

What are we, who are we and how does that position us?
Change and continuity in the identity of a new university

Submitted by Karen Mary Cook to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education in Education, July 2014.

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A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'K. Cook', is centered on the page.

Abstract

This empirical study of the organisational identity of a newly titled university provides an insight into how identity is constructed, maintained, deconstructed and reconstructed in the higher education sector in England.

The purposes of the university sector, and the higher education sector of which it is a part, are being increasingly challenged following significant legislative and environmental changes over the past century. Through these changes what it means to be a university is shifting. Increased complexity and diversity has given rise to a university sector that now encompasses much of what was previously defined as non-university higher education, resulting in what many argue is a crisis of sector identity. Whilst recognising that organisational identity does more than provide a definition of membership, this crisis of sector identity impacts upon the identity development and understandings of those who are now part of it.

Research on identity in the higher education sector has been focused on professional and academic identities, the concept of what it is to be a university in a policy-driven, mass participation higher education system or the interaction between the two subject areas. This thesis has a different focus, concentrating on the relatively under-researched area of change and continuity in organisational identity particularly focussing upon a period of change in legal definition and organisational positioning.

During the period 1998 to 2013, the University of St Mark & St John (Marjon) moved from being a college of higher education, to a university college and finally, through a change in legislative criteria, to a university. This thesis explores change and continuities in its identity through its journey and various incarnations. It investigates how definitional constructs and sectoral positioning interface with who the organisation is; its identity.

The thesis is based on an interpretive mixed methods case study, focussing on the strategic development of the University during this period. Existing theoretical models of organisational identity have informed the analysis of the data which include documentary sources, a small number of key informant

interviews and participant observations. The latter exploited insights gleaned from working as a senior manager in the University for part of the period in which the research was undertaken.

The research findings reinforce the existing theories highlighting the importance of organisational identity to organisational health, but challenge existing theory in respect of identity development and change. The research highlights the significance of the relationship between 'what' an organisation is, which is a definitional and spatial construct, and 'who' an organisation is, which is a reflection of its identity. This relationship has previously been considered as inconsequential to organisational identity development.

The findings also challenge the assumption that identity change is a change management process brought into effect through a strong leadership narrative and strategic planning tools. The study makes evident the interplay of organisational history, and the strength of internal and external influences on the capacity and willingness of an organisation to undergo identity change. This has resulted in the development of a conceptual framework to support leaders in the exploration of an organisation's identity, highlighting the interrelationship of specific factors on identity development.

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Declaration

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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Chapter One: Rationale for the research topic

‘Over the next few months we will therefore determine the name, brand and future identity of the College, given that, if awarded TDAP, we will be able to call ourselves a University College’ Marjon, 2006

The English Higher Education system and landscape has changed and developed over the past century responding to various environmental pressures including the impact of industrialisation, a post war economic development agenda, massification, globalisation, and fluctuations in state influence over the sector, with the more recent near privatisation of the system (Shattock, 2012). These changes have impacted upon the development of the higher education sector and the institutions within it, as well as how they understand the nature of their work and their identity. Attitudes and meanings relating to the terms ‘university’ and ‘higher education’ are being challenged and over the past two decades there has been an increasingly dominant discourse of crisis in the sector; a crisis of sector identity (Barnett 2000, 2005, 2009; Marginson, 2007; Delanty, 1998).

This thesis examines the issue of organisational identity in the English higher education sector through detailed exploration and analysis of a new university; the University of St Mark & St John (Marjon), as it changes title and arguably its status from a college of higher education to a university college, through the acquisition of taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) in 2007, and on to a university in 2013 following changes in the legislative framework relating to universities in England. The new university is examined in the context of its sectoral position as it moves through these incarnations, to understand how the changes impact upon organisational identity.

The University has spent much of its existence on the periphery, or arguably outside, of the university sector as a college of higher education and a university college. The research presented here also considers the development of this section of the non-university sector, adding to the limited

published knowledge relating to this group and their place in the higher education landscape (Locke et al, 1985; Teichler, 2008).

In this chapter I explore the emergence of the issues that led to the research question, introduce the organisation and the factors relating to its position in the sector and outline my personal perspective in the context of the research.

1.1 Emergence of the issue

I joined the University in 2007, when it was changing status from a college of higher education to a university college as a result of a successful year-long review by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) instigated by the then Principal, Professor David Baker. This resulted in a recommendation that the organisation be awarded TDAP. The act of seeking TDAP was an act of self-determination enabling an application to be made to the Privy Council resulting in the legal right for the organisation to use university in its title, in line with the legislative framework in England that maintains the protected use of certain titles.

Becoming a university college with TDAP meant that Marjon was no longer reliant on its partner university (University of Exeter) for the awarding of its degrees or as a justification for its place in the higher education sector (Stoakes, 2011). Through this process it had secured academic independence and joined another sector, or sub-sector of the university sector through a change in classification (McDonald, 2013) and promotion to a higher level in the heavily stratified UK higher education sector (Teichler, 2008).

This change ignited debate within the organisation about what/who it is. Marjon had just become a university college and there was clear evidence of the emergence of an identity crisis or meanings void (Gioia et al, 2010). The introduction of 'university' into the title of the organisation invoked discussion of organisational identity that had not been foreseen by the management of the organisation, issues that were being considered by the wider sector; what did it mean to be a university (college)? These issues included the curriculum offer (type and level), the associated interaction with the Governmental economic agenda, the place and meaning of research within the organisation, and its wider civic responsibilities, particularly in the context of the organisations social

reform roots and Christian heritage. The use of 'university' in the title appeared to generate different understandings as to organisational purpose and responsibilities, but these were at odds with the history and lived identity of the organisation. Arguably this change in status was at a level that Bartenuk and Moch (1987) identify as traumatic, requiring what Clarke et al (2010) suggest is a replacement of understandings of the way we are, a transformation of organisational identity.

There was clear evidence of a deficit discourse within the institution, including statements across the management and academic staff groups relating to the organisation not being a 'real' university, reflecting the strength of what Tajfel & Turner (2004) refer to as intergroup identity comparisons in identity formation and development. Using a legislative lens Marjon should have been considered at this point a legitimate member of the university sector. University colleges were defined by the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 and QAA as having 'Recognised Body' status as awarded by the Privy Council. They had the power to award their own degrees, but were required to retain college in the title if unable meet the criterion of having a student population of 4,000 full time higher education students, 3,000 of whom were on degree level programmes. Marjon could therefore be considered a small university, but still a university, unable to remove the 'college' label only as a result of the size of its full time undergraduate population.

'What' an organisation is may well be definable in law, however when considering organisational identity as constructed a legislative interpretation is inadequate in terms of understanding the identity of the organisation. As articulated by Albert & Whetten (1985), the identity of an organisation is more a question of 'who' an organisation is relating to its character, distinctiveness and temporal continuity. This is something shaped between the organisation and its environment over time (Czarniawska & Sevon, 1996). The legislative lens was not the only one being used internally or externally as the institution struggled to understand its changing position. There was evidence of what Barnett (2000) refers to as a tacit understanding of what it means to be a university that was at odds with the legislative definition.

1.2 The importance of Identity

Identity impacts all aspects of an organisation and dictates how it responds to critical issues, including what products (curriculum) it offers, in what way and how it allocates and prioritises use of resources. Clarity of identity is considered essential for the effective operation of any organisation (Hatch & Schultz, 2004). Identity informs not only the strategic development of an organisation, but the day to day responses to issues that arise (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia et al, 2010). It enables not only the effective allocation of resources, but gives meaning to those involved with the organisation and in times of challenge, a clear identity supports strategic decision making and more effective response to the external environment (Albert & Whetton, 1985; Hatch & Schultz, 2004). Where there is clarity of identity and mission within universities there is evidence of 'effective strategic planning, marketing and public dissemination on the unique characteristics of the institution, future visions for growth and enhancement' (Ferrari & Vecloff, 2006).

This identity clarity and its impact on strategic direction and decision making has become more urgent within the University over the past five years as it has had to respond to an environment of student number controls and an overall reduction in per capita student funding. These changes have impacted widely across the higher education sector and institutional responses have resulted in the prioritisation of some curriculum areas over others and both general and targeted financial efficiencies. How matters of threat are responded to will be dependent on institutional identity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991), and responses to these external threats may also shape the future identity of the institution (Czarniawska & Sevon, 1996). There was evidence that a lack of this clarity of identity was having a negative impact on staff morale, decision making and prioritisation of resources. As a newly appointed senior manager I felt it important to explore these issues, with a view to understanding their origins and impacts, and to support the development of a positive, healthy institutional identity shared by staff, students and other stakeholders.

1.3 The University; an introduction

The University of St Mark & St John (Marjon) is a small higher education institution in the South West of England, developed through the merger in 1923 of two separate Church of England teacher training institutions established in the 1840s. It defines itself as one of the longest established higher education institutions (HEI) in England, arguably sixth behind the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, University College London, King's College London and Durham University. This assertion is however confused by conflicting definitions used for determining HEI membership, which is particularly relevant to this research. The institution developed as a teacher training college through the 1900s, not an HEI, broadening its curriculum portfolio during the 1970s as a response to Government cuts in the number of student teachers to be trained. As a result it became a college of higher education delivering a wider range of undergraduate courses and, through gaining its own taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) in 2007, it became a university college. Following legislative changes (DBIS, 2012) it was able to secure full university status in 2013. The organisation remains a member of the Cathedrals Group, a collective of English higher education institutions with Church foundations, reflecting the importance of its Christian heritage.

Marjon is situated in Plymouth, Devon having relocated from London in 1973 and is a community of approximately 2,500 full time equivalent, on campus, undergraduate students, who are supported by approximately 350 full time equivalent staff (HESA, 2011). The delivered curriculum is focussed predominantly on undergraduate provision in the fields of Education (including teacher training) and Sport, which in 2012 account for 81% of the students, split almost equally, the balance being made up of programmes in speech and language (8%) and media and the creative arts (11%) (HESA, 2012). Marjon is heavily reliant on public sector funding and student fees, accounting for 80% of the total turnover, the balance being largely generated by directly associated activities such as student accommodation and catering. Research income was less than £30k in the 2011/12 academic year, an increase over previous years. The University has no endowment funding (University of St Mark & St John, 2012). Marjon is one of the smallest, non-specialist, publically-funded, higher education institutions (HEI's) in England and is one of two HEI's in the City of

Plymouth, the other being the University of Plymouth, a former polytechnic which is approximately ten times the size of Marjon (Caritas Data, 2012) and at the time of writing competes for students in all curriculum areas offered by Marjon except the sport related portfolio.

