VISTAS is the University of West London journal. It provides an opportunity for contributors from all areas of UWL to publish academic, scholarly and contemporary writing to a wider audience. It is intended to play a part in the wider transfer of knowledge to the community and business in the region. At the same time it will invite its audience to reflect their interests and concerns and so engage in debate (through writing and other media) about the leading and significant issues within their perspective.

It will offer an opportunity for formal scholarly publication by way of applications to practice, reflection and critical perspective, and it will attract expert and authoritative contributions as a way of stimulating exchange of ideas in a critical and policy-related spectrum.

Its range of themes will support the current strategic mission of UWL. These can be broadly based, for example, focusing on media, communications, arts and creative endeavour as well as on a core of business, management, health and enterprise. A strong regional dimension will serve to encourage contributors from outside the institution. The three themes of ‘education, economy and community’ will enable the net to be cast widely.

Its purpose is to attract, interest and stimulate writers and readers alike and assist the University to communicate with the public at large, and with specific stakeholders, about mutually engaging themes and issues. It is designed to engage the public’s, communicate and promote the purposes of UWL, and make a tangible contribution to the identity, image and reputation of the university community and its corporate and public life.

VISTAS: Education, Economy and Community will be published in hard copy magazine format twice a year in April and October and it will also be available in digital formats. The published version will be distributed widely and is designed to be a tangible symbol of University activity and presence.

Members of UWL and other university stakeholders are invited to submit papers for the consideration of the editorial board. Papers will be subject to refereeing by peer reviewers, so that VISTAS will be a publication channel comparable to major journals in fields of study and research. In addition, and subject to the editors, VISTAS will publish other suitable matter which represents university and stakeholder interests. Contributions will normally be between 4000 and 6000 words length although longer pieces may be considered. Full details are provided in ‘Author Guidelines for Submitting papers’.

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The idea of creating a general journal for the university emerged in Summer 2009 and by the Spring of 2010 the concept had been shaped and contributions were then sought and invited. The launch of the publication now coincides with the transformation of Thames Valley University into the University of West London in April 2011. The Vice Chancellor has already put these events into a wider strategic context (see the preceding section).

As Managing Editors we now have the pleasure of introducing the first issue of VISTAS: Education, Economy and Community: The UWL Journal. We believe this first group of contributions will help to define in practice some of the ideas behind the journal to provide a forum of academic publication for many within and outside the university. This will not only distribute particular works more widely but will create spaces for communication and engagement between our wider stakeholders and audiences. We hope to promote the cause of good and interesting writing that not only sets down the record but which also helps to shape and influence wider debates. The desire to contribute to knowledge and to shape the actions which result from this creative effort is very much part of any university.

We have selected the paper by Chris Birch as our first paper for the inaugural issue, as it sets out to explore the changing and challenging environment of the modern university, and picks up the ever present theme of the university and the knowledge economy. As a general journal we will necessarily be eclectic but see this as a part of the mission. Suresh Gamlath follows the path set by Chris Birch with a paper that reflects on financial education in turbulent economic times. The knowledge economy will not thrive on knowledge alone: its relations with finance, money and wealth creation are there for all to see in current events. Peter Xu provides a discussion which widens our horizons reminding us all of the rise to prominence of China in the world. Her economic leadership is growing and inevitably society, institutions and constitution will have to adapt.

It is no coincidence that a paper on China is followed by one on Africa. Tanzania was an early recipient of Chinese economic support in infrastructure building but African societies in development must also address fundamental social and economic issues as they change. Frank Maduga and Tony Olden explore how these changes also need to exploit the management of communication. The theme of information and communication is taken up by Ronan McNeill, albeit locally in London with a study of the senior and settled Irish community: a reflection of the wide diversity experienced in the UWL catchment. Heather Loveday and co-workers present a view of a major health care issue in the area of infection control. The Faculty of Health and Human Sciences has taken a lead in a matter which concerns us all, that of public health.

These contributors are only a few of the many interests represented at UWL. So in future issues we look forward to presentations from tourism, airline and airport management, hotel keeping, leisure, gastronomy, cooking and catering. And more widely, we look forward to offer computing, information, media, creative arts, design, technology, as well as nursing, psychology, law and the full range of education, business and management disciplines. We are sure it will not stop there, but for the moment, please enjoy and reflect upon what we have to offer.

Dr Stephen A. Roberts and Dr Tony Olden
Managing Editors
The introduction to the Dearing Review of Higher Education in 1997 stated that:

The purpose of education is life-enhancing: it contributes to the whole quality of life. This recognition of the purpose of higher education in the development of our people, our society and our economy is central to our vision. In the next century, the economically successful nations will be those which become learning societies: where all are committed, through effective education and training, to lifelong learning.

In the years between the publication of the Review and the recent Browne Report much has changed but Dearing’s vision remains a powerful leitmotif for us all. Foremost has been the massive expansion of Higher Education built on the (now defunct) target of 50% of all 18 year olds to have a place at University. Alongside a growth in funding, this formed the cornerstone of the enlargement of the sector that marked the first decade of the 21st Century. However, a combination of the banking crisis and a recession has led to what David Willetts called a ‘paradigm shifting moment’ as the sector struggles with the new fees regime to be implemented in 2012-13.

Central to the shift will be a move towards a more customer or client focused environment where the quality of the curriculum and those who deliver it will be crucial to the success of institutions. This will put academics centre stage and questions will be asked openly about their purpose, in particular, what does ‘being an academic’ actually mean? What responsibilities does the role entail? And how should they be defined in our institution? I will try to answer each in turn.

The word academic, as we know, has a symbolic function connoting the worth of one’s occupation and hence one’s self. This is often linked to the institution in which the academic works and is fundamentally embedded in the discipline they teach. It also helps us recognise academics through the functions they perform which include inter alia: the ability to research and advance knowledge in their discipline or field, the act of communicating that knowledge to others through pedagogic and practical means as well as bringing a critical awareness to issues of local, national and international importance. However, the ways in which the term academic can have a more denotive meaning also needs to be examined. For instance, the very fact that an individual works in a university can of itself be testament to their claim to be an academic regardless of the connotative functions mentioned above. This form of classification usually carries with it certain terms and conditions which are constructed to support the individual’s pursuance of their vocation.

The responsibilities of the academic are equally protean. Furedi (2011) believes that academic judgement is integral to the pursuit of a scholarly or scientific vocation. From this standpoint, there is an umbilical relationship between academic responsibility and the nature of the practice being furthered in the discipline of field. This means being responsible for the upkeep and advancement of knowledge in the discipline and for ensuring that it is communicated to others, particularly students, in a way that has integrity and authority. At the University of West London it is my hope (and intention) that all academics do or will engage with their discipline or field in a scholarly way and the Vistas journal is an important addition to the growth of this culture of engagement.

So what does being an academic at UWL actually mean? Here I am indebted to Boyer (1997) who proposed that scholarship has four essential qualities: discovery, integration, application and teaching. Discovery is well understood and closely aligns with what various forms of empirical research. Integration, on the other hand, is about synergies and linking understanding and knowledge across disciplinary boundaries. Application focuses on applying research and scholarship to practice based activities including commercial, social and cultural enterprises. Finally, teaching is the glue that binds the framework together and at UWL it remains central to what we do and aspire to achieve. Without it the community of scholars that makes up the collegium will have no fundamental value or meaning and it remains for me the sine qua non of our daily lives.

This first edition of Vistas has been compiled with the aim of encouraging all staff to engage with Boyer’s (1997) categories because as John Henry Newman (1852) argued, a university ‘is a place of teaching…Its object is the diffusion and extension of knowledge.’ Put simply, we should all be ‘drawn to the pursuit of knowledge’ not just for its own sake (although that is perfectly acceptable) but because it can change lives and influence the world in which we live. I hope all those who engage with this excellent journal will, like me, find it an enjoyable and worthwhile experience and will be encouraged to submit their work in the editions that follow.

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Professor Peter John
Vice-Chancellor
Re-thinking the marketing mix for universities: new challenges, new opportunities and new threats

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The context of the challenge that faces most universities as the world around them rapidly, and sometimes unpredictably, changes is outlined. There are opportunities for those that are able to adapt quickly. From a Darwinian perspective, only the fittest are likely to survive in what will be an increasingly competitive and difficult operating environment.

The essence of the argument is that universities need to re-think the culture, capacity and capabilities upon which they have traditionally been built. This will necessitate a fundamental review of what resources are invested (or divested) in them, how they are used and how to respond in a real market where the learner will be sovereign, as higher education becomes consumerised.

Keywords | UK higher education; industry-education relations; knowledge economy; employers; employment and skills; education policy; marketing strategies; change management

Introduction

This has proven to be a very challenging paper to write, partly because it crystallises so much that universities have to do if they are to become market-led and marketing-oriented, as is increasingly being demanded and expected, but also because the overarching context is one of unprecedented sectoral turbulence. This has been predicated by the global economic crisis which started in the Autumn of 2008, the impact of which is now being fully felt on both the supply and demand sides of higher education. The forty seven Employer Engagement initiatives, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) with a gross value >£102m, were designed to drive strategic alignment between universities and business. The original policy drivers anticipated continued and sustainable economic growth, recognising the need to ensure the long term development of a fit-for-purpose future workforce which would enable UK plc to compete effectively in the global marketplace, and sustain the standards of living that we have come to expect.

The paper outlines the context of the emerging global challenge from 2008, which confronted most universities as the world around them rapidly, sometimes unpredictably and occasionally unfairly, changed. It also indicates possible opportunities for those that are able and prepared to adapt. Taking a Darwinian perspective, only the fittest are likely to survive in what will be an increasingly competitive, complex and difficult operating environment. Doing that which has always been done will almost certainly not be an option in the face of huge and systemic political, economic, ecological, social and technological change. Many universities, with their high fixed costs and consequential lack of agility and adaptability, may well find that the speed needed to meet the challenges is too fast for their embedded cultures, ecosystems, processes and general modus operandi to cope with. Many will disappear as we know them and not an unsubstantial number are likely to die altogether.
The essence of the argument is that universities worldwide will have to re-think the culture, capacity, capabilities and competencies upon which traditionally they have been built, if they are to survive, and perhaps thrive, in an ultra-competitive environment. This will probably necessitate a fundamental review of what resources are to be invested in, and indeed which are to be divested, how they are to be used and how to respond in a real marketplace where the learner will increasingly be ‘King’.

Field, factory and firmament
The course of the past millennium has seen the British economy transform from being primarily agrarian, through to an industrial and more recently, into the twenty first century, towards a knowledge orientation. It is now difficult to avoid hearing, or reading the terms ‘knowledge economy’, or ‘knowledge-based economy’. Given their constant use and application, it is important to be clear on what they mean and infer.

The term ‘knowledge economy’ can refer to the ‘economy of knowledge’, which focuses on the production and management of knowledge, set against economic constraints, or to a ‘knowledge-based economy’ where the emphasis is on the use and application of knowledge to produce economic benefits as well as job creation. Peter Drucker (1969) first popularised this distinction, and the difference is more than semantic. In an economy of knowledge, knowledge is a product in its own right whilst in a knowledge-based economy, it is a tool whereby the value of the knowledge created lies in its commercial and societal application and exploitation. There is a large degree of inter-dependency between these, but there is no inevitability that one will lead to the other. Transformative structures, processes and interventions are needed to get from one stage to another and often, this will necessitate the involvement of multi-disciplinary teams ranging from scientists, engineers and technologists to consumer behaviour specialists, economists, sociologists and psychologists. Schumpeter (1961) would argue that entrepreneurs are the critical link between the creation and exploitation of knowledge. They, according to Schumpeter, alongside land, labour and capital, are the critical fourth factor of production. Their distinct skill is to match what is possible in the context of what is known, with that which is wanted, needed or desired. Their primary role and driver is both to see, and seek new commercial opportunities. Through their innovativeness and imagination, they then create dynamic economic disequilibrium by forcing change to happen through the adaptation, adoption, application and implementation of existing knowledge.

It is perhaps important to contextualise this with the rapid globalisation of world markets. The seminal Race to the top (Sainsbury, 2008), highlights the significance and implications of an international economy ‘without walls’, whereby we see emerging an international market for world labour, capital, goods and services. Modern trends to globalisation are underpinned by rapid and seemingly endless developments and improvements in communication and transport technologies, making global operations and logistics faster, easier and cheaper. This is accompanied by an emerging ‘global mindset and identity’ whereby more people now have an international perspective which permeates both their thoughts and actions.

In economic and social terms, globalisation provides both opportunity and threat. It provides new sources for imports and new markets for exports. Businesses are able to re-structure and re-locate, taking advantage of relative production cost-benefits at a given moment in time, whilst at the same time they can build new markets through both physical and virtual marketing channels. In this context, production and manufacturing activities are likely to be located where costs are smallest, and this is unlikely to be in well-developed nations where their cost-base is relatively high. Increasingly, the economic imperative for wealthy nations is to be engaged in the high value-adding aspects of the development of both goods and services, and this is likely to be through new knowledge creation, the re-interpretation of existing knowledge, concept development, innovation, design and service related activities. These are less easy to offshore, or transfer, certainly in the medium term, until international competitors develop their own infrastructure which enable them to undertake these functions for themselves.

The implications of these interpretations and definitions on our current lifestyles, wellbeing and perhaps survival, are profound. To compete in an increasingly competitive global marketplace, we will need to be creative, innovative, enterprising and entrepreneurial. We will need to be clear where our own sources of relative and sustainable competitive advantage lie. We will then need to align political, economic, social and technological policies, strategies and tactics which facilitate the achievement
of these aspirations. This will necessitate a consistent and coherent approach, as significant long-term investments will have to be made which enable aspirations to become realities. Achieving these laudable goals will not be easy. Others will be taking a similar approach; there will always be internal tensions and conflict over resource prioritisation; in a democracy, relatively short-term needs and expedients often take priority over long term benefits and as has been all too evident in recent years, totally unpredictable externalities happen which can throw the best made plans into disarray, such as the terrorist destruction of the World Trade Centre in September 2001.

Commercialising knowledge:
Since 1997, the current UK Government has commissioned a plethora of reports investigating many aspects of the British economy and in particular, the role that universities and business together need to play in order that we maintain our status as a leading world economy. The now famous Labour election mantra of 1997 was ‘education, education, education’, and this was in part inspired by the philosophy that education is valuable in its own right, but perhaps more in recognition of the longer term economic necessity (frequently asserted by Prime Minister, Tony Blair). It is known that the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, had concerns that there was too little genuine and systemic connectivity between our academic and commercial base, and this is a recurrent theme throughout the many reports that have subsequently appeared. The Treasury perspective is that this potentially represents very significant revenue, GDP and employment opportunities lost, and which therefore merits further investigation and investment.

The Review of business and university collaboration (Lambert, 2003) highlighted the need, in the context of the knowledge-based economy, for business and universities to work much more closely, and synergistically, together. It highlighted the critical importance of ensuring effective bi-and multi-directional flows of information between those that create, apply and commercialise knowledge, thereby ensuring that through collaboration, value is added in many ways and at many levels, with significant emphasis on long term sustainability. The Lambert Report is seminal, and has subsequently driven funding policy in multifarious ways which in turn has led to many universities shifting their mission and focus, giving greater emphasis to economic impact and benefit.

The Review of creativity in business (Cox, 2006) highlighted the relative advantages that low cost base economies have in a world where transportation is cheap and pervasive. ‘This has already led to the diminution of many long established industries and a consequent loss of jobs, particularly those requiring lower levels of skill. The expectation has always been that these would be replaced by those requiring higher levels of skill, but what has become increasingly apparent is that this is not necessarily the whole picture. The now rapidly developing economies have no desire to remain as suppliers of cheap, low-skilled labour to the world. And indeed, why should they?’ (Cox, 2006). The implications from Cox are that training and up-skilling alone is not likely to be enough to create sustainable competitive advantage. He emphasises that to think in this way ‘would be both wrong, and dangerously complacent’ and what is needed is a fundamental shift in business capability, predicated on not only higher level skills, but more upon curiosity, creativity, ingenuity, innovativeness and entrepreneurialism. These are attributes that need to be encouraged and nurtured, implicitly becoming embedded into our culture and upbringing. If successful, for others to simply copy them is neither easy nor indeed possible, and therefore they do provide the potential for longer-term economic sustainability.

In Increasing the economic impact of research councils (Warry, 2006), it was clearly stated that ‘Chief Executives of each Research Council are responsible for the economic relevance of their programmes, and for the impact of their spending ... there are a range of policies now in-place to deliver a step change in the economic impact of Councils, but the potential of these policies needs to be realised’. The subsequent implication of this shift in funding policy, has been that all applications for government supported research funding have to place greater emphasis on future economic impact, and this measure significantly influences ultimate resource allocation decisions. This, of course, is academically controversial, but the impact can already be seen that this has had on funding policy and aligned to this, many universities’ Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer strategies.
Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills (Leitch, 2006) was commissioned to look at the UK’s skills base, both where we are and where we need to go. ‘In the nineteenth century, the UK had natural resources, the labour force and the inspiration to lead the world into the Industrial Revolution. Today, we are witnessing a different type of revolution. For developed countries who cannot compete on natural resources and low labour costs, success demands a more service-led economy and high value-added industry. In the 21st Century, our natural resource is our people – and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills will unlock that potential. The prize for our country will be enormous – higher productivity, the creation of wealth and social justice’ (Leitch, 2006).

This report highlighted demographic, technological and global changes which together present significant challenges to our national modus operandi, but at the same time, huge opportunities. The latter is predicated on being able to respond quickly, efficiently and effectively to closing the gap on the emerging skills, knowledge and cultural issues that are often hidden away. Leitch highlighted the fact that one third of adults in the UK do not hold the equivalent of a basic school leaving qualification; half of adults have difficulty with numbers and 15% (5 million) are functionally illiterate. All of these statistics are much worse than our benchmark comparators. Critically, the report emphasises that improving our schools is not in itself sufficient, as over 70% of the 2020 workforce have already completed their compulsory education. The report makes many important recommendations, but at the heart of these is the need to effect radical change ‘right across the skills spectrum’ at basic, intermediate and higher levels, with specific emphasis on adult skill engagement and development, and upon ‘economically valuable’ skills. ‘Too many of us have little interest or appetite for improved skills. We must begin a new journey to embed a culture of learning, and as a society, we must invest more’.

Race to the top (Sainsbury, 2007) focused on innovation performance in the UK, and in many respects gives an upbeat message relating to this. Specific reference is made to the proportion of GDP generated through high technology, knowledge intensive industries and services, and to the ‘dramatic’ improvements in knowledge transfer partnerships between British universities and business, with ‘the emergence and growth of exciting high-technology clusters around many of our world-class universities’. The report goes on to emphasise ‘our outstanding record of scientific discovery’ with the critical caveat ‘in the future, it will no longer be necessary to start every report of this kind with a dreary statement that, while the UK has an excellent record of research, we have a poor record of turning discoveries into products and services. While we believe that our record of innovation is better than is commonly supposed, we have not yet produced the best possible conditions to stimulate innovation in industry’. This report has been used to underpin further new policies relating to the commercialisation of research, incentivising universities and business to work closely to ensure a market-led approach at all stages of research and knowledge transfer activity.

Innovation nation – unlocking talent (Great Britain. Department for Universities, Innovation and Skills, 2008) emerged from the then newly, and perhaps significantly, renamed Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills. The preface from the Secretary of State, John Denham, stated ‘that the government wants to create a stronger and fairer Britain, equipped to meet the challenges of the future ... we want innovation to flourish across every area of the economy, and in particular, wherever high value business can develop and grow. Innovation will be the key to some of the biggest challenges facing our society such as global warming and sustainable development ... we can achieve this by investing in people and knowledge, unlocking talents at all levels, by investing in research and in the exploitation of this. Government can foster innovation, but only people can create an Innovation Nation’. Following this White Paper, funding policy in general, and to higher education specifically has fundamentally shifted to reflect the ambitions outlined.

In 2008, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) produced their own independent report, Stepping higher (CBI, 2008). This concluded ‘that a strong relationship between the business and university sectors is critical to helping the UK maintain competitiveness. Both sides benefit from this – businesses from new thinking and high quality graduates, universities from practical insights that enrich their teaching, research as well as funding’. Particular emphasis is placed upon workforce development, and the need for new skills and innovative ways of doing things upon which sustainable competitive advantage can be built. The report also emphasises that
employers are not confident that there will be sufficient skilled people available to them to meet their anticipated needs. It also highlights the challenge of a future economy where perhaps half the jobs (in ten years time) will be in areas as yet unknown. This salutary reminder very much reinforces Sir George Cox’s comments that it is not just skills, but creativity and talent that will be so important, as it is these attributes that will actually define what skills and competencies will be required.

In November 2009, against the economic backdrop of the global banking crisis, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published Higher ambitions – the future of universities in a knowledge economy (Great Britain. Department for Universities, Innovation and Skills, 2009). This took a fifteen year economic perspective, and tried to anticipate the impact of impending changes, some of which are known, and others that need to be anticipated. It states that ‘the most recent estimate is that UK universities’ economic output is £59bn per annum, and amounts to 2.3% of UK GDP’.

The challenge highlighted in this paper is how this progress can be maintained. ‘In a knowledge economy, universities are the most important mechanism we have for generating and preserving, disseminating, and transforming knowledge into wider social and economic benefits. They are crucial too, as the providers of life chances for individuals, in an environment where skills and the ability to apply those skills are essential preconditions for employment’. The report goes on to map out the demographic changes that are expected, impending environmental issues, the impact of further technological advances and the non-viability of the continuation of the current arrangements for the funding of higher education. It also shows that relative to our economic competitors and comparators, the UK participation rate in higher education has slipped from 7th in the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) rankings, to 15th. There is more recent evidence emerging that the UK is now less socially mobile now than it was fifty years ago (Hills, 2010).

Inferentially, this is unlikely to help support our future economic aspirations and indeed expectations, and hence, the report starts to look at what needs to change to get us to where it is perceived we need to be. ‘A major change is required in the culture of our higher education system, where the focus of expansion has hitherto been in three year full-time degree courses. The next phase of expansion in higher education will hinge on providing opportunities for different types of people to study in a wider range of ways than in the past. The focus will therefore be on a greater diversity of models of learning: part time, work-based and studying whilst at home’.

It is useful to have a macro economic perspective based on simple measures of economic performance. Using OECD (2007) data relating to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head of population (by selected country), it can be seen in Table 1 that the UK is 22% below the USA, only 9% above the combined Euro-Zone countries and significantly below Ireland and Switzerland. This gives a clear indication that our performance in terms of GDP output measure is perhaps surprisingly ordinary when looked at in this way. This information highlights and substantiates the importance of the recommendations from the many reports referred to, and that as a nation, we do need to improve our economic efficiency and effectiveness in order that we are, and remain, internationally competitive.
Table 2 is also compiled from OECD (2007) data. This chart illustrates GDP against hours worked and indicates that the UK is more than 15% behind the USA and France and 22% below Ireland. UK overall performance using this measure is 2% below the Euro Zone average and certainly not comparable with those whom we might expect to benchmark ourselves, again emphasising the imperative to look at what we do and how we do it. It is likely that it is only through smarter working, which will necessitate much more effective production practices, that we will close the gap – and of course, this is a relative and not an absolute model. Others are likely to follow similar strategies, in which case we will have to run simply to stand still, and run very fast to make some headway. This should serve to focus the mind on the scale of the change that is required.
The Higher ambitions report (2009) makes specific reference to impending demographic change, and it is important to consider the implications and potential consequences of these. Universities UK recently commissioned a report to investigate the future size and shape of the higher education sector in the UK. Specifically, how this might change over the next twenty years in response to demographic changes.

