the level of slack available at operational level and the opportunity cost of current business. This applies to UK universities in that the issues of globalisation discussed in the introduction increase the opportunity cost of continuing with ‘business as usual’. Meanwhile, initiatives to control workload allocations across the university in this case are designed to ensure that slack be minimised, resulting in indiscriminate ASB and project failure.

**Figure 1: Burgelman’s Generic Situations Concerning the State of Corporate Entrepreneurship in Large, Complex Organisations**

Burgelman 1983c, p.1357

		<b>Top Management’s Perception of the Opportunity Cost Of Current Business</b>	
		<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Slack Available at Operational Level</b>	<b>Low</b>	<p>Top management does not want, and operational participants do not provide, many entrepreneurial projects.  <b>Result:</b> Minimum emphasis on autonomous strategic behaviour loop.</p>	<p>Top management wants, but operational participants do not provide, many entrepreneurial projects.  <b>Result:</b> Force the autonomous strategic behaviour loop. Jump into just any projects available. Projects end up as “failures.”</p>
	<b>High</b>	<p>Top management does not want, but operational participants do provide many entrepreneurial projects.  <b>Result:</b> Suppression of the autonomous strategic behaviour loop. New projects end up as “orphans” or “misfits.”</p>	<p>Top management wants, and operational participants provide, many entrepreneurial projects.  <b>Result:</b> Maximum emphasis on the autonomous strategic behaviour loop.</p>

## 2.2 Aspects of Autonomous Strategic Behaviour (ASB) & the Strategic Entrepreneur

Burgelman’s 1983b theory distinguishes between two different modes of strategic behaviour, ‘induced’ and ‘autonomous’. Induced behaviour uses current concepts and generates little

equivocality in the corporate context. Autonomous behaviour uses entrepreneurial participants to conceive new opportunities, mobilize resources and create momentum. ASB is purposeful (Burgelman, 1983c) but it does not follow the strategic planning process of the organisation. It is conceptually equivalent to entrepreneurial activity yet it either delivers part of an existing strategy or forms part of a new strategy.

Burgelman & Hitt (2007) suggest that people with an entrepreneurial mindset are ‘habitual entrepreneurs’ who share some common characteristics. Among them are a passionate pursuit of opportunities, disciplined focus on those most promising, the engagement of others and an emphasis on execution. Timmons et al.’s (1985) generic management capabilities of entrepreneurs include total commitment, determination and perseverance, the drive to achieve and grow, opportunity and goal orientation, taking initiative and personal responsibility, persistent problem-solving, realism, a sense of humour, seeking feedback and calculated risk-taking. Stopford & Baden-Fuller (1994) added two ‘bundles of attributes’ of managers and organisations common to all types of entrepreneurship to the three already identified in the literature at that time. The first is ‘pro-activeness’, which they differentiate from highly risky behaviour and characterise as experimental. ‘Aspirations beyond current capabilities’ mean that entrepreneurial managers are not limited by current resources. ‘Team-orientation’ highlights the importance of working together at all levels of the organisation and across boundaries to support innovative ideas, creative individuals and to build momentum. The ‘capability to resolve dilemmas’ enables apparently impossible challenges to be surmounted while sustained investment in a ‘learning capability’ avoids being mired in fixed patterns of thinking and acting.

The goal of entrepreneurs is to create value by exploiting opportunities. They are willing to fail in order to learn and are persistent and resolute in their pursuit of their dreams (Thornberry, 2001). Opportunity-seeking behaviour comes from a pool of unused resources, so induced strategic behaviour is unlikely to exhaust the potential opportunities perceived by strategic entrepreneurs at an operational level (Burgelman, 1983c). They can run out of energy and motivation through doing two jobs and “*working 18 hours a day*” (Thornberry, 2001, p. 532) since some organisations expect their strategic entrepreneurs to do the day job and then work on an innovation. ASIs are more likely to originate with boundary-spanning members of the organisation than with those deeper within. The individual entrepreneur must convince people that the innovation s/he wants to pursue is in their own interests (Burgelman & Hitt, 2007). So that an ‘ecosystem’ of interested partners develops a ‘collective interest’ around the individual entrepreneur. Hutt et al. (1988) argue that ASIs are typically characterised by “*purely dyadic communication relations*” (p.17), ignoring organisational boundaries. In comparison with induced strategic behaviour, ASIs are more likely to involve a communication process that departs from regular workflow and hierarchical decision-making channels. Strategic neglect refers to “*the more or less deliberate tendency of [strategic entrepreneurs] to attend only to performance criteria on which the venture’s survival is critically dependent*” (Burgelman, 1983a, p.234). Their often unorthodox or unusual approaches create managerial dilemmas within organisations which can be resolved temporarily through the neglect of administrative issues in the ‘entrepreneurial stage’ of a venture as “*a necessary cost*” (p.235).

