**A REVIEW OF THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

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The research on this topic forms part of the focus of the professional doctorate that I am currently undertaking at University of Sunderland. The area of research is examining working relationships between academic and administrative staff at the University of Sunderland. The motivation and interest in the research has been developed both from my degree and through employment at the University of Sunderland.  
  
This work is conducted in an attempt to answer the original research question "Can improvements be made to enhance the working relationship between academic and administrative staff".  
  
The study aims to critically analyse the working relationships between academic and administrative staff at a post 1992 University in the North East of England. It is anticipated that the final recommendations will demonstrate strategies that, if adopted will enhance the working relationship between the two groups of staff. The aim of the study is not to prove the existence of a particular phenomenon, as there are no preconceived ideas about what the findings might be. A basic premise of this research considers that even if the data obtained from the two groups of staff does not highlight any problems, proposed suggestions can always be made to make improvements to the working relationship between the academic and administrative members of staff.  
  
The area of research is prevalent in the current climate due to the changes and external pressures that are being placed on Universities. There has as Vabo (2013) states, been an increase in the number of students, new management regimes, amended policies and changes in funding arrangements within Higher Education in recent years and as a result of this a considerable increase in the number of administrative positions within Higher Education. The external environment in which universities operate has vastly changed over the last 40 years and there is now a lot of survival pressure on universities in the UK. Conway, 2014 states that there have been considerable changes in technology, government funding and a change in attitudes and constraints which have led universities towards operating as a business model. Conway (2014) suggests that in the light of these changes, there is the need for effective collaboration between academic and administrative staff.  
  
The paper seeks to examine the benefits of collaboration within the University of Sunderland and investigates the notion of communities of practice that are currently in existence. The findings from the study will be discussed surrounding this topic. The work of Wenger (1998) is drawn upon and further developed by the proposal of academic and administrative staff working within the same community of practice.  
  
  
References:  
  
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