In the period 2006-2027, it is estimated that the UK population will rise by 15% from 60m to 70m. The increase will not be reflected evenly across age groups, and it is projected that the numbers of 18-20 year olds, which are critical to traditional University entrance planning, will rise by less than 1%. At the same time, the numbers aged >65 will increase by more than 30%. This gives rise to many fundamental questions with profound political, economic and social implications that an ageing population brings. Immediate issues about the viability and sustainability of our pensions system, which Lord Hutton is now investigating, and will report on in July 2011, where the workforce of the future will come from, and how we ensure that our ageing population has an appropriate economic, social and technological skill set to match the circumstances in which they may well find themselves.

As the Higher ambitions report (Great Britain. Department of Universities, Innovation and Skills, 2009) advocates, a new model of higher level learning will be needed to equip ageing individuals, companies, other organisations and UK plc, with a toolkit to enable them to both thrive and survive in an environment where the rate of change gets only faster. This agenda offers many opportunities to higher education providers, but so too are there many tensions and challenges.
Can universities adapt to a market environment?

Most conventional marketing textbooks advocate four key inter-related, co-dependent marketing variables – the so-called four P’s of the marketing mix, which are used to satisfy needs, wants and desires, or communicate, with customers. These are product, place, price and promotion. (Kotler, 1972) Typically, three further key variables have been added to recognise and accommodate the difference between the marketing of tangible products and those of intangible services which are process, physical evidence / resources and people. (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000)

If universities are serious about becoming market-led, then attention and thought needs to be given to the nature of their core business and to be clear about, as Levitt would suggest, ‘what are we selling?’ (Levitt, 1960). This fundamental understanding and perspective should then help to identify, and inform, what the key variables are that will underpin the marketing of a university portfolio, and the tactical apportionment of resource that needs to be allocated, and where, to optimise their chances of success in the marketplace.

Defining the core business of a university is in itself challenging and controversial, and one to which there is probably no absolute clarity nor consensus. For example, is the primary product that we ‘sell’ the degree award itself, with its associated classification and certification? Or rather do we actually ‘sell’ the brand of the university, with the standing and status implications of this? From the perspective of a paying employer, are we actually selling business benefits? More philosophically, do we sell anything at all, and related to this, do we accept the notion that our learners are ‘customers’ in a consumer oriented sense? Many might argue that universities provide ‘general’ opportunities for self-development and lifestyle, and that it is these which most inform choice and where the real value proposition lies to the user.

There are many other issues too which are very specific to all universities. Should we be concerned with future economic and employment needs, and if so, tailor our products and services to anticipate these requirements? Or should we take the view that the development of a well-honed and educated mind is in itself what higher education is about, and that we should avoid an instrumental ‘training’ approach to higher levels of learning, on the basis that those with highly developed minds will be able to adapt more quickly in a world where the half life of knowledge is seemingly ever-reducing? Finally, most universities are multi-faceted, comprising many, not necessarily integrated, elements, all playing a part in achieving their overall mission. If so, is it possible to have one marketing mix, or are separate ones needed to reflect the overall complexity that is a university, and indeed, are even the seven ‘P’ variables adequate and fit for purpose in the context that a university operates in? Perhaps the most important thing is to recognise the validity of such questions, and the tensions that lie therein, and then to find ways to address them as best as is possible.

The concept of the augmented product mix is well established (Kotler, 1972) and this recognises that competitive advantage and customer satisfaction is often gained through enhanced product support both pre-, during and post-purchase. The importance of the service element of this has long been recognised and in many ways, this blurs the simplistic product /service demarcation. Most marketers would now make specific reference to the extended marketing mix in their product planning and overall product life cycle management. Indeed, many have started to consider many additional marketing variables. Serious consideration needs to be given to a hyper-extended marketing mix for universities, to reflect their super-complexity and the rapidly changing environment in which they are expected to operate.

Chris Birch
An extended marketing mix for higher education?

Table 3 illustrates as a honeycomb, twenty potential marketing variables that might be important to a greater or lesser extent, in the construction of a marketing plan for a university, with relative importance starting from the centre. The relative level of importance is debateable, but what is perhaps most important are the principles behind this. If this does strike a chord, then the implications for many marketing activities of a university are profound.

Table 3
Universities as global brands

At the heart of the proposed model is the promise. As higher education becomes more globalised and competitive, most universities have become very aware of the importance and value of their brand, in order that they can more easily differentiate themselves. Many universities have invested significantly in developing their image, status, standing and reputation, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, to create for themselves a sustainable source of competitive advantage. From a consumer behaviourist perspective, a good brand implies a long-standing promise, underpinned by clear and unambiguous values, activities and actions. A great brand is a promise kept, and it is essential that universities are able to deliver that which they promise, be it implicit or explicit (De Chernatony and McDonald, 1998) Individuals, families and organisations now take a big risk when committing to a university, and invest very significant amounts of time, money and effort into participating in higher level learning. It should not be surprising that their expectations rise ever-higher as their personal commitment increases. There is significant evidence from National Student Survey feedback of user-dissonance, with universities all too often not living up to expectations. The message is clear – brand building is a commercial necessity, and an essential part of the corporate marketing mix. If fully thought through, it adds huge and recurrent value. The underlying infrastructure upon which it is based must be fit for purpose and everyone associated or involved in the University must be fully engaged with the values and proposition and delivering the promise at the level of each and every individual, to ensure the result is a ‘delighted customer’. This is a significant undertaking. The risks of getting this wrong are far reaching. A great brand is hard won, and easily lost. A brand can be nurtured and cherished over many years, and one simple mistake can have almost instant terminal effects, so those that build commercial dependence on their brand need to remain vigilant at all times.

The product – what are universities selling?

The product or service on offer is fundamental to all commercial activity, which in itself presents a dichotomy for universities – our products are fundamentally quality assured and approved programmes and awards, at many academic levels. For example, a Business School student might graduate with a BA (Hons) in Management Studies, a Master of Business Administration or a PhD in Organisational Behaviour. That is what they sign up to do. That is what the validation and accreditation processes approve and assure. Ostensibly, that is what they appear to be buying, or investing in – or is it? Arguably, what they are really purchasing are the plethora of processes and services underneath, which facilitate their academic development and that ultimately culminate in success on their chosen award. Furthermore, the perceived value of the brand of both the specific award and the awarding institution, are very important.

Traditionally, our higher education learning process is an extended one, taking those enrolled anything between three and ten years to achieve their primary learning outcome. In times of rapid political, economic, social and technological change, it is not unlikely that both supply and demand-side expectations, and aspirations, will change during the study period. Arguably, if so, the ramifications of this rapidly changing and dynamic environment are fundamentally challenging to what are traditionally static, prescriptive, introspective and risk-averse quality assurance processes and procedures, originating from a time when the pace of change was slower, more predictable and less pervasive. This creates a clear tension between traditional supply-side provision and current demand-oriented expectation to which there is no ready, nor easy solution. As Levitt (1960) postulated nearly fifty years ago, organisations need to be very clear on what they are selling, focussed on benefits, and that a clear and empathetic understanding of this is needed to inform strategic, operational and tactical decisions, at all levels, which will then manifest themselves in many ways. There is little evidence in the UK that providers of higher education have at the fundamental level, philosophically adjusted to the changed environment, and using Levitt’s words, are ‘marketing myopic’. Which is perhaps why, for example, we struggle with what ought to be straightforward nomenclature as to what to call our students / learners or indeed, are they customers?
The real estate: what is its value?

Synonymous with universities and other higher-level education providers are the campuses, buildings and the town/city where these are located. Sometimes iconic and always a tangible part of the overall offer and brand, traditionally these provide the physical infrastructure to deliver learning and to create a learning community. Huge financial investment has been made in physical infrastructure by most universities, with significant capital and ongoing revenue consequences, which cannot quickly be altered. Set against the impending changes outlined in the first part of this paper, it is likely that universities will have to reconsider the real estate propositions to fit with overall societal change. That is not necessarily to infer that buildings will not be required, but it is likely that their relative importance and role will need to reflect other changes that are taking place, often driven by technological advance, environmental considerations and economic circumstances.

Space management surveys show that the overall usage rate of space is low (as little as 20% based on relatively generous metrics), yet over 25% of annual income is spent operating them. This has to beg fundamental questions relating to future investment priorities in a period where value propositions are changing, driven by lifestyle, economic and technological changes (See Table 4). The traditional and relatively inflexible place-based learning construct, necessitating individual attendance often at prescribed times, is, and will continue to be, a barrier to entry to many of those who increasingly need access to higher-level skills and knowledge, but whose schedules are varied and unpredictable (Table 4). It is an imperative that buildings do not become a millstone around the necks of universities in both financial and access terms, and that sufficient resources are available to invest in technology enhanced delivery, which is likely to become increasingly important in the context of blended delivery of courses.

Table 4

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP per head of population (OECD 2007 $)</th>
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A new pricing regime: ending uniformity?

Pricing of university activity is complex and varied. For full-time awards, there is a nationally capped fee that can be levied, currently £3250 per annum, and almost all universities charge this. There is a free market at postgraduate level and for international students, and fees vary between courses and institutions, though the deviation is small overall. Rates for part-time study vary, but tend to relate to an amount per annum rather than an amount per module. Where modular pricing does occur, it tends to be based on the annual full-time fee divided by the number of modules studied per academic year. Short unaccredited courses are usually priced based on full economic costing models, and market / demand factors are often not considered.

Off-campus delivery raises a number of very interesting questions regarding the basic principles of course pricing. Often, employers and employees are interested in short courses or individual modules, rather than complete awards. Impact and benefits need to be seen as an expected benefit, with the clear expectation of bottom-line benefit. Furthermore, formal accreditation is not a primary driver for employers, though employees do see the value of recognised qualifications. Because the cost base of most universities is very high, including the costs of running campuses with all that that entails, the full economic costing approach to off-campus provision can result in prices that are uncompetitive and unaffordable. Private providers are often able to be more flexible and price competitive, and currently in the UK, they undertake 80% of in-company training. They do not have the same degree awarding powers that a university has, but if that is not a primary requirement for the paying employers, then that may not be a consideration when choice of provider is made.

The issue is this: if we do want more people with accredited higher level qualifications, then we will have to address the cost / price / value proposition in a creative way that enables HE providers to compete with lower cost base providers. In mechanistic terms, this is straightforward. In terms of culture, custom and practice, it is very challenging. Ultimately, those universities who want to deliver more off-campus, work-based learning activity, will need to address their cost base and/or pricing approach. Real estate will need to look very different in terms of shape, size, design and location. Staffing contracts will need to have greater flexibility too, as on average, >55% of the cost of running a traditional university is spent on human resources. This is way above that of other providers. Product development too is very expensive, and fewer and different products will be needed which can be efficiently and effectively adapted to match commercial requirements, providing the agility that a competitive market place necessitates. It is likely that individual modules will have greater value than full awards, and curriculum design and accreditation processes and procedures are likely to need to reflect this. The key issue is that pricing will need to become market driven, and the supporting cost base and infrastructure will need to reflect this. One perhaps needs to consider the question as to why a work-based learner, supported by their company and requiring a specific, commercially oriented learning and development outcome, but who never actually goes near a campus, should be expected to fully contribute to this?

New markets need new promotional approaches

As universities have expanded and grown, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, more resource is invested in promotional, public relations and advertising activity. This work is fundamental to ongoing recruitment and to developing the brands that are so important in a high-involvement decision process, which selecting a university now is for many would-be buyers. Given that most universities are offering relatively traditional full-and part-time awards, it should not be surprising that ‘marketing departments’ are very much geared up to supporting these through glossy prospectuses, traditional media advertising, educational partnerships, student recruitment fairs and increasingly the worldwide web.

The development of new commercial markets, and how best to access these, is a challenge for any organisation, and a university is no exception. Those universities actively engaged in directly working with employers, have adopted more business to business (B2B) approaches to promotional activity, including personal selling using a variety of brokerage models. Teams of business development specialists act as a conduit between the market and the supply chain. The idea is that they identify opportunity, ascertain
commercial training development needs and requirements, and then find ways of sourcing solutions through the university resource base, or where necessary, associated partners. This B2B approach is direct and relationship based, managed through sophisticated customer relationship models (CRMs), and very different to that employed for traditional student recruitment. It is also very challenging to the way that universities do things. University marketing departments have relatively little influence over the development of product and related delivery, which are usually ‘owned’ by faculties and the academics therein, primarily to satisfy internal quality assurance and standards. If an opportunity is uncovered by a broker, the theory is that faculties, or their equivalent, will innovate or re-engineer that which exists in order for it to meet market need. The reality is that this is very difficult to achieve, for a combination of people, process and resource reasons. University systems and structures, often established and embedded over many years, sometimes centuries, are simply not designed to work at speed or at the behest of external forces. To properly address in-company markets, and to become more demand-led, it is becoming clear that the development of a parallel set of product and service related processes will have to be developed in order that a brokerage model can work. This change is fundamental and potentially high risk, in that the implications are organisationally pervasive and external monitoring authorities may not be sympathetic to the underlying philosophy.

Engaging and energising academics to drive market change

Traditional academic culture and the customs and working practices that are associated with this are well embedded into most universities, often re-enforced by contracts of employment which lend themselves to many interpretations. Changing behaviours and expectations in this context is difficult, made more so because of the complexities regarding the allocation of overall academic workloads, the tensions that inevitably arise over determination of priorities at any moment in time, and not uncommonly, an inertia based on the premise that ‘what happens works, so why change it?’ More has been expected of academics over the past ten years in many universities, reflecting both global and societal change, but also relatively diminishing units of resource. This has led to what many academics regard as a managerialist approach, with implicit expectations of heightened accountability, transparency, targets with greater focus on performance and achievement of outcomes.

Work-based and work-related learning does not infer a simple recycling of traditional campus based pedagogy in a work-based environment, and this is just beginning to be realised. Much planning, thought, effort and resource needs to be injected if this is to be done well, with the consequent change management implications. Such issues and tensions need to be anticipated, with innovative and creative solutions being developed. New career progression paths need to be opened which give clear signals that engagement and success in the development and delivery of the new agenda, does not carry discriminatory career risks.

For academics to engage, commit and ultimately drive this new agenda, there needs to be clear and transparent promotional opportunities to Reader and ultimately Professorial level. Their roles will include leading on the redesign of a radically different curriculum, focussed on a multiplicity of learning outcomes and delivered flexibly, relevantly and affordably. They will need to run parallel research projects and engage in appropriate scholarly activity which when taken together, create an expertise base which academically informs future developments. It is important to state that this is neither an easy, nor a fast process and getting the
most intelligent of people to leave past models behind is challenging. A point to add is that should opportunities arise to appoint new blood, human resource and appointments processes and procedures need to be fundamentally changed to reflect what may well be a very different type of person specification / appointment to that made in the past.

Business process modernisation

As with people, academic processes, which underpin academic quality and integrity are often geared to a world where time and speed were not of the essence, and where selection rather than recruitment were more commonplace. Historically, award validation processes could take over a year, and rarely less than six months. Module approval could be similar. Academic quality processes were, and still are, supply-side dominated. For employers and employees who have little time, are often paying for their courses and development and are operating in rapidly changing environments where they have to almost run to stand still, this is a problem. They expect to be treated as clients, with an appropriate responsiveness to their needs, and many universities who are trying to work more closely developing workforces in the workplace, are finding it very difficult to meet demand-need, not least because their own business processes make this very difficult. Non-academic processes can also be a problem. Online registration, online payment, online submission of work, and online receipt of information all challenge models that are ostensibly geared up to those who attend in time and place mode. In competitive terms, these day-to-day processes and procedures are critical, and off-campus, work-based learning does not work properly if they are not in-place and working efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, for these to work, an array of information systems need to work in harmony, which can also necessitate a major investment as many systems have evolved over time, and do not fully (or sometimes partially) integrate. As with other aspects, this is not just about technological systems. It is more about how people do things, and are able to respond to the changing circumstances and requirements. FutureSkills has very much highlighted this, and is now a major stimulus to driving change in our fundamental business processes.

In constructing a degree programme, individual modules underpin the curriculum and when taken together, eventually form the overall award. The design and structure of an award will ensure some form of academic coherence which ensures knowledge, skills and competencies are developed to the prescribed and appropriate level for that award. Module descriptors will lay out pre and co-requisites, aims, objectives, topics and themes, reading and assessment methodology. Some might make reference to skill, competency and behavioural development, though this is not universal at higher levels, where often the focus remains on knowledge dissemination and transfer, and the assessment of this.

Pedagogy – the key marketing variable for higher education?

Generalisation is always dangerous, but this model will be recognised to a greater or lesser extent by most university academics who are involved and engaged in campus-based delivery. There is perhaps nothing intrinsically wrong in this approach, which has survived for hundreds of years, and served many generations well, be they part of agrarian, industrial or commercially-oriented economies. However, as economies of the 21st Century become ever more globalised, knowledge-based and underpinned by instantaneous communications, achieving sustainable competitive advantage is increasingly difficult to achieve and maintain, and consequently, the pressure to constantly innovate with better products, services and business / production processes is unremitting. It helps to achieve this if a workforce is creative, ingenious and curious, with the mindset of always looking to do things more economically, efficiently and effectively. With an ageing demographic and workforce and the need for constant up and re-skilling, to ever-higher levels, there is an opportunity too for educators to develop new learning-oriented models of delivery that are responsive, fit for purpose, relevant, effective, affordable and delivered off-campus. The working understanding of the meaning of pedagogy is ‘the design of learning processes that lead to relevant learning outcomes’, and in the context of this paper, this could be viewed as the critical marketing variable, with pedagogic innovation creating a genuine source of competitive advantage in a market that is projected to grow for the foreseeable future. That infers the need to constantly research and innovate based on contemporary, but ever-changing, need.
Extending the marketing mix for HEIs

It may be interesting to consider a range of other key ‘P’ marketing variables, built around the core seven. This by no means is an exhaustive list, but it perhaps serves to highlight the complexity of the total marketing mix that universities need to offer. In themselves, these merit detailed analysis but for the purpose of this paper, I will merely raise the possibilities. Packaging is much more than the outer skin in which traditional, and simple products are wrapped. In the context of a university, it could include accommodation, earn and learn opportunities, meal deals and the many enrichment activities which in total support the rounded development of the individual. And of course, the balance of a package will vary with different categories of learners, reflecting their specific needs and the relative importance that they attribute in terms of value-added. There is perhaps nothing new in this, but the point to be made here goes back to Levitt’s question of ‘what are you selling?’, and conversely, ‘what are they buying?’ Contentiously, it might be argued that we over-promote the award itself, and under-promote other elements that the purchaser is actually more interested in. If so, that could have profound impact on not only what we offer, but how we offer it.

The world is rapidly changing, and the competitive environment in which we operate is getting ever-more challenging. This begs the question about whether we are undertaking sufficient marketing research to inform the world as it will look like in the future, as opposed to how it appears now. Most multi-national organisations now spend much time, resource and effort on building models that project and predict likely future scenarios, as their lead times to make appropriate changes are long. This is certainly the case of all universities, where degrees take three to four years to complete, and where the ongoing development cycle is often long. For example, based on projected demographic trends, if decisions are made to deliver higher level education into the workplace, then fundamental investment and divestment decisions will need to be made which of themselves carry very significant business risk.

As the balance of funding shifts from the public purse to the private individual, professionalism will become ever-more important in that it will become intrinsically linked, and indeed underpin, the whole learning experience. Debate can be had on what ‘professionalism’ means, but at the very least, it will have to include consistency, responsiveness, quality and the ability to over-deliver the promise that is being ‘bought’. In any complex organisation, this is easier said that done, and ultimately, the achievement of it will depend upon every individual employee’s commitment, ownership, engagement and personal responsibility to ensure that experience is as ‘sold’. In many universities, arguably this will necessitate a significant cultural change and re-alignment of priorities.

In the context of a demand-driven market economy, which higher education is now progressing towards, perception of value based upon the standing of a university, of the courses within, of those delivering them, or supporting their delivery and of the ‘whole experience’ is critical. Ultimately, perception has to be supported by every-day reality, but it can both be influenced and exploited. It is essential to fully understand users, influencers and markets’ aspirations, motivations and expectations, and then to weave this fully into the brand promise.

Physical resources create a conundrum for universities. Traditionally, these hinge around the campus with all which that entails – the classrooms, lecture halls, students union, playing fields, offices, cafe areas and residences. The cost of maintaining such physical assets is, as already highlighted, both huge and rising and usage by most measures is inefficient. However, there is little doubt that the attributes and appearance of physical assets has a significant impact on perception, image, reputation and status. Perhaps the questions which need to be asked are forward-looking ones. In a ‘new world’ in which many aspects of funding are very likely to change - where there will be as many, if not more, older (working) learners as there are ‘traditional’ younger ones; where younger ones themselves need to earn and learn in equal proportion; where technology provides new delivery alternatives and indeed heightened user expectations; where new eco/environmental drivers gain greater significance; and where in general terms, economic, efficient and effective use of assets become business critical in a way that previously perhaps it has not been. A university with no buildings is difficult to
conceive (though not impossible), and certainly in the United States, but spreading across the world, including the UK, the largest higher education provider there is now the private ‘Phoenix’ University which rents its buildings on a commercial needs basis. This gives rise to further questions around the need to actually own physical resources, which inevitably becomes restrictive in terms of market flexibility and agility, as opposed to alternate commercial arrangements. The key issue from a marketing perspective is to understand the value attributed by users to place-based resources – and that in certain markets, it may be less than is imagined. If that is the case, then transferring investment to other resources might bring significant commercial benefit, short, medium and long term.

Processes, procedures, systems and structures are what bind complex organisations together. Of themselves, they need to be efficient, effective and unobtrusive. They need to reflect the needs and requirements of not only paying users, but of other stakeholders too, reflecting statutory requirements around funding, legal and quality regulation and compliance. In many ways, business and academic processes have become organisational hygiene factors. It is assumed by all that universities will get them right, but this is a basic expectation which levers relatively little value-added. However, if something goes wrong, the implications are immensely negative and profound. From a marketing perspective, getting core business processes right is fundamental to success, and this includes, for example, effective and pervasive online systems, efficient telephony services, reliable timetabling, good communication, being well organised and generally well cared for. In the last resort, there will also be an expectation of effective systems to handle complaints and provide redress if appropriate. Effective business process factors increasingly provide the opportunity to engage with, and entice a market. Equally, getting this wrong can lead to almost instant commercial failure. We are all aware that society in general is now very intolerant of large commercial organisations which cannot respond to them fast, friendly, and fairly.

Participation can infer many things. On the one hand, it could be interpreted to mean a new market, based on a policy of widening participation aimed at those who traditionally have not been targeted nor engaged with universities. It could also imply new partnerships with a range of delivery partners, for a variety of strategic marketing reasons. In the context of this paper, the intention is to highlight the importance of developing active supply and demand side participation and engagement in the learning experience, in its widest form. This reflects not only the complexity of ‘becoming educated’, but also the potential impact of the now pervasive virtual digital world to inform, influence and involve individuals in ways that previously could not be considered. Global networks based on common interests, can both easily and cheaply be accessed, thereby creating opportunities and challenges that hitherto had no relevance in the context of the learning environment. Now, arguably, they are integral to it and our pedagogic processes need not only to reflect this, but also to be based on the assumption that this is now a requirement of effective, contemporary learning. Today’s generation of learners now expect to have the support of their academics, technicians, support staff, immediate and virtual peers, all of whom add value to their overall experience.

The digital age brings many other new marketing challenges to universities. Wertime and Fenwick (2008) talk about the importance of understanding what are often unwritten rules of digital permission. Digital gate crashing (in many forms, including spamming, unwanted blogging, misuse of social network sites, inappropriate texting and messaging) creates the same dissonance as turning up uninvited to a party. Increasingly, perception of an organisation rests on understanding the often unwritten laws of the ‘virtual jungle’, and not alienating digital natives by breaking these. The impact of any error in this respect is close to instantaneous, globally pervasive and almost always commercially devastating as even the best PR departments find it impossible to assert any control. Linked to permission is privacy.
One of the great paradoxes of the digital age is that whilst access to information and people is close to instantaneous, to abuse this ‘privilege’ is to violate personal privacy. From a university marketing perspective, the key point is that effective cyber-communication is on the one hand critical, but that this needs to be targeted, measured, timely and useful. The line is fine, and much strategic and operational thought should be given to understanding the needs and expectations of learners to maximise the benefits that technology can bring.

