

## **Chapter 4 Research Methods**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter is structured chronologically, though certain activities necessarily happen in parallel or are developed further at a later stage:-

- development of the Foundation Professional Development (FPD) scheme (4.2)
- development of the change programme (4.3)
- development of the survey (4.4)
- the January Awayday (4.5)
- development of change readiness (4.6)
- focus group feedback (4.7)
- the May Awayday (4.8)

It takes up and uses the background understanding from chapter 2 and utilises the results from the further investigations of chapter 3. The FPD scheme is included in this report for the learning and experience it has brought.

### **4.2 Foundation Professional Development Scheme**

As originally envisaged (chapter 1), this project would investigate the management of change, using the development of a significant change (i.e., one that challenges/ alters present work practice) to track and learn from the process. The change proposed had support from the manager as it would have aligned the department closer to positively perceived externally developments and had the potential to improve student recruitment etc. The programme envisaged was to track the development through its interaction with staff in the department, noting problems, issues, good practice etc. A survey was considered an integral part of the research, comparing attitudes before and after an updating session (part of an Awayday).

What had not been envisaged, was a number of significant factors:

- the manager though supportive, was deeply/ unconsciously (more) concerned with getting broad support for changes that would rapidly appease the deficit issue.
- a key gate keeper (chair of the Programme Managers Committee: PMC) was against any change that was felt to increase staff loading, even though full support was given by the rest of the committee

This had the effect that the proposal (Appendix A3) was delayed a number of times passing through the PMC committee and was at one stage directed to be discussed by a sub committee (which further strengthened support). The outcome was that the committee endorsed the proposal and recommended it as worthy of further consideration by the working parties (part of the change programme of 4.3).

Though one of the working parties has now recommended the proposal for implementation, it is likely that the proposal may be lost in the management

implementation of the long list of recommendation. Lessons to be drawn from this (which influenced the change programme of 4.3) are:-

- the department has not a track record of successfully implementing changes that affect a number of staff; only localised changes that are heavily championed, succeed
- Management and gate keeper support is usually essential
- the department has not (though now being developed) the structures/ culture to manage/ implement significant change
- an isolated change is precarious to implement and further, processes to deal with e.g., resistance to change, have little currency in isolation. This is not the case where a change programme or a change culture (e.g., learning organisation) is in operation.

### 4.3 The Change Programme

To gain an overview of the departments change environment, two business tools were used: -

- Lewin's (1951) Force Field Analysis (chapter 2.2.3)
- Carnall's (1990) Organisational Diagnosis Questionnaire (Appendix A4)

