AN EVALUATION OF EMERGENT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES IN RELATION TO THE USE OF COMPETENCIES IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM – A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY RECONTEXTUALISATION.

Dr Peter Stokes
Ambassadeur – Royaume Uni, AGRH.
Lancashire Business School, University of Central Lancashire
PRESTON, PR1 2HE
Royaume-Uni/United Kingdom
Email: pstokes@uclan.ac.uk/ Tel: 00 44 1772 894773 /Dom: 00 44 1704 566289

Resumé
Competencies have come to play a central role in a wide range of settings in United Kingdom public and private sector contexts. In many regards, these developments reflect wider international and global discussions and movements concerned with competency and how to assess, nurture and develop it.
The paper provides a historical contextualisation of competencies in the United Kingdom. In particular it outlines a brief history of the evolution of competencies in this context underlining the recent and rapid emergence and implementation of competencies in a wide range of organizational and human resource development situations. The paper examines the nature of competencies and the epistemological and ontological paradigms on which these approaches are couched in a British historical socio-cultural context. Within that context, many of these approaches (herein the paper pays particular attention to the British National Vocational Qualification System – NVQs) are underpinned by an empirical, pragmatic and ultimately modernistic, positivistic predilection. In an attempt to reappraise this rigid and highly structured representation of competencies, the paper draws on the resources of Critical Management approaches and notions of 'lived experience'. In this way, it aims to contribute to the small number of marginal revisionist voices in the mainstream competencies literature. This is supported by a qualitative methodology built on an in-depth two-year ethnographic study (employing participant-observer methods) of a consultancy delivered training programme for customer service competency based vocational qualification in a water utilities company based in the north of England.

Overall, the paper provides an assessment and a critique of the experience of competencies and vocational training in a United Kingdom and finds that, in the context examined vocational qualification competencies frameworks do provide a structure framework with which to catalogue employees' work and roles. However, they are weak at capturing and portraying the rich panoply of multifarious emotions and social interactions that take place in the workplace and everyday job life.

Mots clés: competencies, positivism, critical, lived experience.

Introduction

Competencies have come to play a central role in a wide range of settings in United Kingdom public and private sector contexts. In many regards, these developments reflect wider international and global discussions and movements concerned with competency and how to assess, nurture and develop it. The paper provides a historical contextualisation of competencies in the United Kingdom. In particular it outlines a brief history of the evolution of competencies in this context underlining the recent and rapid emergence and implementation of competencies in a wide range of organizational and human resource development situations. The discussion examines the nature of competencies and the epistemological and ontological paradigms on which these approaches are frequently couched in a British historical socio-cultural context. In an attempt to reappraise competencies, the paper draws on the resources of Critical Management approaches and perspectives and, in particular, embraces notions of 'lived experience'. In so doing, it combines with the small number of marginal revisionist voices in the mainstream competencies literature. This is supported by an in-depth two-year ethnographic study (employing participant-observer methods) of a consultancy delivered training programme for customer service competency based vocational qualification in a water utilities company. Overall, the paper provides an assessment and a critique of the experience of competencies and vocational training in a United Kingdom.

A Historical Contextualisation of Competences in the United Kingdom

The last three decades in the United Kingdom have witnessed a widening role for competencies and related terminology in the workplace and increasing attempts to classify behaviours and attributes required for varying job situations. Indeed, talking about the growth of competencies in the 1980s and 1990s, Hirsh and Strebler (1994, p.81) suggested that the development of competency based training for organizations emerged as a '… a veritable industry in the late 1980s and …into the 1990s…' and Sparrow and Bognanno (1994, p.57) that 'Competency based approaches [have] been a rising star'. In turn Garavan (2001, p.144) notes 'The increased usage of competencies is also reflected in the burgeoning academic literature on the topic'. In the intervening period, vocational and competency based training have witnessed a range of transformations and remains prevalent.

Competencies grew out of a response to increasing concerns and a recognition in the 1980s that the United Kingdom was falling behind other national economies with regard to skills and qualification levels in the labour force and notional competitiveness (Edwards-Zara, 2005, p.420). They were also viewed as a more individually focused and non-elitist qualification in comparison, for example, with traditional classroom, theory-intensive further and higher qualifications (Pate, Martin, Robertson, 2003, p.172). These concerns were manifested in government reports such as the (now defunct) Manpower Service's Commission *New Training Initiative: an Agenda for Action* (Manpower Services Commission, 1981) and the government white paper *Working Together, Education and Training* (Department of Education, 1986). The central tenet of these policies was the initiation of an employer-based

system of training predicted on consolidation and formalisation of job roles and competencies across a range of industrial and business sectors. The Management Charter Initiative (MCI) played an early central role in established the occupational standards for management that would link into the creation of vocational qualifications.

Identified competencies are typically constructed into competency frameworks. These frameworks may be developed within a given company or, alternatively, the framework might be adopted from an existing national qualification system developed, supported and administrated by a network of government departments, quasi-government and private organizations. One of the difficulties with generic frameworks is that they may apply only generally to a specific company situation. This has drawn charges against them with regard to their relevance (Hirsh and Strebler, 1994, p.90)

In the academic domain, a key early commentator on commentators was Boyatzis (1982) following the work of McClelland (1973). His central contribution was the need to achieve performance through the identification of the underlying personality traits, skills and abilities within the job. In particular, what attracted the attention of organizations and governments was the possibility of a systematic way of managing superior performance of individuals in a given population and of measuring the associated training inputs and achievement outputs (Gibb and Megginson, 2001,p.152). In particular, Boyatzis research identifies important managerial competences in notional 'soft skill' domains such as, among others, 'efficiency orientation' 'concern with impact', 'proactivity', 'self-confidence', 'conceptualization' 'use of socialized power'. As the academic discussion gathered pace in the 1980s a not always useful series of arguments concerning appropriateness of nomenclature were perhaps unavoidable. Not least of all was the debate about the important and difference of 'competences' and 'competencies' which does not need to be rehearsed here. Suffice to say, nevertheless, that 'competencies' emerged as the term in common usage in the contemporary era (Sparrow and Bognanno, 1994, p.58)

The attention given to competencies stems from a long post-war malaise and transition in the United Kingdom economy concerning performance, efficiency and effectiveness. This was largely the residue and impact of movements and discussion taking place in North America and this was perhaps an inevitable part of a well rehearsed dialectic between the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Indeed, in analysing the influence of American management thought and practices on a range of European countries, Engwall and Zamagni (1998) characterise the United Kingdom as a 'late adopter'. This is certainly the case in the area of competencies where the movement followed on from the work in the United States by McClelland (1973) and Boyatzis (1982).