If the marketing issues of participation, permissions and privacy can be understood, then the potential does arise to personalise an experience to fit an individual’s need at a moment in time. Specific, relevant and timely information can be sent them and learning opportunities and assessment can be tailored to meet their known requirements. Learning can become more portable in the sense that much of will need to be accessible on a just-in-time, anytime, anyplace, anypace basis. Furthermore, portability will extend the Bologna principle that credit points from one European university will be transferable to another, thereby facilitating another level of flexibility.

The academic implications of delivering this are profound, but in a world that is increasingly characterised by consumer driven choice, instant gratification, high service quality expectation and supply-side competition, then there is no reason to think that somebody, somewhere, will not be able to respond positively to achieve this. The implied challenges are perhaps the most difficult that universities have to face up, and respond to. Most are supply-oriented, with many systemic protective mechanisms built-in that currently support the status quo. The shift to a demand-led orientation will necessitate a fundamental review of all aspects of marketing.

The road ahead

The world is changing rapidly, and universities are no longer shielded from the implications and consequences emanating from pervasive political, economic, social and technologically driven change. The great Austrian economist, Joseph Schumpeter, 1961 postulated that entrepreneurship and innovation are the only ways of sustainably responding to such challenges (Schumpeter, 1961). This can be multi-faceted, as has been argued in the paper. There are many new markets that universities could, and should, engage with. To do this cost efficiently and learning effectively, they must fundamentally re-think how they buy, use and prioritise their resources. It is easy to talk about becoming demand-led but much less easy to achieve this. Using long-established, core marketing variables, as a reference point, it is clear just how far away many traditional universities are from being able to be demand-oriented. Moving into any new market is not easy. Neither is developing new products and related services and procedures. Societally and economically we need work-based and work-related learning to be successful, and indeed, to work well. The question is whether universities rise to this challenge. One would like to be hopeful, but the reality of the challenge is immense. Might a better market solution emerge outside traditional university supply? The likelihood of this is perhaps now much greater than it was three years ago, as State support diminishes and the burden of cost falls directly onto the consumer.
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Hefce. See: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/employer/projects/


The Economy, society and financial education

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Against the backdrop of the recent financial crisis that began in 2007, this paper explores the relationship between financial education and socio-economic stability. The ensuing discussion portrays consumer-education as having a substantial role to play in the security of the financial system; it also examines the complex nature of financial literacy and its implication for policy.

The conclusion presents a paradoxical relationship between economic stability and financial capability that highlights the challenges inherent in promoting it through education.

Keywords | financial capability; financial regulation; financial crisis; social and economic wellbeing; philosophical anthropology.

Introduction

Eight years after seeing in the new millennium, over a decade of economic stability came to an abrupt end in Britain. The first time that ordinary Britons suspected that something was amiss in the financial world was in September 2007, when Northern Rock (one of the top mortgage lenders) became the first British bank in over a century to suffer a run on its deposits. Around the same time across America and Europe, large banking establishments (including the Swiss bank UBS, and wall street giants Citigroup and Merrill Lynch) were announcing unprecedented losses.

As the instability that originated in the financial sector spread to the real economy, recession became the inevitable consequence for much of the developed world, adversely affecting growth in the global economy. At the time of writing, the emerging consensus on the cause of the crisis pointed to sub-prime mortgages and collateralised debt securities; blame was also apportioned at the Fed’s relaxed monetary policy, and the failure of regulators to curtail casino-style gambling among financial traders.

However, an issue that is less well explored in the mainstream literature is the relevance of consumers’ financial literacy to economic stability. The growing level of personal debt and its de-stabilising effect on the economy is a concern to many governments. Even before the recent crisis, people’s ability to make prudent financial decisions and to plan their economic futures has attracted high-level discussion. In 2006 the G8 held an International Conference on Improving Financial Literacy in Moscow (November 29-30). The conference discussed the relationship between financial literacy and economic development; the role of financial education in enabling people to plan for retirement (pensions) and reduce the threats to their personal security (insurance); and the evaluation of several financial education programmes including recognition of best practice.
Our modern financial system emerged from Big Bang Day on October 27, 1986 that changed the way business was done at the London Stock Exchange. With the transfer from the open-outcry method to electronic screen-based trading the rules effectively removed the distinction between stock broking and stock jobbing. Until then, stock brokers bought and sold financial securities through stock jobbers on behalf of clients (i.e. investors); while stock jobbers dealt exclusively with brokers and other jobbers, making their profit on the bid-ask spread. After the reforms, brokers traded freely with other brokers without having to go through a jobber, and the use of faster electronic communication systems gave markets added liquidity and greater avenues for lowering risk (Michie, 1999, p. 543-94).

The regulatory controls that once existed to ensure ‘gentlemanly’ conduct were replaced by an ethos of self-regulation. Investment banks were left unfettered to invent new financial instruments to diversify away the risk of holding assets (and liabilities). With the blurring of the distinction between investment banking (which engaged more directly with asset trading on the exchange) and retail banking (which served the general public), financial alchemy that was once confined to elitist circles came to influence the lives of ordinary citizens.

The resulting complexity of financial services contributed to a classic case of information asymmetry in the market for consumer finance. For free-market systems to function efficiently, consumers must possess the ability to make choices that maximise their private benefit. The complexity of the modern financial economy has made understanding it, a more difficult task for the average person. We can therefore argue that the potential for market failure due to information asymmetry tends to be high, unless two broad interventions are made: first, to provide better information about financial products, and; second, to improve the ability of the consumer to make prudent financial choices.

More recently in 2009, Finance Ministers from the G20 countries meeting in Pittsburgh, USA, pledged to:

‘… launch a G-20 Financial Inclusion Experts Group. This group will identify lessons learned on innovative approaches to providing financial services to these groups, promote successful regulatory and policy approaches and elaborate standards on financial access, financial literacy, and consumer protection.’


The issue of financial illiteracy is not only of concern to the developed world, but has become a global agenda, involving emerging economies as well. In March 2010, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Reserve Bank of India jointly hosted a conference to ‘advance and elevate the policy dialogue on financial education and literacy’ internationally, particularly in the South East Asian region, (OECD, 2010).

In Britain, the Financial Services Authority’s Base Line Survey revealed that many people failed to adequately plan ahead for retirement, and they were not sufficiently prepared for contingencies like loss of income, or emergency expenditure (Atkinson et al., 2006). According to the report, only a small proportion of the UK households were facing a severe debt crisis, but a larger number were vulnerable to slight changes in economic conditions. One significant contributor to this state of affairs is the lack of responsible financial planning on the part of households – many of whom are incurring unsustainable levels of personal debt. This pattern of behaviour is marked by a generation gap, with a majority of people below the age of forty, being less financially capable than those older. However, one cannot entirely blame the consumer for a lack of restraint in an economy that thrived on credit-led spending made possible by an advanced financial economy. In developed economies, sophisticated financial systems have been successful at diversifying away the risk of holding personal debt. It is therefore not surprising that in a well insured economic environment people were generally ignorant of finance, Ferguson (2009).
Economics, sociology, and pedagogy of financial education

The theory of free markets operates on the premise that by exercising their private interests, buyers and sellers contribute to the efficient allocation of societal resources, as if by an invisible hand (Adam Smith, 1776, book IV, ch.II, p.456). Societies that are driven by free-market fundamentals, allocate economic resources based on the private interests of buyers and sellers. It therefore implies that the rational consumer who acts to maximise his/her private benefit would work in harmony with other rational consumers to discipline the producers into providing what consumers want. However, while the high street shopper’s eye for a bargain can serve to increase competition among retailers; financial services are far more complex and therefore not readily discernible to the average consumer.

The resulting information asymmetry (Stigler, 1961) would cause providers of financial services to have an unfair advantage over their consumers, thus creating an imbalance of ‘bargaining’ power. If the problem is widespread and persistent it will compromise the market’s allocative efficiency. Hence, for the financial services market to function efficiently, consumers must have an adequate understanding of personal finance. It is this issue that financial literacy seeks to address.

In principle, a financially literate person would be able to make effective decisions to promote his/her economic wellbeing, and would have the knowledge and understanding to make rational financial choices. According to the US Financial Literacy and Education Commission:

‘Financial literacy can be described as the ability to make informed judgments and to take effective actions regarding the current and future use and management of money. It includes the ability to understand financial choices, plan for the future, spend wisely, and manage the challenges associated with life events such as a job loss, saving for retirement, or paying for a child’s education.’

(United States. Government Accountability Office (GAO), 2009) p.2

It therefore seems plausible that the systemic lack of financial literacy in society would lead to inefficiencies in the market for consumer finance.

As a deregulated financial industry, freed from the shackles of caution and restraint sought to maximize its profits, it deployed an arsenal of creative ingenuity to diversify away the risk associated with investing and lending, through instruments collectively known as derivatives. As retail and investment banking combined their operations, it linked the consumer more directly to the financial markets. In the recent financial crisis, the weakness of the banking sector was attributed to its exposure to derivatives known as collateralised-debt obligations, which were backed by US sub-prime mortgage agreements. These instruments allowed mortgage loans to be repackaged as tradeable securities, and sold on the international financial exchanges. A mortgage may be regarded as both an asset and a liability: to the borrower the loan constitutes a liability; while to the issuer it would be an asset that yields a regular interest income, and a claim on real estate. As these mortgage-backed securities were sold onto third parties – the end beneficiary was no longer the original issuer, but the party that owned the financial instrument backed by these mortgage agreements. So long as the borrower was able to maintain scheduled payments there ought not to be any concern; however, a small but significant proportion of these derivatives were backed by sub-prime mortgages.

In the US sub-prime mortgage market, lenders made loans to people who due to their low income or patchy credit history did not qualify for a normal mortgage loan. Sub-prime borrowers were therefore more likely to default on their loans, and in many cases their homes did not offer substantial collateral. Furthermore, sub-prime borrowers paid a much higher rate of interest than ordinary borrowers, thus increasing the burden of keeping up with debt-repayments and adding to the risk of default. Through collateralised debt instruments this personal risk was transmitted to the rest of the economy through the financial system – afflicting not only the American economy but also the global economy. Setting aside contributing factors such as the unscrupulous practices of sub-prime lenders (Grose, 2009), the bubbling real-estate market (Coleman et al., 2008), and government policy that encouraged home-ownership; a financially literate consumer would have realised that what was being offered was too good to be true, and that in the long run he/she would be worse-off.
When viewed from an educational perspective, the whole incident may attributed to people’s lack of financial literacy (Gamlath, 2008).

It is therefore fitting that regulatory efforts to strengthen the financial system should also address financial literacy and personal financial education as a significant part of legislation. The Financial Services Bill that had its first reading in the House of Commons in November 2009 provides for the establishment of a Consumer Financial Education Body (CFEB) whose function it will be:

… to enhance …

(a) the understanding and knowledge of members of the public [of] financial matters (including the UK financial system); and

(b) the ability of members of the public to manage their own financial affairs. Financial Services Bill (2010), s.8 / c.6A (FSA 2000). See also Great Britain (2010) for the Financial Services Act.

However, underlying the obvious nature of financial literacy are some subtle realities which have implications for efforts to revitalise it within society; one of these is its relation to social status, (SEDI, 2004, Atkinson et al., 2006). The lack of financial literacy impacts unevenly on different demographic and socio-economic groups – for e.g. people from more affluent backgrounds would suffer less from it than those of the ‘working-class’; an older person with a family, is likely to be more adept at managing personal finances than a single young adult. Moreover, financial literacy is dependent on the level of education. Mandell (2008, p. 29) noted that:

‘College students are far more financially literate than high school students, and literacy increases with each year of college.’

Also, economic status tends to be co-related to other factors such as race, ethnicity, age, gender and family status (for instance single-parent families). Therefore, improving financial literacy, may involve focussing on: poorly educated people from particular ethnic or racial groups; young people mainly from low-income families; single parent families struggling to make ends meet, and so on. Targeting these vulnerable social groups who are less immune to economic shocks would yield a greater marginal benefit to society – but it would also mean recognising that personal financial education has an inherent social bias. In the recent crisis, sub-prime lending was common place in the poor neighbourhoods of the US, and was largely confined to low-income households which had little or no access to mainstream sources of finance, (Engel and McCoy, 2007, Immergluck, 2009). Perhaps a more equitable concept would be financial capability as applied by Johnson and Sherraden (2007).

The notion of capability refers to the freedom of choice a person has in life (Sen, 1993); it refers to real opportunities that people have when deciding what course of action to take in managing their economic wellbeing, (Nussbaum, 2002). The key difference between literacy and capability is that the later takes account of external conditions in addition to the person’s internal capability. Without access to mainstream finance a person would not have these real opportunities and therefore teaching him/her to make informed choices (i.e. financial education) would be practically redundant. Dixon (2007) suggested that delivering greater financial education to the consumer should also need to involve the Department for Education and Skills, as well as the Department for Work and Pensions, which are well placed to provide education to vulnerable groups in society. Inclusion of such groups is a critical factor to the success of any national scheme, because even if a person were to possess the knowledge and understanding to make the rational choices; it would be useless if he/she is shunned by the local bank and the only recourse to funds is the ‘local loan-shark’ (Ford and Rowlingson, 1996, Regan and Paxton, 2003). Without access to mainstream financial services, financial literacy would be of little or no use to low-income households (Kempson et al., 2005); hence, regulation should address this issue as exigently as placing greater controls on bankers’ bonuses.

Effective regulation should therefore seek to create (greater) access to mainstream financial services for lower-income households. In Britain, the body charged with advising the government on creating greater access to mainstream financial services for lower-income households is the Financial Inclusion Taskforce (see Great Britain. HM Treasury, 2010). Its job is to monitor and evaluate the government’s ‘financial inclusion goals’ published alongside the 2004 Pre-Budget Report, and to offer independent advice to the Treasury in this regard. However, greater access to financial services alone solves only part of the problem; without the right education the consumer would be no better off. Greater freedom has to be combined with increasing the consumer’s competency to make rational choices and informed decisions.
In Britain, schools have been teaching economic well-being and financial literacy as part of the citizenship curriculum since 2002; however, it is not mandatory and forms part of a repertoire of other elements included in the citizenship curriculum. A study commissioned by the Ifs School of Finance (Davis et al., 2008), supports the view that providing dedicated lessons in personal finance would be a more effective approach to improving financial capability than infusing it with other subjects. This view was shared by a group of more than eighty MPs who signed a motion in June 2007 calling on the government to introduce stand-alone GCSEs and A-Levels in personal finance (Ford, 2007). However, there are pragmatic obstacles that have to be overcome if mandatory lessons in personal finance are to become a common reality in UK schools – chief among them is the already crowded curriculum, and teachers’ own understanding of personal finance. Besides increasing the educational provision, there is also the issue of effective pedagogy: would formal education be able to deliver a meaningful learning experience that develops a person’s financial instinct?

The education system is generally oriented towards developing literacy; but financial capability calls for it to condition people’s behaviour. Most money management courses base their curriculum on the life-cycle hypothesis, which assumes that people are able and willing to plan their current consumption and savings to provide for significant changes in future circumstances such as owning a home, starting a family, going into retirement, etc., (Modigliani and Brumberg, 1954). In reality, however, most (if not all) personal financial decisions carry a significant emotional bias; far from basing their decisions on methodical planning (mechanical reasoning), people are more likely to use intuition – which behavioural psychology calls heuristic simplification. (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979)”s Prospect Theory, suggests that people’s decisions are not based on probabilities of the future but on ‘decision weights’ which are attached to potential gains or losses. (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984) note some peculiar facts about people’s reactions to gains and losses: for e.g. a £2000 gain would make a person happier than gaining £1000; but not twice as happy. Furthermore, a person’s negative reaction to loss is greater than the positive reaction to gain. That means, for a typical person in his/her thirties saving to provide for retirement, the relative satisfaction gained from building up a nest egg may appear to
be less than the opportunity cost of forgoing current consumption. (Thaler and Benartzi, 2004) noted that money management seminars given to employees to encourage them to save for the future were not effective at encouraging conducive behaviour. Instead they suggested that a more effective means of encouraging saving behaviour would be to alter company pension schemes such that they link increases in contributions to increases in pay – eliminating the need for individuals to make financial decisions.

When making financial decisions people do not always go for the cheaper option; they do not use textbook cost-benefit-analysis; instead their choices are influenced by emotional bias. (Prelec and Loewenstein, 1998) found that people planning to purchase an electrical appliance (e.g. a washing machine) would prefer a payment plan that begins after purchase; but when the same option is offered to pay for a holiday, people preferred to pay for it before going on that holiday – even though both payment options were identical. Their research illustrated the use of mental accounting in personal financial decisions. Financial management courses teach people to keep track of their incomes and expenditures (accounting), and to plan for the future, anticipating likely changes in circumstance (budgeting). However, when recording their financial transactions people use a mental accounting system in which each decision is compartmentalised and isolated from others – such that one decision is being made with relative disregard to other decisions, actions and outcomes. For example, let’s take the classic case of a couple saving towards their mortgage deposit on their first home. They already have £12,000 in the bank and are working up to £25,000. The pair has created a mental account in which the £12,000 in the bank is emotionally attached to their future home. Meanwhile, if they were to consider purchasing a car worth £7,000 they would rather finance it through a separate loan, willing to pay twice the interest they are earning on their cash savings; even though using their cash savings would have been the cheaper option. For our couple, the rational option would be more painful, because they have already created a house mental account which is kept separate from the car mental account – although mixing the two would have been financially cheaper. Therefore in practice, a person’s decision whether to borrow to finance a large expenditure is not based on objective budgeting, but on mental budgeting.

People would be willing to get into debt in order to finance a durable good such as a TV or a car as these would be consumed over a longer period; whereas paying for a vacation after they have consumed it would be perceived as a burdensome debt. Therefore, people’s borrowing habits are not merely determined by how much debt they are getting into or the interest they pay on it; but whether it actually feels like a debt. Such biases tend to make our everyday financial behaviours to deviate from what is expected by traditional theories of economic behaviour. When courses in money management are developed, it is to the traditional theories that they often subscribe – possibly falling short of their true potential. This begs the question: how do we make financial education more effective such that it delivers the essential capabilities that people need to make effective decisions in real life? Part of the answer is to re-examine how we teach personal finance.

Given that personal financial education should seek to improve people’s capacity to make sensible judgements in real situations, one pedagogic approach worth noting is experiential learning. Here, learners acquire the requisite knowledge and skills by experiencing the phenomena they are attempting to understand. ‘Meaningful experience’ enables us to build conscious connections as we attach a sensory value to each experience (Dewey, 1916). Learning through experience results in change within us; it leads to changes in behaviour and attitudes, and improves our judgement. (Kolb, 1984) presented a four-stage iterative model of the experiential learning process: it begins when the learner actively interacts with “concrete experience” of a real situation and reflects on this experience. The learner then conceptualises the experience, and formulates a working hypothesis about the phenomenon, which is then tested through application to the real situation. This process occurs in a continuous cycle until it reaches a natural climax; or is terminated. In formal education, teachers have used simulations of real situations to give their students the opportunity to learn from experience, but in the safety of their classroom, (Faria, 2001).
(Mandell, 2008) may have found empirical
evidence that confirms the effectiveness
of experiential learning in finance. When
comparing financial literacy of school leavers,
he observed a noticeable difference among
children who had taken identical money
management programmes in school. Children
whose programme included a simulated
stock market game demonstrated greater
financial literacy than those who took the
same programme but without the simulation.
In a typical stock market simulation, students
were given a hypothetical sum of money
(usually $100,000) and tasked with making
investment decisions on financial assets
traded on the stock exchange under realistic
market conditions. The object of the game
was to maximise returns over a given period;
it gave students a meaningful experience of
the relationship between risk-and-return, as
they learned to make financial judgements
through a process of action and feedback.
(Dewey, 1916) noted that in such learning
environments students became part of the
phenomenon they were attempting to learn,
and are not merely spectators of theory;
instead they acquire the potential for reflection
and deep thought, enabling them to apply the
principles they had learnt to new and different
situations later on in life.

For financial education to make a real
difference in people’s lives, it should begin
early in life and continue beyond school
and into adulthood, (Preston and Feinstein,
2004). This is because experiential learning
does not stop after school, in fact it increases.
The meaningful experience that formed the
basis for learning during the early years has
changed – it has now become the person’s
life itself. In early education the emphasis
should be on developing cognition; however in
the later stages the emphasis should shift to
“behavioural conditioning” (Shirer and Tobe,
2005). Thus, equipping people with the skills
required to survive in financial life may require
a shift from education to training (McCrea,
1920). These are early days and therefore
it is hard to fully determine the scope and
effectiveness of the latest plans to improve the
nation’s financial capability; but what is certain
is that to tangibly improve financial capability it
needs to be driven by the right philosophy and
purpose, else it risks being little more than a
public information service.

Conclusion
The discussion above has highlighted the
subtle yet inextricable link between financial
education and economic stability. In addition
to weaknesses in the banking system, the
recent crisis has underscored the strategic
significance of financial capability. For markets
to function efficiently it is important to ensure
the symmetry of information between sellers
and buyers; however, the complexity of the
financial system places the consumer at a
natural disadvantage. To redress this imbalance
two forms of interventions are necessary:
on the one hand to ensure that suppliers of
financial services provide greater information
about their products, and; at the same time
to improve the consumer’s ability to make
prudent financial choices.

Beyond its direct relevance to the stability
of free-market economic systems, financial
capability has a strong association with social
justice. Providing effective financial education
to the masses should be part of a broader
public policy aimed at greater social inclusion.
Acquiring the skills to survive in a complex
and dynamic financial world is an experiential
process that is co-dependent on the
environment. Therefore, teaching methods that
actively build on experience and interaction
have been promoted as highly effective means
of building capability.

Paradoxically, despite our best efforts at
educating the consumer’s financial sensibilities;
the greatest teacher may turn out to be the
economy itself. In a relatively stable economy
with a large social-welfare state and a well
insured consumer, financial capability (as
discussed above) would seem irrelevant to
people’s economic wellbeing, and therefore
the net social benefit of greater financial
education, would be low. The net social benefit
of financial capability seems to be dependent
on the state of the economy and its impact on
our expectations of the future. Hence, the onset
of recession and the return to boom and bust
might prove to be an effective educational tool
– teaching people the fundamentals of scarcity
and choice; changing their attitude towards
credit; and making them more receptive to the
importance of prudent financial management.
References


An analysis of the relationship between economic growth and the rule of law: a lesson from China’s experience

Peter Yaliang Xu | xuzhenbo@hotmail.co.uk

Since 1978, China’s economic boom has attracted great attention from economists. However, it is perhaps too early to make any judgement over the lessons learnt from China’s economic development. To presume China will overtake America to become the first economic superpower, or to presume that China will collapse due to increasing social problems would be somewhat slapdash. Nevertheless, a fact that must be faced is that in the past 30 years, both China’s GDP growth and social problems have rapidly increased hand-in-hand.

It seems that there is a question that must be asked: is there a way to promote economic growth and social stability at the same time? Perhaps one of the answers is to establish rule of law. This paper is based upon China’s experience of economic growth, and analyses the relationship between rule of law and the economy.

Keywords | China; 21st century; modern China; economic growth; economic development; rule of law

Economic reform and China’s modernization

The economic reform in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) began in the late 1970s, after the end of the Cultural Revolution, when the Communist Party of China (CPC) government faced serious economic problems and social instability. Since 1958, the Great Leap Forward slowed down economic development. The command economy was not able to function properly for a national population of around 700 million people (circa late 1970s). This led to great public dissatisfaction with the government, and in 1978, the second generation of the CPC leadership led by Deng Xiaoping started to reform the economic system in an attempt to shift China towards a market-based economy.