There is a considerable difference between a company-led expatriation (i.e. ‘induced strategic behaviour’ (Burgelman, 1983b) for the organisation’s own benefit) and an autonomous working abroad experience (entrepreneurial behaviour for the individual’s own benefit). The level of responsibility felt by the organisation is completely different. “*The positive energy for internationalization is within individuals, not bedded in the school*” (p.48) commented a respondent in Robson & Turner’s (2007) university-based research. Opportunism and flexibility play an important part in international staff experience (Richardson & McKenna, 2003); the desire for travel, adventure and personal fulfilment is a stronger motivator than upward career mobility.

### 2.3 *Entrepreneurship in Higher Education*

Most literature on the topic of entrepreneurship in HE refers to the introduction and encouragement of ‘academic entrepreneurship’, the technology transfer, spin-out and commercialisation activities of universities which are not relevant to this paper. However, some general points are useful in considering the importance of culture and the implications of fostering entrepreneurship of any kind in a university.

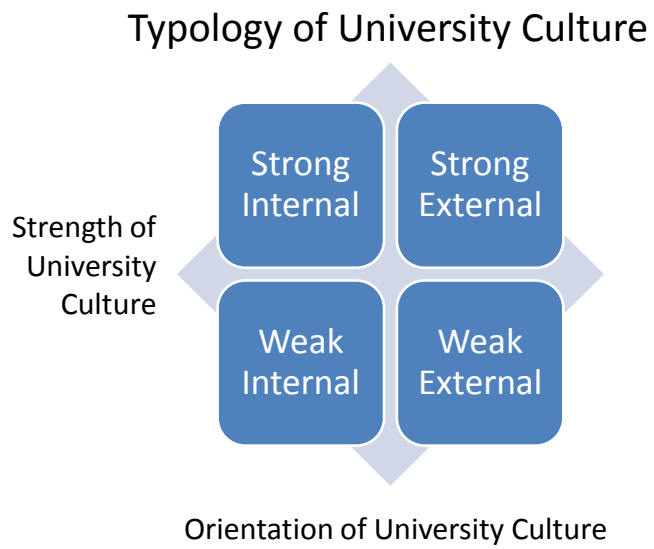
Kuratko & Goldsby (2004) assert that there are many organisational obstacles to entrepreneurial activity and that the key is to identify those which are the greatest threat to new ideas and devise a means to overcome them. Bartell (2003) echoes Grigg’s (1994) assessment of universities in arguing that the orientation and strength of a university’s culture are highly influential on strategic management and on an ability to adapt and cope with environmental turbulence (Sporn, 1996) and can enhance or inhibit renewal and innovation (Cameron & Freeman, 1991). Binks & Lumsdaine (2003) use the four pillars of successful innovation (Lumsdaine et al., 1999) to discuss the promotion of entrepreneurship in a university. They include consistent communication from the centre and the dissemination of best practice, examples of success and peer recommendations. They suggest that an appropriate environment can most effectively be provided by “*the demonstration effect*” (ibid, p.50) since staff are better convinced by other staff than a central marketing campaign.

Sporn (1996) defined the ‘strength’ of a university culture as the degree of fit between values, structure and strategy. Using that concept and Cameron & Freeman’s (1991) identification of ‘external or internal positioning’ (see Figure 3) as the principle dimensions influencing an institution’s strategic management, he developed a quadruple typology to assess a university’s capacity to support a strategic approach (see Figure 2). The dimensions can be used to examine a culture’s readiness to support strategic management and secure consistency between strategy and culture, where a strong culture is considered most appropriate for adaptation in a turbulent environment (Bartell, 2003). Bartell links this with Cameron & Freeman’s (1991) characterisation of an ‘adhocracy culture’ (as one with an ‘external adaptation’, focussed on a “*shared commitment to entrepreneurship, flexibility and risk*” (p.30, see Figure 3) and a flat structure populated by professionals (Mintzberg, 1989)), to argue that a university with an adhocracy culture, i.e. a strong culture and an external orientation, is “*most likely to facilitate a successful internationalization process*” (Bartell, 2003, p.55) as opposed to a type favouring a hierarchical culture and resource allocation.