To more fully understand how Marjon is positioned in the sector it is worth comparison with the University of Exeter, its former accreditation partner. This is an important choice of comparison as it is with an organisation that Marjon and its academic staff in particular have defined relationships with and as such will provide a key, but not the only, external reference point when engaging in matters of identity consideration. The University of Exeter, located forty five miles away from Marjon, awarded the degrees of the former College from the signing of an affiliation agreement between the two institutions in 1991 until the final students graduated in 2010. The University of Exeter was created by Royal Charter in 1955 as part of the post-war development of the HE sector (Silver, 2003; Shattock, 2012). It has expanded through growth in student numbers, the establishment of a medical school and the development of an 'internationally recognised' research profile into a recent addition to the Russell Group of Universities, defined in the stratified higher education sector as the most prestigious group of UK universities. The University of Exeter has grown from 932 students in 1955 (Silver, 2003, p128) to over 18,000 students in 2012/13, including over 1600 post-graduate research students and continues to benefit from financial contributions from external benefactors and alumni. The turnover for the University of Exeter in 2011/12 was some £257 million, £50 million from research contracts and almost £4 million from endowments (University of Exeter, 2012). The University of Exeter is a selective university, as defined by the Sutton Trust 2010, with some of the highest academic entry requirements in the sector, whereas Marjon is predominantly a recruiting university college with a significant intake of students from the lower socio economic groups (HESA, 2012) and some of the lowest academic entry requirements in the higher education sector (*Sunday Times*, 2012). The University of Exeter has an extensive portfolio range, whereas Marjon offers programmes in a narrow range of subject areas.

The differences between the organisations are clear, and have been interpreted inside Marjon as the University of Exeter being a ‘real’ university, with Marjon only having a place in the sector by virtue of partnering with it (Stoakes, 2011). In its identity statements Marjon defines itself as a regional teaching led, widening access HEI with a focus on the student experience, whereas the University of Exeter defines itself through its academic standings in the league tables, research outputs and developing global reach.

The changes in the University can be seen in the table below with the ordering of the primary activity reflecting the relative size of the student population, and contribution to institutional sustainability:

| Title | Date | Primary Activity |
|---|------|---|
| College of St Mark | 1838 | Training of teachers |
| College of St John | 1841 | Training of teachers |
| College of St Mark & St John | 1923 | Training of teachers |
| College of St Mark & St John | 1974 | Training of teachers and undergraduate provision |
| University College Plymouth St Mark & St John | 2007 | Training of teachers, undergraduate provision and limited masters level provision |
| University of St Mark & St John | 2013 | Undergraduate provision, training of teachers and limited masters provision |

1.4 History and Identity

The history and development of both the university college sector and its relationship with the wider higher education sector is crucial to understanding where Marjon came from, its developed identity and how it is positioned in the new higher education landscape. The development of the identity of an organisation as Newton suggests is arguably ‘bound up with the social and historical roots that lead to its creation’ (Newton, 1965) as well as the ongoing influences of the environment within which it operates. This implies that identity is not fixed, but mutable and socially constructed over time (Gioia et al, 2000).

The stated rationale for Marjon seeking TDAP, giving the institution academic independence from the University of Exeter, was to gain ‘university college title, expand the curriculum portfolio, increase recruitment and keep ahead of the ‘others’ (Stoakes, 2004); defined in this instance as other colleges of higher education and the further education colleges. It was argued that this separation and independence would give the institution the opportunity to reconsider its position in the higher education sector, exploiting its distinctiveness as ‘a teaching led institution ... committed to raising educational standards, to extending opportunities and providing education and training which are socially useful’ (Marjon, 2005). This was particularly important at a time when the Government was making additional numbers available to institutions to deliver more vocationally focussed foundation degrees as part of the agenda to increase participation levels and improve the skill levels of the wider workforce. These Governmental changes appeared coherent with the institution’s identity and stated mission, but institutional development through foundation degrees was outside of the scope of the accreditation arrangements with the University of Exeter, and was therefore not able to be taken forward (University of Exeter, 1991). It was perceived by the management team that the lack of independence with regards to the development of the curriculum had curtailed Marjon’s capacity to grow student numbers, when other similar institutions were taking advantage of these changes in Government policy to increase their overall size and the breadth of their portfolio enabling many of them to become universities.

This restriction on growth has had a lasting impact on the size of the institution, leaving it smaller and arguably more vulnerable academically and financially than others who had gained TDAP earlier. This is evident comparing with other Cathedral Group institutions, such as Canterbury Christchurch University who in 1993 had 6,000 students, gained TDAP in 1995 and grew their portfolio during the next five years through the development of foundation degrees in the public services and now have over 18,000 students (HESA, 2011). Similarly the University of Worcester gained TDAP in 1997 and has grown by over 100% in student number terms since 2004, taking advantage of Government initiatives for growth in foundation degrees, with significant growth in public services and health related activities (University of Worcester, 2012). This change in the size

and academic breadth of a significant number of the Cathedrals Group institutions has also impacted the number remaining as university colleges. Many, through their increased size, have achieved university status under the 2004 changes to the regulations for university title (DfES, 2004), and thereby have reduced the size of this sector of higher education.

1.5 Another level of identity challenge

Following the award of TDAP there was a declaration that the new University College had a revised vision; to become a full university. Professor David Baker had stated on appointment in 2003 'we will gain taught degree awarding powers and achieve university college status' (Marjon, 2004, p3). The College prepared a Critical Self Analysis document in 2005, a paper produced for the Privy Council, the organisation in England responsible for the awarding of university title, as part of the TDAP process. It declared, 'the retention of the word 'College' will indicate our intention to remain a University College for the foreseeable future rather than necessarily seek to grow in size in order to meet the criteria for university title' (Marjon, 2005, p6). There was however a publically stated shift immediately after gaining TDAP, with the Principal using the Annual Report to express the desire to 'become Marjon University' (Marjon, 2007, p2). This raised a number of identity related issues. Was the change to a university college a 'holding place'? Was the place of the university college in the higher education hierarchy unclear, invalid or unattractive? If so, why, and how would this impact the understandings of identity within and external to the organisation particularly during the interim period?

There were many examples of movement through from college of higher education to university college to university, including institutions such as Edgehill University, University of Chester and Canterbury Christchurch University. The perceived need for this journey could reflect the status of the university college sector, which as outlined by Pratt (1997) and Brennan and Williams (2008) was widely considered as 'second division' in the higher education sector. The devaluing of a group has been shown to heavily impact identity, with the lower order groups' identity remaining 'socially unvalidated'

(Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Did this influence the desire to move from university college to university status?

The reducing size of this sector, which had fallen to six by 2007 (HEFCE, 2007), also meant that there was little available in terms of external referencing for those becoming university colleges, which is a key element in the process of identity formation and maintenance (Gioia et al, 2010). Also a reduction in the size and associated value of a strategic group weakens the desire of others to be members of it (Peteraf & Shanley, 1997).

These changes both to the institution and within the sector were clearly impacting internal and external perception of the institution. There was increasing debate, internally evidenced through the minutes of the senior organisational committees, about what it was to have 'university' in the title. Questions were raised about what that meant in respect of the curriculum, research and the way the institution was able to respond to policy issues, what Delanty (1998) refers to as the trinity of missions of a university. These debates were occurring more widely in the sector; was the drive towards massification and vocationalism undermining the true purpose of the university and was scholarship as opposed to research sufficient to justify the 'university' title? (Barnett, 2000 & 2005; Marginson, 2007; Deem, 2006; Thomas 2011). Internally a lack of institutional confidence was evident following the separation from the University of Exeter, arguably a feeling of chosen abandonment, which was clearly reflected by staff in the feedback to the strategic plan, Marjon 2010, presented to the Academic Board in February 2007.

The institutional lack of clarity about 'who we are' and in fact given the confusion over the place of university colleges within the higher education sector, a lack of clarity about 'what we are', was resulting in dysfunctional institutional behaviours. This was evident with regards to (i) the prioritisation of resources, (ii) poor use of management time through extended debate as a result of a lack of clear reference points for decision making and (iii) marketing and publicity, where there was a lack of consistency with respect to projected image and the lived identity both internally and externally. Identity confusion has potential for long term impact on the sustainability and general health of an

organisation, as reducing resources may not be put to most effective use and it loses the ability to articulate its identity in an increasingly competitive market.

1.6 Development of the research question

Initially I intended to explore why the organisation had applied to be a university college, to understand what a 'university college' was and its position in the higher education sector with a view to understanding what this change meant for the purpose and expected behaviours of the organisation, as defined by its membership of this group. This would make the relationship between 'what' the organisation now was and 'who' it was in terms of its identity visible. This did not however appear to answer the question as to why there was a need for a 'new brand and future identity' (Marjon, 2006). It did not provide the opportunity to explore the assumption that a new identity can be developed and adopted by an organisation to suit a revised strategic direction, raising the more complex issue of how organisational identity is constructed, maintained, deconstructed and reconstructed. Through the process of TDAP Marjon appeared to be actively seeking to be something different; a university college, not a college of higher education, and almost immediately on achieving that changed status not a university college, but a university.

This raised two connected issues for consideration. Firstly what was understood by these variants of higher education institution and what were the similarities and differences between them? Secondly how were these understandings influencing the perceived purpose and identity of the organisation as it changed its title and status? Why were the changes necessary, what was the intent of this change and how were these manifested in the strategic direction and day to day behaviours of the organisation?

The broad issues to be explored through the research were becoming evident, but more focus was required to contain the work to something that was manageable given the time and resources available, and to provide a context and framework for completing the research.

1.7 Focus of the research

As a result of the issues identified above this thesis investigates the under-researched area of organisational identity within the English Higher Education sector, within the context of organisational classification change.

A number of research threads emerged in developing the thesis from initial reading and my personal understandings of the situation in the University, and these were further honed to establish a coherent research question; what is the position of the university college in the higher education sector and how does this positioning impact identity development of individual institutions?

With specific reference to Marjon it was decided to explore this question at an organisational level by answering the following two research questions:

What are the changes and continuities in the institution's self-identity during the period from 1998 to 2013? What is the inter-relationship between its sectoral positioning and how it understands itself?

The interpretive research is presented as a case study, using a mixed methods approach linking documentary and interview data with insider observations. The context, outlining the development of the sector, aims to provide an understanding of the place of the organisation within higher education and explores the external factors impacting the way the organisation and its work is understood both internally and externally. This should be viewed as more than background material as it highlights some of the significant influences upon institutional identity development particularly in respect of strategic group identity (Peteraf & Shanley, 1997). Much of the case study research is based on review and analysis of key institutional documents leading up to and following the application for TDAP, supported by relevant sector wide published documents placing the institution in its broader context. As argued by O'Brien et al, 'context is crucial to explaining behaviour by reference to the conditions in which the decisions were taken' (2004, p142).

Documentary review and analysis is the primary research method, supported by two semi-structured interviews, one with the Principal in post at the time the

decision to proceed with TDAP was taken and the then Deputy Principal responsible for the process and the implementation of the changes. The two interviewees were selected as they were the key informants responsible for driving the TDAP decision forward and an understanding of their rationale for the decision and how they portrayed this to the various stakeholder groups is crucial given the influence of leaders on identity formation and reformation (Gioia, Shultz & Corley, 2000).

The model developed through the research challenges the simplistic assumptions often made during change management processes and enables the exploration of the 'nuances of the construction of university identity' (McDonald, 2013). This increased awareness should support the overall success of programmes designed to change the primary purpose of organisations but also bring into focus the continuous nature of organisational identity evolution and development through its interface with the changing environment, including the possibility of identity challenge from these external changes.

1.8 Contribution to Knowledge

This research reviews the then University College from two separate but connected perspectives. It reviews the history and development of the university college sector, making visible its position and contribution to higher education, and interfaces this with issues of organisational identity through change of classification. Both of these areas are relatively under-researched.

