

*.....taking a complexity perspective on leadership,  
continuity and change in organisations .....*



October 2008

**DOCTOR OF MANAGEMENT /  
MASTER OF ARTS**

Part-time research degree programme offered by  
**The Complexity and Management Centre**  
at the **Business School of the University of Hertfordshire**



This research programme is unique in reflecting the perspective of the Complexity and Management Centre at the University of Hertfordshire, which has an international reputation for its work on the implications of complexity theories for organisations.

There are various ways of understanding how people in organisations find themselves interacting with each other in order to do their work.

At the Complexity and Management Centre we have a particular perspective in which we understand organisations as population-wide patterns of relating which emerge in complex responsive processes of daily local interaction between people.

This perspective draws on analogies from the complexity sciences understood in human terms from perspectives in sociology, psychology, group analysis and organisational theory.

### ***Who the programme is for***

The programme is for experienced leaders and managers, as well as internal and external consultants, who are interested in questioning, reflecting upon and developing the effectiveness of their current work, particularly how they think about what they are doing.

Many feel that dominant ways of making sense of intricate and confusing organisational situations are often one-sided. They concentrate on the rational and predictable aspects of human experience, leading to attempts at programmatic, large-scale management of change. This programme focuses attention on how wide-spread change emerges as people interact locally in everyday situations.

### ***The personal challenge of the programme***

Working with organisational change is not divorced from personal change and questioning how one thinks is both intellectually and emotionally challenging.

This is not a taught programme, but rather one in which participants will be formulating and pursuing their own particular inquiry together with others during five-day residential meetings, as well as in small learning groups and through email contact. This will involve participants in exploring their experience of their work and how they think about it both in discussion and in intensive reading and reflective writing. Attendance at all programme sessions is a requirement. Prospective participants need to consider how they will incorporate these additional demands into their normal working and social lives.

### ***Developing professional modes of working***

Participants' work will be the focus of their research. This is an experience-based programme for professionals. Projects exploring the experience of work are a major aspect of its experiential nature. Those sponsored by their organisations can thus point to direct benefits concerning critical issues that they are facing in their work. The fact that participants come from a wide range of organisational and national cultures generates a rich conversation of diverse perspectives.

## ***Reasons for coming on this programme***

There are relatively few professional research degree programmes, particularly ones that emphasise a reflective, reflexive approach in which the candidates' work is their research. This programme offers the opportunity of completing high level doctoral research in three years.

It is possible to stop at the research Masters' level after two years.

There is an unusually high and in depth level of supervision provided by the faculty.

The experience of the programme is personally developmental and it focuses attention, to an unusual degree, on the experience of group dynamics and the psychological dimensions of organisational life.

The methodology involves taking one's own ordinary experience seriously, challenging one's ways of thinking about this and developing a rigorous, critically aware approach to relevant literature.

Because it focuses on the participant's current work it is immediately beneficial to the organisation.

This programme is well established and successful.

## ***The history and achievements of the programme***

The Doctor of Management programme started in 2000, attracting practising leaders and managers from a range of organisations in many countries. Since 2002, the programme has produced 31 graduates with 21 of these at the level of Doctor of Management and 10 at the level of Master of Arts by research. The cohort due to complete in October 2007 is expected to produce a further 17 graduates. A new cohort of 9 members commenced work in June 2007.

Graduates and current participants come from the USA, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Israel, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland and the UK.

They are employees of public and private sector organisations and are also self employed consultants to organisations. A number of them are Chief Executives – for example two graduates are CEOs of hospitals in the USA and one is CEO of a large UK charity. Two are university professors in Ireland and Canada, two are Nurse Directors on NHS Boards and another is CEO of a major Division of the Dutch Railway system.

The research community of the programme is therefore well placed to generate material and insight into the daily practices of actual organisational life.