#### **Figure 2: Sporn's Typology of University Culture**



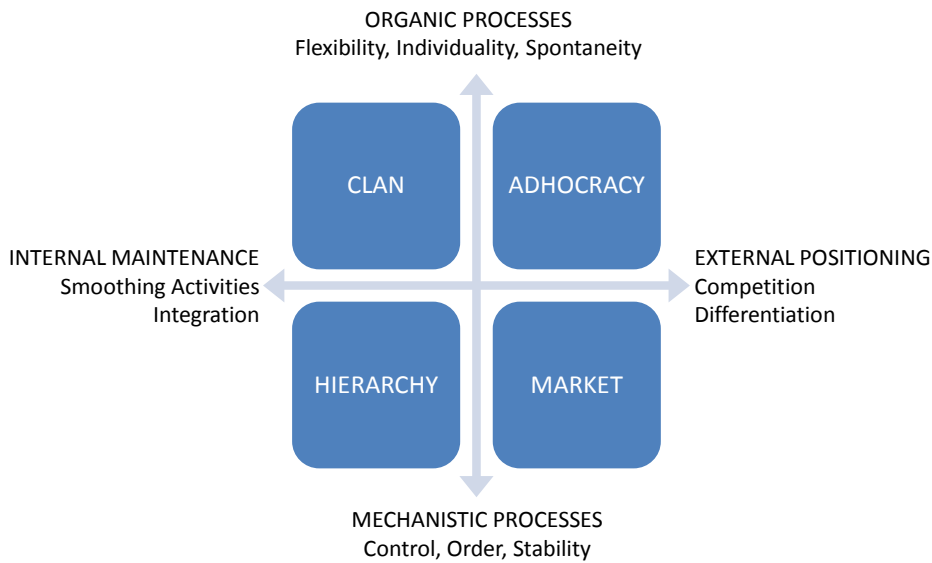
(Sporn 1996, p. 56, cited in Bartell, 2003)



**Figure 3: Cameron & Freeman's Model of Culture Types for Organizations**

(Cameron & Freeman 1991, p. 27, cited in Bartell, 2003)

## A Model of Culture Types for Organizations



### 3 Methodology : Coghlan & Brannick’s Insider Action Research Model

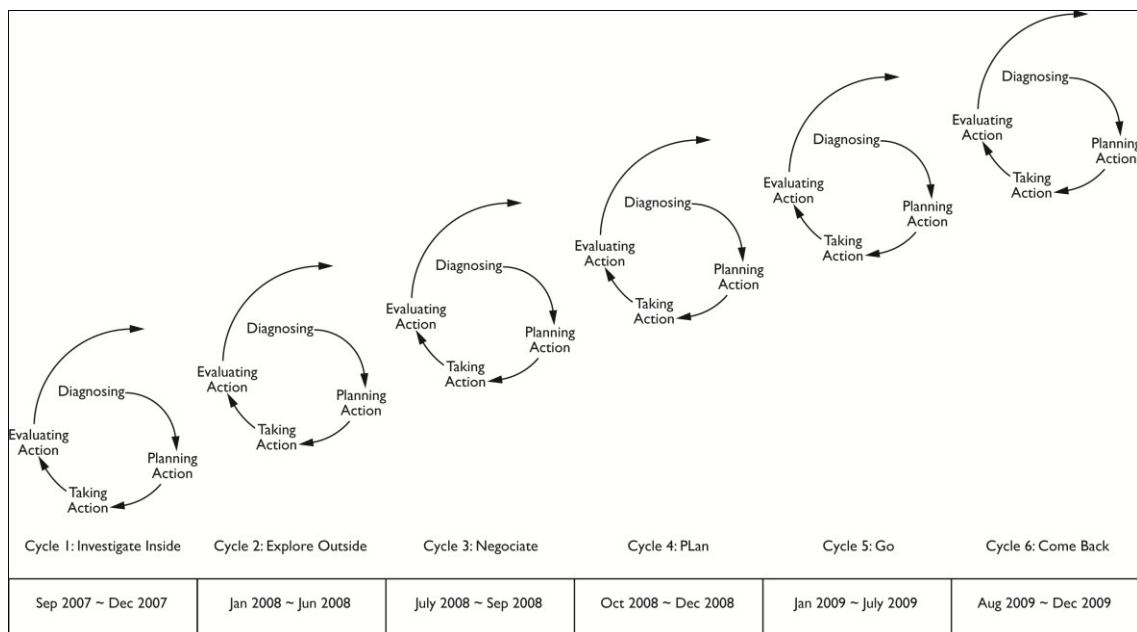
Action Research (AR) has been used commonly in the field of education (O’Leary, 2005). Kember (2000) strongly advocates an AR methodology as a “*mode of educational development*” (p. 36). He and several other authors (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992; O’Leary, 2005) discuss the merits of an AR approach to educational quality enhancement, such as an international staff exchange. Kember (2000) uses Argyris & Schön’s (1978) terminology ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory-in-practice’ to claim that universities are more prone to suffer discrepancies between the two than any other organisation and so it is vital to look beyond policy documents. Practice is what should be analysed and evaluated.