A command economy used to be considered as one of the core characteristics of a socialist state. Initially, a command economy was beneficial for China to rebuild and recover from the after-effects of the Second World War. As time went on, certain defects of the command economy became particularly pronounced. Firstly, the government maintained strong control over this economic management, and there was almost no difference between the affairs of the government and the affairs of state-run businesses. Ignoring the economic regulations between supply and demand prevented the development of a market. Secondly, public ownership – which prohibited private ownership – ensured that all work was equally shared, which led to people not being pressured or interested to any great effort or quality in fields of work that were not in accordance with their interests. It is clear that – in the long term - in a command economy, there was lack of development.

In 1978, for the purpose of quickly increasing economic growth, Deng Xiaoping employed the market economy system to bring China’s markets to life. Deng’s reforms included decreasing the government’s control over the markets through the Communist Party’s policies or orders. The reform also sought to alter the traditional ways of thinking that had resulted from Communist rule under Mao Zedong. The most important thing to consider about the reform is that it was not comparable with Gorbachev’s revolution; in fact, it was almost completely and diametrically opposite.

Deng Xiaoping’s reform was more similar to the ‘East Asian Model’ of reform; focusing on economic growth whilst maintaining the existing political system, and using the
government’s authority to provide a catalyst for development. In fact, maintaining the Communist Party’s status and increasing China’s social welfare were the most fundamental goals of the economic reform. Over three decades, China enjoyed significant achievements since the economic reform began. The restructuring of the economy and resulting efficiency gains have contributed to a significant increase in GDP since 1978 (see Figure One). In China in 1978 this was only RMB 379 per capita (considering inflation, in real terms this is about RMB 471.6 in 2007). In 2007 GDP per capita increased to RMB 17,909. In real terms, Chinese wealth has increased forty fold between 1978 and 2009. The economic growth rate since 2003 has generally stabilised at around 8%.

Figure One - Changes of wealth in China from 1978 to 2007

GDP per capita (RMB) in China

Put into an international context using a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) basis, in 2009 China stood as the second-largest economy in the world after the United States of America (see Table One). However, in per capita terms China is still lower-middle income class and nearly seven times lower than the United Kingdom. (See Table Two).

Table One - GDP rank in 2009 (purchasing power parity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP (PPP)</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>$14,260,000,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>$8,789,000,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>$4,137,000,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>$3,560,000,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>$2,811,000,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>$2,149,000,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: CIA, 2009a)

Table Two - GDP per capita rank in 2009 (purchasing power parity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value (PPP)</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>$46,400</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>$35,200</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>World</td>
<td>$10,500</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>$6,600</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: CIA, 2009b)

Table Three - Exports rank in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Value (PPP)</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>$1,194,000,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>$1,121,000,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>$994,700,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>$516,300,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>$456,800,000,000</td>
<td>2009 est.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: CIA, 2009c)

2008, Figures produced by Dr Peter Yaliang Xu)
China’s economy has changed from a centrally-planned system that was largely closed to international trade to a more market-oriented economy that has a rapidly growing private sector and is a major player in the global economy. China was noted in the Foreign Direct Investment Magazine (Anderson, 2008) as, “the most attractive destination for foreign investment ahead of both Eastern and Western Europe”, and already the largest country in exporting goods (see Table Three above). In 1978, there were almost no privately-owned companies. In 2007, privately-owned companies constituted 69% of China’s economy (Chen, 2007). It is clear that after 30 years of Deng Xiaoping’s reform, a form of market economy has been established and accepted in Communist China by the majority of Chinese people. Today, the sprawling modern cities of China demonstrate that Mao’s age is a distant memory and very unlikely to return. However, new social problems have emerged following the economic boom, such as disputes between the government and people. The reform of agriculture brought 70% of the Chinese population out of poverty, but since China began economic reform in the urban cities, their development quickly surpassed that of rural areas. The gap between rich and poor citizens has increased significantly. Urban development has disrupted social harmony as old ideas have been challenged by the very visible and material benefits brought by the market economy.

In 2008, China held the Olympic Games, which are normally considered to be a privilege of developed countries. On another hand, the Sanlu milk scandal gave a very bad image of China around the world. In fact, there are two completely opposite views of today’s China: one is of a high-tech, modern, developed and cultured economic powerhouse, and the opposite is of a centralised, oppressive state with a lack of human rights and democratic freedoms.

In fact, “comparing China to much wealthier countries, leads to the unsurprising conclusion that China has more problems: there are more deviations from the rule of law, government institutions that are weaker, less efficient and more corrupt; and citizens enjoy fewer freedoms while living shorter and more impoverished lives…[However], China’s performance across a range of variables from economic performance to elimination of poverty to the establishment of a functional legal system and government institutions is on a whole demonstrably superior to the performance of most African, Middle Eastern and Latin American countries.” (Peerenboom, 2007, pp. 11, 20)

Clearly, China is still a developing country; there is significant ‘breathing room’ for the economy to develop. However, increasing social problems have hindered further economic development. For example, “the number of official recorded protests rose to high levels … from approximately 10,000 ‘mass incidents’ in 1994, in the words of the [Chinese] Ministry of Public Security to 74,000 in 2004, before declining to approximately 80,000 in 2005 and 2006 “ (Perry and Selden, 2010, p. 26). Increasingly social instability has attracted great attentions of the CPC’s leadership. As a result of this, a new dominant ideology serving as the guiding direction of social development - known as the ‘Construction of Socialist Harmonious Society’ (Social Harmony) - has been introduced by the fourth generation of the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The concept of building social harmony, according to President Hu Jintao (2006) is to provide for “…the needs of the development of democracy, the rule of law, justice, sincerity, amity and vitality as well as a better relationship between the people and the government and between man and nature.”

Therefore, it seems that China will take further account of not just economic reform towards market economy, but an overall social reform that could continue increasing economic growth and as the same time could also promote a balanced overall social harmony and general stability. Furthermore, as highlighted in President Hu’s above speech, China’s social reform projects have included the development of “rule of law and justice”. Therefore, it seems that after decades of economic boom, Chinese government has acknowledged that, perhaps there is a significant mutually reinforcing relationship between rule of law and economic development.
Is the rule of law important for economic development?

Economic reform has been taking place for 30 years; China is largely out of poverty but is also far from being wealthy. In the past few decades, many Chinese and Western legal scholars (e.g., Professor He Weifang, Jiang Pin, Professor Peerenboom, Selden, etc.) have suggested that the CPC should take serious steps towards deeper and further political and legal reform with the aim of increasing the level of judicial independence and rule of law. Part of the reason given is that there appears to be a significant relationship between rule of law and economic growth. Historically, the idea of rule of law is generally considered to safeguard individual rights, private property, liberty and equality.

In fact, in the past few decades the idea of rule of law has become widespread. Some scholars believe rule of law “has become the motherhood and apple pie of development economics” (Anonymous, The Economist, 2008, p. 95), noting that rule of law is held to be not only good in itself, because it embodies and encourages a just society, but also is a cause of other good things, especially economic growth. Brian Tamanaha once stated that, “no other single political ideal has ever achieved global endorsement” (at St John’s University, New York, quoted by Anonymous in The Economist, 2008, p. 95). Clearly, there is an affiliation between rule of law and economic growth and this relationship is ever significant in the global era. The World Bank rule of law index has provided evidence (see Figure Two) that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between rule of law and social wealth.

Figure Two - Rule of law rank and GDP per Capita

(Rule of law data sources: World Bank Aggregate Governance Indicators 2007; GDP data sources: CIA the World Fact Book 2007, Figures produced by Xu.) From the distribution of the dots on the above graph, it is difficult to ascertain a clear relationship between rule of law and GDP per capita. However, if we apply linear regression to the graph we can see there is some evidence of a proportional increase in social wealth together with rule of law.

There is a common similarity amongst the countries or jurisdictions ranking in the top quartile on the World Bank’s rule of law index: developed, wealthy economies. North America, Western Europe, Australia, Israel, five East Asian countries and regions: Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and China’s two special administrative regions: Hong Kong and Macao – together with Chile, French Guiana and oil-rich Arab countries fill the top ranks of World Bank’s rule of law index. The top quartile consists of high or upper-middle income countries. This is considered to be due to the fact that the rule of law and economic developments are closely related, and tend to be mutually reinforcing (Peerenboom, 2007, p. 34). Notwithstanding theoretical arguments for and against the claim that rule of law contributes to economic development, the empirical evidence is surprisingly consistent and supportive of the claim that implementation of rule of law is beneficial for sustained economic development.

In the past three decades, China’s economic growth has drawn the most attention. Yet, concurrent with economic development, China has speedily increased its legislation agenda; vast numbers of laws pertaining to economic development have been adopted. There were very few laws before 1978 in China. By the end of 2007, 229 acts had been passed by the NPC, 600 national administrative regulations had
been adopted by the central government, and over 7,000 local acts had been passed. Out of 229 parliamentary acts, 105 acts were adopted between 2003 and 2007. Since 1982, the State Constitution has been amended four times (1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004). Notably, in 1999 for the first time the constitution added the term ‘rule of law’ and in 2004 prescribed that the “citizen’s legitimate private belongings cannot be impinged”.

However, the “rule of law in economic development in China is frequently underestimated due partly to the tendency to elide rule of law with democracy and a liberal version of rights that emphasizes civil and political rights” (Paul, 2003, p. 310). The Chinese political regime is not considered to be democratic, and the Chinese legal system is considered to possess insufficient protection for civil and political rights. In addition, China’s economic growth has generally not provided protection of economic interests and the facilitation of economic transactions. In other words, China does not seem to have great economic freedom.

Economic freedom includes the protection of the value of money, free exchange of property, a fair judiciary, few trade restrictions, labour market freedoms, and freedom from economic coercion by political opponents (Peerenboom, 2007, p. 34). It seems that there is still a room for further development in the aforementioned areas in China. It also follows that for further economic development, a better legal system is likely to be required. In fact, the World Bank rule of law index demonstrates that countries with better legal systems tend to have higher growth and more wealth, and vice versa. Some scholars note that the relationship between rule of law and economic growth also appears to be non-linear (Kurczewski and Sullivan, 2002, pp. 218-2). In order to provide a more detailed understanding of this relationship, I decided to separate countries into different groups of ‘rule of law’ ranks and then compare them with their position in economic ranks, and use the Chi-Square test to see the P value, and work out whether or not such a relationship is significant.

The statistical compilation of a nation’s rule of law position is between -2.5 to +2.5, with the higher value indicating greater rule of law. I divided nations into four groups in accordance with their rule of law figure. The groups are: Low rule of law country, less than -1; lower-middle rule of law country, between -1 and 0 (including -1); upper-middle rule of law country, between 0 and 1 (including 0); high rule of law country, over 1 (including 1). Table Four illustrates how the two ranks – rule of law and economy – correlate with each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Four - Relationship between rule of law and economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low income family</td>
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<tr>
<td>lower/middle income country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upper/middle income country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high income country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

low rule of law country
lower/middle rule of law country
upper/middle rule of law country
high rule of law country
### Status * classification cross tabulation

#### Count

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Low income countries</th>
<th>Lower middle income countries</th>
<th>Upper middle income countries</th>
<th>High income countries</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower middle rule of law countries</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
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<td>High rule of law countries</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>206</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Chi-Square Tests

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<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>81.181</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.41.

As the Chi-Square test above shows (Table Four), the P value or asymptotic significance (Asymp. Sig.) is 0.000, which is less than 0.050, and therefore proves that the difference is significant.

According to the statistic, the chance for a high rule of law country to enjoy higher income is 29/34 (85.29%). The chance for an upper middle rule of law country to be a high income country is 26/60 (43.33%). The chance for a lower middle rule of law country to be a high income country is 3/79 (3.78%). The chance for a low rule of law country to enjoy high income is 2/33 (6.06%). The chance for a high rule of law country to be a low or lower middle income country is 29/33 (87.88%).
Therefore, the chance for a country with a higher rule of law to be a higher-income nation is much higher than for a country that has a lower rule of law. However, it is true that the relationship between rule of law and social wealth is complicated and difficult to define. Despite this, the correlation between relative social wealth and rule of law is undeniable, even if it is not proven that they are explicitly interdependent.

Following economic growth, society becomes more complex since a formal legal system that meets the standards of rule of law provides a fair method of solving economic disputes. Moreover, dispute resolution is only one of the economic functions of a legal system. A legal system also creates the basic infrastructure for transactions, including markets, security exchanges, mortgage systems, accounting practices, and so on. In addition, particularly for China, a good legal system can also serve laudable functions other than promoting economic growth; for example, limiting arbitrary acts of government officials and thereby reducing social instability.

Another form of evidence that illustrates the relationship between rule of law and economic growth has been provided by China’s experience. Following 30 years of economic change, vast numbers of laws have been adopted by Chinese legislators. On one hand, these laws promoted economic growth, but on another hand economic booms demand increasing legislation for more advanced laws.

In fact, following economic reform in China, the role of the judiciary has naturally changed over time and is continuing to change today. Chinese judges no longer fight against the class enemies, but are more likely to act as arbitrary agents, though according to the Chinese constitution, Chinese judges’ autonomy is highly limited. Following economic growth, Chinese society has become far more complex than it was in Mao’s era. At the same time, increasing legal development requires the law enforcement body – particularly the judiciary – to have improved and relevant knowledge to deal with contemporary social matters. Therefore, in 1995, the first adoption of the Judges Act by the National People’s Congress (NPC) required aspiring judges to pass an examination before judicial appointment. Following further economic growth, in 2001 the NPC amended the Judges Act to require more qualifications from applicants to judicial vacancies.

Without economic growth and its resultant changes, the NPC would not seek to pass the Judges Act. Conversely, without the Judges Act there may have been more impediments to China’s economic growth.

Rule of law is also important for ensuring good governance, and it seems logical to assume that good governance in turn promotes economic growth. For example, unlike China, in many post-communist countries, well-intentioned policies were quickly established, but it soon became clear this was not enough.

“I was a traditional trade and labour economist until 1992…” says Daniel Kaufmann head of the World Bank’s Global Governance Group 2008, “…when I went to Ukraine, my outlook changed. Problems with governance and the rule of law were undermining all our efforts.” (The Economist, 2008, p. 95).

Perhaps, for economic matters, rule of law may not be as necessary or as significant in poor, rural based countries. However, for matters of governance, such as maintaining political stability, preventing violence, controlling corruption and maintaining effective government, the relationship between such issues and rule of law is much more linear and applies to all large societies (see Figure Three).
Figure Three - Relationship between rule of law rank and good governance rank

The above figure appears to illustrate that a higher rule of law allows for better governance and the better the governance, the richer the nation. However, China seems an exception to such a relation (see Figure Four).

(Data Sources: World Bank Aggregate Governance Indicators 2009, Figures produced by Dr Peter Yaliang Xu)
An analysis of the relationship between economic growth and the rule of law, a lesson from China’s experience.

The above image shows that following significant growth of the economy since 1978, political stability, control of corruption and rule of law in China has decreased. Yet despite this, a reduction in good governance has not damaged the country’s economic growth. What does this mean? Perhaps it is because China has a very special system that does not demonstrate such a relationship between rule of law, good governance and economic growth. Or, perhaps the measure of China’s good governance index is not very reliable.

To complicate matters further, the rule of law agenda has continually expanded in China. As the world’s second largest economy (in GDP per capita), China is already part of the global village, and plays a significant role. In this global era, to ensure future economic development, good governance, political stability and civil and human rights, China cannot continue to avoid promoting rule of law.

In fact, the lack of rule of law development is limited by the classic Marxist theory employed in the Chinese constitution. Law is considered by Marxists as a negative element used by capitalists in their rule over the proletariat. Once a proletariat society is established, law should no longer be necessary. Given this, there is a significant need to develop classic Marxist theory to take account of this perspective.

What happened in the USSR has shown that classic Marxist economic ideology – in the long term – fails to increase social wealth. Moreover, a lack of understanding of the notion of law and the concept of the rule of law seems to be the main thrust of Marxist legal theory, including the ignorance of law’s economic, political and legal aspects. Marx attempted to show how historically, the rule of law has played an important but negative role in capitalist nations (for example, through land enclosures, confiscations, forced conditions of work, control of population movements). However, the main thrust of Marx’s analysis is that – regardless of ideology – a state is not simply the direct servant of the ruling class, (for example, working-class political power and welfare provision have grown considerably since Marx wrote); in fact, in some states, law is rarely capable of being interpreted as the direct expression of the will of a dominant class (Collins, 1982, p. 66), and the state seems more like an institution that emerges to maintain order and stability with the context of the dominant mode of production in a society.
It seems there is a difference between rule of law and class power. History has already proven that disputes between people and government will always appear in a state regardless of ideology, and disputes can be resolved in some states, but can also be turned into conflict in others. Conflict theory failed to account for the fact that law does not operate as a purely repressive mechanism in all societies. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink the meaning of the rule of law, especially in nations that are or have been influenced by classic Marxist theory.

The core difference between rule of law and class power is given by E P Thompson (1985, p. 263) when he stated that,

‘...most men have a strong sense of justice, at least with regard to their own interests. If the law is evidently partial and unjust then it will make nothing, legitimize nothing; contribute nothing to any class’s hegemony.’

Of course, the ruling class may attempt to protect their own interests through the law. However, law should clearly stipulate that it applies equally to all citizens, and therefore cannot appear to the public to favour only the ruling class. Hence, the law must not only have an effect on normal individuals, but also produce the same effect on the people who made the law. Therefore, the “law” whether in capitalist or socialist states - as a body of rules – will only be respected and followed by the people if it has been applied with logical criteria, with reference to standards of universality, justice, impartiality and equity.

In fact, the effect of law, from its occurrence and operation throughout the history of the human race, has had at least two very clear effects on nations and people. On one hand, many nations have collapsed because unjust laws forced people to resort to violence against the state (this happened particularly under the dominance of Confucian theory in Imperial China and the Kingdom of Korea where both countries endured revolutions which marked complete changes of dynasty). On another hand, many nations prevented this from occurring with just laws. This can be evidenced in the United Kingdom whereby the rule of law was steadily increased over a long period of time, staving off the threat of a revolution which was commonplace in many other parts of Europe during the 18th century (e.g. see E.P. Thompson’s work Whigs and Hunters, 1985).

Consequently, law cannot only be defined by classic Marxist theory that law simply equates to class power, but rather requires a more complex and perhaps contradictory understanding. In fact it is more likely that law is a sword that cuts both ways; one side can ‘harm’ the government, preventing arbitrariness, and the other side can ‘harm’ the people by implementing law which will legitimatize government. Therefore, the rule of law serves the need for the security of economic transactions and the general conditions of individual liberty. But, at the same time, it also serves the technical and ideological needs of the state and more generally, the efficient structuring of power. E P Thompson analysed 18th century England, challenging the classic Marxist assumption that rule of law is a negative element serving the objective of class control. E P Thompson (1985, p. 266) noted that:

‘...the rule of law itself, the imposing of effective inhibitions upon power and the defence of the citizen from power’s all-intrusive claims, seems to me to be an unqualified human good. To deny or belittle this good ... is a self-fulfilling error, which encourages us to give up the struggle against bad laws and class-bound procedures, and to disarm ourselves before power.’

In Thompson’s view, rule of law is an unqualified human good. However, in my view, rule of law has historically played a successful role as a “human good”, furthering social stability.

As the result of the above theoretical analysis, the meaning of the rule of law can be concluded as the English jurist A. V. Dicey formulated in the late nineteenth century. The most celebrated conception of the rule of law involves three elements: firstly, the absolute supremacy of law over arbitrary power, including wide discretionary powers of government; secondly, that every citizen (particularly, including lawmakers), are subject to the ordinary law of the nation administered in the ordinary courts; thirdly, that rights are based not upon abstract constitutional statements but upon the actual decisions of courts. In this conception, law is regarded as the rules governing all society. Government, no less than citizens, is seen as subject to law. The state can change law freely as it requires, through recognised processes, but the actions of all state servants and agencies are to be subject to law. Thus, if the Chinese government wishes to maintain social stability, the application of rule of law will perhaps be an important contributing factor in doing so. In addition, this would appear to be beneficial for China’s further economic development.
The importance of judicial independence

The rule of law demands that law acts as the primary source of rules governing society. A society with rule of law must consist of at least two core aspects, which are:

- Legal professionalism, and
- Judicial independence

Out of the above two aspects, judicial independence seems to be the most crucial. This is because law is worth little more than the paper it is written on for too many people in China. In fact, most people may never be concerned about the law, until they enter a dispute with other citizens or the government and require a settlement by law. This is why, from many perspectives, adjudication and courts seem to be an obvious and necessary central institution of the legal system. In many people’s view, the courts are the primary organs to represent the law, because judgements are passed by judges in the courts. According to this, the courts and the judges must appear as having a necessary level of justice and impartiality, in order to maintain credibility amongst the people. Therefore, judges must appear to the public to be making decisions independently and according to the law, and nothing more. As such, the concept of judicial independence is a keystone of the rule of law.

Judicial independence is an idea that has either internal (or normative) and external (or institutional) aspects. From a normative viewpoint, judges should be autonomous moral agents, who can be relied on to carry out their public duties independent of venal or ideological considerations. Independence in this sense is a desirable aspect of a judge’s character. In fact, regardless of the ideology of a nation, similar requirements for judicial independence are normative features of most written constitutions of modern nation-states. However, historically, institutional support is far more important than moral autonomy. This is due to the fact that judges are human and the decisions they must make can have a great influence on people, so it is necessary to provide institutional shields against any possible threats or temptations that might come their way. Judicial independence in this common sense is a feature of the institutional setting within which judging takes place.

According to the above analysis, the principle of judicial independence is the ability of a judge to make a decision on a matter free from pressures or inducements. Furthermore, the institution of the judiciary as a whole must also be independent by being separate from government and other concentrations of public power. “If the judiciary is to exercise a truly unbiased and independent adjudicative function, it must have special powers to allow it to ‘keep its distance’ from other governmental institutions, political organizations, and other non-governmental influences, and to be free of repercussions from such outside influences.” (Kelley, 1990, p. 2)

In order to ensure this occurs, many factors of judicial independence should be considered. As the Justice Thurgood Marshall (1981) of the US Supreme Court once said, “We must never forget that the only real source of power that we as judges can tap is the respect of the people.” There is a famous adage: justice must not only be done, but must also be seen to have been done. A court can only be truly accepted as being just if it has the confidence of the public that it is just and fair. “For trials to be regarded as fair it is important that judges are regarded as independent and not subservient to political or other interests” (Davies, et al., 2005 p. 244). In order to inspire confidence from people that justice is being applied independently, judges must not be under the influence of any outside sources (which includes the government, political organisations, non-governmental organisations, state/public companies, private businesses and individuals). To avoid such a perception, judges must have no real or apparent contact with outside sources.

If indeed they [judges] had such contact with outside sources, such as a political party, it would appear to be biased in favour of the policies of that party, or, if that party controls the current government, to be biased in favour of the state (Kelley, 1990, p. 5). If a court or an individual judge is subject to, or even appears to be subject to, inappropriate pressure or interference by the executive or administrative arm of government, this is considered to be an inappropriate interference with judicial independence. It must be so in order to limit the formal interaction between the courts and outside sources.
The history of the judiciary around the world demonstrates that the greatest danger of interference comes from other government institutions or political parties. This is because it is inevitable that there are some dealings between the courts and the executive branch or the legislative branch for financial and administrative purposes. To standardise the principle of the independence of judiciary, the government should only provide necessary security, finance and administrative support to the courts.

Therefore, according to the principle of judicial independence, the relationship between the government and the courts regarding the above issues is a relationship of support, not control. As such, if the government has the power to set judges’ appointments or remuneration, or the power to set courts’ administrative methods or operations costs, then the government has effectively set up a connection between itself and the courts. Judges, acting in their own interests must do all they can to acquire more support from the government. As the old proverb goes, ‘Don’t bite the hand that feeds you’. If courts protect the state-owned companies and government interests, the people will lose their respect for the judges. Judges will then lose their ‘power’ to find solutions to problems. Without public confidence, society as a whole is at risk of becoming less harmonious and stable.

