Institution: University of Chichester, Business School

Unit of Assessment: 17 (Business and Management Studies)

Title of case study: Developing leaders and organisations in complex public sector contexts

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2020

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Rob Warwick, Business School, University of Chichester	**Role(s) (e.g. job title):** Reader in Management and Organisational Learning	**Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:** 2013-present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) University of Chichester (UoC) research led to improvements in leadership capability and organisational development (OD) in 2 Sussex-based NHS Trusts and the UK Civil Service's Organisational Development and Design (OD&D) Service. This was achieved through an iterative process of research and leadership development carried out between 2013 and 2018, which drew on the UoC's research into action learning and the profound impact leaders within organisations can have, both on each other's practice, and the organisation as a whole. As a result of this work, the UoC researchers were credited with generating wide-ranging cultural improvements in the OD&D Service, and contributing towards the most significant improvement in one NHS Trust's CQC rating ever achieved.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) While we know that leadership matters, the relationship between what leaders do and the effects of those actions can be difficult to establish – particularly over the long term and in complex contexts. Addressing this difficulty in 1978, Donald Kirkpatrick developed a 4-tier model that tracked the progress of training and development initiatives (tier 1) through to their systemic impacts on organisations as a whole (tier 4). Although powerful conceptually, finding empirical evidence of leadership development (at tiers 3 and 4), and thus developing leadership in an informed way, has remained elusive. The leadership programme at the core of this case study was a postgraduate certificate accredited by the UoC, which has run a total of 4 times (typically over the course of 10 months). The approach taken has been iterative, whereby research outcomes influence reflexive leadership and research practice. In short, building on the work of Ann Cunliffe (2009), we have taken a critical perspective as researchers and leadership developers. Our practice-led research has provided compelling evidence of the impact that leadership development has on tier 4. The particular area of investigation relates to the processes of facilitator-led group coaching in the form of 'action learning' (Revans 1998; Revans 1979), with an emphasis on political and power relations (Rigg & Trehan 2004; Vince 2001; Vince 2004). This approach can facilitate meaningful engagements with the central issues governing decision making.

The research, conducted between 2015 and 2020, focuses on the development of individuals' leadership capabilities in relation to the outcomes of the organisations involved in the leadership programmes we ran. Over the 5-year period we tracked the impact of leadership development initiatives (**R1**). The research involved working closely with a group of NHS leaders and reconsidering our own practice as facilitators and researchers (**R4**). A particular focus was the importance of challenging the way participants saw the world – exploring in practice, for instance, the interaction between 'field' and '*habitus*' from a Bourdieusian perspective ([Bourdieu, 1977](#)). In other words, how habits and rituals that are taken for granted can be safely unsettled and made available for discussion and development (**R3**).

In the papers we cite here, we explore how the conversations in the action learning sets come to have 'ripples' within the wider organisation, demonstrating how 'spatially' action learning has a wider organisational impact (**R4**). We then take a longitudinal 'temporal' view of the same participants to explore how their practice has developed and the impact they attribute to action learning, having formed a tacit part of their leadership practice. These research insights were used to contribute to a book on developing leadership, organisational development and being a reflexive practitioner (**R2**). Further research on the impact these programmes have had on us as facilitators and researchers is forthcoming in the *Journal of Autoethnography*.

The outcomes of our research have come to further shape the leadership development programmes we undertake and the organisations that undertake them. Indeed, it formed the basis of the development of the University's own highly reflexive (Cunliffe 2016; Cunliffe 2009) MBA programme and the impact it has had on participants (**C3**). Henceforth, the research will focus on practice-based learning, with a special issue call for papers in the *Action Research Journal* on *Artfulness in the organisational playground* and practice-based learning research.

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. McCray, J., Warwick, R. & Palmer, A., (2018). Impressions of action and critical action learning: exploring the leadership development of senior doctors in an English healthcare organization. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 22(1), pp. 69–85. ISSN 1360-3736.

R2. Traeger, J. & Warwick, R., (2018). *Organisation Development: A Bold Explorer's Guide*, Libri Books. ISBN 9781911450221.
  - Nominated by *HR Magazine* as being in the top thirty worldwide thinkers in Human Resources for 2019.

R3. Warwick, R., McCray, J. & Board, D., (2017). Bourdieu's habitus and field: implications on the practice and theory of critical action learning. *Action Learning: Research and Practice*, 14(2), pp. 104–119. ISSN 1476-7341.

R4. Warwick, R., Palmer, A. & McCray, J., (2017). Action learning: ripples within and beyond the set. *Leadership in Health Services*, 30(2), pp. 138–147. ISSN 1751-1879.

All outputs available on request.