This research is a combination of first, second and third person AR, with the researcher as the sole active player of a specific key role (initiator, organiser and driver of the project), collaborating closely with immediate family and an exchange counterpart (second), relying on the participation of colleagues, drawing on resources (information, funds) from respondents and requiring the co-operation of others (third). Reason & Bradbury (2001) assert that the best AR involves all three.

Coghlan & Brannick’s (2005) focus on doing AR in one’s own organisation made their model and approach particularly appropriate for this work. The research was designed around six potential ‘Apollonian’ cycles (Heron, 1996) of three to seven months to be conducted in systematic, chronological order from September 2007 to December 2009 (see Figure 4). The first four cycles actually happened in a more ‘Dyonisian’ way (ibid.), in which taking action was integrated with reflecting in a spontaneous way, but the overall plan was implemented to schedule. Cycle 5 ‘Go’ was the actual period of exchange: January to July 2009.

#### Figure 4: Spiral of Action Research Cycles

(adapted by the author from Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p.24)



Each of these cycles consisted of four steps: Diagnosing, Planning Action, Taking Action and Evaluating Action, some of which were conducted individually by the author and much of it in conjunction with others. Within each of these steps, another four stages exist: Experiencing, Reflecting, Interpreting and Taking Action and these were used as a basis for the first phase of analysis.

The Cycles were split into their component parts – Diagnose, Plan Action, Take Action and Evaluate (on one axis). Each part was then analysed in four ways – Experience, Reflect, Interpret and Act (on the second axis). Data from any relevant source were allocated to one (or more) cells of the resulting grid. Sometimes the analysis was conducted at the time the data were generated, at other times the analysis came about as a result of applying this grid to the raw data. Once all data were allocated and this initial analysis complete, themes were then constructed or drawn out by matching and collecting together similar analyses emerging from a Cycle. Overall conclusions were drawn through a ‘Thesis Cycle’, a meta-analysis of the AR and its resulting themes, structured around their contents, processes and premises (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005).

The analysis of this research is written in the active voice. According to Sigel (2009), in social science the passive voice bogs down the narrative and obscures the meaning. Instead, the use of the active voice is designed to “*provide a solid, cogent argument that focuses on clarity and precision*” (p.478). The centrality of the author/researcher means that much of this section is written in the first person. Coghlan & Brannick (2005) claim that this greatly strengthens a report consisting of the author’s reflection on their personal learning, as this one does.

## 4 Case Study Analysis

In 2007, I set out to initiate, organise and implement an international exchange for myself, a UK academic, with a colleague in a partner institution in Europe. This case analysis draws on those experiences and compares them to various domains of literature in entrepreneurship and strategy execution, resulting in the identification of the role of the strategic entrepreneur in executing elements of internationalisation strategy.

For senior management, exchange was for young academic staff and exchanges did not take place due to the staff's unwillingness, cynical attitudes and lifestyles. For academic staff, the rarity of staff exchange was due to the management's unwillingness, attitudes and the working environment they had created. People who had already undertaken an exchange or spent an extended period were difficult to locate in the university. Interviews with the few I found revealed the personal nature of their motivation, and their willingness to overcome potential barriers, which was common across all interviewees.

*I was bored with my job, divorced and my kids were growing up. I met a guy who wanted to exchange and decided to go for it.*

*Previous Exchanger, School, respondent, (interview)*

Past exchanges were initiated, organised and implemented by entrepreneurial individuals, sometimes **despite** the organisation. Note the informal and 'dyadic' nature of some crucial communication (Hutt et al., 1988) and entrepreneurial behaviour in evidence:

*One of the guys had been to a conference and had met someone from Old Dominion University in Virginia and they got talking about exchanges and decided it would be a good idea if they could find somebody interested to do an exchange, and he mentioned it to me.*

*Previous Exchanger, School, respondent, (interview)*

#### 4.1 *The Absence of Strategy*

The internationalisation process of the university was an emergent strategy (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) and the result of 'collaborator drag' (Howe & Martin, 1998). Indeed, it could be characterised not as a strategy at all but as a series of opportunistic operations (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Giles, 1991; DeLisi, no date).

*If there isn't a document, there isn't an **agenda** or the clout to take it forward.*

*HR Manager, Centre*

The terminology used by members of central departments betrayed the absence of planned or umbrella strategy (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). They often referred to issues being on the 'agenda' (or otherwise), which can be defined as 'a list or programme of things to be done or problems to be addressed' and implies therefore an emergent, rolling list of 'things to do' rather than any consistent long-term aim and direction.