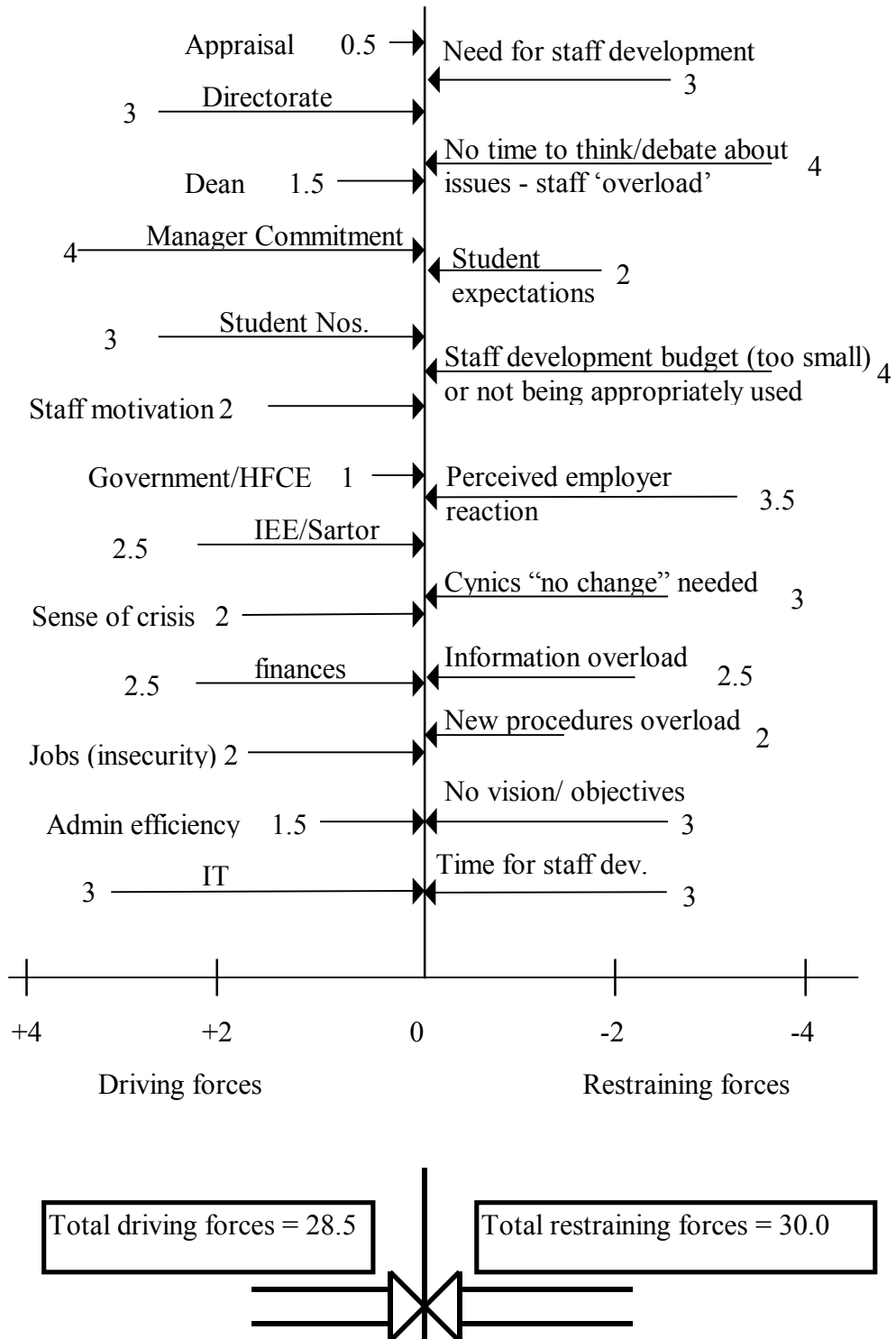
The results from the force field analysis (figure 4.1) clarifies whether change is likely to happen. Specifically it was felt that if the number of the driving forces were promoted (e.g., sense of crisis, financial deficit, staff motivation, vision), and a number of the restraining forces were reduced in strength (e.g., time to think, cynical attitude), then change was possible. The results from the questionnaire (though mostly considered outside the scope of this work: chapter 1), gave an initial insight into: motivation, support, and attitude towards change. Briefly and in summary, the following areas were indicated as being in need of being addressed and within the scope of this programme:- staff time (space for staff to take on board change), resistance to change (certain difficult staff to be targeted), education (of change process, pressures to change etc.), and motivation (change culture).

The change programme envisaged consists of a process within which a series of three Awaydays provide 'milestones'. Though past Awaydays are generally felt 'a bit of a waste of time', they are accepted by staff as part of the department's culture i.e. one has to attend, and they provide a rare space/ time for updating and a rare focus for being together as a department. The management driving force for making change (i.e. the growing financial deficit linked to falling student numbers) has been discussed in chapter 1.

To implement the change programme, the author envisaged a six stage process:-

- Preparation and agreement (manager, PMC, all staff) of the first Awayday plans
- Awayday 1 (January): with: a dramatic theme/focus, information/ updates, and an opportunity to contribute and buy into the process. Outcomes: to

## Academics: Forces Acting in SECEE for Change



**Figure 4.1: Force field analysis of the department.**

- agree further work that needs to be undertaken and how it should be undertaken
- Groups working on themes/ work identified
- Awayday 2 (May): to hear recommendations and ratify
- Management to prioritise and develop the implementation plan
- Awayday 3 (September): to up date - ‘train’ staff in the implementation

## 4.4 The Survey

It was decided to undertake a survey, the objective of which was to make inferences as to the effectiveness of the Awaydays and working group process in promoting readiness for change in the department. The plan was to run the same survey before and after each Awayday and use the first set of replies as a benchmark. The study population was all the department staff, but specifically targeting those who attend the Awayday. The mode of data collection was by a self-completion questionnaire, due to time constraints. A brief questionnaire was considered likely to elicit a much larger response.

The questionnaire media chosen, was Question Mark<sup>1</sup> (a proprietary software package used primarily for student testing), for the following reasons:-

- the author had experience of using this software (Fuchs et al, 1997)
- the software was on the department’s network and all staff had access to the network
- the package has some in built question analysis functions
- the author had some experience in asking qualitative questions (with students) using this software
- the Awayday was about change and the manager was particularly keen that staff were introduced to this software. As the author was to give a talk about the software at the Awayday, it was felt that if staff had had direct experience, then they may be more open to trying it.
- in the author’s experience, academic staff are also attracted to trying out new software and so this adds to the potential of getting a greater number of returns (the number of returns is expected to be low, from prior experience).