Firstly, considering the position of the university college in the HE sector there is a wealth of literature relating to the wider sector, its structure, development and the policies that relate to it. There is little work evident on the university college sector as a part of the wider HE sector, how this sector was originally established through colleges of higher education gaining TDAP and the demise of the sector through institutions gaining full university status. These changes were initiated in the first instance through organisational actions, but more recently enacted through legislative change. This research adds to knowledge in the sphere of the history of English Higher Education.

Secondly, the main focus of the work seeks to understand organisational identity development and factors impacting changes and continuities over significant organisational change in the context of change of classification within an established stratified sector. Drawing on an analysis of empirical data derived from a particular setting this research builds on and challenges existing theoretical constructs in the field of organisational identity, providing a framework to support improved professional understandings and practice for organisational leaders during times of major change and development. Whilst there has been a developing body of work in the field of organisational identity, particularly over the past decade (Hatch & Schultz, 2004), there has been no research in the UK focussing on understanding the factors affecting how university colleges construct and develop their identities and little academic emphasis on the identity of individual universities. There has been recent work on elements of identity, particularly university distinctiveness (Wooldridge & Newcombe, 2011; Oxford Brookes, 2011). Much of the work on identity issues in the higher education sector has focussed on professional and academic identities (Billot, 2012; Deem 2006; Henkel 2005), or the concept of what it is to be a university in a policy driven, mass participation higher education system (Barnett 1998, 2000, 2005; Delanty 1998, Biesta 2007), often with a focus on the interaction between the two subject areas. This work takes a different perspective.

Some limited research has been undertaken in the USA on similar issues (Levin, 2002), with more recent work on strategic change and identity in higher education (Gioia & Thomas, 2006; Clarke et al 2010).

Although the case study is specific to Marjon, the findings will be able to inform practice not just within the organisation but in the wider sector. Many argue that case study based research produces findings that are unlikely to be widely generalisable (Guba & Lincoln 2005, Weick, 2005), but Hartley counters this, arguing that the generalisability comes from the 'theoretical propositions, not the population' (2004, p225). This research will provide greater insight into identity in the higher education sector, informing practice both within and outside the sector. The conceptual framework developed through this research provides

those in leadership roles, particularly in higher education, a mechanism through which to interrogate the identity and purpose of their own organisations. Whilst relevant to the wider sector and those with an interest in identity more generally, this work will be of particular relevance to those looking to change the nature and identity of their organisations, or being subjected to change through legislation, bringing into question the future identity of the organisation. In the UK this may apply to those developing through gaining TDAP, or research degree awarding powers, or through a change in title or status following the freeing up of opportunities to be classified as a university or university college through recently announced changes in current Government policy in this area (DBIS, 2012).

On a personal and professional level this work has deepened my understanding of the development of the University itself, its interface with the higher education sector in England, of organisational identity and the role of senior managers as actors in this. A clearer understanding of the position of the institution in relation to the wider sector has influenced the approaches taken to strategic and operational planning within the institution. Understanding and exploring the current and declared future identity in the context of the internal and external factors impacting it has supported this.

1.9 Personal history and professional setting

As outlined by Sparkes (1994), the paradigmatic lenses through which individual researchers view the world impact upon how individual researchers shape and undertake research. This will be a reflection of personal and professional experiences. My personal experiences relating to the higher education sector tended towards the 'ill-informed' prior to this research project. I will explain why.

I could be considered as one of the success stories of massification and widening participation in that I would identify as having a working class upbringing and was a first generation participant in both further and higher education. I attended a further education college to complete my post 16

education and completed my first and second degrees (1985 and 2000) in what would now be referred to as post-1992 institutions, not that I knew that at the time. Entering higher education as a student I had limited knowledge of the wider structure and development of the sector and associated identity matters. Entering higher education as a senior manager many years later this knowledge remained underdeveloped, which I believe contributed to the lack of comprehension felt at the organisational response to the achievement of TDAP and university college title.

My professional background is one mixed in finance, resource and general management in both the private and public sector, with the past 20 years spent at senior management level in the education sector. I joined the further education sector in 1993 at a time of significant change as colleges were given autonomy from local authority administration under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and setting up business support and administration functions of their own. As a qualified accountant with a business degree and a career previously based in the private sector, I felt it important when joining the education sector to seek to understand the landscape within which it operated and the broader history, traditions and cultural issues influencing the sector. This was supported by undertaking an MBA (Education), where I was able to work on leadership and management issues from an educational sector perspective with managers with professional histories embedded largely in teaching roles in further education. Whilst in the further education sector, I took an active national role in work with Government Departments and sector funding agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council (since replaced by the Skills Funding Agency) in the development of policy relating to the sector, including the introduction of the Education Maintenance Allowance for post 16 learners.

As an outsider entering the organisation and the sector from further education, I felt unable to comprehend the apparent lack of organisational confidence, understanding of and pride in what the newly designated University College was. As I started my EdD programme in 2008 the developing issue had sharpened in focus as following the award of TDAP there was a declaration that the new University College had a revised vision to become a full university. A

desire to understand in more depth the context described above, the history of the institution, the position of university colleges in the higher education landscape and the theoretical frameworks associated with identity led to my interest in this as a research topic. As a senior manager the development of the institution and its long term sustainability are a professional priority. This research would enable me to increase my understanding, reflect on and challenge my own thinking and practice, whilst adding new knowledge to the developing field of organisational identity.

Through the professional doctorate 'up to date knowledge of professional practice' (Drake & Heath, 2008) to support colleagues across the sector and the profession are valued outcomes of this research. A professional doctorate provides a framework for the research and enables the dual outcome of recognised professional development through the achievement of the qualification and, through the generation of new knowledge, impact on leadership understandings and practice, not just in my own organisation. As 'a researching professional' (Wellington and Sikes, 2006, p725) undertaking insider research through exploring issues within my own organisation, including challenging my own position and that of colleagues is not something to be undertaken lightly. As outlined by Drake & Heath (2008), there are matters of ongoing relationships with the wider organisation and specific colleagues to consider when undertaking research of this type, as well as matters of 'insiderness' and the ability to maintain a 'neutral' perspective at the same time as being embedded in the organisation. These matters are discussed more fully in chapter 4.

I moved into the higher education sector in 2007, and to date my time at the University has been very institutionally focussed, with limited capacity to engage more widely within the sector. My primary function could be articulated as responding to issues of the development and survival of what is a small and semi-specialist institution by higher education sector standards. I was initially appointed as Director of Corporate affairs in 2007, retitled as Vice Principal (Resources) in 2008 and following an internal restructure given the title of Deputy Principal from 2011. In September 2012 the Principal left the University College and I was appointed as Acting Principal for the period from October

2012 to May 2013 and as Marjon achieved full University status during this time I became Acting Vice-Chancellor. When I reverted back to my substantive post, following the appointment of the University's first Vice-Chancellor, I finished the research project as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC). Arguably with the title DVC come widely held definitions and understandings, one of which appears to be possession of at least a doctorate and a research profile. Whilst my title changed in line with the changes in status of Marjon, my underlying responsibilities did not. However, particularly externally within the sector, there was a clear perception from others that somehow this was now a more senior post than that of Deputy Principal, or a post with more status. These expectations were not known to me at the outset of the research, nor influenced my decision making, but this mirrors the changing expectations of Marjon as it moves into the university sector.

The object of the study, and me as the subject studying it, are intimately entwined. Just as Marjon goes through changes in title, so my position moves in parallel. I am part of this institutional journey with a level of influence over it, and throughout the period from 2007 I am referring to myself in the research as a member of the senior management, raising issues of methodology relating to my engagement and embeddedness in the research, as will be considered in more detail in chapter 4.

What my work in two very different further education colleges and now a new University has shown is that whilst there may well be general sector identities, there are deeply embedded histories, cultures and traditions which heavily shape the identity of individual institutions and the way in which they respond to the national and local contexts and environments.

1.10 Summary

This chapter has introduced the development of the research topic through explanation of the issue of identity crisis apparent at the University College from 2007 and the relationship of this with the wider policy and higher education sectoral development, which has arguably led to the sector experiencing an identity crisis.

The changes in title and arguably position in the higher education sector for Marjon reflect the complexity of the issue being considered in respect of its identity responses. To understand the implications of this complexity it must be placed within the wider external landscape of the higher education sector, reflecting the importance of the external environment in the consideration of organisational identity. The following chapter provides a context of the landscape and the development and positioning of the university college sector.

Chapter Two: The higher education landscape and university colleges - a context

'history, contextual environment and actors of the organisation' impact upon the identity and associated strategic processes of an institution. (Steiner et al, 2012, p4)

Organisational identity literature suggests that identity is formed by a process of 'inter-organisational comparisons and reflections upon them over time' (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p73). The history of the development of the organisation, the landscape of the wider sector and the position and identity of those within it is therefore an important element of this research. Understanding the development of Marjon, from its original roots as a 'radical teacher training church college' (Peach, 2010, p96) through the responses to policy and environment changes resulting in the organisation it is today, supports an understanding of the change and continuities of the University's identity.

This chapter explores the key developments in higher education in England as they relate to Marjon, providing a context for understanding the university college sector and its position in the wider higher education sector. In terms of identity it explores the different types of institution in the English higher education sector, their development and distinctive features and introduces the inter-relationship of this with the identity development of individual institutions.

2.1 Teacher Training Colleges – The beginning

The formal establishment of teacher training colleges in England commenced in the 1830s, following the agreement in 1833 by Government for an allocation of funds to be distributed by the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in England and Wales, often referred to as the National Society, to those engaged in the schooling of the poor. The Government was not involved in funding education to this point, with investment in 'Pauper Schools' (Gosden, 1969) coming largely from the Church in respect of elementary education. In 1839 the Committee of the Privy Council on Education was created, with Dr James Kay (later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth) as 'the first and most famous secretary' (Lawson & Silver 1973,

p268). He had founded Battersea College 1838 as one of the first teacher training colleges, later taken over by the National Society in 1841 and renamed St John's College. St Mark's College (previously Stanley Grove College) was founded by the National Society in 1839 and located in Chelsea. These two Colleges which merged in the 1920s were the predecessor institutions of the College of St Mark & St John, more recently the University College Plymouth St Mark & St John, and currently the University of St Mark & St John. Teacher training in the elementary sector was provided through the pupil-teaching scheme, where pupils aged 13 and above meeting certain standards were apprenticed to a head teacher, teaching for a number of hours per day and continuing with their own development with more individual lessons by the head teacher after teaching was finished. Bligh notes that 'by the 1850's there were over 50 teacher training colleges, almost all supported by religious foundations' (1990, p29). With significant social change in the mid to late 1800s, teacher training was transformed and following the Elementary Education Act 1870 numbers of institutions involved in teacher training more than doubled with the University sector becoming involved in training teachers from 1890 (IoE, 2012). Secondary school education to this point was largely undertaken by graduates with no specific teacher training. Non-denominational colleges opened in the last years of the 19th century, as had teacher training departments in the universities - 16 of them by 1900. Despite these developments the 19th century was a period where there was 'hostility to the very idea of mass education' (Gillard, 2011), with teacher training colleges at the forefront of radical social reform.

The 1902 Education Act enabled Local Education Authorities (LEA) to support teacher training colleges and although most of the existing colleges were church owned they were still entitled to grant aid from the state. The Education Act 1944 gave power to the Minister for Education to require LEAs to establish and maintain teacher training colleges. This supported post war shortage of trained teachers, the implications of the introduction of free secondary education for all and the raising of the school leaving age from 14 to 15 in 1947 (McCulloch,1994). To accommodate continuing increases in demand another 76 teacher training colleges had opened by the end of the 1950s (The National Archives, 2012).