The absence of a stated aim to internationalise, at any level in the university, was a barrier to staff mobility in several ways. The schools waited for direction from the centre, while the centre left it to the schools. Like in Bartell's (2003) low-end example, the resulting 'muddling-through' had no plans, resources or targets attached and so implementation was narrow in scope (e.g. a franchise agreement or student exchange only), piecemeal and opportunistic. Little planning was possible. With no explicit strategic intent, entrepreneurs seek alternative 'hooks' on which to hang their ASIs, creating unnecessary complexity in order to minimise barriers.

The relative indifference of senior management had two effects. This exchange was my 'pet project' and they could see nothing to gain from it. Furthermore, a lack of priority and interest from senior management meant that it was regarded as low priority. Often it was the attention of senior managers that lent urgency and importance to certain issues - created fires to be fought - and everything else had to be downgraded. This phenomenon is reflected by various authors in the

literature as a positive enabler of strategy execution, but it depends on the senior management attending to strategic, rather than operational or tactical, issues and defying Gresham's Law (Kaplan & Norton, 2008).

*If it's not on the University's **agenda** then the energy won't be put into it. (Definitely) That's the thing we want to do is put it on the **agenda** for the staff and student benefit.*

*Manager, Central International Office*

This short-termism was to create unnecessary fire-fighting. The lack of an agreed strategy in the partner institutions meant that the project was owned by me as an individual as a tactical, autonomous initiative. The absence of strategy also resulted in operational managers feeling unable to support me in areas such as accommodation and human resources.

*The difference in agenda is an issue: I mean, 'Accommodation' are money-makers, they need to turn profit and you compound that with accommodation contracts and the limited spaces we have and there is a lack of flexibility for them to contribute to achieving an internationalisation strategy.*

*Senior Manager, Central International Office*

#### 4.2 *The Absence of Architecture*

The term 'architecture' has been coined to encompass the concepts of structure, roles & responsibility, planning, process and resource in strategy execution. Incentives and rewards for staff exchange (either implementing or supporting it), where they existed at all, came from within entrepreneurial individuals. The organisational incentives and potential rewards were remote, indirect and uncertain. This was a barrier to implementation.

With no architecture in place for international staff exchange and a reluctance to erect a barrier by asking for support of any kind from the institution, I was forced to 'piggy-back' existing process and divert available resources, acting as entrepreneur (Burgelman, 1983c; Herr & Anderson, 2005). To fund the necessary travel, I 'piggy-backed' an existing trip to France and was facilitated in this in my international management role. I also used my personal experience of the language and country. My medium-level salary provided sufficient funding for securing accommodation, for example.

My specialist international role in the school was a deciding factor in my ability to explore opportunities outside the organisation. In this role, part of an existing structure, I had the resources to fund the face-to-face meetings required to attract a potential counterpart. I also possessed the tacit knowledge of our partners, their activities and our contacts in the institutions to enable me to plan a search. This became my 'home' as strategic entrepreneur (Burgelman, 1983c).

An execution architecture, constructed as a result of a strategic commitment within the organisation, would facilitate implementation. Staff exchanges existed beyond stated strategic intent and were implemented by highly-motivated and experienced entrepreneurial individuals able to create time and locate money, forging new process and building structure as they went. This meant it was unnecessarily difficult, complex and time-consuming, entailed unnecessarily high risk for the individuals and organisations concerned, relied on a small number of entrepreneurial individuals with specific attitudes, skills, experience and opportunities (and them coinciding) and was unnecessarily precarious in its organisation.

*This project (...) has everything you could possibly imagine. So, from a personal point of view, what you find is the whole project is a house of cards and you are an inch away from the whole thing collapsing and an inch away from it being a brilliant success.*

*Author's research journal*

The UK university appeared inadequate in managing expatriated employees in terms of advice, expertise, resources, processes and skills. The partner university appeared to be inadequate in managing incoming guests and even hostile to them. The UK university relied on the will of individuals to welcome a guest. Neither institution was as determined as individuals were to make the exchange a success.

The absence of resources such as time, money and skills earmarked for staff exchange was a significant barrier to implementation. Each individual exchange had to identify, compete for and was awarded funds from a variety of loosely-related sources, applying for which was a time-consuming and largely uncontrollable process, reducing the feasibility of each to serendipity and therefore impeding the implementation of exchanges as strategic activity. Entrepreneurs research, negotiate and organise every aspect of the exchange themselves, making a high level of motivation, access and ability a pre-requisite. The combination of resources required is complex and uncertain, resulting in a 'house of cards' construction, liable to topple if any one independent element fails.

*The thing is, it's easy to approve a theoretical idea, isn't it? It's much more difficult to put in money and time and stuff behind something."*

*HR Manager, Centre*

### 4.3 Culture

The culture worked against me in the planning of my exchange, and in my favour in its execution. The reliance of the organisation on the goodwill of the staff was the modus operandi. It compensated for poor contingency and resource planning and obscured the absence of strategy; indeed, it replaced strategic action with 'muddling-through' (Lindblom, 1959). Gaining commitment to such an initiative was almost impossible: it was too far in the future and too unlikely to happen for firefighters to prioritise it.