The development and adoption of competencies has been carried out based on a number of assumptions and desired outcomes. These include the establishment and attainment of an *objective* measure of being able to do all, or part, of a given task. There are many different kinds of competency discussed in the various areas of business and management literature. For example, it is possible to talk about individual or organizational competencies. Murray (2003, p306) describes these as:

> '(1) *Personal (or management competencies).* Those competencies that comprise personal attributes, skills and behaviours to perform a function or task of a job in a designated …way
>
> (2) *Organisation competencies.* Those competencies defined by processes, systems and practices (e.g. training methods, performance appraisal reviews, motivation techniques, change programs, technical processes) that enable any firm to turn personal competencies into organisation-wide competencies…'

In turn, strategic management discourse has dedicated time to analysing the concept of core competencies of the firm (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990). This particular approach reviews what abilities and skills the firm possesses at present, and may possess in the future, and how these might be configured in order to achieve competitive advantage. Such resource-based competencies may be knowledge based 'they are not solely human but rather composed of human capital, social capital (important relationships that exist) and organizational capital (i.e. processes, technologies, databases) (Snell et al in Wright et al (2001)) It is frequently the case, to discuss organizational competencies in terms of tangible (financial, technological, physical, human) or intangible (brand name, reputation, know-how) (Bratton and Gold, 2007, p.55)

In relation to personal competencies Woodruffe (1992, p.17) states that competencies are 'the set of behaviour patterns that the incumbent needs to bring to a position in order to perform its task and functions with competence'. Whereas, Bratton and Gold propose that 'competencies' are the:

> 'Underlying characteristics of a person which result in competent or effective performance taking into consideration the nature of the task and the organization context' (Bratton and Gold, 2007, p.580).

In essence, both definitions point at what the person concerned brings to a given role. At the level of the individual, competencies have been stated as typically comprising 'three recurrent features:

- a competence is seen in the context of a particular job or job role and the organization in which that job exists
- Competences are positively associated with superior performance
- Competences can be described in terms of specific behaviours which can be observed in the job' (Hirsh and Strebler, 1994, p.83)

The Income Data Services (2008) argued that competencies usually define behaviours that an employer values and believes will play a role in the organization's long-term goals and that competencies can usually be seen as either behavioural or technical.

There is an interesting and important nexus to be made between organizational and individual competences in that they are both focused on with the shared, ultimate, objective of achieving competitive advantage at a range of levels leading up to advantage for the entity of the firm as a whole. Competencies, whether, organizational (tangible or intangible) or individual are intended to align, marry and support larger organizational goals, objectives and strategies (Hafeez and Essmail, 2007).

Margerison (2001) has also pointed up that there is too much time dedicated to discussing individual competencies when in fact it is team competencies that are as, if not more, important.

A number of advantages and disadvantages became apparent in the early period of the introduction of competencies to British work settings. On the positive side, competency approaches underpinning a wide range of vocational awards have been credited *inter alia*, with clearly identifying needs for employees and potential managers, facilitating and improving selection and recruitment, allowing a basis of comparison between employee performance, engendering a common language and scheme for assessing ability and skills, providing a basis for people to self-assess and monitor progress, and systematising job role and content, and identifying the skills and competencies that will ultimately lead into overall better corporate performance and competitive advantage.

On the less positive side, competencies and vocational approaches can be seen as creating difficulties because: they are susceptible to being applied a range of varied and un-uniform manners, assessors may assess in variable and unreliable manners, there is a danger that the development of competencies at the individual level will not results in an improvement in organizational performance, Assessment of competences tends to be backward, rather than forward, looking (i.e. concentrate on what the person can already do rather than their potential), standardised competency frameworks may seem inflexible or rigid when applied to different organizational settings and contexts, it may be more orientated towards a UK/USA derived approach to development and therefore have limited international transferability ((Sparrow and Bognanno, 1994, p.61) Thorpe and Holman (1994), in examining a case study of the MCI competency framework as applied to higher education settings, identified that the 'knowledge' aspects of skills and situations tend to be weakly addressed due to an over focus on behaviour and outcomes. Their insight may have implications across many vocational qualification experiences.

Most importantly, yet frequently overlooked in the commentary on competencies in the United Kingdom context is the epistemological and ontological provenance of the approach. There are two points to make here, one pertaining to a Western general epistemological orientation and the second underscoring a particular set of embedded values in the United Kingdom. As indicated above, the United Kingdom has been marked as a 'late-adopter' of management ideas, techniques and philosophies from the North American model (Engwall and Zamagni, 1998). In the post-WWII era, management and organization thinking, teaching, research and practice in the North American sphere has been strongly informed by modernistic and positivistic concepts and constructs (Lyotard, 1984, Bratton et al. 2007). The normative 'late-adoption' pattern has meant that the United Kingdom emulates and assimilates much of hegemonic American practice. It is therefore no surprise to learn that over the last sixty years modernism and positivism – with their reification of linearity, notional objectivity, scientific experimentationalist method, representational and reductionist categorisation and typologies have become the dominant frame of reference in British Business Education and much wider organizational life.

This broad cultural infusion has been sown on an accommodating ground of longstanding British sensemaking (Weick, 1995) through the philosophical traditions

empiricism and pragmatism. (McEwan, 2001, pp73-75 drawing on the work and legacy of Bentham (1748-1832) and Mill (1806 – 1873). It can be readily seen that many of the philosophical commitments of this amalgam of modernistic positivism and empiricism and pragmatism dovetail extremely well with the delineated, categorised, experienced-based (cusp anti-intellectual) framework that has come to represent the British National Vocational Qualification system.

In particular, a charge that may be levelled at a number of competency approaches is that, due to the limitations of the paradigm(s) in which they are rooted, competencies are less predisposed to represent or capture 'soft-skill' competencies pertaining to, for example, relational, personality, behavioural areas (i.e. as opposed to supposed hard skills areas – accounting, planning, budgeting). This is not to say that such dimensions are not sought to be addressed by competency frameworks. Moreover, it is precisely this sort of competency that has been discussed in relation to manager and senior manager work. It is, however, the case that the human behavioural dimensions are often addressed in a mechanical, unproblematised and weakly situationalised contextualised manner. This has been alluded to some extent above however in order to illustrate the form and impact of this issue it will be useful to begin to focus attention on a particular approach to competencies, namely, the British National Vocational Qualifications Framework.