Therefore, the institutional principle of judicial independence means that judges do not have contact with any other (non-judicial) sources, and particularly with other state institutions in matters which judges are concerned. This represents an idealistic view of complete judicial independence. However, history has shown that it is difficult to completely cut judges’ connections with state bodies. Simply writing such a principle into codified law will not necessarily result in an independent judiciary. In fact, no country can claim to have a complete independent judiciary; the subject of real interest is the degree to which the judicial branch is separated from other state powers. However, the characteristics of rule of law are more likely to be established if there is a high level of judicial independence.

Conclusion
Currently, in the case of China, the judicial system has improved significantly over the past three decades. However, the constitution establishes judges as belonging to the body of government officials, with lower relative ranks to their legislative and executive counterparts at all levels of the state hierarchy. Furthermore, the judiciary is solely dependent on the wealth of the local government. It has naturally created very close contact between the judiciary and the local authority. The level of judicial independence in China is not considered to be very high. As such, China’s economic boom over the past three decades has not benefited much from the actions or role of the judicial system. It is therefore possible that China’s future economic growth may require more considerations towards judicial independence, by increasing the separation between the judicial branch from the other state branches, as well as establishing an independent means of remuneration for judicial staff.

Thus the relationship between rule of law and economic growth can be an arguable and complicated issue. China’s experience seems to illustrate that economic boom may not necessarily require rule of law as a catalyst. However, lack of rule of law may lead to social problems occurring which may decrease political stability. In fact, no-one can seriously doubt that the rule of law is a significant factor in economic development, since it is now almost a truism to argue that an honourable justice system, maintained by independent legal institutions, underpins the economic and social advancement of any society.

Indeed, it is part of accepted wisdom that judicial independence is central not just to the operation of the rule of law but, more generally, to the good ordering of a society too. Clearly, one of the key challenges that China faces today and in the future is how it can adapt and develop a Marxist-style rule of law and judicial independence.
An analysis of the relationship between economic growth and the rule of law, a lesson from China’s experience

Peter yaliang Xu

References


An analysis of the relationship between economic growth and the rule of law, a lesson from China’s experience

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Communicating with the public: modern social security schemes and the transformation of traditional society in Tanzania

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Historically the source of social security for a Tanzanian has been the extended family and the community. The pressures of modern life, however, have led to changes over the years, and the old safety net no longer applies to anything like the same extent, as the experience of the Chagga people of Kilimanjaro region makes clear. Yet only approximately 10% of Tanzanians are covered by the country’s modern social security schemes. An investigation is underway to find out why the take-up of formal social security is so low, whether poor communication between the social security industry, the government and the market is a factor, and if so how communication might be improved. As part of this investigation a survey is taking place of workers in the “informal sector” such as fishermen, mine workers and small traders; final year school and teacher training college students; and key players in social security provision.

Keywords: Corporate Communication; Social Security; Tanzania; Chagga people

Introduction

According to a recent International Labour Organization (ILO) report only around 20% of the world’s population is covered by formal social security arrangements. The situation is worse in developing countries where the ratio is below 10% (ILO, 2008a). In Tanzania in East Africa the take-up is so low because most people consider formal social security to be irrelevant to their lives. Modern social security is relatively new to most of the continent. In the past traditional customs and arrangements applied, and the ways in which social protection measures were instituted and practiced by the residents of East Africa were very similar. Nomads such as the Masai who are found in both Kenya and Tanzania used their livestock as their insurance. But like those who farmed—for example the Chagga in Tanzania, the Kikuyu in Kenya and the Baganda in Uganda, they depended on their family affiliations for future support against social and economic hazards. Their children and their extended families were crucial for the future, and their participation in social activities with the community was important if support and assistance was to be received from that social group. In Africa the extended family rather than the nuclear family was the norm. This structure ensured that a safety net existed. The terms “brother” and “sister” include cousins, not just “same mother, same father” offspring. Children were sent long distances to board with relatives who lived near a school. In later years these children would repay their debt by helping out these relatives financially in their old age. As a result of this supporting children at school became a form of investment in one’s own future as well as in the children’s. Accepting responsibility for the elderly was part of family and community life. Traditional customs and arrangements, however, have weakened under the pressure of urbanization and other aspects of the modern world.
Both continuity and change have been features of Tanzanian society from the colonial period to the present. Government institutions and policies intended for the entire country were put in place firstly by the Germans and then by their post-World War I successors, the British. After independence in 1961 the Tanzanian leader Julius K. Nyerere took the path of African Socialism (Mwakikagile, 2009). He famously remarked: “While some nations aim at the moon, we are aiming at the village”. Given the difficulties in providing water, electricity, school and medical facilities for people spread throughout such a huge geographic area he came up with the policy of ujamaa (socialism). This brought rural dwellers together into collective villages where services could be centralized. They were not popular. Amongst other drawbacks they tended to disrupt traditional society. Such changes brought discomfort to those affected, especially those forced to move to new areas leaving behind what some regarded as sacred land left to them by their ancestors.

Nyerere, who ruled the country from independence in 1961 to his retirement in 1985, was a strong believer in locally owned policies that emphasised societal well-being and development as a collective responsibility (Mwakikagile, 2009). In addition to the safety net provided under traditional social security arrangements there were the Ujamaa na Kujitegemea (socialism and self reliance) policies pursued under Nyerere. The new policies had the common good and equality as the cornerstone of society’s existence plus shared values, opportunities and expectations. Taxation was the main instrument used to finance the needs of the destitute and those in acute need of social and economic protection. Such needs included free education and health care as well as settlements for deprived groups such as housing for those suffering from leprosy.

At village level those who were disadvantaged by being sick, disabled, widowed, orphaned or elderly would receive direct support from fellow villagers. They would be cushioned against social and economic contingencies by the larger community around them. Those working on the farm or other communal activities could be assured that should they become less able to carry on working, the wider community would support them. This was an important social security guarantee. Awareness that failure to work together was equal to isolating oneself served as a good reminder to anyone who was hesitating to participate in communal endeavours. This was similar to contributing or signing up for a social security scheme. Nyerere’s other methods of containing income disparities and social class included a cap on income and wages earnings, and the introduction of strict laws governing shareholding in private and public institutions. Another feature of Nyerere’s time in office was that no children lived on the streets, as some do under the liberalized economic policies of his successors. The Chagga people of the Kilimanjaro region have one of the highest per capita incomes in Tanzania (Howard and Millard, 1997). But nowadays there are Chagga street children, and young people coming together in small gangs known as vijwenu (sitting on dead stones) or “jobless corner”.

Modern social security

Social security has evolved in different ways in countries in the global South. It can be traced back to village societies where there were traditional systems of social security and hunger insurance (Platteau, 1988). Elsewhere (and in the context of Vietnam), Popkin (1979) argued that new social security mechanisms would be required in traditional village communities as they emerged and modernized. In Tanzania, social security started during the post-colonial era with the establishment of the National Provident Fund (NPF) in 1964 which later became the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) in 1997. Other funds in existence are the Parastatal Pension Fund (PPF Act, 1978), the Local Authority Provident Fund (LAPF Act, 2006), the Government Employees Provident Fund (GEPF Act, 2006), the Public Service Pension Fund (PSPF Act, 2004) and the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF Act, 2001). All such schemes aim to provide quality services and to sensitise the public to the benefits being offered and to membership advantages. Yet to date all schemes collectively cover no more than 10% of the total population.

A higher proportion of those excluded from any type of social security protection are from the informal sector such as self-employed persons and those employed in small-scale businesses. They include farmers, livestock keepers, small traders, transport workers, fishermen, small scale miners, transport workers, domestic servants, and others whose employment may not attract a regular income all the time. This economic group accounts for up to 50% of
Improving the effectiveness of communication in the social security sector in Tanzania
Frank Maduga and Tony Olden

The gross domestic product in some Southern countries and countries in transition (ILO, 2008b). ILO findings (2002) are backed up by the experience of Tanzania and its neighbours Uganda and Kenya: a major hindrance to increasing and widening social security coverage is the fact that most of those not covered come from the informal economy. For many years the social security industry has not placed much value on those who work in this sector. Instead it concentrates its activities on the relatively small number of formal sector employers. In commercial terms the informal sector represents a new market or unchartered territory.

The Chagga people: background and tradition

The Chagga are a good example of both tradition and change. They comprise around 1 million out of Tanzania’s population of approximately 40 million inhabitants. They are one of the largest ethnic groups in the country, and one of the most organized and modern. They live along the lower slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, which has some of the most productive land in the country. Their home area is one of the most developed in the country with its coffee and sisal estates as main cash crop business. Banana and maize farms are for food production, while wildlife and tourism provide additional sources of income. The Chagga were early adopters of modern farming including the use of fertilizer and irrigation systems. Today the Chagga use excess banana and maize produce to generate the much needed cash to meet other family and social requirements. However Smith (1999) points out that this move of going for cash exposed many families to oversell their food stocks, only to face hunger and malnutrition that hits women and children particularly hard.

The Chagga are amongst the most educated ethnic groups in Tanzania. In this particular location people take pride in their education above anything else. There are reports that even a 70 year old would have his or her primary school exercise books in a suitcase, occasionally taking them out to show to grandchildren, and boasting of good handwriting or excellent performance in class work during time at school many decades previously. Further, the Chagga are generally very active entrepreneurs, be it farming, trade or any other economic activities. For many years they have been applying new methods of cultivating their main crops such as bananas which give a good return. They were amongst the earliest groups in Tanzania to convert to Christianity, which gave them an advantage in terms of access to the Western education system—the schools established by missionaries in the colonial era. The money brought into the area each year by travelers climbing Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, is substantial. Yet despite the presence of foreigners, the Chagga maintained their social and economic traditions for a long time to a considerable degree, and still do so. They are known for aspiring to have their own house in their home area. They are also credited for making a lot of efforts in ensuring that they bury their fellow villagers, relatives and family members not only within the village but within family-owned pieces of land. One would be linked in the compound during life with those who have gone before, and after death one would be buried alongside them. The practice was extended to those who lived and died elsewhere. The remains of the deceased would be transported home and the society took responsibility for the burial. Women married to Chagga husbands were also recognized as part of the husbands’ clan hence they were to be buried where their men originate. Why then do modern social security products such as funeral grants not have appeal to such a group?

Their culture, innovativeness in income-generating activities, and common bond in social groupings, distinguished them from other groups including their closest neighbours from Pare and Meru as well as people on the Kenya side of the border. With regard to marriage, the Chagga to a large extent married fellow Chaggas. Anyone marrying a non-Chagga was an exception and there was even a word to describe such a relationship. When it came to the death of a breadwinner, the clan would ensure that the surviving children, spouse, and parents had some arrangements that made their lives go on with minimum deprivation. This included the now no longer popular arrangement of family inheritance: a brother would inherit the wife and children of the deceased.
The Chagga in times of change

Following the advent of HIV/AIDS the practice of wife inheritance has been frowned upon. In addition, Chaggas are increasingly now being buried wherever they die, in any part of the country. The advent of survival benefit being offered by modern social security schemes would be a natural successor to complement or even replace the traditional practices. However, the official statistics indicate that this is not happening.

Being one of the largest ethnic groups in the country they have a lot of impact in spearheading changes or maintaining the status quo wherever they have their presence. Originally residing in Moshi area and on the eastern and southern slopes of Mount Meru and Mount Kilimanjaro, they are now all over the country taking their entrepreneurial spirit with them wherever they go. Known for being industrious and committed business individuals, their influence stretches beyond business to areas such as farming methods, education, beliefs, culture and work ethics. They are distinguishable whether in the country or beyond. In recent times, members of Chagga communities are known to have established, owned and run business ventures elsewhere in East Africa, in Europe and in North America. In southern African countries such as Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Lesotho, the Chagga have a presence amongst successful medical practitioners, lecturers, other professionals and business people.

Though they are far away from the location of their traditional and ancestral practices, they would still identify themselves as Chaggas wherever they went. They may not be taking part in mbege drinking sessions (mbege is a common local alcoholic drink), or engaging in annual family reunions at Moshi, yet in all aspects they keep in mind their Chagga background regardless of lifestyle, culture and place of living. Far away from kihamba (a Chagga family plot where home grown bananas are the staple food), Chaggas would meet fellow Chaggas and form an alliance in any part of the world. In such situations there is bound to be some dilution of culture and other traditional approaches to marriage, faith and beliefs. However, a family or a social dispute involving Chagga persons would most likely be heard and resolved by a fellow Chagga.

During the past such matters were handled by the elders in Kilimanjaro area. Similar mediation processes are now being practiced wherever conflicting parties work or live without necessarily reverting back to Chagga land. In the absence of elders, friends, relatives or just ‘homeboys’ or ‘home girls’ (though the latter are not common unless the disputes involve women) would be called upon to intervene.

Over the years, the Chagga have traditionally maintained certain kinds of gatherings. One of such occasions is known as ndesi. This particular event involves food—mainly roasted or boiled goat—accompanied by drinks such as mbege. When one needs assistance in the farm or when building a house, all that was required was to organize food and drinks and invite fellow villagers. Regardless of how big the task was members of the community would do their best to finish the assignment and carry on with the eating and drinking. This arrangement was very useful in securing a helping hand for the sick, disabled or widowed whenever something needed to be done. These arrangements provided a form of traditional social security. In such situations, even those who would not wish to drink mbege (it is unlikely that they would not share the organized meal), would still turn up and render their support as this was the ‘expected’ thing to do. There was no way one could deliberately miss the occasion without criticism. Sanctions were in place for those refusing to cooperate including being alienated from fellow members. In modern times such gatherings have also taken the shape of family/clan reunions. Those who reside outside Kilimanjaro area usually make efforts to be home during and around specific times. They would join their fellows in their local village for Christmas and New Year festivals or during burial or wedding occasions so that they are all together. It is no surprise that the occasion was also used to address other matters of interest to individuals, families or the entire clan.

Modernization has brought its own problems, however. In Tanzania as elsewhere in Africa those who received mission school education got a head start which their children and grandchildren generally consolidated for the family. Those who missed out were less fortunate. The income gap between rich and poor has widened, and the Mt Kilimanjaro region has what might appear to be a surprising combination of a high child malnutrition rate with a high per capita income. The conclusion of Howard and Millard (1997, p. 206) is that, taken together, “colonialism, capitalism, socialism and Christianity … unraveled Chagga safety nets for the poor”. Capitalism goes back at least as far as the Arab caravans who set out from the coast in search
of ivory and slaves. They went far into the interior—as far as Lake Victoria—and needed provisions along the way. The Chagga supplied these. After taking over Tanganyika in the late 19th century the German colonizers introduced a hut tax, a way of forcing men to work in the cash economy. Christianity emphasized the individual. The post-independence government had African socialism as its philosophy, but it still needed income from exports. People were penalized for planting crops to feed themselves instead of growing coffee for sale.

Rapid demographic and social changes brought by modernization made it less effective to utilize some traditional means such as preparing food and drink (ndesi) to solicit community support. Not only has the culture changed dramatically, but there is also a serious shortage of manpower capable of rendering such support in the rural areas. Children form the major proportion of the rural community and very often are being looked after by a single mother or elderly grandparents. Kerner and Cook (1991) found that the majority of households in their research sample were made up of late middle-aged to elderly couples living with younger children and grandchildren. Although more than 80% of Tanzania’s population is still rural, young men and women were moving to urban areas due to a combination of land pressure and educational and work opportunities. Children born to unemployed young people in the cities are sent to the villages to be cared for by already struggling elderly relatives. Children orphaned by HIV/AIDS become the responsibility of their grandparents also. For widows whose partners have died of HIV/AIDS life can become intolerable due to social stigma, inadequate nutrition and lack of medical services.

The situation is not limited to the Chagga but includes the Pare, the Masai and many others throughout the country. The coastal areas interacted with Arabs from the Gulf and to a large degree adopted their culture, customs and practices including the Islamic faith. Yet as elsewhere the extended family was all-important when it came to social protection. Nowadays this is not what it was, and the aged, the orphaned, the widowed, the sick and the disabled are all liable to suffer.

A problem of communication?
Insuring for the future is difficult when day-to-day financial pressures are so intense for the majority of people in Tanzania. Why worry about what your funeral will cost when it could be years before you die and you know your family will have to bury you anyway? But lack of communication is one reason for the low take-up of modern social security schemes. Communication with the public has been particularly successful in two Tanzanian campaigns, one historic and one contemporary. Under Nyerere’s leadership in the 1960s and 1970s there was a big emphasis on education, literacy and libraries, and adult literacy rates rose to amongst the highest in Africa (Olden, 2005). The president’s sense of the value of literacy communicated itself to the general public, and people responded (Bwatwa et al, 1989). The campaign applied very effective communication tools that were relevant and worked to achieve the objectives. In more recent years public campaigns concerning the importance of safe sex practices (for example the main city of Dar es Salaam has numerous billboards advocating safe sex) have also contributed to the lowering of the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the country.

The American communication specialists Grunig and Hunt (1984) list four models of communication between organisations and their stakeholders/publics. The fourth and the one they consider most appropriate is what they call the two-way symmetrical model of public relations. This emphasises a two-way rather than a one-way relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders. The practices of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) in Tanzania would appear to run counter to this. If a man is a member of the NSSF he gets free health care for himself, his wife and his children. But an unmarried man concerned about the health of his parents will not find this attractive, since they are excluded from the scheme. One has to enrol for the health care, and filling in forms is an obstacle for any Tanzanian who is not literate. In addition, Western-type records such as marriage certificates will not always exist: one elderly man, on being asked to produce his marriage certificate, pointed to his grandchildren and said “Look, these are my marriage certificate”. 
This indicates a communication problem. In advancing their stakeholders' theory, Grunig and Repper (1992) argue that an organization needs to have a constant dialogue with its stakeholders with a view to learning their concerns in order to communicate back more effectively on issues raised (the two-way symmetrical model) or maintain a dialogue with stakeholders in order to adjust the organizational position in line with stakeholders’ expectations. They argue that communication is excellent when the latter takes place. In contrast, the traditional communication model refers to an organization which puts its message across using the most convenient means at its disposal, targeting as many people as possible (large mass), and hoping that the target audience will receive the message in due course.

Investigating the problem
Even in a developed country like the United Kingdom the social welfare structure took many years to get to its present stage. In addition, modern Information and Communications Technology (ICT) means that monitoring the workforce, those out of work and the retired is relatively straightforward most of the time. The situation in Tanzania is less advanced, and the society is different. Although stable and democratic, Tanzania is a poor country and most Tanzanians work on the land, in fishing, or in some other part of the informal sector, for example petty trading. The Kiswahili term jua kali (toiling under the “hot sun”) is used in neighbouring Kenya. For most Tanzanians life is a struggle. They need food, shelter, clothing and money for school fees and other vital things today rather than the benefits that contributions to a modern social security scheme may bring at some stage in the future. Organizations such as the National Social Security Fund do not quite seem to take such realities into account, which limits their impact on society. In the meantime, progressive modernization and weakening of traditional approaches to social welfare means that increasing numbers of Tanzanians are falling between the gaps.

A research project is in progress to find out why the take-up of formal social security is so low, whether poor communication is a factor, and if so how communication might be improved.

The specific research questions are:
- What are the traditional attitudes to social welfare, and how have they changed over the years?
- What makes Tanzanians so indifferent to modern social security schemes?
- How are these schemes being communicated to the public?
- How might communication be improved using contemporary theory and practice?

A survey is being conducted in eight of the twenty-one regions of the country (including the home of the Chagga people, Kilimanjaro) taking into account geographical spread, cultural, economic, and other demographic factors. Three different groups are being surveyed: workers; final year school and teacher training college students; and key players in social security provision. Why these three groups?

Fishermen, farmers, livestock keepers, mine workers and small traders all operate in the informal sector of the economy, and live close to the margins of life. Their perspectives are being sought in the knowledge that few are likely to belong to formal social security schemes. A fisherman in Tanga or Dar es Salaam is used to not counting for much in society. He knows that if he is ill and cannot put to sea there will be no money coming in for himself and his family. Mine workers are better educated, and also risk their health and indeed their lives to make money. Gold is mined in Singida and Tanzanite in Arusha. The mines are owned by wealthy individuals and those who go down them are self-employed. Most of the work is done by hand, with those underground earning more than the ones at the top who pull up the loads for mechanical grinding and extraction of minerals. Miners are also conscious of the welfare of their families. Questionnaires are being used to collect data from the workers, but as a survey tool they have obvious limitations when dealing with a population that includes non-literate, as in this research. Fishermen, for example, have low levels of literacy, and in such instances the questionnaire is being administered orally.

Final year school and teacher training college students are being surveyed because they will shortly be entering the world of employment.
Final year A level students are at least eighteen years of age and often older. Final year teacher training college students will already have A levels if they are taking the diploma programme that will lead to them becoming secondary school teachers. They will already have O levels if they are taking the certificate programme that will turn them into primary school teachers. Teacher training colleges and secondary schools in various regions are being selected. The students at such schools come from all over the country.

Key players in social security provision include senior staff at social security providers such as the Government Employee Pension Fund and the Local Authority Pension Fund. The interview will be a better tool than the questionnaire when surveying these individuals, many of whom were already known to the main author from his day-to-day job as a regional manager for the National Social Security Fund. Information on traditional attitudes to social welfare will be gathered through interviewing some members of Chama cha Wazee [the Association of Older People], which has branches in all regions.

Conclusion

Continuity and change are features of life in Tanzania as they are elsewhere, but change has been enormous in Africa over the last century. The concept of the extended family survives, but not as strongly as before. The gap between rich and poor widens. Modern social security arrangements provide a level of protection, but those most likely to need help in the future tend not to participate. The social security industry needs to be much more flexible in what it provides, and it needs to enter into a dialogue with both customers and potential customers. The industry and the government must communicate the value of social security schemes, just as the importance of literacy was communicated to Tanzanians in the 1960s, and the importance of safe sex practices has been communicated in recent years. Preliminary indications from this investigation show that most students at teacher training colleges are not even aware of the modern concept of social security—and these are the very people who in twelve months time will be teaching the nation’s children. Official awareness of the problem is increasing, however, and both the Ministry of Labour in Tanzania and the International Labour Organization are interesting themselves in this research.
References


The use of information by the long-term settled Irish population in London

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The Irish in Britain are a well established community. This study focuses on the circumstances and experiences of members of a long term settled group who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. Social structures and networks have developed to meet the personal and cultural needs of the community. Informal and personal communication plays a strong role in providing for information needs and these link into networks provided by churches, cultural associations, local authorities and the voluntary sector. The experiences of the group have determined their behaviours and preferences. Overall, their experiences form part of the pattern of aging and act as a challenge to resourcing future needs.

Keywords | Irish diaspora; Irish in Britain; Irish in London; migrant labour; user community; information seeking behaviour; elderly populations

Background

Ireland has always experienced emigration, but it grew rapidly after the failure of the potato crop in the 1840s. This has continued steadily ever since with a boost in the ten years after 1945 (Fitzpatrick, 1989). Modern commentators refer to this as the ‘Irish diaspora’ which consists of Irish emigrants and their descendants in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and states of the Caribbean and continental Europe. The diaspora maximally interpreted, contains over 80 million people, which is over thirteen times the population of the island of Ireland now (estimated 6.2 million in 2009).

In order to settle and survive in a new environment, the Irish needed to access information. Over time the information needs of the Irish have changed, particularly for the elderly immigrants who form the basis of this study.

All the major British urban cities experienced some form of Irish migration with Liverpool and Glasgow becoming two cities with large Irish populations. As the capital city and the historic focal point of the whole British Empire, London also experienced large-scale migration of Irish people. The Borough of Camden and the East End were settled in the interwar years as many Irishmen worked on the railways and in the docks. More large-scale migration from Ireland came in the 1950s exploiting the post-war rebuilding and general improvement in economic conditions in the UK. The population of the Irish Republic fell every year during the 1950s. It is impossible to make a precise estimate due to the fluidity of movement between Ireland and UK but according to Cowley (2001) who used national insurance number registrations as basis of estimate in 1955, 48,000 people left Ireland; by 1957 it had risen to 58,000. The larger part of this migration was directly to Britain because of proximity and the pull of an established Irish community. It impacted on all large major cities such as Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and especially London. In the latter there was a large concentration of Irish in Kilburn, Criklewood and Camden, as well as considerable communities of Irish in Hammersmith, Fulham, Acton, Holloway and Paddington.