The programme is building up a body of knowledge about what managers and leaders actually do at the micro level. This research is being published in a series of edited volumes containing the work of graduates from the programme called *Complexity and Emergence in Organizations*, published in London by Routledge. Titles so far published are:

*A Complexity Perspective on Researching Organizations: Taking experience seriously, edited by Ralph Stacey and Douglas Griffin*

*Complexity and the Experience of Leading Organizations, edited by Douglas Griffin and Ralph Stacey*

*Experiencing Risk, Spontaneity and Improvisation in Organizational Change: Working live, edited by Patricia Shaw and Ralph Stacey*

*Complexity and the Experience of Managing in the Public Sector, edited by Ralph Stacey and Douglas Griffin*

*Experiencing Emergence in Organizations: Local interaction and the emergence of global pattern, edited by Ralph Stacey*

A new volume will be published in early 2008: *Complexity and the Experience of Values, Conflict and Compromise in Organizations, edited by Ralph Stacey and Douglas Griffin.*

**An appendix gives a list of the theses of those who have graduated.**

## ***The approach to research***

The research is undertaken from the perspective of an organisational member who takes his or her experience seriously and fundamentally questions ways of thinking about organisational activities.

This is very different to research on, or about, experience. In avoiding the splitting of theory and practice, and of emotion and intellect, particular attention is paid to understanding change as shifts in our experience of ourselves and of our patterns of relating to each other. As an integral part of the research, the programme itself also provides an opportunity to reflect on our own processes of working together and the insight this might provide on organisational life. Particular attention is paid to habit and spontaneity, cooperation and conflict, and power as enabling constraints in relationships.

Participants form themselves into small learning groups supervised by a member of faculty. The faculty provides a high degree of supervision and participates fully in the learning community.

Each participant's research is at the same time his or her daily work. Participants are required to reflect on narratives of what they do each day in the normal course of their work in order to make sense of what they actually do. This requires them to formulate an argument about some aspect of their work in a critically aware way, locating how they are thinking in relevant discourses, traditions of thought and their literatures. The contribution they are required to make is both to knowledge and to practice.

The research method can thus be described as taking one's experience seriously. This way of working reflects an understanding of organisational life as fundamentally *conversational* in nature. As change unfolds in unpredictable and potentially creative ways, people display the capacity to act into the unknown and it is this capacity that we seek to understand.

During the programme, participants will work with their own experience of change in their organisations, reflecting on insights gained from the programme, following an iterative cycle, which is intrinsically *paradoxical* in nature. Everyone is acting with intention to shape the organisation while, *at the same time*, they are being shaped by the organisation.

## THE PROGRAMME OF SUPPORTING STUDIES

All participants are required to complete the Programme of Supporting Studies in five residential modules, each lasting five days, over a period of 18 months. The modules include:

- opportunities for experimentation and exploration of the self-group relationship
- examination and discussion of conceptual material
- peer coaching in small learning groups
- integration of learning through reflection, leading discussions and sharing experience.

The following themes are examples of the likely material to be explored through discussion of guided reading and reflection on the participants' own experience.

### **Module 1 – Theme: Complex responsive processes of relating.**

- The basis of mainstream theories of managing and organising.
- Development of notions of causality, stability and change in Western thought.
- Complexity theory in the natural sciences and key implications to do with radical unpredictability, stable instability, self-organisation, emergence, diversity and the internal capacity for spontaneous change.
- The implications for strategy, leadership, communication and change management.
- Implications of complexity thinking in the social sciences: power figurations and the patterning of mind, self and society as phenomena emerging in human relating.
- Method and methodology: narrative and reflexivity.

### **Module 2 – Theme: Communicative interaction as patterning process.**

- The communicative process and its importance in the construction of ordinary everyday reality. The facilitation of fruitful conversation, i.e. flowing conversation that recreates the constraining themes, norms and values of a group's identity and *at the same time* allows for the emergence of difference and innovative change.
- The self-organising patterning of human interaction through associative response, turn taking sequences, mirroring, rhetorical devices and 'unconscious processes'. Sensing shifts in such processes.
- Social constructionism. Intersubjectivity theory.
- Storytelling in organisations, language and meaning. Narrativity and knowledge.
- Management and consulting as performing arts. Playing a part in the evolution of events.