Legislative changes through the 1962 Education Act resulted in teacher training students being treated as higher education students for the purposes of student support arrangements, in line with Higher National Diploma students, and teacher training colleges were considered as members of the broader higher education community. However, teacher training did not become a graduate activity, and teaching was recognised as a graduate profession only after recommendations by the James Report in 1972.

Independent teacher training colleges, as opposed to departments within universities were specialist institutions; teacher training was their primary and in most cases only curriculum offer. They focussed on what veered between instrumentalist teacher *training* and teacher *education*, depending on the desire of the Government of the day (Carr, 2000). Staff were not contractually required to undertake peer reviewed research activity that would have been recognised as that which would be fundable through processes such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) or predecessors. The College of St Mark & St John continued to deliver teacher training during this period, growing to in excess of 230 students, all men, by the mid-1950s (Marjon, 1956). The introduction of women as students in 1958 enabled the college to grow, supporting the government's increased demands for teachers.

2.2 The Development of the Wider Higher Education Sector

In England, the university sector was extremely small and elitist during the 19th Century, with Oxford and Cambridge Universities, established as seats of learning in 1096 and 1209 respectively, operating as the only universities until 1829. During the next ten years Kings College London, University College London and Durham University were established and by the end of the second world war England had only 9 universities.

Alongside the continued development of teacher training there was significant post war development more broadly in higher education, predicated on the need to 'invest more heavily than had been done in the 1930s in scientific, technological and technically trained manpower' (Shattock, 2012). As a result, a

number of what have been classified as 'red brick' or civic universities developed out of 'colleges of advanced technology and regional colleges' (ibid), including the University of Exeter during the 1950s, followed by what have been referred to as 'plate glass universities'. The introduction of these new universities during the 1950s and early 1960s increased the size of the sector and the breadth of curriculum offer, with the civic universities attuned to the developing industrial needs of their localities, displaying what Shattock asserts was a 'solid commitment to science and technology and the provision of a widening base for student recruitment' (2012, p26). As these universities have developed many of them would now be classified as research intensive universities, selective universities with national and international student recruitment, as opposed to the more locally focussed widening access universities they started as. One specific theme I am taking from this is the development of the civic universities to become more like the established universities. This raises the issues of identity, mimicry and the influence of the wider sector on what is valued in the development of individual organisations.

Changes in the higher education landscape from the mid -1960s had significant impact on the wider higher education sector and teacher training colleges, their development, independence and identity.

2.3 HE in the UK from the 1960s to the early 1990s

One of the most significant challenges to the university sector and arguably its identity was the introduction of the binary system in the 1960s and the resultant notion of a broader higher education sector supporting the massification agenda articulated most notably through the Robbins Report (1963). The higher education sector in the UK today is diverse and complex, not only in its offering, but in its structure. Many would argue that this structural complexity arose as a result of the significant change in HE policy in the 1960s, where 'a substantial increase of entry quotas to higher education ... was considered in most countries as a precondition to stimulating economic growth' (Teichler, 2008, p3). Not only did this change result in a move from elite higher education to mass higher education (Trow, 1973; Shattock, 2012), but also more clearly defined the role of the state in relation to higher education and the increasingly well-

articulated connection between the sector and economic competitiveness. Prior to the 1960s, universities in England were considered to be highly autonomous, with a focus on both research and teaching, and a strong theoretical or academic basis to their curriculum offer. In this vein, Brennan and Williams state that 'the regular OECD publication, 'Education at a Glance', referred to UK universities as 'state funded private institutions' (2008, p232). A new type of higher education institution was considered the quickest and most cost effective way of enacting this required change and in the English HE sector the response was the development of what is often referred to as the 'polytechnic experiment' (Pratt, 1997), with the introduction of a 'binary system' of higher education. Crosland (1965) differentiated the developing polytechnic sector from the university sector, putting the then technical colleges and colleges of education in the 'public sector' and universities in the 'autonomous sector'. He claimed that the 'increasing need for vocational, professional and industrial based courses could not be met by universities' (Crosland, 1965) State control of this new sector through the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) would ensure that these institutions remained responsive to the needs of the local society, as opposed to being aloof and exclusive. Their ability to support the competitiveness of the British economy was a key policy objective for the development and sustainability of the dual system.

By the end of the 1960s, 30 polytechnics had been created, largely from colleges already engaged in providing what was termed 'advanced higher education', delivering not only business and technology subjects; the 'vocational backbone' of the polytechnic, but also a range of more traditional academic subjects also offered by the existing university sector.

The development of this new sector within higher education was not without its critics. Silver cites Kingsley Amis despairing at the proposed introduction of these institutions with their professional and vocational purpose. He states that Amis had no wish to teach in something called a university that was really, 'a rather less glamorous and authentic training college', or to live in a society 'which has abandoned the notion of a university as a centre of learning' (2003, p178). This type of statement encompasses the nub of what has become referred to as the identity crisis for the higher education sector (Barnett 2000,

2005; Delanty, 1998 and others), which has implications for the identity of those within it. The statement opens up the debate not only as to what it means to be a university as opposed to a 'training college', but also questions the purpose of a university education as opposed to higher education level training and development.

The development of the sector in this way resulted in what many saw not as a binary system of institutions equal but different, but a two-tier system, with universities clearly superior. Pratt (1997) refers to the polytechnic sector as supporting the 'service tradition', where pursuit of knowledge for its own sake (traditional university espoused purpose), was not a primary, nor indeed secondary function. They were 'engaged explicitly in professional and vocational education' (ibid, p10) or more disparagingly, 'mere' vocational training (Robinson, 1968). Robinson also referred to the British image of the polytechnic as 'an educational soup kitchen for the poor', alluding to the increasing widening participation agenda required to be supported by the polytechnics to ensure that the growth targets originally articulated by the Robbins Report to the Committee on Higher Education (1963) were met, supported through less rigorous academic entry grades than those required by traditional universities.

It is widely recognised that this system created the illusion of two distinct traditions of higher education (Locke et al, 1985; Pratt 1997; Brennan & Williams, 2008), but the reality was less clear with universities also delivering professional and technical training and education and the polytechnics undertaking wider academic curriculum offerings. Brennan & Williams argue that 'polytechnics were never intended to be different from universities' (2008, p233) stating that entry requirements and academic outcomes were similar to those of a university. 'Similar' is very well articulated by the established university sector as not the same, with a clear differentiation between the status of the polytechnic and the university, which remains in place today despite the majority of higher education institutions being titled 'university'. This differentiation is reinforced by the various mission groups; collections of like universities or other HEIs. It is evident that in the polytechnics generally the curriculum offer was more vocationally focussed, entry requirements were lower

and admissions requirements more flexible, taking into account students other experiences. This did result in a widening of access to higher education, predominantly in the new sector and this differentiation continues today as evidenced through Sir Martin Harris' (Head of the Office of Fair Access in 2010) report on widening access. He clarifies that despite significant improvements in access to higher education overall over recent decades, 'participation in the most selective universities is not widening' (Harris, 2010, p16). He defines selective universities as those with high entry requirements, the self-selected 'mission' groupings of institutions that categorise themselves as research intensive and selective, and the Sutton Trust (2010) grouping of 13 highly selective universities. Harris also acknowledges in his report that 'Bright disadvantaged students '(are)' also less likely to apply to selective universities' (ibid, p23), which is an issue of identity, not just of the individual and their direct influencers, but also of the organisations.

The main differential between the polytechnics and the universities highlighted by many writers on higher education was the primary purpose of these new institutions; highly vocational and professional training, possibly reflecting their previous existence as technical, business and education colleges and not the generation of new knowledge through research nor clearly reflecting a notion of education for the sake of broader human development. Barnett argues that a higher education institution cannot be termed a 'university' unless its primary function is 'as a site of collective inquiry or questioning' (2000, p27). This debate about the purpose of a university is not recent. As Silver states 'the core of the debate (*on going since the mid-19th Century*), included the nature of a liberal education, knowledge as useful or as an end in itself and therefore the place of science and practical subjects in university curricula' (2003, p4). Mills, the Rector of the University of St Andrews in 1867, as cited by Silver more clearly stated this argument when at his inaugural address he said 'a university is not a place of professional education ... Their object is not to make skilful lawyers, or physicians, or engineers, but capable and cultivated human beings' (2003, p4). Truscott argued that 'the primary aim of the university must be the search for knowledge – research as we call it today' (1943, p141). The polytechnics were not universities, despite in many instances being university like. They were

alternative providers of higher education, but their existence and development raises to the fore the wider debate of the purpose of the university.

What is evident from this review is that the purpose of the university in the post-war era was being challenged by the expansion and development into a higher education sector. This challenge was made more complex by the introduction of the new sector with a primary purpose of delivering vocationally focussed higher education through an institutional type more managed by and attuned to the needs of the state through the LEA. Fowler argued that this sector could develop and represent 'as valid a philosophy of higher education' (1972, p25) to that more widely acknowledged and accepted as university education.

During this period there were significant Government policy developments that impacted the very existence of the teacher training colleges, and how they defined their futures.

2.4 The development of the Colleges of Higher Education

Whilst the introduction of the binary system was the key change to HE in the 1960s and 1970s the system did not cover all of the institutions delivering higher education. During this period teacher training colleges, and some further education and technical colleges developed into Colleges of Higher Education through what Locke et al (1985) refer to as an unintended consequence of the 1972 White Paper 'Education: A framework for Expansion'. Perversely the expansion policy did not apply to teacher training, and 'the numbers of students in colleges of education was to decline by about a third by 1981' (Pratt 1997), whilst numbers in higher education generally were due to increase over the same time period by 750,000 places, to be largely accommodated by the polytechnics. The White Paper offered a range of options to the colleges of education, including integration into or merger with a university, polytechnic or FE college, merger and diversification with other colleges of education, diversification as a free standing college or closure. The result was staggering. As Locke et al (1985) map over the period from 1972 to 1982, of the 152 colleges of education in existence at the start of the period only 27 continued as free standing institutions, including the College of St Mark & St John. Of these

27, only 9 remain as free standing institutions as at July 2012, 5 as university colleges and 4 as universities (SCOP, 1993). The 27 original institutions and 32 others created from a range of mergers became at the time another new sector in the broader higher education landscape; the colleges of higher education. This was not a title conferred on the institutions by the then Department of Education, but one developed and used by them and others for differentiation. This title is still referred to today by funding and regulatory bodies such as HEFCE who state that their funding regime covers higher education institutions, including universities and 'some higher education colleges (which) cover a wide range of subjects while others specialise, for example in performing arts, agriculture or nursing'(HEFCE, 2012).

Pratt (1997) suggests that at best this small group of institutions were standing alongside polytechnics, or more likely were a 'second division' of public sector providers of higher education. This image is mirrored by Brennan and Williams who state that 'UK higher education is sharply hierarchical, with most higher education colleges positioned below a university sector which is itself highly stratified' (2008, p239). This argument reflects the size, breadth and level of the curriculum offered by the colleges, the fact that they were wholly reliant on universities to accredit their degrees, had no contractual requirement on their staff to undertake research activities and could not offer research degrees. The existence of these organisations as higher education providers was at the discretion of their accrediting partner.