Competencies in the United Kingdom - Contemporary Context and Issues

Competencies continue as very much part of the *modern* business setting being used in many sectors: education, health, public management, supply chain management, food and wine, library services, facilities management, leisure and hospitality among many others (Ashton, 1996, Clark and Hinxman, 1999, Brophy and Kiely, 2002, Ashcroft, 2004, Bouzdine-Chameeva, 2006, Barth, Godemann, Rieckmann and Stoltenberg, 2007, Institute of Physics, 2009, Department of Health, 2009, Halley and Beaulieu, 2009). Equally, competencies for various types of employee: directors, managers, other employees and spheres, for example, leadership, and careers have been a focal area in the literature (Margerison, 2001, Thach and Thompson, 2007, Spendlove, 2007, Cappellan and Janssens, 2008). Competencies have therefore infused and imbued every aspect of organizational life. As such they have become a normative way to attempt to address and account for thought, action and behaviour in the contemporary British organization. Watson (2002, p.428) points up issues of commodification and marketisation that intertwine with competencies. He discusses the notion of 'portfolio or boundaryless careers' and suggests that the development by individuals of 'marketable competencies' has emerged as an important element of such pathways.

As has been discussed above, the term 'competencies' is employed in a range of ways and contexts, organizational and individual competencies, competencies relating to a particular role or business sector as in vocational qualification frameworks, and also, manager competencies – the skills, traits and attributes that managers might need to apply be able to perform their jobs effectively. The evolution of ideas relating to

organizational competencies and individual (employee, manager) competencies have been introduced earlier and it is now to individual vocational qualifications within an organizational context that the discussion turns as this is particularly germane to the case study used to gather field data.

The United Kingdom National Vocational Qualifications Framework

The key body in the United Kingdom context for developing, structuring and controlling competency based vocational qualifications is the National Vocational Qualifications Authority (NVQA) and the Scottish Vocational Qualifications Authority. This is aligned with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Vocational awards can be attained at five different levels, identified as Level, 1, Level, 2 and so on up to Level 5. One of the key roles of the Authority is to establish the 'Standards'. The Standards map out all the competencies and skills that a prospective candidate must fulfil to be able to achieve the units of a given vocational award. All vocational qualifications are made up of 'units'. Units cluster together particular typical situations likely to be encountered in a given business role and area. For example, in the case of the Customer Service Award (discussed further below in relation to the field research) the Level 3 Award is comprised of units (in turn comprised of sub-units termed 'elements'). The Units/elements are entitled, for example:

> 'Unit 205, Making Customer Service Personal/Element 205.1 Identifying opportunities for making customer service personal'
>
> 'Unit 205, Making Customer Service Personal/Element 205.2 Treat your customer as an individual'
>
> 'Unit 211 Delivering Customer Service on Your customer's Premises/Element 211.1 Establish a rapport with the customer,

And, so on and so forth, depending on the unit that are identified as necessary for coverage. An award typically would be constituted of a number of such units to be completed. Candidates undertaking vocational qualifications are assesses by qualified Assessors. To be able to undertake this role, assessors need to have undertaken the vocational award for assessing candidates to endure that they have the competencies and that they are competent to do this. Importantly, Units often point at behavioural or attitudinal dimensions of employee candidates. It is, in fact very much at the discretion of the assessor concerning the degree to which these have taken place and been witnessed.

Assessment of candidate competencies can take place through a number of methods. These include *observation* by the assessor of the candidate carrying out their role. In some awards candidates are allowed to simulate or show the role in action however, quite often, the demonstration has to be live and real. Also, it is possible for candidates to write *personal statements* of experiences and roles supported by evidential documentation like a report of notes. Alternatively, the candidate can ask someone for a *witness testimony* reporting on what they have done to demonstrate particular competencies against the standards. In addition, it might be that there is a document, such as the minutes of meetings, reports and so on and so forth that can be use as *document* evidence.

Operating in relation to the NVQA are a number of awarding bodies, such as the City and Guilds. In addition, there also exists the Learning and Skills Council, a quasi government department responsible for disbursing funds for the further education sector (relating to ages 14-19) and a range of ongoing supporting publications and materials (see Whiddett and Hollyforde, 2003, 2007 as illustrative of the repetitive nature of the work produced).

Typically the landscape of competencies in contemporary United Kingdom focuses on a number or recurrent concerns and approaches. Central to these is the notion of developing competency frameworks. The aim of a competency framework is to ensure fairness of comparison across job roles and staff. (Whiddett and Holforde, 2007, pp.7-36) In 2007 sixty per cent of organizations in the United Kingdom were reported as employing a competency framework for their staff and half of the organizations who didn't have one were planning to introduce one (CIPD, 2007, p.18). The primary uses these were used for was to underpin performance reviews and appraisals. Fifty-two per cent of competency frameworks were created in-house. A further thirty-three percent were created in house with the assistance of consultants. A mere eight per cent claimed to use a framework developed by an external organization (CIPD, 2007, p.20).

In 2005 the United Kingdom government set up the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme (Learning and Skills Council, 2009) This revisiting of vocational qualifications recognised and aimed to begin addressing a number of long commented concerns with competency based vocational qualifications. It sought to improve support from employers for the qualification. Hitherto it had been difficult to secure consistent and ongoing commitment from employers to vocational qualifications. Employing organizations typically felt that the available competency based qualifications were too paper-bound, and bureaucratic and did not always seem to respond to and develop organizational aims. In tandem with this, the homogenous, and perhaps sometimes inflexible, standards that had been drawn up by qualification awarding bodies did not always seem to respond to individual learning needs. Finally, the government wished to see vocational competency based qualifications rolled out into additional business sectors and be able to recognise a wider range of achievement so as to support slipping government targets for further and higher education achievement. Moreover, there has been an attempt to make links to other grading systems. Overall, the review is to ensure that competency framework's are fit for purpose and meet organizational needs.