With regard to the content and format of the questionnaire, Fink (1995) recommends that it is best to adopt or adapt questions used elsewhere. With this in mind, a relevant questionnaire used in a similar discipline area, was located (Carnall, 1990). The questionnaire reported (see Appendix A4), was used to diagnose organisational change in International Engineering, a large engineering design and project management company. The approach taken was to use a seven point Likert scale. The questionnaire design had five statements against each of eight categories (key

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<sup>1</sup> Question Mark Computing Ltd., 5th Floor, Hill House, Highgate Hill, London N19 5NA; 0171 263 7575; Url: <http://www.qmark.com>

tasks, structure, people relationships, motivation, support, management leadership, attitude towards change, performance), allowing an average 'score' to be obtained against the categories.

A number of texts were consulted to gain experience of questionnaire design and analysis (Hague, 1993, Oppenheim, 1992, Aiken, 1997, Berg, 1995, Fink, 1995, Greenfield, 1996). To construct the questionnaire, the following guidelines were followed:

- utilise or adapt any relevant questions
- use verbal rating scales to indicate level of feeling, as they are simple to use and easy for the respondent to reply (Hague, 1993). This was considered an important issue with academics, as they often will not respond unless the questionnaire is perceived to take little time to complete.
- specifically use a five point attitude scale, as some experience had been gained using this with the Question Mark software implementation of a well tried student learning diagnostic questionnaire (Entwistle, Thompson & Tait, 1992)
- use a series of questions to investigate attitudes
- use specific questions to investigate factual issues
- the question form needs to be specific, meaningful, minimum of words, avoiding negatives and the hypothetical (Berg, 1995)
- use fixed response/ closed questions for simplifying data analysis
- use a loosely grouped question order NB depending on questionnaire, options range from using a logical sequence with easy questions being placed first to gain confidence (Hague, 1993), through a 'funnel' approach to get to very specific issues (Oppenheim, 1992), to random (Carnall, 1990).
- pilot questionnaire with specific reference to :
  - question wording
  - instructions
  - layout and clarity

To investigate the effectiveness of promoting readiness for change in the department, the following areas were targeted by the questionnaire:-

- Personal readiness for change
  
- Personal motivation (i.e., allowing for change to occur)
  - Properly rewarded (in some form) & supported
  - Feel involved in School
  
- School's capacity for change
  - Possible to get thing done (personally) in School
  - Within Faculty context
  - Cooperation/working together in School
  - Communication within School
  - January Awayday effectiveness
  - Leadership in School
  - Reported stress level

#### 4.4.1 Political sensitivity of questionnaire

A number of important points about the conduct of employee surveys are given by Guest and Knight (1979):

- The objectives of any survey should be clearly explained to individuals.
- Employees should be told how the information gathered will be used and how far it will be distributed.
- Anonymity should be offered to encourage openness.
- Feedback should be given as soon as possible after the survey is conducted, showing action as a result of the information received.

In addition to these points it was thought politic to obtain support and approval from the Programme Managers Committee (PMC). This was obtained in principle when the Awayday agenda was discussed. The content of the questionnaire though was not disclosed for the following reasons:

- Staff have had no experience of internal attitude surveys.
- There was little time in an agenda packed meeting to explain the operation in detail, if questions were raised.
- There was a great danger of the meeting making up ad hoc questions.

The results from the questionnaire were summarised (Appendix A5) and presented to the PMC (a copy of the results having been given to the Manager and Chair of the PMC a few days before). The summary was presented in a positive light, emphasising the progress that had been achieved by the Awayday. Three significant reactions stand out in the committee discussions that followed:

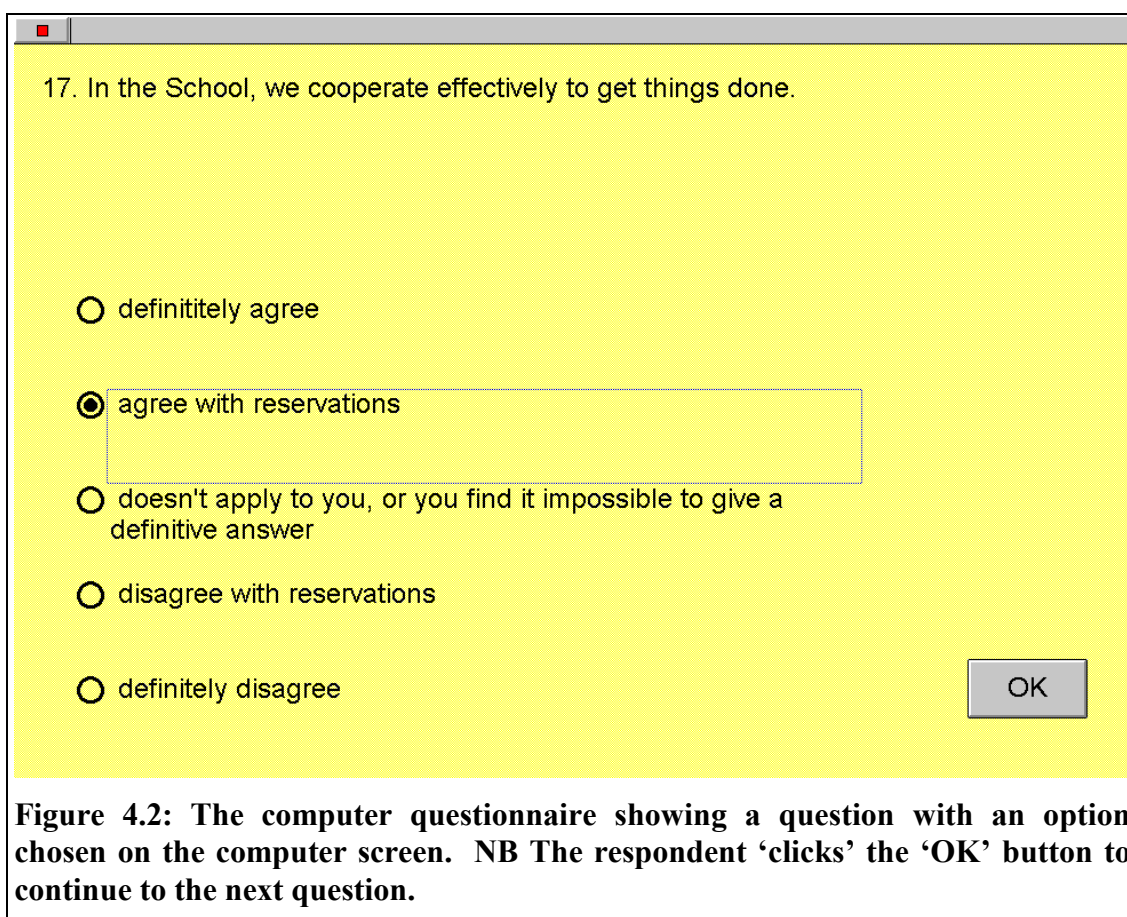
- the Manager was unhappy about asking questions that he felt powerless to address, e.g. questions on reward
- the Chair of the PMC felt threatened by the question on management effectiveness
- many of the committee thought the questions fair and were surprised by the above two reactions.

An outcome of the meeting was that it was agreed that the wording of the questionnaire would be reconsidered by the author and discussed at a subsequent meeting. A further outcome (within a few weeks) was that it was agreed that papers to the committee would remain confidential, i.e. the results were not distributed to all staff. General staff reaction to the questionnaire was favourable - the comment from one staff member sums up the positive feeling "this is the first time we've been actually asked about what we think."

In retrospect it is rarely a good idea to give academic (engineering) staff actual 'data' as they often get lost in the details rather than seeing the trends/overview. In this case, only the 'grouped' results of Table 2 should have been presented.

#### 4.4.2 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted by sending (by email) the instructions to two staff. The staff were then observed as they followed instructions and ran the questionnaire. Some minor rewording was undertaken on two questions. Advice was also sought from the Plymouth Business School and minor changes made. The piloted instructions were then sent by email to all staff (using a departmental electronic distribution list). Unfortunately it was not realised by anyone in the department, that the majority of staff did not have their computers set up to access the departmental network (student desktop) and so only seven replies were received before the Awayday. (The network situation has now been the subject of a number of subsequent meetings to resolve this problem). An indication of the computer questionnaire's display is shown in figure 4.2. The questionnaire is quite fast to construct if a completed question (includes scoring) is copied a number of times in the design software and then only the question text is edited for each question. The data collation is extremely fast. The option of exporting the results to a spreadsheet (Excel), was chosen.