The development of this small and declining sector was and still is perceived to be an important issue for the identity of the individual institutions within it and their stakeholders.

Locke et al (1985) considered the identity of this small group of colleges of higher education through a review of how they presented themselves in their prospectuses, their academic allegiances and the type of programmes they offered. Were they just like a polytechnic, but smaller and with a narrower curriculum? This implies that there was a widely held understanding at the time of what it was to be a polytechnic, which is disputed. The colleges appeared to stress their differences from the polytechnics and focussed on their size, their

relatively specialist natures and their validation and accreditation arrangements undertaken with university partners as opposed to the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), the national body providing accreditation arrangements for the polytechnic sector. What was apparent through the work of Locke et al (1985) was that they were not distinguishable as a group, being a mixture of technical colleges, liberal arts colleges, art and design institutions, and ex-teacher training colleges who had extended their portfolio in order to survive. They were recognisable by what they were not. Not universities, not polytechnics and not colleges of further education. This group was now a wider group, with mixed histories who appeared to have no valid place in the university sector and struggled to be identified in the wider higher education sector.

2.5 The Further Education and Higher Education Act 1992

The FE and HE Act 1992 marked the end of an era in England and Wales, abolishing the higher education binary system that had been in place from the 1960s. This Act enabled the polytechnics, and other higher education providers to award their own degrees and subject to specific criteria be called university. Polytechnics had through the 1980s wrestled with what they perceived as unnecessary and unmanageable interference from the LEAs who were trying to manage responses to local economic need in an environment where the institutions were recruiting nationally and responding to wider market trends in terms of curriculum priorities. This was partly addressed by the 1988 Education Reform Act, which had granted polytechnics and other institutions such as HEC's independence from the LEA. Significant change followed in 1992 as a result of the Further and Higher Education Act when finally, after years of campaigning by a number of polytechnics, the issue of title, but arguably not perceived status, was resolved. Teichler (2008) argues that much of the debate relating to harmonisation of the sector related not to administrative matters and management, but to issues of perceived status, where polytechnics had developed in such a way as to become similar to universities. This is referred to as 'academic drift' where there was evidence of increasing levels of imitation behaviour in polytechnics resulting from the fact that 'academic staff, students and graduates, employers and politicians have similar views with respect to

what is noble and what is less noble in higher education' (ibid, p7). The result was that the polytechnics were no more; they were retitled as universities. Some would argue that this change and dilution of the sector meant that in England 'universities' were no more. Barnett suggests that 'the university no longer knows what it is to be a university ... we name a number of institutions 'university' but in their fundamental aspects - of knowing and being - it is doubtful they have much in common' (2005, p99). This implies that there was a time when it was known what was meant by university, which had been lost, or that there was, and still is a definitional ideal to which universities aspire. Whilst diversity of universities as a result of these changes was inevitable, as stated by Brennan, 'like it or not, universities are typically differentiated in terms of prestige, with antiquity and research reputation being its primary determinants' (1999, p7).

The White Paper 'Higher Education a New Framework'(DES, 1992) argued that the term polytechnic had never been widely understood, making the sector second choice for the school leaver market. It could be implied from this statement is that there was never an intention at their inception for polytechnics to be of lesser status, but to be different from universities in their curriculum and research offerings. These same arguments were presented by the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP), the group representing the Colleges of Higher Education in 1993, as they sought the use of the title 'University College' and more recently by Guild HE (2010) as it pursued full university title for its university college members. The arguments presented throughout these debates focus on the academic level of education provided by the institutions and ignores the deeper and more contested issues of primary purpose and identity. There is much continuing debate relating to the impact of this change for the identity of the sector, and for those institutions within it, and whether the title 'university' reflects as Barnett suggests a 'tacit sense that there are value-laden boundaries to what we take a university to be' (2000, p27). The issue of a sector wide identity crisis will be explored later.

2.6 University Colleges – where did they come from and what is their position?

From 1992 a 'unitary' higher education system apparently existed, but a significant amount of higher education was still being provided by institutions outside of the formal university sector, the most significant group being the colleges of higher education, educating 8% of all higher education students in 2003/04' (Brennan and Williams, 2008). The 1992 Act was considered by SCOP to be significant for the notional collective of 'colleges of higher education', art colleges and other specialist institutions delivering higher education as their place in this 'unitary' higher education system was not clear.

In 1993, there were 52 members (see appendix 1) of this group and following the 1992 Act they presented a paper titled 'The Case for University Colleges' calling for a removal of the 'university/non-university division' (1993, p6), which they felt had been erroneously sustained by the Act. The group argued that the 1992 Act had not achieved the commitment of the Government as outlined by the Prime Minister in his introduction to the White Paper 'Higher Education, A New Framework' which stated 'in higher education our key reform will be to end the increasingly artificial distinction between universities on the one hand and polytechnics and colleges on the other' (DES, 1992, p4). This Act had merely shifted the binary line, redefining polytechnics as universities and leaving the colleges firmly placed in their 'second division', now not by comparative positioning with other organisations, but through legislative definition. The SCOP paper compared the group favourably to polytechnics in terms of student mix, quality and overall commitment to meeting the Government's widening participation agenda. It went on to address some of the key issues that the sector was wrestling with generally in trying to clarify the position of the 'new' university, including the proportion of the student population studying for honours degrees and post-graduate courses, the breadth of subjects offered by the institution, the issue of research as a pre-requisite for university status and possession of taught degree awarding powers. In an attempt to unify the sector and establish a level of external clarity, SCOP suggested that the sector ought to be referred to as the 'university sector' going forward as opposed to the 'higher education sector', distinguishing it very clearly from the further education and schools sectors and embracing all providers. The paper suggested that a

research criterion would be important for those seeking full university status (recognising the widely cited research emphasis of a university), but that this should not be a pre-requisite for university colleges (SCOP, 1993, p28). The proposal suggested that the name university college would, and should, indicate a difference from universities, in that such institutions would not normally enjoy the same breadth of curriculum, or size. However the name would indicate 'educational comparability...' (ibid, p3). Given the place of research as a core educational characteristic of a university in the debates throughout the past century to assume that an institution would have educational comparability without the need for any commitment to research seemed somewhat naive. In addition the term university college was in use within the university sector, primarily by the Oxbridge colleges and University College London; institutions with long and prestigious histories as universities, with clear research profiles.

From an organisational identity perspective this was a highly significant moment, with the first signs of these organisations wrestling with the issue of identity and their position within this more widely defined HE sector.

There appeared to be little response from Government to the challenges presented by SCOP and during the mid-1990s in order to enhance their external identities; how they presented themselves to their external stakeholders, some of the colleges with university accreditation arrangements began using the title 'University College', including the College of St Mark & St John. This was stopped by a legislative change through the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 where the university title was protected through the requirements that:

(1) A relevant institution in England or Wales shall not, when making available (or offering to make available) educational services, do so under a name which includes the word "university" unless the inclusion of that word in that name is authorised by or by virtue of any Act or Royal Charter, or approved by the Privy Council for the purposes of this section.

(para 38, 1998)

Institutions using 'university college' in their title without meeting the above requirements had to revert back or amend their titles excluding the term

university to reflect this decision. This reinforced the notion that these institutions, despite delivering predominantly undergraduate honours degree programmes, had no place being confused with 'universities' and whilst part of the 'higher education sector' were not part of the 'university sector'.

The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 still ensures that only those institutions authorised by any Act or Royal Charter, or approved by the Privy Council can make use of the word 'university' in the title. There are specific criteria that an institution must meet should it be seeking approval for use of university college or university. Legally a university college was a body awarded 'Recognised Body' status by the Privy Council, that has the power to award taught degrees in its own name, is 'able to demonstrate that it has regard to the principles of good governance' (QAA, 2011), but does not have at least 4,000 full time equivalent higher education students, 3,000 or more of whom are registered on degree level programmes. A higher education college may be the same as a university college in all but title, but will award the degrees of a partner institution and therefore cannot use university in its title. In order for an institution to be a university there was in 1998 a requirement for it to possess research degree awarding powers (RDAP). This condition was withdrawn after significant debate in 2004, arguably adding further confusion to the understandings of what it is to be a university. As outlined by SCOP 'in recognition of excellent teaching as a university mission in its own right, university title was made accessible to institutions with TDAP without the need to hold research degree awarding powers. This change was achieved in the face of considerable opposition from parts of the university sector' (2004, p1). Legislatively the definition of **what** it was to be a university had changed, but this did not mean that the widely held understandings had shifted, impacting the identity of individual organisations.

The requirements were diluted further in 2012, with an amended student number threshold of 1,000 full time equivalent students (BIS, 2012), affording organisations such as the University of St Mark & St John opportunity to be awarded the title 'university' through the provision of documents confirming TDAP and student numbers to the Privy Council. This change followed

sustained lobbying by Guild HE, culminating in a paper to ministers; 'University Title: A case for clarity' (2010).

The term university college is one that seems to be only understood by a small number operating within the sector itself and in 2011/12 related to only 6 publicly funded generalist higher education institutions (HEFCE, 2012), out of the 130 publically fundable higher education institutions. This marks a significant reduction from the 27 in existence in 1992 (SCOP, 1993).

To date the title of university college appears to have been used as a stopping off place for publicly funded institutions on their way to university title. This is clearly evidenced by 21 of the 27 English generalist colleges of higher education remaining in 1992 moving through university college title and on to university title as they became eligible (or merged with universities), many of them in 2005 following the removal of the RDAP requirement. The small number of institutions remaining in the university college category and the lack of clarity of how it interfaces with the more widely understood term 'university' reinforces the confusion in the wider market place as to what they are. The terms 'university' and 'college' are both widely understood generally as institutions that offer higher and further education respectively, but what is the place and purpose of the university colleges and what is the impact of this on their identity? Does such an institution have a different primary purpose than a university, recognising that this in itself is a highly contested term?

As private providers (e.g. BPP University) and subsidiaries of publically funded universities (e.g. Coventry University College) now have the opportunity to become university colleges, and indeed universities, the definitions and meanings become further contested. BPP University, a private for profit organisation operating in the United Kingdom state that they do not consider themselves as 'competitor' to public universities as they offer something different. They 'work(s) with employers to offer degree programmes tailored to work and to the professions (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, February 2012), implying that this differs from the primary purpose of the publically funded university sector. Coventry University College also differentiate themselves in a similar way stating on their website that 'Coventry University

College is designed for people who want to benefit from high quality courses but who have decided that the traditional student experience is not for them. This means that the College will focus on the teaching and learning that leads to your academic and/or professional qualifications' (Coventry University College, 2012).

Both of these organisations place their focus on vocational higher education, without the traditionally recognised broader educational and student experience attached to a university education. It could be argued that this definition places these university colleges in the same place that the polytechnics inhabited following their inception in the 1960s and 1970s, reinforcing the notion of higher level training and not university education; a broader experience associated with human development. How this compares with the stated purpose and public identity of the University of St Mark & St John will be considered in the main body of the case study, but it adds confusion to the wider understanding of the purpose and identity of the 'university college'.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has explored the development of the higher education and university sectors in England over the past century, with particular reference to the place of the colleges of higher education and university colleges. Through the narration of the history relevant factors are the stratification of the sector as it has grown and diversified, and the pull of a well-developed understanding of what it means to be a university on the behaviour of those in the sector. This is evidenced by the identity changes of the civic universities as they developed their portfolio, research and recruitment profile to be more like the traditional universities, the pressure of academic drift contributing to the end of the polytechnic system in England in 1992, and the development and demise of the university college sector as institutions moved to university status.