Methodological Approach

The study used an ethnographic approach (Van Maanen, 1978, Bryman and Bell, 2007, pp439-470, Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, pp.137- 153) Ethnography enables the researcher to use an array of qualitative techniques to examine a community in action in its natural, usual and everyday environment. In relation to Gold's (1958) well-cited classification of observer roles which embrace towards one end of the continuum 'complete participant', 'participant as observer' to, at the opposing end of the spectrum 'observer as participant' and 'complete observer', the research worked as a participant observer. This meant that he was totally implanted in the milieu of the

CLO. Ethnography, as methodological approach was ideally suited to the study. The participant as observer also permitted unstructured and semi-structured interviews to be conducted (Maylor and Blackmon, 2005, pp.225-233). All data were recorded in the form of notes. It was deemed an unnatural intrusion to try to use recording devices because the respondents were not used to such an experience. Also recording would not have been easy in the day-to-day client calls. Moreover, many respondents would be worried what would happen to the tapes and feared they risked ending up in the hands of senior management.

In a study such as this it is important to underline the role of reflexivity of the researcher towards the individuals and groups researched and reciprocally by the people researched to the researcher (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). The researcher spent many hours in the company of individual company employees, travelling many miles, visiting many clients together over many months. This provided an opportunity to socialise and get to know each other reasonably well on a personal level. The research embraced this subjectivity at the heart of the ethnographic approach of the research. Within the reflexive tradition of inductive research it is important to signal that for some respondents the researcher felt great empathy whereas with others no strong relationship developed. A couple of the employees become personal friends. Others were rude, unfriendly, aggressive or obnoxious towards the researcher and this never abated during the two years. Some were not unfriendly but were guarded and remote. One of the more extreme instances involved one elderly male worker who insisted on urinating into a bucket in secluded locations rather than find a public toilet. Clearly there was a gamut of behaviour and personalities. The researcher's background as someone with personal experience of a working class life and factory floor working meant that while alarming when they occurred none of the experiences were necessarily shocking.

The data analysis followed an inductive crystallisation process whereby the data were constantly reviewed in the light of repeat data capture. This form of review allow emergent themes in the data to be identified and analysed.

Reflections of Lived Experience of Competencies in the Field

The Field Research Organization

The field research was conducted in a large water utilities company employing approximately 5000 people located in the north of England. The author was part of a team of some ten assessors who were delivering a National Vocational Training, Level 3 qualification. He gained his A1/A2 Assessor Award during the process. The programme was targeted at ninety three Customer Liaison Officers (CLOs) who interacted on a daily basis with customers in the field. Each assessor was responsible for assessing approximately fourteen CLOs. The CLO role was the result of a change management programme and restructuring in the company. This had seen the creation of the new CLO role and the counterpart to this the Network Controller (NC) role. It was intended that the NC would look after the technical aspects of the network and would not have contact with customers. On the other hand, the CLO would be entirely customer facing and would no longer be involved with any technical aspects of the

water supply network. Prior to the change the CLO and the NC role had not existed and both roles had been carried out by each member of the field team. CLOs used company white vans to travel around their designated area. Because half the original staff were now undertaking NC roles this meant that the CLOs were covering a territory surface area that was double what they had previously had to cover. On occasion, due to the scheduling at the central headquarters this could mean that CLOs would leave a customer visit and have to travel fifty miles to another visit and then return back to the area where they were previously for the subsequent visit resulting in very long journeys. The issue of poor scheduling was a recurrent issue and, together with the changing job role, was a source of great discontent and tension. The company was concerned about improving its ratings on customer feedback. It was assumed, without any major research, more on management intuition that it would be necessary to improve customer interaction with the newly formed CLOs. Overall, the changes were far from popular and had witnessed considerable discussion with unions and some acrimony over what was considered by the front-line staff to be an the ill-thought plan by management.

A Day in the Life of a CLO.

Typically this involved spending whole days with the CLO at a few weeks' interval. The day would include telephoning the CLO to arrange the visit arriving at the works depot or the CLOS home address to meet up and drive off together in the van. The day would comprise visiting customers houses and premises and entering customers' houses to discuss water supply and quality problems. Lunch and breaks times would be spent with CLOs in 'greasy spoon' basic workers' cafes. As the researcher became more friendly with and trusted by CLOs he would find himself doing their shopping, visiting family and friends and doing little errands as the CLOs fitted these 'unofficial' personal and domestic jobs into their planned and prescribed work routine. As such he witnessed and experienced a breadth of rich experiences with the CLOs.

Initial and Emergent Findings and Preliminary Discussion.

The experiences from assessing and journeying with the CLOs produced a wide range of data. These data are still in process of being analysed and important themes and findings identified. For the purposes of presentation at conference the findings and accompanying discussion below provide indicative rather than a comprehensive discussion of what is planned in the final paper. Nevertheless, it is intended and hoped that this will facilitate the reader to obtain an impression of the relationship of the competencies experience to the employee/student CLOs, the assessor and other organizational actors. As indicated above, the data analysis is ongoing and themes are emerging and being consolidated. Four of these themes are presented below centred around competencies and resistance, competency frameworks as bureaucracy and anti-intellectualism, competencies as a device in a battle between managerialist and craft cultures, private and professional lives lived out in a competency framework.

A Theme of Competencies as Eroding Resistance

One of the key themes that came out of the research was the issue of resistance by CLOs to undertaking the qualification in the first place. The lead assessor on the programme suggested that in her experience this was not however typical. By way of illustration, on the first visit to a CLO the assessor got in the van and greeted the CLO. The CLO shouted:

> 'So what the f******g hell is all this NVQ competencies b******ks about!' (CLO 'A', 2007)

The assessor gradually built up a very friendly relationship with CLO A however the cynicism never really went away completely.

Many assessors on the programme reported various obstruction tactics to impede and delay their visits to CLOs. These tactics included cancelling appointments at the last minute, calling in sick on a given day. All of this was resonant of the forms 'organizational behaviour' characterised by Thompson and Ackroyd (1999). There was little doubt that the introduction of the competency framework was seen and used as a device to categorise and evaluate the CLO job. This afforded the opportunity for managers to have greater apparent say and control over CLO operatives. This was indeed true to some extent since what the job should consist of had now been made very explicit. Nevertheless, on a wide range of occasions older more experienced CLOs devised ways and loopholes to counter-manager the new job construction. This would involve exchanging jobs on work schedules with other CLOs unofficially to overcome the illogical allocation of jobs from the call centre. Equally many CLOs would go beyond the role of the CLO and assist clients, particularly elderly clients in ways that were not permitted. As an assessor the researcher was of course automatically complicit in these deviations – he was present at the time they occurred and had no power (or necessarily desire) to block them. In essence both respondent and researcher were engaged in a process of creating new sense of the job role. The competency framework assessing the workers actually had very little relationship to this. Rather it was the case that opportunities were looked for to tick any boxes possible. This was often a collaborative process between the researcher-assessor and the respondent-employee.