### **Module 3 – Theme: Politics and ethics in organizations – power relations as self-organizing enabling constraints.**

- Power relations and political processes in organisations.
- Identity, difference and conflict as emergent social processes. The implications for creativity and innovation in organisations.
- Anxiety and spontaneity: human responses and social defences; destructive group processes.
- The nature of leadership in conditions of complexity, unpredictability and paradox.
- Relevance to change and evolution in organisations.

### **Modules 4 & 5**

- Joint design by faculty and participants around emerging concerns.
- These modules may include visiting speakers, organisational visits, self-managed workshops and seminars, coaching or tutorials.

## PROJECT WORK

All participants are required to complete the Project Work.

Supervised, work-related research projects will focus on making sense of practice. Participants will *work in small learning groups*, which will meet for two days on three occasions each year. The purpose of these groups is to provide supervision to support participants in completing their projects. This is the core of the research and will involve considerable writing and rewriting as each person's line of inquiry deepens. Participants will need to engage critically and constructively with each others' work.

Deadlines will be set for completion of:

Project 1, which is a reflective narrative weaving together the influences and experiences that inform the participants' current practice in organisations.

Project 2, which is a sense making exploration of some key processes and themes in the participant's current practice, incorporating a questioning review of key perspectives of the programme.

Project 3, which is a detailed account of experiences of organisational change to which the participant has contributed as a manager, leader or consultant and which situates the participant's thinking in relation to other approaches to understanding the issues raised.

- *For the MA:* A synopsis of the 3 projects identifying the themes running through the work and critically appraising the methods and practices employed in the research. The coherence of the research projects must be clearly demonstrated.
  
- *For the DMan:* Project 4 is a further account of organizational change that demonstrates the ability to explore one's practice, informed in increasing depth by a coherent theoretical base and awareness of broader issues raised by this practice.
  
- *For the DMan:* A synopsis and critical appraisal of the 4 projects identifying the themes running through the work and critically appraising the methods, theories and practices employed in the research. The coherence of the research projects must be clearly demonstrated and the contribution made to knowledge and professional practice must be identified.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE MA

Participants registered for the MA, will submit a portfolio of work at the end of the second year of the programme. This consists of the three project reports and a synopsis of the nature of the work undertaken, which identifies coherent themes running through that work which forms a clear argument, displays crucial awareness in relation to relevant literature and critically appraises the methods and practices employed. An MA will be awarded to a candidate who successfully investigates and critically evaluates important aspects of a professional discipline and its relationship to the wider context.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DMan

Participants registered for the DMan undergo a progression assessment at the end of the second year of the programme. On satisfactory completion of this assessment a candidate proceeds to the final year in which a further project is undertaken. At the end of the third year candidates submit all project reports in the form of a thesis identifying coherent themes and critically analysing methods and practices. The thesis must demonstrate an independent and original contribution to an organisational knowledge and professional practice and its relationship to the wider context.

## THE FACULTY

The programme will be managed by the Programme Director, Ralph Stacey, Professor of Management and Director of the Complexity and Management Centre at the University of Hertfordshire. He is also a group analyst and author of *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics* (Pitman, 4th edition, 2003), *Complex Responsive Processes in Organisations* (Routledge, 2001) and *Complexity and Group Processes: A radically social understanding of the individual* (Routledge 2003). Professor Douglas Griffin will also play a key role and other faculty will be appointed later. Professor Griffin is Associate Director of the Complexity and Management Centre, independent consultant and author of *The Emergence of Leadership: Linking Self-Organization and Ethics* (Routledge, 2002).