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4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Our OD programme has led to substantial benefits for 3 major public sector organisations, including broad cultural improvements and opportunities for individual participants' personal development. In each case, our programme has enabled people to develop confidence in tackling difficult organisational problems and complexities, build trusting relationships and address the concerns of regulators. It has also influenced the field of organisation and leadership development more widely.

The programme worked with approximately 100 individual leaders in 2 Sussex-based NHS Trusts and the UK Civil Service's OD&D Service. Our first partner was Western Sussex NHS Trust, which, when we began this work, was undergoing the first of 2 mergers. The initial focus here was on developing a shared sense of leadership and vision (evidenced in **C1**), and latterly on moving out of 'special measures', having merged with a larger Trust that was in a state of stress. This larger Trust had received highly critical reviews from the CQC. In both cases, the Chief Workforce and Organisational Development Director attributed the work we carried out with them as having had a significant impact on the clinical care, efficiency, and regulatory improvement of the Trust as a whole (**C2**). She has also corroborated to how we built confidence in tackling widespread and long-lasting interpersonal and trust-related problems within the Trust:

> [T]here were a few embattled characters. The facilitation gave a confidence and a feeling of safety […] The conversations in that setting, which felt developmental and sharing, built a level of trust that we have come to rely upon very heavily that has changed the nature of the relationships. We have been braver in tackling some of the things here. I'd say that there is a direct link for the leadership development we put in for the clinical leads and Care Quality Commission [CQC] outcomes. For Brighton, one of our key aims was to come out of […] Special Measures with the CQC. The CQC report rated us as good for resources and outstanding for care – the most significant shift […] that has been recorded. (**C2**).

This CQC report stated that 'the leadership team had the right skills and abilities to run a service providing high-quality sustainable care. We observed leaders working seamlessly together across departments. They were knowledgeable about clinical issues and about priorities for the quality and sustainability of the service.' (**C3**).

Our work with the OD&D Service, which began in 2016, was aimed at developing a centre of excellence for organisational development and design within the UK Civil Service – a capability they saw as critical in dealing with the increased complexities of government (**C4**). As a result of this work, the OD&D developed an increased ability to work collaboratively with clients to solve problems together. The Deputy Director for Organisation Development and Design offers the following summary of this change:

> The first impact this is having is in terms of a shift in mindset from a more classic civil servant to someone who solves problems. It is a shift in mindset from being an expert to holding an 'enquiry' and collaborating with the client to help them work things out. It is not just a mindset; it is also confidence. The way that we run [the programmes] enables [participants] to reflect back on their practice. Intellectually, people get it, but it is the ability to practice it and reflect [that matters]. (**C4**).

More broadly, our research (particularly **R2**) is now widely used in organisation development programmes such as Ashridge's Executive Doctorate in Organisational Change, and the Roffey Park Institute's Masters in People and Organisational Development – both internationally renowned in their field. **R2** also led to our nomination in 2019 for *HR Magazine*'s 'HR's Most Influential Thinker' award, as one of the top 30 'thinkers' in Human Resources, worldwide. The panel commented that it was 'one of the most helpful, applicable and widely read works on OD at the moment' (**C5**).

Beyond this, our research has influenced the development of the UoC's MBA programme – particularly its focus on how participants can be enabled to take their own experience seriously as a reflexive prompt for further development. One participant is quoted in *The Times*/*Sunday Times* 'UK MBA Programme List' list as stating that 'The most interesting thing has been contemporary leadership […] empower[ing] your employees and make sure they have what they need to do the job. It is changing me: I look at work from a different perspective.' (**C6**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

C1 – *a personal impact*: Participant number 4 (Warwick, McCray and Board, 2017) was a senior doctor talking about the impact the programme had on them personally: 'I've got to remember that I've got a lot of power in this organization and people do listen to what I say, so I need to use that wisely, […] to always bring the best out of people.'

C2 – *an organisational impact*: Testimonial statement from Denise Farmer: Chief Workforce and Organisational Development Director, Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust. 19 March 2019.

C3 – Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust – Inspection Report, Care Quality Commission, p. 9 (published 8 January 2019): https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/AAAH5824.pdf.

C4 – *an organisational impact*: Testimonial statement from Carolyn Norgate, Deputy Director, Organisation Development and Design Specialist Partnering, Organisation Development, Design and Learning, Civil Service. 29 March 2019.

C5 – *wider organisation development impact*: Testimonial statement from Jenny Roper, Deputy Editor, HR Magazine. September 2019.

C6 – *a personal impact*: Julie Rendle-Eames, Head of Customer Experience, West Sussex County Council, quoted in 'The UK MBA Programme List: South East', *The Times*, 7 July 2019: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-uk-mba-programme-list-southeast-wnr5s6kr0.