**Figure 4.2: The computer questionnaire showing a question with an option chosen on the computer screen. NB The respondent 'clicks' the 'OK' button to continue to the next question.**

As no short term network solution was possible to allow all staff access to the computer test, a paper based version was produced and attached to the Awayday outcomes (see Appendix A6). A condensed version (Appendix A7) was also produced for ease of sending by email, and sent electronically a few days later, requesting a rapid reply. In all, sixteen replies from forty staff were received (i.e., a

40% response rate: above average). The paper based replies were transcribed onto the spread sheet (see Appendix A8, which shows the raw data in a form similar to that when exported from Question Mark). Average and standard deviation values have been added to give the mean and give an indication of the spread of marks, respectively.

### 4.4.3 Analysis Method

The scaling used (see table 4.1) has advantages in that after averaging, a positive value indicates a positive attitude and negative value, negative attitude etc.

+2	+1	0	-1	-2
Definitely agree	Agree with reservations	Doesn't apply to you, or you find it impossible to give a definitive answer	Disagree with reservations	Definitely disagree

**Table 4.1: The attitude scale used in the department**

Oppenheim(1992) discusses attitude scaling. He points out that using the procedure for Likert scales is simple but one needs to make sure that all the items measure the same thing. To adapt this to the analysis of the questionnaire, requires only that the scores of certain questions need to be multiplied by minus one. As an example to gain an impression of attitudes to communication within the school, the results from question 18 (“I only hear of developments via the ‘grape vine’”) has to be ‘inverted’ when averaged with questions 2 and 3 (‘I am being kept fully informed of developments in the School/Faculty’). This was undertaken and is indicated on the questionnaire results (Appendix X) by the inverted questions having a ‘/’ prefix.

To benchmark the questionnaire results to the pre January Awayday set, separate spread sheets were employed for each data set. The data averages for each question were then compared on a summary sheet in the same workbook (Appendix A9: table 1). The replies received were split into a number of groups (see table 4.2), to allow comparisons to be made in practice.

Group	Details	Replies
1	Replied before the Awayday	7: 5 academics, 2 technical staff
2	Attended the Awayday AND replied before the Awayday	4: 2 academics, 2 technical staff
3	All those who attended the Awayday	10: 7 academics, 1 admin., 2 technical staff
4	Didn't attended the Awayday and replied after the Awayday	6: 3 admin., 3 technical staff

**Table 4.2: Respondent groups for the January survey.**

To consider whether the January Awayday has had a positive effect, a comparison of the results from groups 1 and 2 needs to be made. As the sample size of group 2 is

very small, a rough comparison between groups 2 and 3 was made. For all questions (except Q15 & 22), similar results are recorded, showing that group 2 can be considered indicative of Awayday attendees. A rough comparison is shown in Appendix A9: table 1 of groups 1 and 2. This shows a positive swing in all questions (except Q22) NB a score change pre Awayday of -1.7 to -1.3 after the Awayday, is a positive movement. It is also interesting to note that group 4 and group 1 (non attendees) have similar average scores for many questions (note: group 4 staff have read the Awayday outcomes/positive influence?, but five out of six are admin/technical staff who may have felt excluded from attending/negative influence?). Table 2 of Appendix A9, compares the means of the areas targeted in section 4.3. A summary of these results is presented and discussed in chapter 5.1. Consideration was given as to how to analyse survey data statistically (Fink, 1995). Means and standard deviations are used but noting the small population size, these must necessarily be considered indicative.

#### 4.4.4 Reliability and Validity of Survey

Oppenheim(1992) recommends using sets of questions to increase reliability over single opinion items, as they 'give more consistent results, mainly because vagaries of question wording will probably apply only to particular items, and thus any bias may cancel out, whereas the underlying attitude will be common to all the items in the set or scale'. This has been undertaken. The chief difficulty in assessing validity, is the lack of criteria. As Oppenheim concludes, 'what we need are groups of people of known attitude characteristics (criterion groups), so that we can see whether or not our questions can discriminate between them. We cannot necessarily predict behaviour from attitudes... the links between attitudes and behaviour are complex...'. This of course is the crux of a dilemma i.e., in wishing to measure the readiness for change in an organisation, attitudes (which may be 'espoused theories'), do not necessarily give an indication of likely behaviour ('theories in practice' - see Chapter 2.2.7). The attitude questionnaire must therefore be seen as one business tool to be used alongside others, but that it may also have predictive properties.