*"Why light a new fire?"*

*Middle academic, School, respondent, (focus group)*

Contrast this with one of Shephard's (1997) rules of thumb for change agents, "*light many fires*" (p.136), in order to precipitate change throughout a system.

This aspect of the culture also meant that precise planning was neither possible nor necessary. My colleagues' familiarity with 'muddling through' and absorbing an ever-changing ebb and flow of work meant they were comfortable from the start with the idea of my absence for an extended period of time; worse, with the presence of a strange, new person to look after. Only teaching hours can be accurately measured and allocated and so this became the focus of the exchange negotiations, externally and internally. Preparation, management and marking were not discussed.

#### 4.3.1 Tacit Knowledge: A Double-Edged Sword

Reliance on tacit knowledge (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000) was an influential part of the culture. 'How things work' was apparently explicit in the bureaucratic processes and its documentary

products. But the reality was that power, influence, knowledge, communication and decisions existed and operated outside, alongside and despite the bureaucratic structure. Dual processes, explicit and implicit, were at work and formed the ‘bilingualism’ identified by Gewirtz et al. (2005) and possibly Kyrgidou & Hughes’ (2010) ‘ambidexterity’ or ‘duality’. This enabled the organisation and allowed the entire exchange to be planned and executed swiftly, with the production of only two documents, one official approval and no signatures. It also made it difficult and time-consuming for a ‘newcomer’ such as me, especially one lower down the organisation, to ascertain how to implement a new initiative. It was a double-edged sword.

#### 4.4 Flexibility

##### 4.4.1 Conceptual

Conceptual flexibility facilitates a staff exchange. The senior stakeholders’ operational requirement that I **must** cover my precise teaching allocation imposed high rigidity into the concept: the subject area, my counterpart’s confidence in English, its timing and duration. There was no strategic requirement. Truly symmetrical, direct exchange cannot exist due to cultural and procedural differences between institutions. An amount of conceptual and individual flexibility was necessary to make the exchange work and some ‘strategic neglect’ (Burgelman, 1983a) helped. Headline terms and overall parameters are sufficient. A change of language, such as avoiding the word “exchange”, might help shift the conceptualisation.

##### 4.4.2 Personal

Considerable personal flexibility was involved in the organisation and acculturation process. The willingness to make the exchange work was crucial and continued throughout, although sorely tested at times. The lack of support from both home and host institution(s) gradually eroded my personal good-feeling towards both of them and left me unable to recommend either to my colleagues interested in staff exchange. Precedent and momentum were therefore lost and the institutions could not benefit from a best practice exemplar.

Everyone involved in the exchange demonstrated personal flexibility in making personal and professional arrangements. Each exchanger negotiated cover with colleagues, who demonstrated flexibility. Colleagues’ supportiveness was quite different in the different institutions. The conversation below between the exchange counterparts can be compared to Thornberry’s (2001) observation concerning the expectation of some employers that strategic entrepreneurs should do two jobs:

*#1. I had to find someone to do most of (my lectures) so I asked my colleagues. Because of that I had to delay other lectures in Paris, for example, to start them later, and it was quite a problem because I have worked until the last week and it was rather intensive when I came back, so it was quite difficult. I worked all through January and I had to work a lot when I went back. That was a problem (...) in total it was double work for this year – much more than the ordinary.*

*#2. I found the same thing: My job at home didn’t stop. I have my e-mail address in the UK and I’ve got an e-mail abroad as well and suddenly you’re doing twice as much work.*

*#1. Yes. It’s a lot of work. No-one really helped me.*

In discussions with potential partners, any rigidity regarding the nature of the exchange – timing, duration, personal specification, terms and conditions etc – erected barriers. I avoided this by

requesting **little** flexibility from my own institution and offering **much** flexibility to a partner, absorbing the difference in my personal arrangements.

#### 4.4.3 Organisational

‘Slack’ (Burgelman 1983c, Figure 1) was rare in the organisation and required a ‘top-down decision’, as explained in this management conversation:

*#1. The bottom line is the institutional attitude to staff time: to introduce slack into how Schools are held to account for the staff’s time. ..*

*#2. ...and it varies across Schools.*

*#1. This is why the lead has to come from the top, really.*

and in this from a middle academic in the School:

*We are so close to our workload maximums here that the effort to go and get it, and be bought out, and organise it, is too much.*

*Colleague*

Academics’ time was measured, allocated and controlled in divisions of minutes by a workload calculation model, while administrative staff clocked in and out. Flexibility in the way teaching workload was managed would enhance benefits. For example, exchangers could be present for their incoming counterpart, and enjoy their counterpart’s presence when they went out. Potentially, a surplus of resources would result for the UK partner, with no need to rely on an available outgoing partner in order to receive an incomer.