Irish migrants tended to go to live in areas of existing immigrant concentrations. Poverty and racism went hand in hand and these conditions led to a degree of self reliance. The historical relationship between the UK and Ireland also added to this uneasy relationship and this deteriorated in the late 1960s when the political situation in Northern Ireland worsened. With their Roman Catholic faith as one of the defining factors of their identity there was...
tension with the largely Protestant north. This sense of community served as bonding and as more migrants arrived from Ireland they used family contacts as a first point of contact. The fact that the Irish tended to work, socialise and intermarry with each other also strengthened the idea of a home away from home.

Another burst of emigration came in the 1980s: immigrants were educated to a better standard and the traditional sense of identity was less important. This led to some changes in outlook in the traditional centres of the Irish community. Families also moved towards the suburbs of London and some went back to Ireland as the Irish economy began to pick up in the late 1990s. According to the 2001 census there were 675,000 people in England identifying themselves as “white Irish” (about 1% of the population).

Now, the age profile of the Irish community is an older one. The percentage of Irish people aged 50 years and over (at 51.5%) is higher than for the white British population as a whole (35.2%) and for non-white minorities (14.5%) (MIND website, 2010). Women also outnumber men due to a longer average life expectancy and a better lifestyle. As Age Concern (1998) point out in their report, older people from ethnic minorities face double discrimination due to age and race. Ethnic minority people require more support to cope with poor health and low income and are faced with racial discrimination. Norman (1985) goes further and explains that migrants experience “a triple jeopardy scenario” due to old age, a tendency to live in physical and socially challenging circumstances of inner urban areas, as well as suffering cultural and/or racial discrimination which can lead to communication difficulties in housing, health and social care (Tilki, 2003; Tilki et al., 2009).

The elderly Irish face challenges as a group and their information needs must not be overlooked. The communication and delivery of such services must be culturally sensitive to maximise effect. Thus their experiences on arriving to this country, their way of life and interaction with other groups and organisations are a basic factor in understanding their information needs.

Twenty people from the Irish community were interviewed using mainly semi-structured face-to-face interview techniques. Two groups were studied: one consisting of fifteen people, all long-term migrants living in London; the other comprised five who were involved in information activities. Two of the five had done extensive studies into the health of the Irish population in London. A range of organisations that provide services for these migrants were studied along with a review of the information that these organisations generate.

An information audit of the Irish organisations involved with elderly migrants

Organisations of first contact for migrants:
On arrival, migrants would have been totally perplexed by the bright lights of London. While many, but by no means all, had some friends or family members to rely on, these people could not meet all the initial information requirements. The Catholic Church was one of the first groups to recognise the needs of the Irish migrant in Britain. It was familiar and has a tradition of social support. In 1920 the Catholic population of Britain stood at two million and by 1970 it had almost reached five million. While some of this increase can be attributed to post-war migration from places such as Poland and Italy, the majority of this increase was from Ireland. The church authorities were quick to act when large-scale post-war migration commenced. Led primarily by the Archbishop of Dublin John Charles Mc Quaid, The Irish chaplaincy scheme was initiated. The idea of the scheme was for church authorities to keep close tabs on the flock in “Protestant England”, but it was soon realised by the priests and chaplains on the ground that more was needed.

Clergy organised social activities which provided an ‘alcohol free’ environment and thus attractive to women in the community. Many other clergy got involved in community groups such as housing associations and hostels. Chaplains went into the field to support migrant men working on motorway construction projects and they performed other supportive roles such as letter writing to the families back home. The large concentration of Irish in places such as Kilburn allowed people to meet and exchange information on Sundays at masses.

The Irish have a great oral tradition and this was and still is reflected in the way information is exchanged around the community. The Irish public house was an important place for Irishmen in particular. While the aspects of drinking and socialising are well documented, the pub allowed people to maintain links with fellow Irishmen and exchange ideas and information. It has often been commented
that such famous hostelries such as the Crown and the Archway Tavern were not just pubs but labour exchanges also where men could pick up work. These public houses also provided lodging and many cashed cheques as most people were without a bank account.

Irish dance halls also provided informal platforms for information to be shared. By the late 1960s there were over twenty of these establishments with the Galtymore in Cricklewood and the Buffalo in Camden Town providing focal points for the community. These cultural centres may have passed into history but they left their mark on the community as it struggled to assimilate to mainstream British society. They demonstrate how cultural capital sustained a natural information resource.

**Official government bodies:** Since 1950 the embassy of the Republic of Ireland has been located in Westminster. In addition to its normal diplomatic function it has an iconic status due to the large number of Irish in the country and their unique legal status. The embassy provides assistance in areas such as passport queries and birth certificate information. The embassy also gives advice to people who are retiring or considering moving home to Ireland after a long period of time.

The embassy serves as a bridge between the Irish government and organisations that are dedicated to helping meet the needs of the Irish migrant.

The Dion group was set up by the Irish government (Dion is the Irish world for shelter) to address the concerns of the Irish community in Britain. The committee has given much financial support to voluntary agencies that provide advice and welfare services, which need to be accessed by vulnerable migrants. This constitutes a wide spectrum of services such as health and housing entitlements, social welfare and employment, which promotes social inclusion.

The Federation of Irish Societies (FIS) was set up in 1973 as an informal umbrella organisation for existing Irish clubs and societies to assist them in finding accommodation and giving business advice. It set up the community care network and was a major force in setting up associations such as the Irish Housing Association to deal with the needs of the most disadvantaged members of the community. The FIS is non-political but has had formal meetings with the Irish Government since the early 1980. Quarterly meetings are held with the Irish Ambassador on matters relating to the Irish in Britain. There has been increased contact with the British Government in recent times and the FIS attends meetings of the British-Irish parliamentary assembly. There has been representation at the Home Office Relations Forum, which has stimulated political involvement and helped to raise the plight of so many migrants in Britain. The inclusion of the Irish as a separate ethnic group in regard to the census, for instance, will only help to generate more statistical data for research purposes. The FIS is active right across the UK and is involved in all aspects of Irish life in London whether social, cultural or as a service provider.

Local government services also provide services for all aspects of elderly migrant life. Camden library service has an extensive local history collection with a range of sources which reflect the Irish community in the Borough. While the library service has an important part to play in migrant life it plays less of a special role in the Irish community. Local government services utilised by the Irish migrants tend to be more health or benefit based. Ealing council provides an age concern service: the Irish Advice Service. Its drop-in centre covers such issues as benefits housing, personal care and returning to Ireland.

**Housing associations and accommodation provision:** The provision of housing is one of the greatest concerns for Irish migrants. Community-based action has developed. The Inisfree Housing Association was founded in 1985 in Brent with the goal of improving health and housing conditions. At present it owns over 500 properties over North and North West London. The association catered primarily for Irish migrants but is open to any ethnic group. Furthermore, it has been involved in strategic alliances with other housing associations such as the Solomon project. This project, which commenced in 1998, consists of a loose gathering of housing associations, which allow it to pool resources and share information. Other housing associations that have an Irish focus are the Cara Housing Association and An Teach Association, which are based in Haringey.

Arlington House in Camden is a hostel which caters for migrant needs. It was opened at the turn of the last century and was the last of a chain of hostels built by the Victorian philanthropist Lord Rowton. At present, one third of its residents are of Irish extraction.
Information services and charities: The London Irish Centre is one of the oldest of its type set up in 1955 by a committee led by Father Tom McNamara. The committee had the foresight to purchase premises in Camden Square where it remains today. The primary aims of the centre were to form a social service bureau to give advice, to keep a register of approved lodgings for both men and women and to provide a hall for social and recreational functions. Today the centre has three large halls with catering facilities, a fully staffed advice and information centre. The bulk of the current case workload has to do with accommodation for long-term migrants but there is also a focus on welfare benefits and employment issues. The centre is also involved in community work through its outreach programme, which caters for older migrants in North London (Kilburn, Camden and Islington). The aim of this service is to be pro-active and to bring information and education to people who may be unable to find it. The service deals with people’s access to health care and social opportunities, along with such issues as adequate lodgings and income. The centre meets a wide variety of social needs with emphasis on traditional Irish music and dancing as well as providing educational courses in the Irish language. It also holds a book club and the London Irish theatre is attached to it. The centre has strong links to other Irish organisations such as the GAA and housing associations, so that information needs can be tackled in a coordinated way.

The Irish Support and Advice Service is based in Hammersmith and performs a similar function to its sister centre in Camden. It has a large focus on the needs of the long-term Irish migrant in Britain and has currently two pension groups in Ealing and Hammersmith, which help consolidate social networks by providing support and activities. The ISAS promotes its advice services with a drop in clinic three times a week in Hammersmith and once a week in Ealing, covering how to claim a pension, obtain housing benefit to help pay rent, seek sheltered accommodation and make referrals for counselling, employment allowance and community care grants. The service also provides advice on returning to Ireland and how to obtain an Irish pension, birth certificate or passport. There is also an outreach service, which involves one to one home visits. This is designed for people with poor health or disability who would not be able to come to the drop in clinic. The service the ISAS provides has a high demand and at the present time is processing over a thousand enquiries a year.

The London Irish Women’s Centre was set up in 1983 to cater for the needs of Irish migrant women. Situated in Stoke Newington, it provides a variety of services for women of all walks of Irish life, particularly those who are disadvantaged such as Irish traveller women. The organisation provides a wide range of services designed to meet the needs of women such as information on the National Health Service, education providers, cultural and social events, housing applications, homelessness debt issues or disability allowances. In addition, the centre also has a small library with Internet access and offers services such as photocopying or printing facilities at a reduced rate.

The London Irish Women’s Centre also liaises with the Immigrant Counselling And Psychotherapy (ICAP) to aid its clients. This is an organisation that deals with migrants of all backgrounds but has a focus on the needs of Irish women. It is attached to the centre and receives funding from the Irish government. As a charity it provides culturally sensitive counselling and psychotherapy to members of migrant backgrounds. ICAP specialises in dealing with people of Irish backgrounds who may be vulnerable and have suffered various forms of mental health issues or abuse. It has a project running in Islington to create awareness of Irish groups in and around the borough. It provides information on healthy living and ways to socialise, and is a valuable service as the stigma of mental health issues is very prevalent in the Irish community.

Brent Irish Advice Service provides a valuable service for pensioners. It was set up in the late 1970s and is run by volunteers as a community and welfare organisation. This organisation provides many general services such as information on freedom passes for public transport, pension credits either British or Irish and other general advice. There are currently two projects running: one provides a welcoming environment where people of Irish descent can take part in social activities and information sessions. The other is a transition to old age project. The object of these projects is to deliver information in a culturally sensitive way so the migrant feels at ease.

There are many organisations operating in London, which help migrants who may have slipped through the cracks of society. One such organisation is Cricklewood Age Concern. Operating in North London since its inception in 1983 it is open to all people whatever their ethnic origin but has a strong link to the Irish community. One of the main objectives of
this group is to re-integrate people back into society. It offers a wide range of services such as the most basic requirement of providing clean clothing and hot food, to more sustained activities such as offering support and direction for education and job prospects. The organisation works in close contact with the borough along with other agencies such as Homeless London and Housing Justice.

The Aisling Project is a registered charity, which is dedicated to reaching out to long-term Irish migrants who feel vulnerable and isolated. It also specialises in providing support for migrants who long to go and see their homeland again and it also supports long-term migrants reconnect with family and friends. The project has expanded greatly over the last 12 years and it makes it one of its primary aims to get in touch with as many Irish migrants as it possibly can. The project is completely run by volunteers who have experience in dealing with issues such as healthcare, alcohol dependency and homelessness. This project is also attached to Arlington House.

Cultural organisations: The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) has a strong London presence. The organisation became prominent in the heyday of migration in the 1960s with clubs scattered right across the U.K. It was particularly important in London as the city has its own team and enters in competition at levels with other competing counties in Ireland. The GAA provided much-needed cultural support to migrants and was particularly important during testing times such as during repeated bombing campaigns in the 1970s. It provides a platform where immigrants from all areas of Irish life can mingle while giving them a sense of belonging. This greatly aids the information transfer role of the GAA. There are numerous local GAA centres scattered throughout the city, but are most common in traditional Irish areas such as the North and North West of London with the main stadium situated in Ruislip.

The London Irish Centre was established in 1995 in Hammersmith and received generous Irish government funding since its inception. The centre does similar work to the Irish Centre in Camden but there is much more emphasis on the social aspect of migrant life. The centre runs weekly programme featuring Ireland’s best traditional and contemporary musicians, Irish literary events such as story telling and poetry nights. There is a dedicated elder programme, which provides social space for migrants to meet and mingle in a secure environment. There are also twice-monthly tea dance and reminiscence groups to allow migrants to share experiences and memories. The centre also has an emphasis on adult education with subjects offered such as Irish language, cultural studies and a variety of Irish music and dance classes. The David Whiteley library is Britain’s only public library specialising in fiction and non-fiction Irish books. The collection has grown throughout the years and now stands at a total of 3500 items and is a valuable information repository. Other organisations that operate in this field are the County Associations, which allow people from the same county to mingle and socialise. They were a strong forum for migrants to meet in the early days of migration with all twenty-six counties of the Republic or Ireland being represented. Today, some exist in name only but the Sligo, Mayo and Tipperary associations still maintain memberships. Other groups which help propel Irish culture and way of life are the London Irish Theatre, Southwark Irish Cultural Arts and Development Centre, and the London Irish Network.

The media: The Irish Post was set up in 1970 to address the information needs of migrants throughout the U.K. by keeping them informed of events and services in their area. It has provided a source of news from Ireland, which is often ignored in British media circles. To an extent the WWW has superseded it for coverage but it is still highly regarded as an important information source for the elderly in Britain. The Irish World is another paper, which generates information for the Irish community. It began in 1990 and provides much the same function as its rival paper. However it is considered much more London based and the fact that it arrived later than its rival has contributed to it having a lower readership particularly among the older demographic. Both of these papers are published weekly.

The national and regional Irish newspapers are widely available throughout London and provide migrants with news from home. The national papers tend to have strong readerships with migrants still having a strong bond with their places of origin. In the past it was not uncommon for relatives or friends in Ireland to post local papers to migrants so that they felt in touch with life at home.

The national broadcaster in Ireland (RTE) provided a radio service, which was available in London on Longwave Radio Atlantic 252. It provided a valuable information source for
people in London. This was particularly true for GAA matches as many people eagerly anticipated the commentary. Unfortunately this service ceased in 2008 to be replaced by a digital service, which most migrants are unaware of and unable to access. RTE television is widely screened in most Irish public Houses and keeps people up to date with news generated by Irish media services.

Interviews with representatives of organisations: Five people familiar with the organizational environment were identified and interviewed. The former chair of the Federation of Irish Societies (FIS) noted that many social taboos still exist today, and these are barriers to successful information transfer. General and mental health can still be a problem area. Alcohol abuse is associated with depression and a feeling of isolation, generating a sense of shame among certain quarters of migrants and a perceived failure to have a successful migration experience. There is a reluctance to seek help from their adopted homeland. With increasing age the problem may be magnified as their social networks and resources degrade.

The Deputy Head of the Social Policy Research Centre at Middlesex University has conducted extensive research into the migration paths of Irish women coming to London. Her research focuses on the lives of Irish nurses who were a significant group in the National Health Service at the end of the 1960s. Their experiences were different to the men and this has been overlooked. She commented that a lot of these nurses who never married had lived in hospital accommodation and when faced with retirement had to seek new homes. This can be a traumatic experience as their support network of friends is also lost. Some nurses who managed to settle and have families married fellow Irishmen, as marrying outside the community (a process known as ‘othering’) was frowned upon. This brought fresh problems due to the lifestyles of some (but not all) Irish men. Alcoholism and absenteeism from the home were common, and while separation and divorce was much more acceptable in the UK than Ireland, many marriages were based on the core Irish belief that only a death could end a marriage. This circle of domestic strife and difficult family life left a mark on many women and it is evident that mental health services must be culturally tapered to respond to women in such situations.

An organizer of the Irish Network of Great Britain was interviewed. His organisation has been aimed at the younger migrant. It is his view that the process of erosion of the community has been intensifying since the 1980s due to different employment practices, and changing lifestyles, and it has accelerated rapidly since 2000. He attributes this to the fact that the majority of Irish would have emigrated in their late teens and that they are approaching retirement as a cohort. Senior citizenship is bringing them to encounter problems and conditions their experience has not necessarily equipped them for.

A worker at the Cricklewood Homeless Concern was interviewed. This organisation is not exclusively involved with Irish migrants but its origins lay in this community. This area of London has long been associated with the Irish community and the worker and his colleagues are in an excellent position to judge what is happening on the ground with regard to the Irish community. He has observed that there has been a marked increase in the number of homeless elderly Irish in the last decade. While there has always been some cases of homelessness, he attributes this to retirement and the loss of income and status. Many live in private rented accommodation so become vulnerable. Problems of mental health issues, social isolation and alcoholism come easily to the fore. He also notes the pride that some of these men have and the sheer embarrassment that many have in asking for assistance. The organisation he represents has done much work to highlight the problem but more needs to be done. In his own words “prevention is better than cure” and the emphasis must be on creating awareness of the services and help that these members of society are entitled to while consolidating and expanding existing services.

A staff member at the Irish Post was interviewed and observed that the paper has witnessed a steady fall in circulation figures for a considerable length of time. The readership reflects the aging population whilst the younger people of the community are searching the Internet for their information needs. However, he was quick to point out that the Irish Post still provides a valuable information resource to its readership. Moving to a digital platform would be a solution but in so doing it could alienate the older community and also hurt circulation figures. He is correct in his assessment that the paper performs an admirable role in creating awareness of issues in the Irish community and also in providing information services and events that may aid an immigrant way of life. The Irish Post is one of the key components in communicating a message to the long-term migrants.
Discussion of findings from the information audit: The first is that there are many organisations working on behalf of migrants which encompass all strands of Irish life in London. The historical size of the community has made this possible and the community as a whole is vibrant, thriving, and equal to any ethnic group, which makes up the demography of London. There is also an awakening in circles that some sectors of the community and particularly the elderly have been caught in a “time warp” and have been left behind. The efforts of organisations, clubs, social services and studies in the field of academia are all contributing to combat the problem. There is a great deal of co-operation between service providers with facilities and resources being pooled together to achieve maximum effectiveness. Many of these service providers, which tackle the needs of the Irish, employ staff of Irish backgrounds. This can help break down barriers as long-term migrants feel much more comfortable with somebody who understands their culture.

However there are still major challenges to face by information providers in helping the delivery of services that migrants should be entitled to. The community is aware to some degree of the services that are available but they are not always being accessed. The audit highlights the need to deliver the message in an effective way. There has been a major push from all sectors of society to incorporate more and more of everyday information needs in a digital form. This can be seen as an evolution for all communities, but the long-term Irish migrants there are still enormous difficulties in adapting to this. Therefore traditional and older methods of delivering information must be maintained in an attempt to keep as many of this community from falling into a state of “information paralysis”.

The Peoples voice

Interviews with information users: These took place between the 22nd of November and the 18 December 2010. Six interviewees were known personally to the author and a process of snowballing was used to gain nine more participants. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) indicate snowballing is a common sense approach if the research is sensitive or the population is dispersed. The interviews were conducted in venues chosen by the interviewees (Acton, Shepherds Bush and Kilburn). Eight of the interviews took place at the home of the interviewee, four were conducted in a social club and three in coffee shops. The questions were open ended way. A Dictaphone was used to record the interviews and notes were taken.

The interviews were conducted in a professional and friendly manner with all subjects willing to discuss their views and the problems they were encountering. Certain subjects that were uncomfortable for people to talk about such as present family conditions and health issues were avoided. Each interview was planned to run between forty-five and sixty minutes but some interviewees were willing to extend.

The characteristics of the group: Eight men and seven women took part. All participants arrived in Britain in the main period of mass migration with the earliest arrival coming in 1951 and the latest in 1973. The ages varied from sixty-three years of age (the youngest) to eighty-four (the oldest) . Nine came from a rural agricultural background and six from a town or urban setting. All except one (from Northern Ireland) were from the Republic of Ireland and all were Roman Catholic by birth. Family situation varied and can be best illustrated by the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Single</td>
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All the women interviewed had been married. All of the men interviewed had worked at some stage in the construction industry and as subject D states “I was always away from home working and then in the pub, it was the culture of the time. A lot of men neglected our families and now we are on our own”
The subjects that were married by and large did so from within the community but once again, women tended to have broader horizons with two women marrying outside the community. These two cases in particular had strong views as both married outside their Roman Catholic faith. This was known as a process of ‘othering’ and was frowned upon socially in the past. The opposition to marrying a British Protestant was obvious but subject B’s partner was Greek Cypriot in origin and as she explained, “It was difficult to explain my choice to my friends here in London, but it was impossible to explain to members of family back home, none of them had any idea where Cyprus was”.

Of the twelve subjects who married, all had children. The size of family was between four and nine, in line with typically Irish families of the time. The entire sample had contact with the children but this tended to be stronger with the female subjects as in a traditional Irish family, where the mother takes the lead with parental duties. The fact that there was a high degree of absenteeism among Irishmen also tends to damage relationships as children reach adulthood. It can be advantageous for migrants to have good relations, as offspring will be able to aid their parents with their information needs. This can be as basic as searching the Internet for service or just helping in filling out official application forms, which some elderly people may find difficult. It must be pointed out that there is a lot of evidence to back up the claim that many Irish men did adjust to family life and had a long and successful career and home life.

**Education:** One of the vehicles of assimilation is the standard of education that a migrant receives in their home country along with their learning experiences in the host country. The system of education in Ireland was and still is very similar to the system used in the U.K. But there was one major difference in this group: the men migrating were products of the new Irish nation, and this shaped their education experience. The provision of teaching in the Irish language and a rather slanted view of Irish history was to shape many peoples’ minds in this time. There was also the fact that the Irish state in many cases left the provision of education in the hands of religious orders such as the Christian Brothers. This educational experience would not always be the best preparation for migration to Britain. However, it became obvious from discussion that the experience of men and women were very different.

This can be attributed to many factors, but the primary one is the level of education they received. Of the men interviewed only one had gone onto secondary level and then only for two years. The cost of secondary education in Ireland at this time would have been beyond the reach of many families.

The opportunities for men to continue to learn formally in Britain were rarely considered among this group. Many men picked up valuable skills when working in their chosen industry but these were learned on site and in a haphazard nature. The lack of formal education meant that many men stayed in positions of employment that offered little progression. Academic ability was not required to progress in many of the construction firms. Physical strength was always more important. This lack of education has led to many men now living blinkered lives, with many freely admitting they would avoid a situation if they felt they were not in control. Their lack of knowledge of subject matter has also served to impoverish. As subject G states “I left school at fourteen and the prospect of some stranger looking at my handwriting is very off-putting.”

The women tended to stay a school a bit longer with five having gone as far as intermediate certificate level (this in British educational standard today would be GCSE level). The remaining two women describe their secondary level education as intermittent due to family concerns such as helping out with family. The eldest sister would be expected to help with some domestic duties for instance. Five of the seven women who participated in this study began their career in the health profession with the other two women employed in the hospitality sector. Those employed as nurses enjoyed much better education due to their chosen profession. Nursing, for many young Irish women at the time was seen as a good career; this was less the case with native British women who did not see it this way. The formal learning experience gave these women a sense of discipline and helped them nurture the desire for education experiences in their offspring. It was also significant that four of the sample when questioned had been active in some form of adult education or belonged to a public library. This however, was as much a social need as a learning need as many of these women used it as an opportunity to engage with their peers in the community.
Experiences on arrival: The was no surprise to find that both the men and the women in the group all left their homeland for better employment opportunities after hearing about the bright lights of London and other major cities. However one of the men (Subject G) left because of institutional abuse as a child in Ireland. While this is well known in Ireland today, it was a taboo subject in the past and the interviewer felt uncomfortable discussing it with a stranger.