Reliability can be expressed in the form of a correlation coefficient and can be measured in a variety of ways (e.g., internal consistency method). Validity may also be expressed as a correlation coefficient, but can be used for a number of different purposes:

- (i) *content validity*, which seeks to establish that the items or questions are a well-balanced sample of the content domain to be measured ('face validity' is not really good enough);
- (ii) *concurrent validity*, which shows how well the test correlates with other, well-validated measures of the same topic, administered at about the same time;
- (iii) *predictive validity*, which shows how well the test can forecast some future criterion such as job performance, recovery from illness or future examination attainment;
- (iv) *construct validity*, which shows how well the test links up with a set of theoretical assumptions about an abstract construct such as intelligence, conservatism or neuroticism.

For this projects purpose it is not proposed to consider this level of detail, but as the software package has some analysis functions, then it was considered reasonable that some analysis be undertaken using the analysis functions in the Question Mark software package. Appendix A10 shows part of a report generated by the software on the Awayday replies. The statistical measures available are facility and discrimination (Pearson product-movement correlation). What was not realised, was that the discrimination function is not reliable for negative scores (Question Mark, 1996). This then leads to consideration of using another package(e.g., SPSS) to undertake further analysis. In practice this was not viable option considering the small sample size, time constraints etc.

To investigate further the questionnaires applicability and reliability, the survey was run at South Bank University (an Engineering department). This is a department that the author had got to know through a change consultancy i.e., has been involved with a change programme (note reference to E<sup>3</sup>SD event cf. Awayday). A paper based version of the questionnaire was distributed by a colleague (Appendix A11) and the actual results compared with those predicted by the department's manager. It was felt that if the managers assessment reasonably matched the survey results, then this was evidence towards confirming the surveys validity. Unfortunately, a web version of the questionnaire could not be trailed here due to restrictions in staff Internet access.

## **4.5 January Awayday**

The January Awayday planning consisted of the following steps:-

- draft development by the author after initial objectives had been agreed with the manager.
- draft agreement of the draft with manager.
- agreement with the PMC
- agreement with staff at a staff meeting.

At all stages great emphasis was placed on gaining further ideas and feedback (this was emphasised to all staff in an email message before the staff meeting). The objectives of the staff meeting were to:-

- introduce all the factual material by the manager (i.e. pressures for change).
- introduce and agree the Awayday agenda and process (outcomes), i.e. so that staff would be prepared (with raised expectations) for the day and would not waste time querying the Agenda/process.
- agree the 'small group' chairs.

These objectives were met.

The Awayday programme and relevant overhead slides are shown in Appendix A12. Briefly the author developed a powerful theme 'To develop a Blueprint for Survival' and outcomes to work toward. The programme consisted of an introduction, three updating sessions, each followed by 'small group' work, then 'small group' chairs

feedback and finally an outcome/ agreement/ conclusion session. Key items to note are:-

- the three updating sessions are structured starting with the far future/dramatic changes, leading up to the 'straight forward' small steps, i.e. 'opening up' staff to dramatic change, but finishing on small 'manageable' steps.
- the introduction included the author briefly introducing the concept of change, acknowledging that it is stressful, and noting the change cycle (adapted from Carnall, 1990).
- Also introduced was a way of handling difficult staff. It was realised that the unhelpful roles of change agents (Brunningham, Cole and Huffington, 1990) applied particularly to staff reaction to change, i.e.:-

*the gatecrasher*      running with a new idea without thinking as to its relevance.

*the fence sitter*      doing nothing/not contributing/hoping change would pass by without being affected.

*the agent provocateur* always trying to undermine/sabotage what someone else is trying to implement/change.

*the devil's advocate* always coming up with why something cannot work, etc., i.e. focus on the negative with no positive alternatives.

Staff were asked to be on the lookout for these (highly visual/ memorable roles).

- after each updating session, staff were split into small groups (i.e. physically moved around to keep attention) to discuss the session. Chairs were instructed (earlier in the week) to keep notes for summarising to the full meeting later and they were given an optional checklist for use with each suggestion (adopted from Carnall, 1990) to broaden their/the groups' analysis of each idea. The small group membership was carefully chosen (keeping separate 'difficult' staff). The small group chairs were also instructed to make sure everyone was given the opportunity to participate (i.e. feel involved/contributed to the Awayday process).
- to keep staff focused and to time, an overhead transparency sheet was developed (Appendix A12: NB. highly visual and used by placing on top of a speakers transparency). The use of this with reasons, was introduced during the introduction.