A Theme of Competency Frameworks as Bureaucracy and Anti-Intellectualism

A further emergent issue concerned the paperwork involved in the competency assessment process for the NVQ award. Many of the CLOs did not like the assessment documentation and needed considerable assistance with it. This was not always helped by the labelling of the documentation. The main form was called the 'MAD' form which stood for Multiple Assessment Document. Naturally this caused many amusing and witty remarks. It was clear that in some of the case of problems with documentation it was a matter of further resistance on the part of the CLO. However, in other instances, there seemed to be issues relating to levels of education. Nearly all of the CLOS were semi-skilled /skilled manual labour. The world of

written qualifications was not a world in which they were automatically comfortable. Although it was not stated three CLOS left the role and returned to become Network Controllers (NCs) on the technical side because this group of employees were not at that time completing the NVQ. But the manner in which these few employees baulked at and postponed written tasks also alluded to a deeper problem of potential illiteracy or semi illiteracy. These workers had thrived well in a world that valued the empirical, the pragmatic, indeed the much admired British saying 'the university of life'. The paper based assessment in competencies proved a serious challenge.

With regard to the issues of skills, many of the CLOS (and especially the older longer serving ones who has a depth of technical knowledge and experience) felt and often stated that the NVQ and competency approach was actually part of a process of further deskilling of their role. Already they believed that the restructuring of their role was problematic and the competency based assessment was yet a further part of that. Moreover, they stated that the assessment was belittling and demeaning of their technical skills and craftsmanship.

> 'This NVQ is a load of cobblers isn't it, admit it, go on. All they want is a monkey to do this job – when the managers get that then they will be happy'. (CLO 'D', 2008)

The temporal retrospective aspect of the award was a further difficulty. Many CLOs felt that they were getting an award for something that they already knew how to do and were doing. The sentiment of many was what was the point? As the process went on what become increasingly important and informative was the interaction and exchanges between the author as assessor and the CLOs. In many cases friendships struck up and it was the wider discussions over mugs of tea in 'greasy spoon' cafes they pointed up some of the lessons to be learned. These discussions were not couched in the dry language of NVQs but rather in an everyday vernacular drawing on common wisdoms.

A Theme of Competencies in a Conflict Between Managerialist and Craftmanship Cultures.

It is important also to draw attention to the wider context of the organization and the CLOs managers. There were many managers and a great number of 'special task forces' of contingent manager groupings. There was very little respect between CLOs and any of the managers. In truth, there was not a great deal of respect in reality for the managers by the assessor team. The assessor team had met the managers before and during the initiative in a range of meetings. The corporate culture typically produced highly political 'yes' (wo)men behaviour. Managers were regularly moved between roles every two to three years. Therefore no manager would take a risk of making a mistake so as not to jeopardise his or her chances of a promotion in the long-term. As one CLO put it succinctly:

> 'They're all f*****g greasy pole climbers and arse lickers – no f*****g use at all' (CLO 'G', 2007)

Concerning longer-term impacts and effects of the programme it is difficult to determine long-term sustainable consequences. For the organization senior management were able to say in corporate reports that 93 of their CLO operatives has attained NVQ level 3. This had considerable political capital in national competitor league tables. For the CLOs the consequence was varied. Older CLOs were often not interested in the vocational qualification process at all. A substantial number were concerned with their chances of retirement. Unfortunately, and perhaps linked to the socio-cultural characteristics of the group to some extent, many has experienced earlier divorces which had resulted in their pension being reduced and given to the divorced partner. This was a major topic of conversation for some of the CLOs. The younger CLOS were very different. These were typically not technically very experienced (the long route of many technical jobs no longer available in the contemporary structures of the organization) and so the NVQ in Customer Experience 'legitimised' them in the light of the new company ethos. For the older CLOs customer service was not a question of competencies. They viewed it more a matter of behaving in a decent human way to deserving customers. This could lead some older CLOs to mending broken taps and pipes for elderly people and doing them favours. All of this was in strict contravention to the new company rule book but they did it in any case. Matlay (2001) has suggested that in the case of small to medium sized enterprises competency approaches may not be as effective as large organizations. The present data indicates that this can also be the case in a very large company employing thousands of people.

The older workers in particular saw themselves as fighting against the competency framework on two linked fronts. Firstly, they felt that 'management speak' had taken over all parts of the company and that the competency programme was a part of that. At the same time they remembered nostalgically a period when they operate using a wide range of skills and exercised a great deal of judgement and independence. Managers were seen as increasingly impinging on this and the competency programme associated with the restructuring of the job was deemed to be a diminishing of their 'craft' role. They often reported that they were becoming mere cogs in a (modernistic) machine.

> 'They knocked the passion out of me a long time ago. I still love the idea of this job but they keep bl**dy wrecking it. This NVQ id the latest in a string of bullshit with had thrown our way. They'll end up getting rid of us and employing bl**dy robots!'.
> (CLO 'H', 2007)

A Theme of Private Identity Lived Through the Competency Framework.

During the research project many events both professional and private happened to the employees. Partners become ill and were taken into hospital, children took important exams, some of the respondents separated and divorced, other respondents married (some for the second or third time), some respondents operated secondary businesses during their day job – school visiting parties, jobs 'on the side' for extra money, a number were deeply involved in interest such as semi-professional motor-bike racing, hunting with hounds, shooting, taking several cruiseship holidays a year

and so on and so forth. What role did the competency framework play in relation to these activities. There is no doubt that many of these activities made many of the respondents more rounded, mature, knowledgeable and even wise. The competency framework wrestled to try to respect and represent the talents that were being brought to the job.

Equally, there were the 'bad' days. The days when one man's ex-wife's solicitor had just written him a letter claiming a large proportion of his pension resulting in the fact that his retirement plans were now destroyed. The day when one of the CLO's announced to the author that his marriage was over and that by the time the competency project was over he would have left her. On those days, it was better 'not to talk too much about the competency work. The researcher assessor would sit in the van or a café and talk. The competency framework never officially acknowledge these many realities of the CLO operatives. Reflexively, the researcher worked hard with the competency framework to see what could be done for the CLO on such days and this might very well 'not noticing' failure to follow procedure exactly or a more grumpy approach.