The common need for every person was for social contact. Migration by its very nature involves a number of deep, traumatic experiences, apprehension and a sense of venturing into the unknown with naturally heightened anxieties (Castles and Miller, 2003). This can be lessened by the knowledge that friendly faces were waiting for their arrival (all but three of the subjects immigrated with the knowledge that a friend or relative had arranged some form of accommodation). The three who lacked a prior contact were all men who had migrated in a haphazard way. It is of no surprise that the primary aim of all migrants concerned in this study was to “settle in” and form relationships. There was also the misconception among the majority that this migration would be temporary and they would return to their places of birth one day. Time was to tell a different story. There was also the apprehension of parents that their young would be unable to function in a “godless society” such as Britain. Subject F’s account of leaving home and arriving in London best explains it:

“I was nurse in the Royal Brompton and shared my room with two girls from Co. Clare. While the initial shock of arriving in England was almost too much it became obvious that we had much more freedom than we could ever had back home. We were earning our own money and could explore one of the great cities of the world without wondering what the neighbours would think. We had a freedom to do what we liked which our counterparts in Ireland could only dream of.”

The men tended to have more freedom to leave due to less parental control but also to ease the pressure on household budgets, which were tight. As subject C explained:

“\textit{I left school in Limerick in the earlier 1950s. The only work that was available to me as a thirteen-year-old was a telegraph boy. On my sixteenth birthday I was too old to do this, as the pay didn’t reflect my age. While my mother did not want me to go there was no choice as I was the oldest of seven and one less mouth to feed.}”

While there was a huge degree of homesickness, it quickly became apparent that many of these young people could have experiences that they would never have been able to have in Ireland. The experiences of living in a more liberated society where one was earning a good wage clouded some migrant’s judgement that these times would last. This was an error on their part and has implicated on their information needs today as this prosperous aspiration has been eroded by events.

Discrimination: It is important to discuss this issue as it still resonates in certain areas of the Irish community. The mass influx of migrants into the UK in the post war period has been widely and extensively researched (Dickens and McKnight, 2008; Hickman, 1997; Hickman, 1998) Many urban centres such as London experienced areas being transformed into ghetto areas for migrant communities. This led to racial tension with the native population with instances of violence a common occurrence such as the Notting Hill Riots of 1958 which involved the Caribbean community. The Irish migrants were not exempt from this experience even though they shared a common language and skin colour with the host group. The fact that the Irish were a different branch of the Christian faith did add to this volatile mix. All migrants who were interviewed experienced some form of discrimination but it was much more pronounced with males. The males were viewed as units of labour and as subject A summed up “We were paid to shovel and dig not to think. We were paid from the shoulders down.”

The experience of having only a basic education and growing up in agrarian society left many unprepared for the hustle and bustle of urban British life. This in turn led to an inward view of looking to one community for support, friendship and all aspects of day-to-day life. These factors aggravated the sense of discrimination and injustice, which gave the community something of a siege mentality.
This view is widely held among the men interviewed but some to a varying degree. Some look back and explain that a form of discrimination came from their fellow Irish brethren. Many of the subjects interviewed admitted that they had difficulty in gaining employment particularly in the area of construction. As subject I put it:

“If you got a British foreman he would treat you alright. Some Irish foreman was very clannish and wanted to know what county you came from and how much you could drink.”

Irish women were not exempt from this stereotyping either and many suffered in their positions of employment. Four of the women interviewed came as trainee nurses and while all said that a lot of their experiences were pleasant, the overall consensus was that there was a high level of tolerance for an Irish stereotype. It had to be treated as harmless banter as subject K states, even if there was a negative underlay:

“They loved Irish nurses. They really did. Irish nurses were always kind of looked up to; you know I suppose it is the charm and sensitivities”

Thus, for many of the women who migrated, their relationship to Irish ethnic identity was mediated by their gender and professional status. Their experiences were largely more positive than the men’s. Irish nurses had a much more positive stereotype in strong contrast to almost all other Irish people in Britain in the period between 1950-1970 (Ryan, 2007).

However there were also accounts of blatant forms of discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice. The fact that most women did not perceive this as anti-Irish racism suggests that they perceived this behaviour as acceptable. Subject J was recruited to a prestigious London hospital and found few Irish nurses on the staff; there was open hostility towards them based on the stereotypes of dirtiness, fecklessness and backwardness. In her own words:

“The sisters were really snappy with us. Say for instance, you didn’t clean down the top of the locker they would say, “oh there’s the Irish again. I’ll show you this is how to clean a thing”. As if we weren’t clean. The English would say “didn’t your mother teach you better than that?”

These experiences encountered a considerable time ago, still have a bearing on the mind-set of long-term migrants, which have implications for information needs. This has evolved particularly when these migrants started to have families of their own, in a period which coincided with the IRA campaign of violence on the British mainland from the early 1970s. This shaped the mind-set of many migrants, as they felt ashamed and bitter of their nationality due to the violence being inflicted in their name. As subject C put it:

“There were some good Englishmen that I worked and drank with. It was very difficult to meet them on a Monday morning and looked them in the eye if a bomb had gone off. My sense of guilt was enormous and it made me more aware of staying in my own crowd”

It can be said that all of the experiences discussed, this drove many migrants to the very edge of society and this still has impact on information needs today.

Information Access: Networking Word of mouth: This is by far one of the most crucial aspects of Irish migrant life in Britain today (e.g. Granovetter, 1973; Olden, 1999; Oakley, 1992; Orsi, 2002). This study can conclude that this is still the most effective mechanism for disseminating information to elderly migrants. The sound of one accent can start numerous conversations and can be a real icebreaker for many purposes. For instance, during this process any subject who had not met the interviewer asked what county he was from. This has not changed in the post-war period either. Traditionally, this was of major importance to men in search of employment but now it is equally important to maintaining relationships with one’s peers or to search for information that may of be importance to the migrant. The information gathering process in this case is initiated through informal channels comprising of family friends and former work colleagues. In the sample interviewed, there was an interesting difference between the genders. While all had some social contact with their peers, the mediums and locations differed. The men still tended to congregate in public houses or betting offices to discuss things while the women used more orthodox methods such as church or social club settings.
The use of information by the long term settled Irish population in London

Ronan MacNeill

felt no different to their British counterparts. as they did feel some sense of assimilation and local councils or agencies such as job centres. Most of the sample had some dealings with specialised services, which are targeted at the tendency among the community not to use boards for instance. There was also a strong observe advertisements on church notice to have a stronger religious faith and would admitted that they no longer attend church. This is not the case with women who tended as churches, have broken down as many men while there was some awareness of the organisations, it was unclear among men what exactly this organisation did and how it might be able to help them. Subject E stated: “The idea of speaking about personal problems with a total stranger would make me very uneasy and I would do my best to avoid it. I would not like the lads to know any of my problems like that.”

Information centres: All subjects interviewed were aware of a service that was designed to meet their specific information needs. The most popular one was the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith, as all the migrants interviewed lived close to this area. The whole sample was aware of the social facilities available to them such as the coffee shop, library and function room. However, it was clear that there was a good deal of ignorance when asked about services that other organisations were offering. The ISAS service is based in the centre and while there was some awareness of the organisation, it was unclear among men what exactly this organisation did and how it might be able to help them. Subject E stated: “as far as I am concerned it was just a group for very old people and I am not ready to join something like that.”

It is therefore apparent that information services such as the one stated above are heavily reliant on word-of-mouth communication. The message clearly is not being delivered as to what services are available. None of the subjects in the sample could recall an advertisement campaign by any organisation to promote Irish needs. The traditional outlets creating awareness, such as churches, have broken down as many men admitted that they no longer attend church. This is not the case with women who tended to have a stronger religious faith and would observe advertisements on church notice boards for instance. There was also a strong tendency among the community not to use specialised services, which are targeted at the community.

Most of the sample had some dealings with local councils or agencies such as job centres as they did feel some sense of assimilation and felt no different to their British counterparts. There was however, a degree of frustration as many had the view that these organisations did not see any ethnic difference. There was also the view that the stereotypical view of the Irish community was negative as subject H stated: “I had an interview one day with somebody in the job centre about my benefit entitlements. The person in question looked and spoke to me as if I was just another failure who had lived an irresponsible life. I found the whole experience very humiliating.”

The deployment of information rights throughout the community must be more culturally informed so that many people are brought into the net. The use of Irish organisations as a medium between migrant and establishment must be broadened as a member of the Irish community working on behalf of an Irish migrant will understand their needs better. This can be as easy as pronouncing an Irish name or surname correctly so that the person that is at the heart of the issue feels they are engaged in the process, as this gives them a sense of control over proceedings.

The media: The sample used various forms of media to meet their information needs. Mainstream British newspapers were all read by the sample but with no distinct pattern. It was interesting to note that while daily Irish newspapers were available in London, most only read them occasionally and only if a friend or colleague had bought one. This can be attributed to the fact that on arrival the Irish newspapers would have been printed a day later in London and therefore the news would have been out of date. The fact that there was no language barrier made it as easy to consume British journalism. The situation became a little more complex when asked about Irish regional papers. Many of the migrants from rural backgrounds still purchased their local paper. The reason for this was an emotional link to their origins.

Television and radio were also accessed with the main terrestrial stations being utilised. No subjects interviewed had access to satellite TV or digital radio. The main programmes watched were of a current affairs nature or sport. There was a degree of sadness that RTE radio was no longer available on the long wave band as many migrants used this service for news from Ireland and to listen to commentary of GAA matches. This service and was replaced by a digital service which none of the interviewed migrants were able to access.
None of the respondents had direct access to the Internet. This was of no surprise as many migrants stated who they would not know how to use it. Some of the migrants did state that they had got family or friends to access information on the Internet such as booking trips to Ireland or searching for social events, however, no subjects said they would use it to search for news.

**Present information issues: Health provision:** The sample interviewed had no issues with disabilities and were fully mobile. Some did discuss friends that were disabled or housebound and found the provision of healthcare adequate with regular visits by outreach workers from various organisations including the NHS. The provision of such things as mobility scooters or transport to hospital for appointments was also mentioned.

All subjects had registered with a GP and all had a national insurance number. Almost all of the men stated they would only go for medical advice if they were ill with flu or had injured a limb. The men seemed apprehensive of the health service, as they were nervous that other ailments such as mental health issues or levels of drinking would be discussed. As subject D stated “Once I injured my hip and went to my local surgery. My regular GP was away and when the doctor I saw discovered I was Irish, the first question he asked was, how much do you drink?”

This attitude may not be widespread, but instances of this may impinge the community as their reliance on word of mouth communication spreads the message! It is important therefore that other benefits to older migrants such as the flu inoculation and a free health check for members over 65 are known about and accessed on the NHS. The provision of mental health services was discussed with the entire sample, however this did cause unease in the subjects and the researcher decided not to pursue this line of questioning (Commander, et al., 1999).

The women of the sample seem to be more aware of what health benefits they are entitled to and this may come from the fact that many of them were in employed in the medical sector and were eager to discuss the fact that they had used such service.

**Employment and Retirement:** All the women interviewed had reached retirement age and were no longer economically active. They all received state pensions from the UK authorities and two subjects also had invested in private pension plans. Three of the subjects also had pension entitlements in Ireland and these were paid directly into their UK bank accounts. While the question was not directly asked, the impression was given that the subjects in question were all financially secure in their retirement years.

The situation with the men was different as three of them were still working. Two were still involved in construction while one was self-employed as a market trader. There was a sense of confusion in relation to pension entitlements as they were not sure of what they were entitled to (Morris, 2001). The subject employed as a market trader had kept accurate records of his employment history and also completed his self-assessment tax returns every year. The men employed in the construction sector were not as fortunate and felt uncomfortable discussing it as subject I states:

“I am not sure what I will do when I retire because I have no idea what I have actually paid into the system. I just hope that I have something to show for my efforts.”

The five remaining men had reached retirement age and their experiences were mixed. Two were receiving a state pension while the other three were receiving a partial pension. Not one of them had any private pension plan and were facing genuine financial hardship. There was a huge degree of shame in relation to this, and when the interviewer touched on the subject on sourcing information on this area, the interviewee stalled. Many of the subjects were aware of the services that are available to them but felt uncomfortable searching them out. This can be attributed to a mixture of pride, embarrassment and a genuine feeling that they cannot be helped.

**Housing:** The housing situation was also a mixed picture, as illustrated in the Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of accommodation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owned by occupant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council accommodation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately rented</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing association</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered housing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The female respondents again seem to show a degree of stability in their lives with almost half owning or part owning their dwelling. This has added security for them in their twilight years. Their information needs are met in this aspect of their life. In some ways this is a measure of migration success.

The situation with the male participants was much different with half the group living in private rented accommodation. It was interesting to note that of the seven men living in some form of rented accommodation, many had lived there since they arrived. Of the three single men living in a privately rented flat or bedsit, two of them said that they had not lived anywhere else since they arrived in this country. Subject E stated, that their central heating did not work properly and the landlord’s reaction was one of indifference. However when asked why he would not consider other forms of accommodation the reaction was:

“I have lived here all my adult life here and I would find it impossible to live anywhere else.”

The attitude was that their accommodation was suitable and that they did not need information about alternative forms. There were some positives as the four men were all aware of their benefits in relation to housing and all were receiving some form of rent allowance. The subjects in council accommodation also seemed to be long-term residents.

**Involvement with community and peers:**

All of the groups said they all took some active part in the community and had frequent contact with friends. This is important, as explained earlier in the chapter in regards to the reliance on word of mouth. Male social lives tended to revolve around such places as the local public houses and betting offices. As most of the sample was retired or close to retirement, this was their only method of human interaction with friends. None of the men stated that they had got involved in any of the events that the Irish centres were providing, except for one who abstained from alcohol. Drinking in the community was still seen as important to men even though most were aware that it was detrimental to their mental and physical health. There did not seem to be much change in the habits of men as when asked about events such as Saint Patrick’s Day or All Ireland Final Day (the equivalent of the FA Cup final for GAA matches) it was stated that the public house was the focus of all social activity.

It was also interesting to note that many men tended to frequent the same establishment every day.

The women in the sample had different socialising habits. As stated earlier, many of the females were still regular churchgoers with most participating in their local church excursions for instance. Some also had interests, which consisted of hobbies such as bingo, or playing bridge, and this allowed some social interaction. Subject M was an excellent source of information about Irish female migrants. She ran an informal social club with her friends and through personal contact with the researcher it was possible to interview many female subjects. This club in Shepherds Bush met twice weekly and all agreed that it was a very significant part of their lives. Subject M stated that without this club many of the group (it also included some men but not many) would be completely isolated except for family ties. The women also tended to visit the library to read socially, with four of the sample claiming to be members of their local library.

**Contact with family and home:** There was considerable informal contact with family members both in the UK and in Ireland. Contact with family members in Ireland has improved through the years as telephone communication improved. The entire sample has a relative or friend in Ireland. The research showed that no subjects wrote a letter to family in Ireland: the telephone has replaced this traditional means of communication. The entire sample, including the three men who had no family of their own, was regularly in contact with family. The importance of a landline was stressed among the group and one of the major complaints was the cost of making an overseas call. Eleven of the sample also had a mobile phone but most said they only used them to receive calls in order for family to stay in touch. Some also liked the idea that if they were to have an accident, they could to contact a family member immediately. Of the sample interviewed who had children, all were ‘empty nesters’ but had regular contact with their children and grandchildren. Most migrants received their families rather than travelled to them. The reason for this can be that most people in this demographic may not feel comfortable travelling out of the local area.
Many of the migrants confessed that having family was very helpful in meeting their information needs as the offspring of these migrants were more aware of how to access services and meet information needs. This was true across the genders.

**Discussion and analysis:** The Irish community has been slow to embrace the changing environment that now surrounds them. There is an awareness of services that are coming on line and there is also a realisation by the migrant that these services are required. It is obvious that there is still an over reliance on traditional methods of communication and support. These have served the community well in the past but as the migrants get older and frailer, more needs to be done. Nicholas (2000) in his research found that the future is not just about information sharing and distribution, but instead about getting closer to what people need in the way of information and how it is to be packaged for the individual at a particular time and place of choice. This involves understanding what difficulties and problems the users experience in order to help them overcome these barriers.

The female participants in this group have been shown to be more progressive in dealing with their information needs and also show some degree of willingness to utilise these services. However, there does seem to be a huge resistance to change from the male demographic. This has its origins in many factors, which have been discussed here, but as more and more of these men reach extreme old age, there must be a strategy to meet their information needs. The work of volunteers and family cannot be overlooked but the data shows that many men, in particular are sole dependants and potentially isolated. The challenge for information professionals working with this community must be to change this way of thinking for the better.

**Conclusions**

This study has necessarily been a local one which has exploited access to a local environment through the contacts and networks of the writer. What about areas other than London? Further study from within bodies engaged in providing information to these migrants may have considerable merit.

The Irish community are still one of the largest migrant communities that exist in the United Kingdom today. There have been many individual successful cases of Irish migrants settling right across the nation and having successful careers and family life. The assimilation process has by and large been relatively smooth, particularly in recent times as Britain has become more multicultural and the political relationship between Great Britain and Ireland has improved.

It must be noted that there is a considerable proportion of this community that have come to be left behind and are living on the margins of society. As the interviews with show, many migrants present lives are still shaped by the experiences they had as younger adults. It is fair to say that during the interview process, the interviewer detected the sense of betrayal and bitterness some of the men in particular felt. The sense of desperation and fact that they are solely dependent on themselves adds to this. The implications of this have direct consequences on all aspects of the migrant’s life. The stigma of loneliness isolation and depression must be overcome to help these people in their retirement years.

Many Irish migrants are aware of the services that are available to them but this is only half the battle. There is a historical legacy which reveals migrant’s problems of wounded pride, shame and embarrassment in searching for help that must be overcome. This must be done sensibly so that migrants feel that their information needs can be met in a setting they are familiar with and that they feel secure in it. There has to be hope that solutions will be found but they will always require an appreciation of the varied and complex life stories that individual migrants carry with them.
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Bibliography


MIND: The Mental health of Irish people in Britain:


Saving Lives – an epic quest to promote an evidence-based approach for preventing healthcare-associated infections in the National Health Service in England


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Director, Richard Wells Research Centre

Since its inception more than half a century ago, the National Health Service has continued to transform and improve the health and wellbeing of the Nation. Now treating a million people every 36 hours, the NHS provides an unprecedented range of clinical interventions that can mend accidental damage, prevent, identify and manage or cure disease, and prolong quality life. However, hospital care and healthcare interventions are always associated with potential hazards, including the risk of acquiring an infection during care. Those patients most at risk are often the most vulnerable and chronically ill in our society and they and their families suffer needlessly because healthcare-associated infections are largely preventable. During the last decade, the Richard Wells Research Centre (RWR) in the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences at University of West London (formally Thames Valley University) has collaborated with the Department of Health and a variety of other governmental organisations and professional societies to develop an evidence-based approach to preventing healthcare-associated infections. This article describes the impact of our work and our journey in partnerships to support sustainable improvements in patient care, enhance patient safety and ultimately save lives.

Keywords  |  Healthcare-associated infections; National Health Service; public health; infection prevention; patient safety
Background

Acquiring new infections in hospitals and in primary and community care settings during episodes of healthcare are a real and constant threat to patient safety in all healthcare systems throughout the world. These infections are referred to as healthcare-associated infections (HCAI), and although there are no national aggregate data on the total number of HCAI in England, the Department of Health (DH [cited in this paper as GB.DH i.e Great Britain. Department of Health]) and successive National Audit Office (NAO) reports estimate that 300,000 patients receiving care and treatment in the NHS acquire a HCAI each year (House of Commons 2009; NAO, 2009). These infections often worsen the patient’s underlying medical or surgical condition and for some result in serious disability or death. In 2007, meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) bloodstream infections or Clostridium difficile infection was the underlying cause or a contributory factor in the deaths of 9,000 patients (Office for National Statistics, 2008; NAO, 2009). However, this figure is likely to underestimate the true mortality rate from HCAI due to the manner in which death certificates were completed at the time. In addition, the acquisition of HCAI will frequently prolong patients’ recovery and delay their discharge from hospital, which in turn increases waiting times for new admissions. These infections are estimated to cost the NHS over £1 billion each year (Plowman et al. 1999) and incur massive reputational damage as the public becomes frightened and loses confidence in the ability of those who work in the NHS to care for them safely.

Almost from the beginning of the modern antibiotic era in the 1950s, pathogenic microorganisms responded to the increasing use of antibiotics by continuously and inexorably developing resistance to the therapeutic effects of an ever-expanding range of newly developed antimicrobial drugs, limiting their clinical effectiveness and rendering many ultimately useless. Antimicrobial resistance is not a phenomenon restricted to just MRSA but also frequently occurs in many other bacterial pathogens that are increasingly involved in causing HCAI, especially multi-resistant Gram-negative bacteria. Multiple drug-resistant infections are often more difficult and expensive to treat and are more frequently associated with serious complications and poor clinical outcomes.

As intense media pressure escalated in tandem with a seemingly ever-increasing rate of HCAI in NHS hospitals from the mid-1990s onwards, it became clear that this situation was untenable. If the NHS could not protect patients from infection, one of the most fundamental elements of safe care, its very future would be in doubt. Worse still, the public became even more anxious about reports of dirty hospitals and equally unhygienic practices by healthcare employees, including doctors and nurses, began to regularly feature in newspapers and on radio and television. It was quickly apparent that the threat to patients was real, it was serious, and it was ever-present in all healthcare settings and it was having a detrimental impact on public health and the delivery of safe healthcare. Soon, there was a sustained public outcry declaring that this situation was not acceptable; and the political reaction was equally intense – ‘do something, anything but do it now.’ It was then clear to all that after the first 50 years of its existence, the NHS was now facing a particularly threatening and perhaps the most defining challenge yet to its survival.

As public, political, and professional concern increased, the DH in each country in the UK responded with a variety of strategic policies, collectively aimed at significantly reducing the risk of HCAI throughout the NHS. The journey towards enhanced patient safety taken during the next dozen years would prove remarkably dynamic and transformational, producing a mind-shift in attitudes and in clinical practice within the NHS that incrementally began to reduce significantly the threat of infection to patients and to NHS staff (Health Protection Agency, 2009). In achieving this, the RWR Centre made a significant and far-reaching contribution and throughout this period, was and remains today at the heart of initiatives to:

- identify, critically appraise and then translate best evidence of clinical effectiveness into infection prevention and control guidelines in the NHS;
- educate and support NHS staff to implement the guideline recommendations into clinical practice;
- provide relevant evidence to support the ongoing development of strategic DH policy;
- and generate new evidence relevant to the prevention and control of HCAI.
The RWR approach incorporated a range of initiatives that included evaluative, translational, learning and enquiry dimensions (Figure 1).

This article is an abbreviated account of our decade-long support and contribution to the overall aims of the DH and the NHS to reduce the threat of infection and associated disability to both patients and healthcare staff, make life safer for people during periods of health-related vulnerability, and to save lives.
Healthcare associated infection – an emerging policy imperative

The need for a government response to the emerging threat of HCAI and antimicrobial resistance was first highlighted in reports from the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee (1998), Resistance to antibiotics and other antimicrobial agents (known as the ‘Soulsby Report’) and the DH Standing Medical Advisory Committee (SMAC) (GB.DH, 1998), The path of least resistance. The evidence presented to these committees indicated that the prevention of microbial transmission between patients through the consistent use of effective infection control measures was an essential element in the fight against MRSA and other antimicrobial-resistant organisms. After responding to these two reports, the DH published an initial action plan based on three key elements: infection control, prudent antimicrobial use and infection surveillance (GB.DH, 1999). It was becoming increasingly clear that the policy response to preventing and reducing HCAI required an iterative and multi-modal approach that harnessed existing evidence, promoted scientific discovery and made use of system and change management strategies to translate what was known into clinical action to protect patients.