The Awayday ran extremely smoothly with the outcomes, which were planned for, being achieved. The summarised outcomes, (i.e. identified issues for each proposed working group, which the author had recorded on a flipchart in the meeting), were circulated to all staff, after the working group chairs had been identified by the PMC and had agreed to serve.

## **4.6 Development of Change Readiness**

### **4.6.1 Customising the MIT/NCET model**

A handout was developed in consultation with the IT Working Party Chair, summarising the MIT/NCET model and suggesting a procedure for its use (Appendix A13). Due to pressure of work on staff, the author developed a detailed planning matrix on IT for the School (to be used as a draft for the IT working party and as an example for the other working parties). A draft audit of the present position was included as indicative results, to show the power of this approach. This handout was discussed at the working party focus groups and the chairs interviewed to find out their conclusions on the applicability and effectiveness of the model. Results are discussed in Chapter 5.3.

## **4.7 Focus Groups**

Bryman (1988) argues that qualitative data adds to quantitative findings by highlighting:-

- features which may have previously been inadvertently omitted from questionnaires
- aspects which previously appeared unimportant.

Berg (1995) discusses practical approaches for the researcher to 'strive to blend the qualitative and quantitative emphasis'. It should though be noted that group interviewing has certain disadvantages e.g., participants may feel constrained by social pressure and moderate their views (Hedges, 1985) and may provide fewer original ideas (Fern, 1982).

For the purpose of this investigation, it was decided that the basic questioning approach (with great respect for defences), should be tried (see Chapter 3.3). It was also decided that working with small groups (2-4 people) rather than individuals, would be safer psychologically (though considered less productive).

To make use of the information gathered (sections 4.2 & 4.3), it was decided to combine a number of activities in focus groups i.e., small manageable groups, used to working together and comprising of a cross-section of the School. Natural focus groups were the five working parties. As technical and secretarial staff were poorly represented on these groups, separate focus groups with these staff were organised. Finally a group of the most recently employed staff (who would have a fresh and comparative perspective) was considered essential (in practice these staff had to be interviewed individually as it was not possible to get together as a group). Advice on facilitating and maximising the effectiveness of focus groups was obtained from Krueger & King (1998), and Berg (1995). Section 4.7.1 develops a practical approach to incorporate these ideas.

#### **4.7.1 General Approach**

A check list of the procedures was prepared (Appendix A14) and followed at each session. The interviews were not taped (as no precedent), as it was felt would inhibit responses. To further allay fears at the start of interviews, it was made clear that no names would be written down and that the views were being collated from anonymous groups of staff. Detailed notes were written during the interview.

#### **4.7.2 Procedure**

The context (purpose) of the meeting was first briefly discussed in the following manner: ‘the School has agreed to set up the working groups to bring about change and so this meeting is to find out how changes (recommendations) could be more successfully introduced, i.e. exploring what might hold us up/what would help introducing the recommendations etc.’

It was pointed out that:-

1. detailed notes would be taken and clarification may be asked for on particular points.
2. Anonymous (no names written).
3. Interviewer would not comment on the points, and aim to record them accurately.

The first part of the focus group was to draw out information and engage debate. The second part of the focus group was to explore using the MIT model, the context/dimension of options available in the recommendations of the groups i.e., it also had an underlying educational aspect. Though not ideal, the calling of a meeting of the working groups needed both ‘activities’ for their chairs to take organising a meeting seriously (free coffee and sandwiches alone was also not enough). In fact, one chair refused point blank to have another meeting (‘we have had our two meetings - we are giving up a day for the Awayday, and our students should come first, i.e. we have not enough time with the students as it is’).

‘Feeler’ questions to draw out opinions were used, specifically:-

- What do you most dislike in the School (i.e. ‘pet hates’)?
- What do you most like in the School (e.g. are proud of, what is helping us to change)?
- What is stopping us change (i.e. barriers)?
- What would you do to change things if you were the boss (i.e., actionable steps)?
- Any other comments?

Using the Tavistock Institute approach, further gentle probing was used to try to investigate underlying issues/opinions/emotions/etc.

Questions were posed such as:

“What does it feel like when that happens...?”

“Do you believe that?”

“You sounded upset when you said that - why is that?”

“Why is that really happening?”

Where individual interviews were undertaken with recently employed staff, a focus on comparison with the previous work environment was made (associated with the 'feeler' questions above).