The chapter opens up for exploration the inter relationship between what an institution is and the individual identity development of organisations. As outlined by Kogut & Zander, 'Identity does more than provide a definition of membership', it 'implies an adherence to a symbolic coding of values and rules'

(1996, p515). What it means to be a university is open to wider interpretation through the challenges in particular of massification, vocationalisation and the place of research. Bauman (1997) asserts that being a university today means being characterised by difference and diversity, but as is evident through behaviours of collectives of universities through this chapter there is a strong desire to retain the developed understanding of what it means to be a university. These understandings are protected by the membership of the strategic group (the collective of the university) despite legislative attempts at redefinition and provide a mobility barrier to other organisations (Porter, 1979). Using the table below the changes in the diversity of the English HE sector is evident. Labelling more HEIs universities has resulted in identity confusion as the legislative and membership definitions are no longer consistent. Many new universities do not meet the member protected and widely understood definitions, leaving them unable to clarify their identity position and their eligibility for membership. As stated by Rothblatt, ‘the idea of the idea of a university is talismatic’ (1997, p213) and whilst there is resemblance between those termed universities, there is sufficient distinctiveness for a stratified and hierarchical structure to exist.

| HE Sector pre-1992 | HE sector in 1998 | HE sector in 2003 | HE sector in 2013 |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| Universities | Universities | Universities | Universities (public) |
| Polytechnics | University Colleges | University Colleges | Universities (private, not for profit) |
| Colleges of Higher Education | Colleges of Higher Education | Specialist university Colleges | Universities (private for profit) |
| Specialist Colleges | Specialist Colleges | Specialist Colleges Further Education Colleges | Specialist universities University Colleges Further Education Colleges Private Colleges |

The impact of these challenges on the identity interpretations of those organisations in the wider higher education sector or aspiring to membership is considered more fully in the literature review chapter to follow.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

'What is a 'university?' – 'a high-level educational institution in which students study for degrees and academic research is done' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013)

3.1 Defining the research field

In the previous two chapters I have outlined the development of the research questions and explored the higher education landscape as it pertains to the development of Marjon. In defining the research field I undertook wide ranging reading in a number of areas including institutional leadership and change management before focussing down on matters of identity for university colleges. This was developed through the identification of the following research threads:

- The development of university colleges from a teacher training college background with particular reference to their place in the higher education/ university sector and associated identity issues
- The meaning of 'university' and the issue of the 'university in crisis' and the implication of this for the identity of the sector and those in it
- Organisational Identity theory and the implications for institutional health and survival where there is a lack of clarity
- Resonance of current organisational identity theory particularly through periods of change focussing on the University College crisis of identity following the achievement of TDAP

In seeking to understand the changes and continuities in the organisation's identity the iterative review processes resulted in a focus on a number of specific issues. Firstly, the strength of influence of the external university sector environment and the associated definitional issues impacting identity development, secondly, the effect of these sector understandings on what it is to be a university college, and finally, a review of theoretical and conceptual

perspectives supporting the analysis and understanding of organisational identity.

The chapter begins by examining how the development of the sector has been considered through the literature (Section 3.2), extending into a critical review of the term 'university' (3.3), and ends with a review of the theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks in use to consider organisational identity analysis (3.4).

3.2 The development of Higher Education in England - an identity perspective

There is a wealth of literature relating to the development of the Higher Education sector during the twentieth century detailing the primary changes to both the sector and individual institutions and associated policy issues (Bligh, 1990; Pratt, 1997; Silver, 2003; Shattock, 2012; Lowe, 2009). There is much written about the history and development of teacher training and the organisations delivering it (Lowndes, 1969; Gosden 1969; Lawson & Silver, 1973; Aldrich, 2002). The development and demise of the polytechnic sector is prevalent across the more general texts, given its significance in shaping the HE sector in England during the 20th century, but only a limited number of texts exist on the development of colleges of higher education following the changes to teacher training in 1972 (Locke et al, 1985). There is little to explain what happened to these institutions after 1982. The development of the university college sector and its more recent demise is notable by its absence and the nature and contribution made to higher education by this sector has received little attention from academic researchers or policy officials. Where it is referred to it is as a reflection of its marginalised position in the higher education sector; as a small, non-university provider of higher education (Brennan & Williams, 2008; Teichler, 2008).

Shattock, in his detailed account of the impact of policy change in the British higher education sector between 1945 and 2011 notes the development of teacher training post war and recognises how 'the DES ruthlessly cut back the colleges of education in the 1970s' (2012, p93), but fails to recognise the

remaining teacher training colleges who expanded their portfolio and became colleges of higher education. When outlining the structure of higher education that developed as the polytechnics increased in size and influence the development of these colleges of HE into university colleges, before many become universities themselves, is ignored.

Silver recognises the existence of the colleges of higher education; arguably the precursor to the university colleges, but notes that 'while the polytechnics had acquired the university title, most colleges of higher education that had emerged in the 1970's, mainly from the teacher training colleges, were removed from the picture through amalgamation or closure, with only a few left free standing' (2003, p231). He reflects that the few remaining colleges of higher education 'faced some of the ambiguities that the polytechnics had had to deal with in an earlier generation, complicated by the financial and status difficulties of the 1990s. Binary conceptions had not quite died' (ibid, 2003, p231).

Lowe, writing in 'A Century of Education' (Aldrich, 2002), defines higher education as that 'which takes place either in, or under the auspices of, universities or colleges of higher education', and goes on to articulate the difference between the universities and colleges of higher education as 'universities have the power to award their own degrees, whereas colleges of higher education are obliged to have their degree qualifications validated by a university' (2002, p75). The university colleges are not referenced at all. This lack of recognition of the university college sector could be explained though the sectors very recent development. At the time of Lowe writing there were a very small number of university colleges, most notably Canterbury Christ Church University College and Worcester University College, as many of the other colleges of higher education did not meet the requirements of the 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act in terms of their size and their ability to award their own degrees and therefore were unable to access the title.

Given the recent development of sector, the overall size and the level of transience as university colleges moved through to full university title, the lack of recognition as a part of the higher education sector may be understandable.

However this lack of recognition impacts the image and identity of those within it as will be explored through organisational identity theory.

Whilst many of the texts present as histories of the development of the sector and/or the policy interface there are fundamental questions of identity embedded throughout. Silver (2003) identifies the policy and legislative developments but also traces the philosophical arguments and tensions relating to the fundamental purpose of the university throughout the twentieth century, including the on-going debates relating to its expansion, the vocationalisation of the curriculum, the place of research and the role of the university in civic terms. Lowe recognises that the development of the sector have resulted in a fundamental questioning of the 'central functions' of a university, experienced through an 'enduring tension between the concepts of a university education which see it as being in one sense or another removed from day to day concerns and, on the other hand, as being central to technological and scientific advancement (2009, p1).

It can be argued that there have been two dominant themes evident in the literature over the past 30 years that impact on the wider identity of the sector. Firstly the impact of massification, marketization, state intervention, managerialism and globalisation on what it means to be a university (Barnet, 1996, 2000, 2005; Beista, 2007; Delanty, 1998; Marginson, 2007) and secondly the development of the professional identity of those engaged with the sector, in response to these contextual issues. In both of these fields the university college sector is largely ignored, and where its existence is acknowledged it is merely in the context of notionally adding to the wider complexity of the structure of the sector (Deem, 2006; Carr, 2009; Silver, 2003).

There has been an increasing interest in distinctiveness of individual institutions, arguably an element of identity (Wooldridge & Newcombe, 2011), although there is evidence that English higher education is more driven by mimicry and the desire to belong to groupings of like institutions than individual distinctiveness (Oxford Brookes, 2011; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). The notion of mimicry highlighted here can relate to a current like grouping or an aspirational

future position (Clarke et al 2010), which is particularly relevant to the university colleges and others seeking to move upwards in the stratified sector.

3.3 The University Sector – A sector with an identity crisis?

The question evident through the literature in identity terms could be articulated as one of primary purpose. Drucker (2008) argues that this is the most fundamental question for any organisation. What is the purpose of the university, how is this reflected by how it understands the nature of its work and its identity? The collective term 'university' should reflect the range and scope of a member organisations work, answering the 'what' we are question, even if the way that this work is delivered is distinctive and reflects the character and enduring features of the individual organisation, answering the 'who' we are question, more aligned with individual organisational identity. As an indicator of commonly held assumptions The Oxford English dictionary defines the term university as 'a high-level educational institution in which students study for degrees and academic research is done' (OED, 2013). This is at odds with the legislative definition which does not require academic research to be done by an institution for it to carry university title (DfE, 2004).

3.3.1 What is in a name?

Some argue that the apparent complexity of the English higher education sector was largely addressed by the polytechnics moving into the university sector in 1992 with the awarding of university title and the apparent establishment of a level playing field; the university sector. This over simplifies what is a complex issue, not just relating to legal title and public funding eligibility but more fundamental issues of individual organisational and collective identity within what is already a highly complex and contested sector identity landscape. It implies that there are consistent, stable definitions of 'higher education' and 'university' that are widely accepted and understood and there is consistency in relation to the acceptance of the range and diversity of institutions within this sector.

Silver argues that the significant changes experienced by the higher education sector over the past fifty years, not only in terms of the policy context but in relation to responses to the changes in the global environment had 'suppressed

any vigorous and sustained debates about identities and aims of higher education amidst changes of such magnitude' (2003, p8). This issue has come to the fore over the past decade with much literature in the higher education field focussed on the 'university in crisis' (Delanty, 1998; Barnett, 1998, 2000, 2005; Marginson, 2007; Biesta, 2007), where it is argued that institutions no longer understand their purpose or place in a world where the Humboltian notion of enlightenment is buried under the drive for economically focussed outputs, where universities no longer have a knowledge monopoly and where massification has led to an increasingly diverse student population and a broadening of the curriculum. This is reinforced by Delanty who argues that 'these developments, coupled with the emergence of new kinds of knowledge production closely related to globalisation, have led to the collapse of the Enlightenment conception of knowledge as autonomous, organic and an end in itself' (1998, p103). Stensaker notes that 'the very idea of what a higher education institution is has been challenged' (2004, p13) and in many countries, including the UK, there is pressure for the purpose of the university to be 'expressed in the idea that the prime function of Higher Education is the training of a high-skilled workforce and the production of high-quality scientific knowledge' (Biesta, 2007, p467).

When we discuss higher education are we discussing universities, the university sector, the higher education sector or some broader notion related to the delivery of qualifications at a particular academic level? Throughout the literature university sector and higher education sector are used interchangeably, as are HEIs and universities, but in terms of identity there are fundamental issues to be resolved. Barnett contests that university has different meanings attached to it than the somewhat broad and widely encompassing term higher education provider stating that 'there are normative dimensions in carrying the title 'university', even if what counts to be a university continually slides and widens' (2000, p27). Thomas, fellow of All Saints College, University of Oxford (2011) argues for a differentiated higher education sector where not all providers are named universities, suggesting that the normative dimensions referred to by Barnett relate in particular to the place of research and the type of curriculum offered in a university. He challenges 'the indiscriminate application

of the label 'university' to institutions whose primary task is to provide vocational training and whose staff do not carry out research' (2011, p9).