## TIMING, COSTS, AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The next cohort will commence in October 2008. Interviews will be held on 2 May 2008, 6 June 2008 and 21 July 2008. The closing date for applications is 5 July 2008. Participant numbers are restricted to around 16 students in a cohort.

Dates of the Residential Modules will be: October 17-21, 2008; February 6-10, 2009; May 15-19, 2009; October 23-27, 2009; February 12-16, 2010. There will be a progression examination on 8-9 July 2010 and a joint learning group meeting on 10-11 July 2010. There will also be a joint learning group meeting on 5-6 February 2011. Other learning group meetings will be arranged when the programme commences.

The fee for the first 2 years is GBP 10,000 per annum and for the third it is GBP 8,000. This does not include accommodation and conference facility costs.

**Applicants should:** be competent and fluent in the English language, both spoken and written; normally have a first degree, or equivalent; have at least five years of practical experience of organisational life in a managerial or consulting role; continue working in or for organisations throughout the programme

**If you are interested in applying please contact: Ralph Stacey at [r.d.stacey@herts.ac.uk](mailto:r.d.stacey@herts.ac.uk)**

## ***Appendix***

### ***Theses awarded the Doctor of Management***

The Part Played by Writing in the Organisational Conversation – Alison Donaldson

Executive Coaching as the Differentiating Patterning of Power – Andrew Lee-Clarke

Reframing Consulting as Transformation from within Human Relating – Bjørner Christensen

Organisation Change Prescriptions as Placebo and Side-effect – Ian Johnson

The Leader: An emergent, participative role – James Taylor

The Practical Side of Complexity: Implications for leaders – John Tobin

Stuckness and Change in a Community of Organisation Consultants: My practice isn't my own – Michael Notan

Developing Leadership: Learning what cannot be taught – Michael Shiel

Quality Improvement in Health Care: Engaging people in the process – Steven Hagedorn

Reconciling Local Initiative with National Policy in Teacher Professional Development – Seamus Cannon

Experiencing Responsibility in the Context of Project Management – Rui Grilo

Re-invigorating and Re-defining the Practice of Qualitative Inquiry within a Business Context – Sheila Keegan

Spontaneity and Power: Theatre improvisation in processes of change in organisations – Henry Larsen

The Experience of Change in the Profession of Clinical Psychology in the UK – Hester O'Connor

National Healthcare Strategy and the Management of Risk in a National Health Services Trust – Karen Parsley

Unplanned Change and the Complexity of Power, Truth and Identity in Consulting – Rune Rønning

Organisation Development and Power Relations in an NHS Trust – Nicholas Sarra

Processes of Culture Change in Organisations and the Contribution of an External Facilitator – Louise van Rhyn

The Experience of Anxiety When Leading in a Changing National Health Service Trust – David Walker

Leadership Power and Ethics in the Educational Sector – Richard Williams

The Appeal to Values in the Management of International Non-Governmental Organisations: Linking Ethics and Practice – Christopher Mowles

## ***Theses awarded the Master of Arts by research***

Making Sense of Change in the Midst of Change – Jane Blacketer

The Impact of Scientific Rationality on Organisational Change in a Science Based Company – David Scanlon

The Emergent Shaping of a Human Resource Manager Role in the Light of Participative Enquiry – Ute Alfes

Complexity and Personal Transformation: Learning to hold space for emergence – Tony Suchman

Exploring the Practice of a Facilitator and Consultant Through the Metaphor of Arts of Practice – Mary O’Flynn

Approaching Organisational Architecture of Internet Companies from a Complexity Perspective – Eric Olsen

Leading in a Trade Union – Stale Dokken

The Experience of Power, Blame and Responsibility in the Health Sector – Penelope Lacey

The Relevance of Theatre and Improvisation to Consulting for Organisational Change – Preben Friis

Responsibility in consultancy from a perspective of emergent social interaction – Claus Have