## 5 Discussion

The value of entrepreneurial individuals was clearly established in this case. So little precedent and so much cynicism in the organisation were reflected in Sporn’s (1996) (Figure 2) and Cameron & Freeman’s (1991) (Figure 3) ‘internally-focussed culture’. It required an entrepreneurial individual to create a new, different culture around the project, Burgelman & Hitt’s (2007) ‘eco-system of collective interest’. No incentive or reward from the organisation was provided so gaining and maintaining that support was crucial. The tacit knowledge required to progress the idea was passed informally from one individual to another.

*If you want to do an exchange, you’re a maverick around here.*

*Previous Exchanger, respondent, (interview), referring to the university*

Staff exchanges have to be implemented by entrepreneurial individuals, but there is a lot an organisation can do to value those individuals, to facilitate and support them in their endeavours.

### 5.1 Strategic Goals / Entrepreneurial Expectancy

‘Slack’ is required for innovation and to implement new strategic initiatives (Burgelman 1983c, Figure 1.) If slack is short then time must be allocated to **implementing** strategic priorities and to do that, a deliberate strategy must be articulated. Relying on emergent strategy is inappropriate in a closely managed organisation. If the University is to be managed, then room for innovation must be managed in.



Universities are conservative organisations (Reason & Bradbury, 2006), so one way of achieving a higher level of ‘entrepreneurial intensity’ (Barringer & Bluedorn, 1999) is through individuals’ ASB or strategic entrepreneurship. The exchange demonstrated Stopford & Baden-Fuller’s (1994) five ‘bundles of attributes’ in entrepreneurship. For example, we were pro-active, aspiring to something clearly beyond current capabilities and resolving dilemmas through a team-approach. The university culture of tacit knowledge, ‘muddling-through’ and ‘fire-fighting’ (Lindblom, 1959; Bartell, 2003) helped me gain senior approval and cover for my absence. It also made detailed planning impossible in the UK. The same culture in the partner university made it impossible in France. I was obliged to shift my attitudes, expectations and workstyle to accommodate a very different approach and had to acculturate quickly.

## 5.2 *Drivers*

The possibility of an exchange existed in the minds of entrepreneurs who dedicated their energy and skill to realising it. Overcoming the barriers relied on those individuals working separately and in concert. Without policy or precedent, entrepreneurs engaged in constructing mutually acceptable agreements, absorbing the extra workload and providing the necessary flexibility. During the exchange, the emphasis shifted from valuing their contribution to avoiding their exploitation. The lack of involvement of the institutions jeopardised their reputations and the project itself.

A strong entrepreneurial attitude was in evidence throughout, embodied in the oft-used phrase “*no worries*”. It is more than a statement of fact: ‘there is no problem’. Rather it is a statement of attitude and intention: we will not make this into or allow this to become a problem. Further, if there is a problem, we will simply overcome it. So strong was this will and so oft repeated was the idiom that it became a catchphrase of the project. It was a verbal talisman of the policy of ‘strategic neglect’ (Burgelman, 1983a) and employed to make the exchange happen. It would ultimately cause a range of worries and problems in implementation.

Personal autonomy, flexibility and an acceptance of risk are acknowledged characteristics of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial behaviour. My exchange counterpart adopted a flexible and risk-accepting approach in moving to a university, city and country she had never visited. When she could not, in her reluctance to drive in the UK, for example, this created considerable barriers and complexity for the project in locating accommodation. These examples are provided in order to demonstrate the fundamental and significant effect entrepreneurial attitudes (or not) can have on the execution of a staff exchange.