#### **4.7.3 Results and Further Analysis**

The approach taken by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991) was taken to analyse qualitative data. The raw data, was summarised by question for each group, but is not included due to the sensitivity of the comments. A list of 'areas' was developed and each occurrence (plus reference pointer) recorded (i.e., a 'content analysis' cf. 'grounded theory' approach). The results were then summarised by significant issue (see Chapter 5.4) The analysis was then cross-referenced against results from the Awayday questionnaire.

### **4.8 May Awayday**

The May Awayday coincided with the organisation's Chief Executive (Vice Chancellor) giving the divisional manager (Dean of Faculty) a deadline to agree plans for the reorganisation of the departments.

A number of meetings were held just prior to the Awayday, including a staff meeting, meeting with the Dean and the annual meeting with the chief executive to the School. Due to the uncertainties/feelings, the Awayday was nearly postponed, but after consultation with staff and the manager, a highly focused half day event was organised to focus on the working parties' recommendations. At the prior staff meeting it was emphasised that whatever structure was put in place, priority would still be placed on implementing the recommendations which were practicable. It was also felt that having a half day meeting finishing with lunch would be appreciated by staff (i.e. a reward: a leisurely lunch to discuss the recommendations and departmental issues, with a free afternoon). This worked out very well in practice.

The author introduced the Awayday to staff, reminding them of the January theme and outcomes (see Appendix A15). A more detailed introduction to change than in January (adapted from Carnall, 1990) followed, with reference to practical examples (e.g. reference was made to a radio programme a few days earlier, where staff from other institutions were complaining about the 'MacDonaldisation' of higher education and the changes occurring.

The aim was to make staff:-

- realise change is happening everywhere, and that understanding the process helps one to survive/get the most out of it.
- Open staff to change and to emphasise that they have a crucial part to play.
- Be prepared to take risks in a positive and supported way.

The final point was, as in the January Awayday, emphasised by the roles staff may take on (see section 4.5), and emphasis given to positive alternatives being expressed cf. being negative. This was particularly effective with one difficult member of staff,

who soon after starting speaking was stopped mid sentence by much laughter, after the comment ‘agent provocateur’ crossed the room! Staff all remained positive after this.

The final part of the briefing reminded staff of the suggested reporting process (pressures for change, the clear shared vision for the future, our capacity for change, actionable first steps), and the priorities (from the memo written to all staff: Appendix A16).

At the end of the working party chairs reports, the author led the ‘review and action planning’ session. The objective here of giving all staff a chance to express their views and express their priorities, was met. A general consensus with all staff was reached, that the management team should next meet to prioritise and implement the recommendations. Appreciation from the author (and manager) for the staff’s participation, concluded the session successfully.

#### **4.9 May Awayday Questionnaire**

Initially it was decided to run the same questionnaire, before and after the May Awayday, to compare (benchmark) with the original results. This time a web based version was developed (as all staff were known to have and use web access) to improve response rate and gain experience for investigating the expected power of this technique (e.g., use with other departments/ universities). Access is also easy as ‘double clicking’ on an url (i.e., internet address) in an email message is all that is required to launch the questionnaire.

After problems with the wording of the January questionnaire (section 4.4.1), the PMC committee was briefed that expert advice was being sought from elsewhere in the University (i.e. from respected figures) and it was re-emphasised that the questionnaire was based on a questionnaire used in industry. Subsequent discussions with the manager have done much to allay concerns.

With the climate of uncertainty around the May Awayday (section 4.8), running the questionnaire was felt to be politically insensitive and may lead to inappropriate/ uncharacteristic responses.

A very brief questionnaire was constructed (Appendix A17), checked with the Manager and circulated with the Awayday outcome papers. (Note: a simple feedback questionnaire is considered good practice in the organisation, after any staff event). It contains four of the least contentious January Awayday questions, enabling some comparison (benchmarking), on:- Awayday effectiveness, communications, readiness to change.

A web based version of the questionnaire (Appendix A18) was also constructed and circulated two days after the paper version (i.e. encouraging a speedy reply).

## 4.10 Summary

In summary a six part strategy is proposed to promote readiness for change i.e.:

- use of a questionnaire to provide quantitative feedback (section 4.6 and 4.9)
- use of a 'readiness for change model' (section 4.2) to identify areas in a change programme that need strengthening
- use of qualitative feedback (sections 4.3 & 4.4) to discover unconscious beliefs/ assumptions (barriers for change)
- use of a model to further influence change, by auditing current practice/ proposed changes, within the continuum of possibilities, and to broaden change thinking
- provide education on change
- development of a change programme, with underpinning theme (section 4.3)