During the following decade the work of the RWR Centre through the DH commissioned nurse-led epic project (evidence-based practice in infection control) would make a highly significant contribution to the generation and synthesis of the evidence base for preventing infections and the effective translation of that evidence into clinical practice throughout the NHS.

Developing national evidence-based guidelines for preventing HCAI

The Soulsby and SMAC reports in 1998 triggered the DH to commission a review of infection prevention guidance and the production of national evidence-based guidelines for the prevention of HCAI in NHS hospitals (epic1). The RWR team entered a competitive tender in 1999 to undertake this work and, having won the contract, brought together a collaborative group of clinicians and researchers to design the guideline development process and undertake a series of complex systematic reviews. An Expert Project Advisory Group was used to engage a wide range of stakeholders, provide peer review and facilitate the adoption of the guidelines within the NHS.

The epic1 guidelines were first published in 2001 (Pratt et al., 2001), the underpinning evidence was reviewed and updated in 2004 (Pellowe et al., 2004) and the guidelines were revised and republished in 2007 (Pratt et al., 2007). During this period there was considerable debate about whether or not HCAI were a threat to patients within primary and community care settings and how this impacted on acute care. The emergence of community strains of MRSA and C. difficile led to the epic guideline initiative being extended to include national evidence-based infection prevention and control guidelines for these settings, commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in 2003 (Pellowe et al., 2003). These are now being updated under the direction of RWR staff. The process of developing these guidelines was complex and exhaustive, using systematic review methods (Figure 2) and consensus approaches in order to arrive at recommendations that were relevant, unambiguous and based upon the best available evidence of effectiveness.
Figure 2

The impact of epic on policy and practice

So how did these guidelines impact on the world of policy development and implementing best practice in infection prevention and control? The epic1 guidelines (Pratt et al., 2001) were the first national evidence-based guidelines to be published in an international peer-reviewed journal, i.e., the Journal of Hospital Infection, making them accessible to experts and generalists alike. Both the NICE community and primary care guidelines (Pellowe et al., 2003) and the epic2 guidelines (Pratt et al., 2007) were also published in the same journal, becoming in 2008 among the ten most cited articles in the journal during that year.

The epic series of guidelines have been adopted by infection control teams across England and Wales and are extensively used to develop local protocols. They were also used in Scotland as the basis for their own guidance and influenced guideline development groups in other countries, e.g., the Republic of Ireland.

The guidelines were written in a user-friendly style that were easily understandable, answered important clinical and practice questions, and clearly described the underpinning evidence that supported each of the guideline recommendations. These recommendations consisted of a number of actions which, if carried out consistently, would prevent infections. They were focused on standard principles for infection prevention and control and actions related to preventing infections associated with the use of medical devices, such as indwelling urinary catheters and vascular access devices, such as central venous catheters. These actions formed the basis of a care bundle approach that would be used in later initiatives to minimise the risk of catheter-associated urinary tract infections and catheter-related bloodstream infections.

Supporting implementation of guidelines into clinical practice

As even the best evidence-based guidelines published in the most prestigious peer-reviewed journals cannot implement themselves, they will fail to influence clinical practice unless they are backed up by imaginative and effective publication, dissemination and implementation strategies.

Strategies for publication and dissemination need to ensure that the guidelines will reach key practitioners and that support will be available to help NHS Trusts and healthcare practitioners incorporate national guideline recommendations into their more detailed local guidelines and clinical protocols. This is how we did that.

To coincide with the publication of each set of guidelines, RWR actively engaged in dissemination. Negotiations took place with NICE and the DH for permission to publish the guidelines as a supplement in the Journal of Hospital Infection, a key publication in the UK for infection prevention practitioners. In addition, the DH circulated copies of the supplement to every NHS Trust Chief Executive. Nurses were targeted through a series of articles in key nursing journals, and the Nursing Times produced a ward wall chart of standard principles. Over the next 12 months, RWR staff conducted a series of guideline implementation workshops throughout the UK and Ireland (Pellowe and Pratt, 2004) and addressed a variety of national and international conferences to publicise and highlight the importance of the new guidelines.

Publishing the guidelines in a high quality peer-reviewed international journal was intended to overcome the well-recognised difficulty experienced by previous DH-issued guidelines, which quickly became lost within the maelstrom of DH circulars, directives and advisory notices, gathering dust on the shelves.
of NHS Trusts throughout the country and ultimately being ignored. The epic guidelines also led the way in ensuring that policy and guidance in the field of infection prevention was informed by systematic appraisal and synthesis of the best available evidence.

When DH consensus guidance for preventing and managing MRSA infections was updated in 2006, the RWR Centre was commissioned to undertake the systematic review that established the evidence base for these guidelines (Loveday et al., 2006). In response to public perception that staff uniforms may contribute to HCAI, the DH again commissioned RWR to undertake an evidence review of the microbiological and social significance of uniforms in relation to the prevention and control of HCAI in order to inform the development of uniform and work wear guidance to NHS Trusts (Wilson et al., 2007; Loveday et al., 2007; GB.DH, 2007).

The clinical governance agenda

In 2002, the DH Chief Medical Officer (CMO) produced a report, Getting ahead of the curve that highlighted that the control of HCAI required the commitment of all healthcare professionals and not just the NHS Trust infection control teams (GB.DH, 2002a). In the same year, the DH established a series of controls assurance standards for infection prevention and control as part of their modernisation and quality improvement agenda (GB.DH, 2002b). These standards sought to ensure that NHS Trusts had proper arrangements in place for the management and control of infections. The controls assurance standards and the elaboration of these within the Health Act (GB.DH, 2006) that replaced them formed the basis of measures used by the Commission for Healthcare Improvement (and its successors, the Health Care Commission and the current Care Quality Commission) for assessing the quality of care provided by NHS Trusts.

In the following year another CMO report, Winning ways, highlighted that progress on reducing HCAI has been small and that a national strategy to address gaps in scientific and clinical knowledge on HCAI reduction was needed (GB.DH, 2003). This report also identifies key action in areas such as hand washing, clean hospitals and device use, including indwelling urinary catheters, central venous lines and respiratory support. Three of these action areas were derived from the first set of epic guidelines (Pratt et al., 2001).

The report also included the requirement for the Chief Executives of NHS Trusts to ensure that infection control was part of clinical governance and patient safety programmes and to appoint a Director of Infection Prevention and Control to be responsible for the management and implementation of infection control policy across the Trust. In order to address gaps in scientific knowledge the report proposed the establishment of a HCAI research network.

Translating evidence into action – the problem of implementation

Despite the clarity of guidance and the transparency of the evidence base, the challenge of changing practitioners’ behaviour remained. Levels of adherence to guidelines in even the most basic of practices, such as hand hygiene, were poor. Practitioners knew what to do and knew why it was necessary, but some of the barriers to adherence identified in the literature remained to be overcome, while systematic reviews indicated that there was little robust evidence for what worked to change healthcare professionals’ behaviour (Naikoba and Hayward, 2001; NHS CRD, 1999).

A previous study has suggested that the implementation of evidence-based practice is more likely to succeed in learning organisations where boundaries are clearly defined, values and beliefs are shared by all, and where staff and clients are valued (Rycroft-Malone et al., 2004). This study further identified that a range of factors that contribute to poor adherence to guidelines included organisational factors, such as the role and function of the infection control service and the proper use of surveillance data to guide practice, and workforce issues, such as knowledge and skill deficits and difficulty in translating knowledge into action. Overcoming these barriers requires a prolonged and sustainable combination of interventions that uses levers such as reporting and regulation, as discussed above, to facilitate opportunities for NHS Trusts and infection control teams to do things differently and focuses on the patient experience as a true measure of quality.

The work of the RWR following the publication and dissemination of the epic guidelines continued to focus on synthesising the evidence base for infection prevention and control through systematic review but also generating and supporting the implementation of evidence-based practice through the use of improvement science. In the following section
we highlight aspects of our work that have facilitated multidisciplinary teams to do things differently, informed the development of the role of infection control teams, promoted the use of surveillance data to underpin infection prevention interventions, and provided learning resources to ensure that all NHS employees are equipped with appropriate knowledge for practice.

Doing things differently – infection prevention as everyone’s business

In an initiative aimed at shifting the responsibility for infection prevention and control and improving outcomes for patients, the RWR collaborated with the NHS Modernisation Agency (MA) to design and deliver a Clinical Governance Support Programme for the Prevention of HCAI. This programme directly addressed the challenge of translating evidence into practice and set the issue of infection prevention and control firmly within the clinical governance and quality agenda. The aims of the programme were to: promote a culture where all members of the healthcare team share responsibility for infection prevention; enable healthcare personnel to make a sustainable change to service delivery that facilitates a reduction in rates of HCAI; and develop networks of healthcare staff that can share best practice and support others in reducing the incidence of HCAI.

The programme used the Review Agree Implement Demonstrate (RAID) model of change management, an adaptation of the ‘Deming’ Plan, Do, Study, Act cycle (Deming, 1994) as a framework through which multidisciplinary delegate teams developed a programme of work to engage stakeholders, patients, and service users to improve patient safety through the reduction of HCAI. Multidisciplinary teams attended the programme, where the assumptions that infection prevention was the sole responsibility of infection prevention and control teams and that infection was an inevitable and acceptable consequence of complex clinical care were turned on their heads, and a systems approach to improving service was used to drive selected improvement projects. At the core of these projects were the principles of system change, such as involving a wide range of stakeholders, including service users; identifying where improvement was needed; challenging the status quo; measuring the outcomes of project activity; and sharing knowledge and learning. Learning from the work of the MA was later used in the Clean Safe Care Programme (GB. DH, 2008) and will be discussed later in this article.

Informing the future role of infection control teams

The infection control team play a pivotal role in the management and control of infections in both hospital and community care. The emergence of community strains of MRSA and C. difficile led the DH to commission a study that examined how community infection control nurses (CICN) were prepared for practice and the extent of their current roles and responsibilities as part of a wider reconfiguration of Health Protection services (GB.DH, 2001; GB.DH, 2002a). The RWR team were awarded an 18-month grant to undertake a multiple methods study of how practitioners were prepared for their roles, the extent of their role and how teams were configured to deliver community infection control services (Loveday et al., 2002, Loveday et al., 2003).

Why was this piece of work important in the greater scheme of things? While highlighting the scope of the CICN role in terms of both healthcare settings and the management of HCAI and communicable diseases, this study suggested that there needed to be a major shift in the focus of activity that these highly skilled practitioners were involved in. It brought into sharp focus that infection control teams (in both community and acute care) spent the majority of their time ‘fire fighting.’ Preventing infection was effectively a ‘Cinderella’ activity with teams having little or no time for creative initiatives or preventative work in terms of either HCAI or other infections. The review concluded that the profession and government should: focus the role of those working in infection control roles identify on infection prevention to shift the emphasis from reactive to proactive interventions; consider the removal of traditional professional boundaries to modernise service delivery; and develop clinical career pathways to make best use of these expert practitioners in the evolving modernisation agenda.
Surveillance – using data to guide practice

Surveillance data is the life blood of infection prevention and control, yet nationally what was known about rates of HAIs in the late 1990s was limited to irregular prevalence studies and voluntary reporting schemes for surgical site infections and MRSA bloodstream infections. National prevalence studies indicated that nine patients in every hundred developed an infection as a result of receiving healthcare and that many of these infections were related to the use of invasive devices (Emmerson et al., 1996).

The NAO report in 2000 identified that the lack of surveillance data hindered the ability of the NHS to target prevention activity in a coordinated and focused way (NAO, 2000). Consequently, in 2002 the government established a mandatory reporting system for MRSA bloodstream infections. By 2004, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) reported that MRSA bloodstream infections had increased to over 7000 cases per annum and began collecting baseline data from the mandatory surveillance and reporting of MRSA bloodstream infections (HPA, 2006).

In 2003, the NAO commissioned the RWR Centre to compare the rates, infection prevention systems and policy initiatives being undertaken to reduce HCAI in the USA, Australia and selected European countries with those in the UK as part of their progress report to the Public Accounts Committee (NAO, 2004). The progress report highlighted that there was little improvement in the data available to indicate the nature and extent of HCAI in the UK and little evaluation of the impact of recent interventions. It also drew attention to the lack of progress in making use of surveillance data to guide infection prevention interventions and suggested that wider factors, such as waiting times and accident and emergency targets, impeded good infection prevention and control practice.

During our systematic review of the evidence base for preventing HCAI, it became clear that the standard of the evidence available was of variable quality for many infection prevention interventions. The systematic review process helped identify where new research was needed and also sparked debate about whether the ‘gold standard’ of research evidence used for other guidelines, i.e., the randomised controlled trial (RCT), was achievable for this area of clinical practice. The multi-factorial nature of infection prevention interventions makes it difficult to control variables and assign causality to one specific intervention. In 2001, the DH Policy Research Programme (PRP) launched a call for research projects focused on the issues raised by the 1998 Soulsby and SMAC reports, making available £2.5 million in research funding.

One of the interventions that had some support in the literature and in the work of the MA and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in the USA was that feeding back surveillance or measurement data to clinical staff had a positive impact on reducing infection (Haley et al., 1985). RWR collaborated with the Infection Prevention Society and successfully submitted a nurse-led RCT known as CHART to investigate the use of local MRSA surveillance data fed back to staff on statistical process control (SPC) charts to drive reductions in MRSA bloodstream infections (Curran et al., 2008). Seventy-five wards in 24 hospitals in the UK took part in the study, and these were divided into three groups in order to test two variants of the SPC feedback system against a control group. When compared to two years of baseline data, both of the experimental groups showed a very significant decrease in the number of ward-acquired MRSA cases. However, because the control group also showed significant improvement, it was not possible to say precisely what part the SPC feedback system had played in the reduction. As indicated above, other national interventions may have contributed to the observed outcomes, as this study took place during a time of intense activity focussed on the reduction of MRSA, e.g., the national roll out of the DH CleanYourHands campaign and the introduction of mandatory surveillance of MRSA bloodstream infections in 2005. The CHART study also had a qualitative component that explored the dynamics of surveillance feedback in the participating wards. Findings showed wide variation in infection control processes, as well as differences in leadership, teamwork, communication and personal engagement with infection control practice. The long standing anecdotal observation that many individuals abdicate responsibility for preventing infection in hospital environments to the infection control team was confirmed through this study. The RCT element of the study was important, in that no other research documented ward-acquired MRSA during this four-year period. Importantly, it equipped infection prevention teams with essential skills in using local surveillance data and established quality improvement tools to guide infection prevention interventions.
Learning to prevent infection – a universal responsibility

Knowledge of new guidelines is the first step in implementation, but a more proactive approach is required to encourage adoption. The Infection Control Nurses’ Association (now the Infection Prevention Society), who were involved in the guidelines’ development, worked with RWR to develop a series of educational workshops in which teams of practitioners could consider implications of the new guidance and develop action plans. BARD™ provided an educational grant for the series, which took place throughout the UK and Eire over the course of a year. An evaluation of the changes made post-workshop identified considerable progress in plans focussed on continuing education or audit (Pellowe and Pratt, 2004). Key factors in successful action plan implementation were time and the support of managers.

The introduction of the DH Clean Safe Care programme and the Saving Lives high impact interventions (GB.DH 2005), along with draconian centrally developed improvement targets forced Trusts to prioritise reducing HCAI and provided them with the tools to examine their performance. Many of the high impact interventions are based on the epic guidelines devised here at UWL, and the reliability tools encourage wards to monitor adherence. Use of these tools also enables Trusts to demonstrate compliance with the duties of the Code of Practice (GB.DH, 2006).

No matter how effective road-shows, publications and conference presentations may be, they will never reach all of the 1.3 million NHS employees who need to be aware of their role in preventing HCAI. In 2004, the NHS Core Learning Unit commissioned RWR and Intuition Publishing Ltd in Dublin to design an e-learning programme that would cater for all staff in the NHS (Fig. 3). The benefit of an e-learning programme is that it can be accessed at any time from any location, its use and success in the assessment can be monitored and the programme can be easily updated (Pratt and O’Malley, 2007).

The initial programme launched in 2005 covered Standard Principles and was designed for two distinct audiences: clinical and non-clinical staff, namely porters, cleaners and housekeepers. Part A, the core course was developed as a review course for clinical staff that can be incorporated into either an orientation programme for new staff or annual update. The rest of the programme provides an in-depth explanation of non-clinical staff members’ role in preventing HCAI, an area sadly neglected prior to the programme’s development.

Figure 3
The success of this highly interactive, award-winning programme can be measured by the tens of thousands of NHS staff registering on the programme. In 2008 RWR were commissioned to develop additional modules for clinical staff. These included high impact interventions (GB.DH, 2005) and the guidance provided in the epic and NICE guidelines for short- and long-term indwelling urinary catheters and vascular access devices (Pratt et al., 2007; Pellowe et al., 2003).

Although the programmes were designed for NHS staff, there is potential for the programme to be used in the pre-registration nursing curriculum. At TVU, now UWL, aspects of the programme have been used in conjunction with work in the simulation centres prior to students beginning their clinical placement. A recent evaluation demonstrated the value of e-learning and this programme for students (Pellowe et al., 2010).

In response to user evaluation data, the programme was adjusted on a regular basis and in February 2011, the RWR Centre in collaboration with Intuition Publishing Ltd. began updating all aspects of this programme to ensure the sustainability of its quality and relevance to both clinical and nonclinical practice throughout the NHS.

Informing the policy research agenda

The CMO report Winning Ways (GB.DH, 2003) identified that a national Healthcare Associated Infection Research Network (hCAI RN) was needed to coordinate and assist in the formulation of a national research strategy to address gaps in current scientific and clinical knowledge about how to reduce the rates of HCAI. In 2006, the DH established the HCAI RN at the RWR Centre to manage and support the PRP in a period of continued policy emphasis on the prevention, management and control of HCAI and a range of initiatives to develop basic science and translational and operational research (Tingle, 2007).

The HCAI RN has an agreed programme of work that entails establishing a strategic focus for HCAI research across government initiatives and funding bodies; commissioning and managing PRP-funded research; establishing a priority-setting process and an infrastructure to provide advice to PRP and other independent advisory groups on research priorities in the fields of HCAI prevention and control; and developing public engagement in HCAI research. Achieving a coherent programme of funded research that reflects often competing priorities of policy makers, researchers, practitioners and a range of agencies, associations and interest groups, notably patient and public, is desirable but also has difficulties.

In order to overcome some of these difficulties, a National Research Priorities Advisory Group (NRPAG) was established in the HCAI RN in March 2008 to extend the debate around priorities for HCAI research and to avoid repetition and strengthen the cumulative power of policy research in this field. The Group is drawn from a range of disciplines, including clinical microbiology, infection prevention practice, organisational behaviour, health economics and epidemiology. NRPAG also supports the research and development subgroup of the government’s independent advisory group on Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-Associated Infection (ARHAI).

HCAI RN and NRPAG have developed a methodology for the identification of short- to medium-term research priorities and those that are longer term, which is both transparent and robust. The processes used for short- to medium-term priorities involve preliminary identification of priority areas using consensus methodology; intelligence gathering to map
Involving Service Users in Research

Partnership between service users and researchers is a cornerstone of the current research and development strategy for the NHS in England. Unlike other fields of care, such as cancer and mental health, researchers in antimicrobial resistance and healthcare-associated infection and microbiology have little experience of working with patients and the public to prioritise, design and conduct research and no access to service users able to contribute in an authoritative way to the research enterprise.

While researchers and practitioners think they know what patient and public concerns are, we do not know our service user audience well, and assumptions are often confined to a narrow, media-focused agenda and assume that the lay public have little part to pay in scientific research. In 2007, the HCAI RN established a Service User Research Forum (SURF) to bridge the gap between researchers and the public in this field. A coordinator was appointed and stakeholders identified via an advertising campaign undertaken through the INVOLVE networks, the UK Clinical Research Collaboration and existing patient/public groups, such as MRSA Action and National Concern for Healthcare Infections. A stakeholder conference was held and a core membership of ten established. The aims of SURF are to ensure that the views and perspectives of patients, carers and the public are fully taken into account within the field of ARHAI research; to act as a resource for the research and policy community; to lead in the identification of patient and public concerns and priorities for research; to advise on how best to involve patients, carers and the public in research; to contribute to all stages of research commissioning, design, conduct and dissemination; to develop, design and conduct patient and public involvement research projects; and to train other users to make a positive contribution to the field of ARHAI research. Following some initial training, members of the group are confidently engaging in the ARHAI research arena, sitting on commissioning boards and reviewing national competitive grant proposals and offering researchers a lay perspective on the value of completed research.

SURF provides a forum for identifying public and user concerns in a systematic way, creating an interface for service users and researchers in the field of infection and microbiology and develops the knowledge and skills of service users and professionals to work together in the prioritisation, design and conduct of research (Jones et. al., 2008).

Making infection prevention everyone’s responsibility — evaluating what worked?

In 2004 the Secretary of State for Health announced a national target to reduce MRSA bloodstream infections by 50% over a three-year period from 2005 to 2008 in the face of continued public concern and media focus on HCAI and dirty hospitals. In the same year a focus on improved hospital environmental hygiene was highlighted in the Matrons Charter (GB.DH 2004a). In 2005, the complementary HCAI work streams being undertaken by the CMO and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) were brought together under the direction of the CNO and the Cleaner Hospitals Lowering Rates of Infection Programme (GB.DH, 2004b). The programme aimed to realise the target for halving MRSA bloodstream infections, improving hospital cleanliness and increasing public confidence in the NHS as clean and safe. In addition to the national target the programme used a combination of system levers and improvement methods to facilitate adoption, spread and sustainable change in organisational, team and individual behaviour. These included regulation and performance management, provision of tools and techniques for evidence based care, targeted improvement support and a knowledge transfer network.
Conclusion

The past two decades have seen the rise of antimicrobial resistance and infections associated with healthcare interventions that are ever more complex. The ability of microorganisms to seek out and expose the frailties of human physiology and behaviour pose a huge challenge for policymakers, healthcare professionals and technologists. The work of the RWR over the past twelve years has had a major impact on the field of infection prevention and made a significant contribution to ensuring the safety and well being of patients through primary and secondary research and its translation into action that ensures the judicious and consistent application of evidence based practice in the care of patients.

The RWR was invited to develop a proposal for the retrospective evaluation of this programme to assess its impact in promoting and embedding the prevention of HAI as ‘everybody’s responsibility’ and identifying the contexts and mechanisms that were critical to improvement. The research team for this piece of work brought together colleagues from across the University in a multiple methods project that used quantitative methods to assess existing and prospective mandatory surveillance data and qualitative case study design to explore the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders within nine NHS acute Trusts of varying sizes and complexity and facing different levels of challenge in reducing their MRSA bloodstream infections.

Our findings indicate that setting a national target was crucial to raising the profile of preventing HCAI generally and MRSA bloodstream infections in particular. National mandatory surveillance data shows that the 50% national reduction in MRSA BSI was achieved in September 2008 but we were unable to establish robust variables from retrospective data and identify statistically significant relationships between the multiple interventions that formed the programme and the reduction in cases. Our cross-case analysis characterised NHS Trusts on a spectrum of improvement resistant to improvement responsive. Both, the programme and targeted support team were catalysts in moving Trusts from ‘resistance to responsiveness’ and creating the conditions for transformational change by: supporting and cultivating leaders and champions; challenging denial and complacency; driving a shared understanding of where the Trusts problems lay through better data, information systems and feedback; changing the mindset of practitioners through the use of root cause analysis and increasing the reliability of evidence based care practices. Crucially we found that there has been a perceived cultural shift in the responsibility for preventing infection and a recognition by all staff that infection prevention and control is everyone’s responsibility and that all practitioners and healthcare workers have a significant role to play in preventing harm to patients (Loveday et. al., 2010)
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