David Carr (2009) separates 'university education' from 'higher education', specifically differentiating 'research and truth seeking liberal development and professional training.' As Carr raises 'from a contemporary perspective, universities and other institutions of higher education are there to serve purposes of utility or research – or some uneasy combination of these functions (2009 p7). One of the most dominant challenges to the notion of the university laid down by Barnett, Delanty, Carr and others relate to the 'destruction of the university from contemplative knowledge to performative, by the recognition that universities are not the only, nor key places that research occurs' (Barnett, 1996).

The debate relating to the title and the meaning of 'university' has been reignited through Government proposals to open the sector more widely enabling smaller University Colleges and private providers with TDAP to apply to be universities (DBIS, 2011, 2012) and the place of research is writ large. Reporting in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (THES) Paul Jump writes that 'the poor research record of US for-profit institutions makes them unworthy of the term 'university' UK academics have claimed' (16 Feb 2012 p7). In the same article Dr Hanley (Nottingham Trent University) argues that 'calling an organisation with no meaningful scholarship a university is a bit like calling a muddy path through a forest a motorway'. Dr Hotson (University of Oxford) agrees, 'essentially research-inactive institutions' should not be called universities'. This debate has been prevalent since the significant growth of the university sector began in the post-war period. Truscott stated in 1943 that 'a university without research would be nothing but a super secondary school' (1943, p48). More currently Barnett argues that, 'talking of mission identity only has a point because what it is to be a university is now not given but is constructed' (2005, p790). This implies that there was once a shared understanding of what it was to be a university, possibly reflecting the small number of institutions in the 19th century, all of whom performed both teaching and research to a very limited percentage of the population.

As is evident through the changes since the 1960s the desire to be a university is not just about legal title, but about how the title relates to primary function and status, one that is highly protected by those who feel it has specific meaning. Symons et al state that the European University Association (EUA) 'stressed the unique position of universities (defined as institutions authorised to confer doctorates) in the construction of ERA because of their traditional dual mission: research and education' (2007, p398). This notion of protection is evident across Europe. Zoontjens, in reporting on how to protect university as a designation for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in the Hague, highlights that there is little 'substantial argument for denying the right of non-university higher education institutions to act as universities' and that 'their ambition to raise their status in comparison to universities by attempting to become more similar to universities seems to becoming dominant over time in Europe' (2010, p3).

Taking a purely legislative perspective teaching institutions, publically privately funded, for-profit and not for-profit can now become universities in England as long as they have taught degree awarding powers and in excess of 1,000 full time students on degree level programmes. However, what is clear from the debates outlined above is that there remains a widely held and influential understanding of what it means to be a university that does not correspond to the legislative position. How this perspective changes over time is yet to be seen but, as noted by Shattock, the need to conform to the developed understanding of what it means to be a university has been clearly evident over the development of the sector. He states that 'British higher education clings to the Humboldtian concept of universities which incorporate research with teaching' (2012, p186), suggesting that 'appeals to institutions to define themselves as teaching only seems likely to fall on deaf ears' (ibid, p186). This highlights the strength of what Teichler (2008) refers to as 'academic drift'; a strong desire by those within the sector to conform to the widely held assumptions of what is valued in higher education. As argued by Brennan, 'like it or not, universities are typically differentiated in terms of prestige, with antiquity and research reputation being its primary determinants' (1999, p7). These could be defined through strategic group identity theory as recognised membership criteria, used to protect the core components of a group identity to

maintain its position within a market (Peteraf & Shanley, 1997). Brennan argues further that this perception is reinforced by the 'fact that the people who write or speak at international conferences about higher education tend to come from the research/high status end of it (ibid, p7).

3.3.2 Relevance to the University Colleges

Given the stated purposes of a university college sector as outlined in the SCOP report (1993), detailed in chapter 2, one could question whether the issues relating to the 'university in crisis' are relevant, possibly justifying the lack of research and consideration as to the impact on this part of the higher education sector.

The move of universities from sites of contemplative knowledge could be seen as irrelevant to teaching led organisations with a scholarship approach to research, where the priority is to be up to date with the research of others to inform teaching. The SCOP report (1993) highlighted that there was an agreement between the colleges of higher education in their bid to become university colleges, as to how they perceived themselves. The need to actively engage in research was not a fundamental part of their declared identity. They identified as primarily research informed teaching institutions. Without the expectation of research as a fundamental element of the purpose of the university college as proposed by SCOP this gives rise to a wider challenge to the rationale for adding 'university' to the title of these institutions.

The argument that the purpose of a university is not the training of students for the workplace, but to enable them to 'develop their capacities to the full; in the process, they acquire the intellectual flexibility necessary to meet the demands of a rapidly changing economy' (Thomas, 2011) presents a challenge to the university college. The notion of training a highly skilled workforce could be argued to be a primary function of the university colleges as they focus on undergraduate level vocational curriculum and specific training, such as the training of teachers, nurses, counsellors and coaches. The curriculum focus of the teacher training colleges was precisely that, and whilst the portfolio of many widened following the changes in the 1970s the focus remained predominantly

vocational with significant increases in the delivery of foundation degrees by the sector, particularly in support of the public services, including health. Canterbury Christchurch University, previously a teacher training college and college of higher education describe themselves now as the 'South East's largest provider of public service careers' (Canterbury Christchurch University, 2012).

The development of these institutions in the way outlined above may reflect that institutions are generally more policy driven and focussed on delivering Government objectives, as their sustainability largely depends on it. The expansion of the higher education sector through giving places to those not traditionally accessing higher education is arguably a fundamental part of the identity of the university college sector, with their evident responsiveness to the widening participation agenda. This could be reflective of the history of many of these organisations having developed from outside of the mainstream university sector, through teacher training or other specialisms, preparing their students for specific careers as opposed to providing a wider generalist education as might be evidenced through the offerings of a university. It could however be argued that this identity characteristic has been reinforced by the organisations seizing the opportunity afforded through policy changes in the 1990s and early 2000s for growth, and growth was the only way to university title. Those institutions making the transition from colleges of higher education through to university status during the 2000s retain a publically declared commitment to widening participation and an emphasis on serving the needs of their regional employment market (Edge Hill University, 2012; University of Winchester, 2012).

Lord Annan highlighted the expected impact of the massification stating that 'if a nation moves from small-scale to mass higher education, it must expect the customs, ideals, organisation and behaviour of its universities and other institutions to change' (1975, p25). By changing the 'ideals' in particular are we not fundamentally challenging the identity of the institutions making up the sector, accepting an increased level of diversity in the primary functions of individual providers? Does this not imply that a somewhat wider definition of what it means to be a university is required to accommodate the changes in the environment?

Silver argued that 'from their formal designation in the late 1960s and early 1970s the polytechnics struggled to define their identities, matched against their own histories and profiles, the interpretation of Government and local authorities, the universities' position and plans for expansion and change, and the diversity of aspirations within and beyond the polytechnics' (p191). This struggle did not end with their morphing into universities. Arguably their becoming universities fundamentally changed what it was to be a university, particularly in the context of widening access and increasing the vocationally focussed outputs of the sector. What did not change at this point was the expectation that a university was a place of teaching and research. As articulated by Marginson, they are 'self-reproducing, knowledge-forming organisations, defined by the binary between the known and unknown' (2007, p126).

3.3.3 Summary

The struggle for the university colleges to define themselves continued as they saw themselves on the edge of a now larger more diverse sector, not formally in it, but not fully out of it. Guild HE, in presenting their influential paper 'University Title: A Case for Clarity' (2010) to Government, sought to articulate the need for university colleges to be renamed as universities for the sake of clarity. They argued that university colleges were university like in their delivery of predominantly higher education provision, and that the legislative restrictions were an artificial boundary causing confusion to students and disadvantaging the development of individual institutions. Given that the nature of the HE sector in England is 'such that many of the pressures tend to conformity: statutory requirements, standards, comparability, the emphasis on one dimension (research)' (Oxford Brookes, 2011) and identity is developed and maintained through inter organizational and environmental comparison (Albert & Whetton, 1985) the position of the sector and those within it is crucial for the identity (re) formation of individual institutions.

A level of indifference to the university colleges from the university sector is understandable given the lack of research activity emanating from the

institutions and their declining number. They were also separated from the main university sector in terms of their collective voice, evidenced by their inadmissibility to the university lobbying organisation Universities UK, as a commitment to research was a required element of the membership criteria. The existence of a separate lobbying body as a result (SCOP, now Guild HE) reinforces the distinction between those inside the university sector and those outside. University colleges have not been considered to be part of the genuine university sector, either they were on the periphery or they were in a second division. The crisis in the university sector may not seem relevant, however as can be evidenced above given the identity pull; the tacit understanding of what it means to be a university and the expressed desire for the institutions on the periphery of the university sector to be full members the debates and their outcomes remain crucially important.

3.4 Identity – A Conceptual Perspective

'Who are we as an organisation' (Albert & Whetton, 1986)

Through the literature there is no work evident on the identity (re) formation of individual higher education organisations or consideration of the change and continuity in an organisations identity through a journey from college of higher education to university college or university college to university. This thesis seeks to fill that gap.

In order to understand how organisational identity has been conceptualised and explored, particularly factors impacting organisational identity formation, maintenance, deconstruction and reconstruction a review of literature in the field was undertaken. The width of the field of organisational identity theory is such that reference cannot be made to all areas and the iterative process of the research and factors evidence through the context section has resulted in the identification of themes and issues for consideration. The thesis is focussed on organisational identity through a period of strategic change and development from a constructivist perspective. It could have been considered from a number of alternative angles, including a critical perspective, challenging the imposition of the change agenda on the individual members of the organisation or

considering identity as a means of regulation and individual control (Alevesson & Willmott, 2002; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). Recent work in the field includes more detailed analysis of the relationship between individual members of an organisation or interpreting identity as a manifestation of multiple layers of understanding, through the identity understandings of the individuals making up the organisation (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997). Research of this type would enable an understanding of the perception of the University by its members, including staff and students and would be a useful piece of follow-up future research.

Through the organisational theory literature it is clear that an organisation's identity will influence how it responds within its environment, what it values and deems as important as it goes about its daily business and crucially in the current higher education context in England dictates how it responds to change. Eckert & Wenger define an organisation's identity as the 'enactment of an understanding of institutional practise, and thus imply ways of being in and seeing the world' (1989, p2). Fombrun states that 'Identity constrains what action a company takes, how it makes decisions, how it treats its employees, how it reacts to crises. Managers and employees tend to act in ways consistent with the company's identity (1996, p111).

Organisational identity is a relatively recently developed field of research, although much of its theoretical underpinnings have been adapted from work in the fields of psychology and sociology, with a shift from work on individual identities (see, for example, Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Erickson, 1968; and Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to the implications of their applicability at a macro level to support understandings of organisations in society. Its applications have not been built on a consistent and well-founded theoretical framework, resulting in what some have termed 'the tower of Babel' when it comes to how the identity concept has been used and defined (Hatch and Schultz, 2000). Arguably as outlined by Hatch and Schultz 'organisational identity presents an original collage of the experiences and expectations of a wide array of people who view the organisation from a multiplicity of perspectives and approach it with a variety of motives' (2000, p1).