The public too were not homogenous automatons. The competency framework offers some variation descriptors to not 'confused', 'very please' , or 'angry' customers contexts. Clearly, these are limited descriptions of the rich panoply of behaviour that might b experienced on a given day. Therefore the competency frameworks not only weakly represent the experience as lived by the employee but equally it portrays weakly the client or customer also.

As stated above these comments provide the introductory analysis of the data for the purposes of discussion at conference. The evaluation and analysis of the data is an ongoing process and the intention id to develop and consolidate a range of emergent themes. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that there is considerable scope to apply in a more concerted way critical, social constructive and lived experiences lenses to these situations to be able to bring a critical realism to the study of competencies in the United Kingdom context.

Competencies – A Critical Perspective Alternative Insight

While competencies' approaches and the debate surrounding these has made some progress in trying to distil and categorise the skills that delineate and identify what an employee or manager need in their work role, it is equally important to say that this approach has not been without its limitations (Watson, 200, p.43). The key limitations revolve around whether or not to accomplish such a project – in a highly complex world of human interaction is it possible to isolate human skills employed in the world of work? This points at the limitations in the modernistic and positivistic paradigm in which competencies are rooted. Equally, while competency assessment frameworks try to take account of contextual and situational factors, again, this is often achieved only in a limited manner whereby, for example, the assessor of the competency has to observe the competency in a range of different settings. For

example, this might be offering customer care to (a) a customer who is angry (b) a customer who is confused and so on and so forth.

As the world of management and organizational theory has evolved so have the demands on competencies frameworks in relation to it. There is no doubt that in some instances, competencies and especially rigid or prescribed competency frameworks may seem artificial or even counter-intuitive to common sense. For example, in order to achieve a given vocational qualification it might be stated in the competency standards for the award that the participant/student needs to do or demonstrate skill or personality attribute 'X'. In the 'real-life' circumstance this might seem illogical or even ridiculous. For instance, in a door-to-door customer service context – showing somebody in extreme distress your company ID-card and introducing yourself formally before controlling the immediate situation! McKenna (2004) raises this point and calls for a role for 'common sense' in applying and working with competencies. Rather than slavishly following only a 'tick box', he suggests, there is a need to apply a more everyday sense-making. But as Weick (1995) as pointed up 'common sense' itself is not always that easily defined or shared between individuals. Watson (2002, pp.446-447) underlines the dangers of the way consultants adopting and rolling out such techniques simply do little more than 'commodify' the concept and reduce it to a series of emotional traits that managers must adopt. As a response Watson suggests:

> 'The danger here is that we are taken back to the type of thinking about managerial competence … that which saw competencies as inbuilt characteristics or 'traits' of human individuals existing in isolation from their organisational context. It is much more helpful to see competencies, instead, as emergent predispositions of people to act in certain ways in the context of relationships, cultural assumptions and ongoing learning and adaptive processes. The concept of emotional intelligence, for example, is likely to be more useful for understanding manager effectiveness if we do not focus on the extent to which managers are emotionally intelligent but focus on the extent to which, in particular organisational contexts, managers act in an emotionally intelligent way' (Watson, 2002, p.447)

In the edifice and structures that have grown up around discussions on competencies it is easy to overlook that a key question associated with the entire competency debate is what makes some managers [or employees] more competent than others. (Watson, 2002, p.292)

In so many regards competencies approaches epitomise modernism and managerialism. Here perceptions of managers revolve around preoccupations of measurable performance and output at the expense of a genuine concern and insight on the social dimensions. This is derived from a long-standing hegemonic tradition of positivism in management and organization studies in the post-WWII period (Watson, 2002, Linstead, Fulop and Lilley, 2009) Aligned and compounded with this, the United Kingdom has a tradition of empiricism, pragmatism. Even anti-intellectualism. As indicated above, these traditions are long established (McEwan, 2001, pp73-75 drawing on the work and legacy of Bentham (1748-1832) and Mill (1806 – 1873). Based on the above characterisation it is possible to say that competencies fit very well within these traditions.

A drawback of the modernistic and positivistic conceptualisation and epistemological grounding of competencies is that they can be charged as reductionist in the way in which they confine and constrain a rich human experience or interaction into a ticked box of 'action achieved. The boundaries drawn around NVQ elements and units are artificial boundaries. Although not capitalised on, such observations are long standing. Canning (1997) has suggested that vocational and competency based approaches cannot fully assess aspects such as inter-personal relationships and social contexts. In this vein, Pate, Martin and Robertson (2003, pp.169-171) have pointed up the possibility for viewing competencies through a subjectivist or constructivist approach whereby the person doing the work and undertaking the qualification constructs the *meaning* of their work.

Given these reflections, it seems therefore there is scope to revisit and reconsider competencies and competency training in an alternative way. This would involve drawing on more interpretive, constructionist and critical ways of making sense of competencies. In tandem with this, it is possible to draw on the dynamic notion of 'lived experience' to try to draw out a richer representation of human experience rather than the constrained and limited representation offered by competencies. The paper seeks to surface tensions between these prevalent "normative" or representationalist presentations (Chia, 1996; Watson and Harris, 1999) and a more marginalised commentary in extant accounts. This paper simultaneously surfaces and develops a more emotive and "lived experience"-type exploration of competency based processes (Knights and Willmott, 1999; Fineman, 1993; Fineman and Gabriel, 1996; Gabriel, Fineman, and Sims, 2005). The *a priori* contention of the argument is that representationalist assumptions, in competency approaches are limiting or constraining in the way they portray the experience. The intention of this paper is not an attempt to usurp existing competency approaches, but rather to complement them with a rich and overt adjustment and acknowledgement of the emotional and human dimensions of competency.

