

Impact of organizational context on networking behaviours of senior managers

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Aim and Objectives

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Aim:

- To explore how the contingencies that influence the formation of IORs affect the behaviours of individual managers

Objectives:

- To show differences in connectivity between senior managers of the same organizations
- To explain these differences using a critical contingencies framework

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Issue of concern

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ANECDOTALLY

- Actions of senior managers are critical to inter-organizational working
- These actions are affected by the organizational environment

BUT

- There are limited empirical data illustrating these effects (see Doz, 1996)

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Three 'Givens' from the literature

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- Senior managers influence their organizations but are themselves influenced by their context
- Senior managers represent their organization, and operate on behalf of their organization
- Environmental contingencies influence the formation of inter-organizational relations
- **SO:** How do the contingencies that influence the formation of IORs affect the behaviours of managers that lead organizations ?

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Study Context

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- ❖ UK Higher Education
- ❖ 1994 Group of universities "helps members promote their common interests in higher education, respond efficiently to key policy issues, and share best methods and practice"
- ❖ Three distinct functions (Teaching, Research, Enterprise) headed by Pro-Vice Chancellor

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Critical contingencies framework for IOR formation – Oliver (1990)

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- **Necessity** – mandated; legal or regulatory requirement
- **Asymmetry** – potential for power or control of another
- **Reciprocity** – common goals, mutual benefit
- **Efficiency** – improve performance
- **Stability** – reduce environmental uncertainty
- **Legitimacy** – reputation, conformity to norms

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How contingencies could operate to create networks among UK HEIs- 1

	Research	Teaching
Necessity	Funding agencies strongly encourage collaboration	Limited expectations, but increasing
Asymmetry	Influence HEFCE regarding future research funding mechanism	Funding mechanisms unchanged – per capita basis
Reciprocity	Exploit complementary skills, interests and assets	Individual universities claim to possess same capabilities

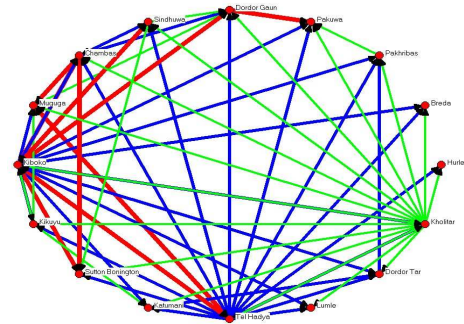
How contingencies could operate to create networks among UK HEIs- 2

	Research	Teaching
Efficiency	More efficient usage of facilities – especially in natural sciences	No high capital equipment
Stability	Uncertainty of future funding mechanisms (at point of study); Collaboration increases resources	Funding mechanisms secure
Legitimacy	Research is a collaborative activity therefore must collaborate across HEIs	Teaching is based on individual performance – a “local” activity

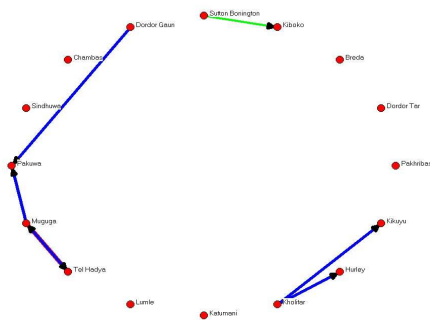
Study Design and Methods

- ❖ 1994 Group Universities
- ❖ PVCs responsible for Research or Teaching
- ❖ Questionnaire distributed in Summer 2006
- ❖ Connectivity analysed using SNA techniques
- ❖ Interviews to explore connectivity – Spring 2007

PVCs - Research



PVCs - Teaching



What PVCs say about contingencies -

1	Research	Teaching
Necessity	“so the idea of [research] collaboration (between universities) is of growing importance” “one of the issues ... for a university ... is collaborative activity ... in terms of strategic alliances”	“we are encouraged to collaborate, but it is actually very difficult” “Teaching ... it’s a less collaborative venture on the whole”
Asymmetry	“[94 Group] were able to broker a position on the changes that Government were proposing for Research Assessment, what is going to happen in the 2008 exercise ?, and I think that proved to be a very powerful lobby group”	“[the consultation by DFES on 14-19 Curriculum reform] helped us [94 Group] with lobbying and increased our influence” “HEFCE fiddling around with the funding algorithms for things like HEIF ... there have been lots & lots of lobbying about the algorithm, and the 94 Group has been very active in that...whereas it is very difficult to point to a similar thing in Learning and Teaching

What PVCs say about contingencies -

2

	Research	Teaching
Efficiency	—	"we are not doing anything serious in terms of collaborative activity with undergraduate degree provision"
Reciprocity	"academics have got complementary skills, they get on, they feel this is something that they can go forward with as a joint [research] bid"	"we've got a pretty good idea on [what makes subject Z] top in the country, but I am not going to be telling anybody. That's one of the things that is there in terms of barriers and constraints"

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What PVCs say about contingencies -

3

	Research	Teaching
Stability	"in a landscape of increasing concentration of research funding, [the university] was in danger of being too small and too far behind ... so we unashamedly thought that we must have more contact, and get collaborative activity going with X and Y"	"Teaching is an extraordinarily managed economy" "funding by and large is much more centralized to teaching and learning block fund, block grant, whereas obviously there is a huge area of opportunity for collaborations for joint university [research] projects"
Legitimacy	"the research odyssey is generally much more collaborative between universities ... research links are much more embedded in the culture"	"teaching tends to be done in the individual institutions, whereas research, there are a lot of areas of collaboration, joint grants go in..." "teaching is what we do, we just get on with it and do it ... if its obvious what you have got to do, then you don't need to talk to others"

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Conclusions - 1

- Empirical data shows that senior managers with different functions, but in the same organizations, display different connectivities.
- **So:** the impact of critical contingencies for IOR formation on manager behaviours depends on their functional responsibilities.

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Conclusions - 2

- Different contingencies seem to promote different behaviours in managers:-
 - **Asymmetry / Stability:** encourages collective action.
 - **Legitimacy/reciprocity:** emphasizes dyadic behaviour.

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