## 5.3 *Task Efforts*

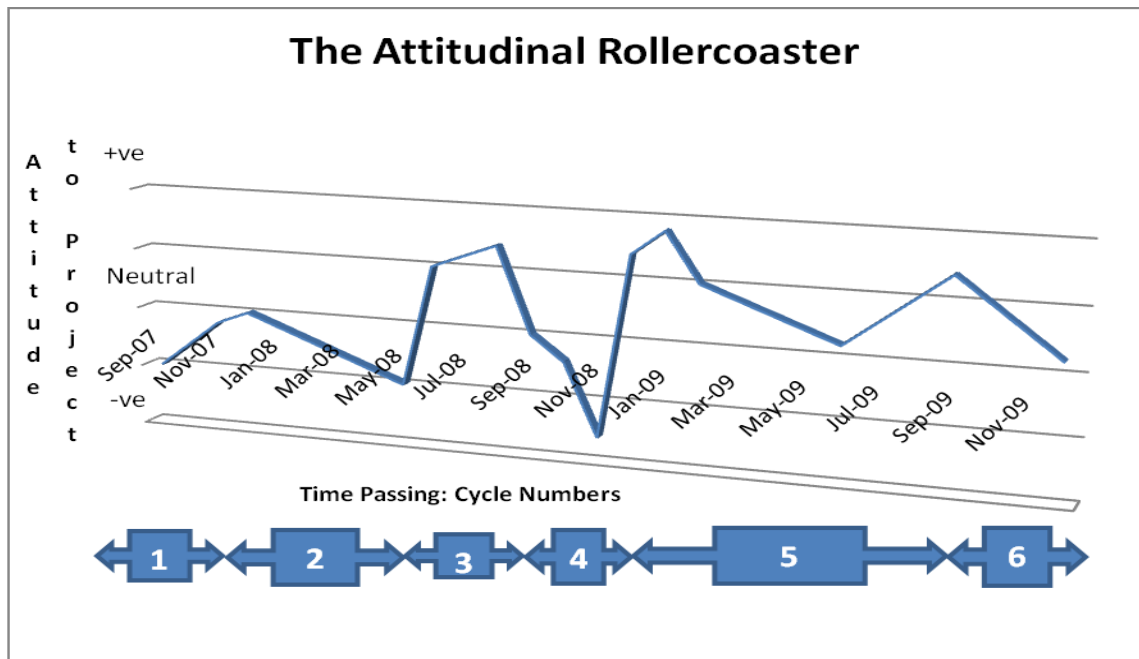
The fact that only my personal tour of face-to-face meetings abroad yielded a partner reflected the strength of a personal network of relationships, how it builds trust and reciprocity, and how that had driven me to devote the resources to developing it rapidly abroad. Travelling to meet someone demonstrates commitment and enables you to be assessed as a potential incomer, allowing partners to devote scarce resources to your project. There is a limit to how far this could be institutionalised.

Both exchange counterparts relied on their colleagues to flex around their own absence and to host the incoming counterpart. This became the entrepreneur’s ‘ecosystem’ of ‘collective self-interest’ (Burgelman & Hitt, 2007), useful in the culture of muddling-through and firefighting. Again, the efforts of individuals are crucial to the quality of the exchange experience and the impressions taken back to the home institution.

Implementing an international exchange as a strategic entrepreneur meant I experienced significant swings in my attitude to the undertaking, illustrated in Figure 5. In evidence are Timmons

et al's (1985) general management capabilities of entrepreneurs, specifically total commitment, determination and perseverance and Burgelman & Hitt's (2007) description of passion and resolution in pursuit of opportunities and dreams.

**Figure 5: The Attitudinal Rollercoaster of a Strategic Entrepreneur**



#### 5.4 Performance Outcomes

Reliance on one individual (and their family) to implement the exchange entailed an unacceptable level of risk for all involved. The level of financial risk shouldered by the exchanger (and therefore their dependents) was a high barrier. The turbulent economic environment in late 2008 exacerbated the potential losses from exchange rate fluctuations. The strategic entrepreneur, working to implement their own institution's strategy, became a true entrepreneur, taking the risk for themselves. In this case, potential rewards would need to be much higher than simply a well-executed strategy for the organisation. Institutions should invest more to secure successful exchanges and provide Binks & Lumsdaine's (2003) 'demonstration effect'. Few contingencies were in place. The collapse of any one element would have resulted in the total failure of the project. No support with accommodation, for example, was forthcoming from either institution although easily provided through funding.

These observations encouraged me to identify the importance of the ASB (Burgelman, 1983a) of individual strategic entrepreneurs, working within an institutional framework. Strategic entrepreneurs can ignore administrative details in order to ensure the survival of their initiative. This resulted in an exchange which had limited application throughout the institution. The flexibility and drive of the strategic entrepreneur, deliberately playing down challenges and practising 'strategic neglect' (Burgelman, 1983a) as they drive to succeed, can result in a precarious structure. In order to execute a strategy (as opposed to an autonomous initiative), the addition of an appropriate institutional approach is more effective than an over-reliance on a small number of highly motivated and flexible individuals.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper has reported uniquely an analysis of the organisation and implementation of a direct, cross-border staff exchange of a six-month duration. In the context of ongoing globalisation of higher education and the new managerialism evident in UK universities, it has explored one approach to the execution, as opposed to the development, of internationalisation strategy. Through the analysis of various emergent themes surrounding implementing staff mobility, ASB by a strategic entrepreneur has been proposed as a feasible approach in a “new” (ie post-1992) UK university business school and the limitations of such an approach discussed.

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