In order to construct a reply to normative representation in many competency frameworks and approaches paper proposes an enhanced role for increased narrative and social construction within them. A helpful comparison for this process is to be found within the critical perspective field of management and organisation studies (Linstead, Fulop and Lilley, 2009) The commitments of writers within this area have drawn attention to the mechanistic and rationalistic nature of writing in the management arena pointing up a lack of commentary on inter alia emotion, spirituality, gender, values and beliefs, identity, power and resistance. Knights and Willmott, (1995, 1999) have proposed this as the absence of a sense of "lived experience" in areas of that literature. They argue that organizational life and management "entails the common experience, challenges and disappointments and pleasures of being human… students and practitioners of management are, first and last, human beings." (1995:3) Commenting on many management texts, they point out that readers "are presented with an endless stream of theories, typologies, bloodless descriptions and often patronising prescriptions" (1999:2). They summarise the purpose of the 'lived experience' approach as "less concerned with the specific and the detailed 'technical' functions of management, as described in most textbooks than with the ways in which technical activities effect the lives of managers."(1999:ix) Many aspects of competency approaches and much of the writing and literature on

competencies are prone to similar effects in relation to the lives of participants, employees and mangers. However, Knights and Willmott are keen to emphasise that they "are not quite so arrogant as to deny [for example] the value of a good textbook in providing an introductory guide to a particular field of knowledge" (*ibid*, p.1) The present paper shares this sentiment with regard to competency frameworks and writings. However, it does underline scope for, in a first instance, surfacing the limited "lived experience" style accounts extant in these approaches.

"Lived experience" approaches draw their inspiration from a socially constructed perspective of human interaction. This offers alternative appreciation of the emergence and patterning of competency experience. For Berger and Luckmann (1971) the objectification (i.e. representationalist) form of knowledge building is a consequence of intertwined processes of typification (classifying and "agreeing" knowledge) and subsequent habitualization (repeated usage and reinforcement) which give rise to the "externalization" and "objectification" (the rendering as fact) of human and social experience. In turn, this permits a process of consequent internalization of a created "reality" in that: "A world so regarded attains a firmness in consciousness."(*ibid*:p.78) And, as such, everyday human experiences become seen as 'legitimated' (*ibid*:p.111) or 'representations' (Chia, 1996) rather than being "humanly produced". (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:78) It should not be assumed that "these moments" occur in a progressive linear or strict "temporal sequence" (*ibid*: p.149) but rather through an iterative and relational manner (See also Watson and Harris 1999:18 and Chia, 1996:581).

It is thus useful to view a programme of competencies as much as a socialisation experience as a project to inculcate and record technical skills and the progressive pursuit of process and outcomes. These seemingly less tangible aspects have the power and poignancy to dictate and to dominate the process and in many cases are more likely to constitute the usual (or normative) rather than the marginal. It is through alternative frames of reference that wider and richer appreciation of competencies can be generated drawing out the social, psychological and emotional dimensions.

Conclusion

The argument in this paper has been able to provide a historical contextualisation of competencies. As indicated, they have been a number of comments in the literature in this regard. However, there is a case and scope to provide a more concerted and rich appreciation of the socio-cultural and socio-economic in which competencies in the United Kingdom environment have emerged.

Moreover, the discussion of competencies in their contemporary context has carried forward a modernistic and positivistic framing of the domain. This has provided guidelines and assistance to organizations in a range of ways. However, there is clearly the potential to bring to bear alternative perspectives and paradigms through a critical gaze to be able to glean a wider and richer picture of competencies and vocational training and qualifications.

In much of the commentary of competency training the full human nature of the participants is not addressed. By gathering and analysing data in relation in a way that shows individuals replete with all the human emotions and characteristics they possess there is a potent opportunity to recast competency approaches and understand them in a deeper manner.

References

Alvesson, M and Skoldberg, K. (2000) *Reflexive Methodologies: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*, London, Sage Publications.

Ashton, C. (1996) ' How competencies boost performance', *Management Development Review*, Vol.9, No.3, pp.14-19.

Ashcroft, L. (2004) 'Developing competencies, critical analysis and personal transferable skills in future information professionals', *Library Review*, Vol. 53, No.2, pp.82-88.

Bardzil, P and Slaski, M. (2003) 'Emotional intelligence: fundamental competencies for enhanced service provision', *Managing Service Quality*, Vol.13, No.2, pp.97-104.

Barth, M. Godemann, J, Rieckmann, M and Stoltenberg, U. (2007) 'Developing competencies for sustainable development in higher education', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, Vol. 8, No.4, pp.416-430.

Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1971) *The Social Construction of Reality*, Harmondsworth, London.

Bouzdine-Chameeva, T. (2006) 'How wine sector SMEs approach strategic questions: some comparative lessons of causal representation of distinctive competencies, *British Food Journal*, Vol.108, No.4, pp.273-289.

Boyatzis, R. (1982) *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance*, New York, Wiley.

Boyatzis, R. (2008) 'Competencies in the 21st century' *Journal of Management Development*, Vol.27, No.1, pp.5-12.

Bratton, J., Callinan, M., Forshaw, C. and Sawchuk, P. (2007) *Work and Organizational Behaviour*, Basingstoke, Palgrave-Macmillan.

Bratton, J. and Gold, J. (2007) *Human Resource Management: Theory and Practice*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave MacMillan.

Brophy, M and Kiely, T. (2002) 'Competencies: A New Sector', *Journal of Industrial Training*, Vol. 26, No2,3 and 4, pp.165-176.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Canning, R. (1997) 'Level 4 N/SVQ in training and development 1992-1994', *Journal of Industrial Training*, Vol. 21, No.5, pp.181-185.

Cappellan, T and Janssens, M. (2008) 'Global managers' career competencies', *Career Development International*, Vol. 13, No.6, pp.514-537.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2007) *Learning and Development: Annual Survey Report*, London, CIPD.

Chia, R. (1996) *Organisational Knowledge as Deconstructive Practice*, De Gruyter, Berlin.

Clark, E and Hinxman, L. (1999) 'Developing a framework of competencies for facilities management', *Facilities*, Vol.17, No.7/8, pp.246-252.

Department of Education (1986) *Working Together, Education and Training*, Government White Paper, Cmnd 9823, London, HMSO.

Department of Health (2009) *World Class Commissioning: Competencies*, London Department of Health (Commissioning) accessed on 23.3.09 at www.dh.gov.uk/ worldclasscommissioning.

Edwards-Zara, C. (2005) 'Evaluation and Assessment' in Wilson, P. (Ed.) (2005) *Human Resource Development: Learning and Training for Individuals and Organizations*, London, Kogan Page, pp.407-422.

Engwall, L and Zamagni, V. (1998) *Management Education in Historical Perspective*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Eriksson, P. and Kovalainen, A. (2008) *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*, London, Sage Publications.

Fineman, S. and Gabriel, Y.(1996) *Experiencing Organizations*, Sage Publications, London.

Gabriel, Y., Fineman, S and Sims, D. (2005) *Organizing and Organizations – An Introduction*, Sage Publications, London.

Garavan, T and McGuire, D. (2001) 'Competencies and workplace learning: some reflections on the rhetoric and the reality', *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol.13, No.4, pp.144-163.

Goleman, D. (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, London, Bloomsbury.

Hafeez, K and Essmail, E. (2007) 'Evaluating organisation core competences and associated personal competencies using analytical hierarchy process', *Management Research News*, Vol.30, No.8, pp.530-547.

Halley, A and Beaulieu, M. (2009) 'Mastery of operational competencies in the context of supply chain management', *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*, Vol 14, no.1, pp.49-63.

Hirsh, W and Strebler, M. (1994) 'Defining managerial skills and competencies', in *Handbook of Management Development*, Aldershot (UK), Gower, pp.79-97.

Income Data Services (2008) *Competency Frameworks*, HR Studies 866, London, IDS.

Institute of Physics (IOP) (2009) *CPD: The Professional Helpsheet Series – Competencies*, London, IOP,

Kayes, D. and Kayes, A. (2005) 'Essential competencies for cross-cultural knowledge absorption' *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol.20, No.7, pp.578-589.

Knights, D. and Willmott, H. (1995) Management as a Lived Experience, Management as Text, Paper presented at the *New Perspectives on Management Education Conference*, January, pp.1-18.

Knights, D. and Willmott, H.(1999*)* *Management Lives: Power and Identity in Work Organizations*, Sage Publications, London.

Koman, E. and Wolff, S. (2008) 'Emotional intelligence competencies in the team and the team leader: A multi-level examination of the impact of emotional intelligence on team performance', *Journal of Management Development*, Vol.27, No.1, pp.55-75.

Learning and Skills Council (2009) 'UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme' http://qfr.lsc.gov.ukvqrp accessed March 12, 2009.

Linstead, S. Fulop, L and Lilley, S. (2009) *Management and Organization: A Critical Text*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave Macmillan.

Lyotard, J-F. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis/Manchester, University of Minnesota Press/ University of Manchester Press.

Manpower Services Commission (1981) *A New Training Initiative: Agenda for Action*, Sheffield, UK

Margerison, C. (2001) 'Team competencies', *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, Vol.7, No 7/8, pp.117-122.

Matlay, H. (2001) 'HRD in the small business sector of the British economy: an evaluation of current training initiatives', *Proceedings of 2nd Conference of HRD Research and Practice Across Europe*, University of Twente, Enschede, 26-27 January cited in Garavan, T. and McGuire, D. (2001) 'Competencies and workplace

learning: some reflections on the rhetoric and the reality', *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol.13, No.4, p.145.

Maylor, H. and Blackmon, K. (2005) *Researching Business and Management*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave-Macmillan.

McClelland, D. (1973) 'Testing for competence rather than intelligence', *American Psychologist*, Vol.28, pp.1-14.

McEwan, T. (2001) *Managing Values and Beliefs in Organisations*, Harlow (UK), Financial Times and Prentice Hall.

McKenna, S. (2004) 'Predispositions and context in the development of managerial skills', *Journal of Management Development*, Vol.23, No.7, pp.664-677.

Murray, P. (2003) 'Organisational learning, competencies and firm performance: empirical observations' *The Learning Organization*, Vol. 10, No.5, pp.305-316.

Noordegraaf, M. (2000) 'Professional sense-makers: managerial competencies amidst ambiguity', *The International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol.13, No.4, pp.319-332.

Prahalad, C. and Hamel, G (1990) The Core Competence of the Corporation', *Harvard Business Review*, Vol.68, No. 3, pp.79-91.

Gibb, S and Megginson, D. (2001) 'Employee development' in Redman, T. and Wilkinson, A. (2001) *Contemporary Human Resource Management: Text and Cases*, London, Financial Times/Prentice Hall.

Gold, R. (1958) 'Roles in Sociological Fieldwork', *Social Forces*, Vol.36, pp.217-23.

Pate, J. Martin, G and Robertson, M. (2003) 'Accrediting competencies: A case of Scottish vocational qualifications', *Journal of Industrial Training*, Vol.27, No.2,3 and 4, pp.169-176.

Snell, S, Youndt, M. and Wright, P. (1996) 'Establishing a framework for research in strategic human resource management: merging resource theory and organisational learning', in Ferris G. (Ed.) *Research in Personnel and Human Resource Management*, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, pp.61-90

Sparrow, P and Bognanno, M. (1994) 'Competency requirement forecasting: issues for international selection and assessment', Mabey, C. and Iles, P. (1994) *Managing Learning*, London, Routledge, pp.57-69.

Spendlove, M. ()2007) 'Competencies for effective leadership in higher education', *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol.21, No.5, pp.407-417.

Thach, E. and Thompson, K. (2007) 'Trading places, examining leadership competencies between for-profit vs. public and non-profit leaders', *Leadership, and Organization Development Journal*, Vol.28, No.4, pp.356-375.

Thompson, P and Ackroyd, S. (1999) *Organizational Misbehaviour*, London, Sage Publications.

Thorpe, R. and Holman, D. (1994) 'The Management Charter Initiative in higher education: an evaluation of its applicability to undergraduates' *Capability*, Vol.1,No.1, pp.43-52.

Van Maanen, J. (1978) 'On Watching the Watchers', in Manning, P. and Van Maanen, J. (Eds.) *Policing: the View From the Street*, Santa Monica (USA), Goodyear.

Watson, T and Harris, P. (1999) *The Emergent Manager*, Sage Publications, London.

Watson, T. (2002) *Organising and Managing Work: Organisational, Managerial and Strategic Behaviour in theory and Practice*, London, Financial Times/Prentice Hall.

Weick, K. (1995) *Sense-Making in Organizations*, London, sage Publications.

Whiddett, S and Hollyforde, S. (2003) *A Practical Guide to Competencies: How to Enhance Individual and Organizational Performance*, CIPD.

Whiddett, S and Hollyforde, S. (2007) *Competencies*, CIPD

Wilson, P. (Ed.) (2005) *Human Resource Development: Learning and Training for Individuals and Organizations*, London, Kogan Page.

Wright, P. Dunford, B and Snell S. (2001) ' Human resources and the resource based view of the firm' *Journal of Management*, Vol.27, No.6, pp.701-21.