Whilst much has been written about identity issues pertaining to the broader sector, little research has been undertaken on individual institutions within the higher education sector in England, particularly as their titles and possibly their position in the recognised hierarchy change, but there has been a developing interest in the organisational identity of higher education institutions in the United States (Gioia et al 2010, Gioia & Thomas, 1996, Burrows, 1999). This work has predominantly taken the form of qualitative case study research conducted on specific organisations or on a specific part of the education sector (Levin, 2002) and raises a number of useful perspectives for consideration in the context of the thesis.

3.4.1 Albert & Whetten – Identity as applied to an organisation

Albert & Whetten are widely credited for the introduction of identity analysis on a macro level, providing a formal definition to the field of study through the publication of their foundational article 'Organisational Identity' (1985) revisited in 2006 (Whetten). The field is now 'a flourishing domain among organisational theorists and researchers' (Gioia et al, 2010). Research undertaken since 1985 tends to use Albert & Whetten's definition of organisational identity as a starting point for either critical review or hypothesis testing. Their work is particularly relevant as an initial conceptual framework to this research as it had at its heart the study of a research university and the writers outline their objective 'to define and develop the concept of identity within an organisational setting, to consider what the term organisational identity might mean that is clear, distinctive, important, useful and measurable' (1985, p264).

Their landmark article gave rise to a broad theoretical framework for considering the essential question – 'who are we as an organisation?' (the identity question), which they differentiate from the question 'what are we?', suggesting that this is a question more easily answered and understood. Taking a simplistic perspective in the case of a university 'what' could be the legal definition, given that university is a legally defined and protected title in England. However, from the sector analysis above, I would argue that the question of 'what' a university is being challenged through environmental developments, membership definitions and strategic group identification. It is inextricably linked to the

question of 'who' an organisation is as it provides certain criteria for organisations to meet, arguably through its characteristics. It is important to differentiate between the concept of identity as definitional, and identity as impacted by the definitional. The definition of what it is to be a university is not understood only in a legislative context, but held by members of the group. Although these definitions are being challenged and will be interpreted differently as meanings alter over time there remains fundamental expectations of a university as defined by Delanty (1998), relating to teaching, research and response to policy, which enables group membership. Definitions for the university college outside of the legislative are not evident and as the 'what' is not clear and easily understood this in itself influences the question of 'who we are', defined by Albert & Whetton as a 'search for answers in the organisation's culture, philosophy, market position, or membership' (1985, p265).

They proposed that the identity of an organisation can be framed around an understanding of three key factors; 'central character, distinctiveness and temporal continuity (generally translated as that which is enduring)' (ibid, 1985, p265) and argue that the identity question will only be raised when an organisation is faced with specific challenges, for example formation, loss of an identity sustaining element (e.g. a founder), growth or decline or change in collective status.

3.4.1.a Central Character

They state that whilst no theory is capable of defining central character it will be identifiable for an organisation at a point in time and for a given purpose through analysis of what the organisation considers as important when making major decisions. These central characteristics will act as a guide for leaders of organisations as to what they should do and the impact of this on how other organisations relate to them. Whilst this may seem vague when being used as one of only three elements of a definition, the writers argue that character is evident in the way an organisation behaves in different circumstances; 'an organisation may focus on different essential characteristics depending on the perceived nature and purpose of the enquiry' (1985, p267). This concept of central character was developed further by Dutton and Dukerich (1991) through

their case study work on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Their empirical work on the organisational response to homelessness found that 'the organisation's identity served as an important reference point that members used for assessing the importance of the issue at hand' (1991, p519), with central characteristics guiding responses to both strategic and operational issues.

Central characteristics are likely to be defined by the key products or offerings of the organisation; in the case of a university its curriculum and research offering for example, its approach to widening participation or selectiveness and its approach to engagement with the business and broader community. How the university sees itself in response to what has been defined as its 'trinity of missions' (Albert & Whetton 1985, Delanty 1998); teaching, research and service/policy, will provide an understanding of the organisation's central character and identity. As argued by Gioia & Thomas (1996) and Burrows (1999) the higher education sector appears to have a predetermined set of understandings or characteristics and these are more closely aligned to those attached to a research university. This is consistent with the issues raised in both the context section and the literature review section above.

3.4.1.b Distinctiveness

Distinctiveness is defined as something that is more attuned to the way an organisation behaves, and is likely to include 'management philosophy, culture and habitual strategic predispositions' (Albert and Whetton, 1985, p268).

Distinctiveness, or claimed distinctiveness is a feature that sets an organisation apart from the others with which it may be compared. There has been much political rhetoric in the English higher education sector about the importance of distinctiveness, with policy documents calling for institutions to be more explicit about their differences and for a more focussed approach to the range of curriculum/research they engage in – focussing on areas where they excel (DBIS, 2010). Arguably this request relates more to effective allocation of resources by the state, through reduction of duplication in provision. It is evident more recently in respect of the allocation of resources to support research,

where there has been increased concentration in those institutions securing publically funded research income.

Institutionally the impact of an increasing number of providers of higher education at a time when the numbers of students entering the system are not significantly increasing (UCAS, 2011) leads to a desire to differentiate the organisation from others. The Distinct Higher Education project argues that 'In a crowded marketplace, and with uncertainty around funding and student numbers in the near future, a distinctive and compelling institutional identity has become essential for survival' (Oxford Brookes, 2011).

There is an obvious need for institutions to be different from others, if only for their overall survival, distinctiveness in English higher education appears more clearly on a collective level as opposed to an individual institutional level, with a strong drive to 'belong' and to be seen as similar to other organisations. Gioia & Thomas (1996) found in reviewing strategic change in academic organisations there was a strong desire to mimic and belong to a specific grouping of like institutions, or an aspiration to join another grouping considered more in line with the development aspirations of the senior management team. This form of mimetic behaviour relates to strategic group identity theory (section 3.3.3.d), whereby groups of similar organisations identify through associations in order to gain strategic advantage (Peteraf & Shanley, 1997) and is mirrored by the range of mission groups representing the various groupings of institution in the UK. These groups reflect the history and development of the sector and the wish to maintain or develop a particular distinctive group identity. The mission groups also reflect and reinforce the evident hierarchy in the sector. The identified mission groups are the Russell Group formed in 1994, representing the research intensive universities, the University Alliance and the Million + Group representing the post-1992 universities and finally Guild HE (previously SCOP) 'representing a number of smaller institutions, the majority of whom are university colleges or smaller specialist HE providers' (Newman, 2009). Although Alice Hynes argues that the mission groups have little impact on the ground, stating that 'most colleagues and even senior policy staff, if asked to put all universities in the mission groups would get it wrong' (2009 p36), the importance of them in terms of public identity and image is clear. This can be

seen by the recent move of the University of Exeter into the Russell Group in 2012, with three other research intensive universities, arguably enhancing their position in the evident sector hierarchy.

Why has there been a drive by those outside the university sector to be part of it as opposed to remaining a distinctive but separate part of the higher education sector? This is not a new phenomenon. The 'red brick' universities mimicked the earlier universities, becoming (inter) nationally recruiting organisations, increasing their selectivity and their research profiles, moving away from their original functions of widening access and meeting the needs of their local and regional economies. Lowe, in describing this phenomenon notes that 'university status meant a swift growth of the Arts faculty as, ironically, they drifted ... towards one of looking as much as possible like a 'proper' university' (2002, p80). Colleges of higher education strived to be renamed university colleges (SCOP, 1993), and then having achieved this, sought a move to be renamed and redefined as universities (Guild HE, 2010). This reflects the notion of 'academic drift' (Teichler, 2008), outlined in the previous section.

3.4.1.c Temporal Continuity – that which is enduring

The final factor that Albert & Whetton suggest is required to be examined to understand the identity of an organisation is that of 'temporal continuity', and this aspect has been the one of their three identity definers most challenged and explored. Temporal continuity is translated through their research as 'that which is enduring' and implies the need for there to be an element of sameness or continuity over time. This draws upon theory relating to the individual whereby their mental health can be threatened if there is a loss of continuity over time. Temporal continuity has been interpreted as a somewhat static construct and given the dynamism required by organisations this concept appears at odds with the obvious development and change being experienced. How can identity be enduring if the organisation is undertaking any form of significant change? Taking a post-modernist perspective Gioia & Thomas challenge Gagliardi's (1986) assumption that it is the primary strategy of an organisation to maintain its identity, arguing that 'if one assumes that organisational change is natural...organisational identity is naturally presumed

to evolve' (1996, p399). This does not necessarily mean that an organisation loses a sense of continuity through change and in a later paper Gioia et al contend that organisational identity 'is actually relatively dynamic and the apparent durability of identity is somewhat illusionary' (2000, p63). They suggest that by reframing 'enduring' as a 'sense of continuity' allows identity to shift 'in its interpretation and meaning while retaining labels for 'core' beliefs and values that extend over time and context' (ibid, p66). Assuming identity is socially constructed allows for change over time as the meanings of the labels used to articulate what is core about an organisation are subject to developing interpretations. Some writers (Gioia et al, 2010; Hatch & Schultz, 2004) have distilled this into the notion of an 'essence', allowing for identity to be a dynamic process that develops and changes over time, but with an underpinning essence that provides a source of stability for those depending on it. There is strong evidence that the sense of the enduring is particularly powerful in the higher education sector, with the understandings of the history and development of the sector impacting on the interpretations of those both inside and outside the sector as to what it means to be a university.

3.4.2 Developing Themes of Organisational Identity Relevant to this research

Much of what was written by Albert & Whetten in their seminal article has been further developed, explored and challenged over the past twenty five years. A number of themes that have emerged during this research have been reviewed along with the three initial framework questions identified by Albert & Whetten and have supported the establishment of a more detailed analytical framework through which the documents and interviews that underpin this research project have been considered.

3.4.2.a Organisations as socially constructed:

The importance of the organisation's relationship with its environment as it pertains to the higher education sector in England, appears to be of greater relevance when considering identity than implied by the original research undertaken by Albert & Whetten, despite their assertion that it is formed by a process of 'inter-organisational comparisons and reflections upon them over

time' (1985, p283). In the case of the university college would be the broader higher education sector and the organisations within it, including the universities, the further education colleges providing higher education and relevant private providers. This concept has developed from that of self-identity development which Billot (2010, p714) states is 'a dynamic construct, as one's individual identity emerges from a personal, ethnic and national context, but is also socially constructed over time'. Henkel (2000) supports this interpretation and views this construction process as being on a continuum that links the past with the present and the future. This is a particularly interesting perspective as it brings in the notion of both past and future which is pertinent to this research project in that there is a significant element of looking forward, in the context of an organisational and sector wide historical perspective in the identity forming/adaption process. Eckert & Wenger (1989) remind us that an institutional identity is not just a label or a title, but meanings are constantly being constructed in the day-to-day practice of learning to live within an institution.

Taking a narrow interpretation of this social construction concept would imply that the organisation's identity is developed for it as 'a product of externally inspired, passive and imitative adaptation' (Scott, 1995, p44) and taken at face value ignores both the impact and influence of those inside the organisation and the ability of the organisation itself to take an active role in influencing and shaping the external environment and its own space within it. Gioia et al suggest that social construction does focus on the members in the context of meaning making, as 'according to the social constructionist view, identity involves members' negotiation of shared meanings about 'who we are as an organisation'' (2010, p5). The importance here is the sense making process of members within the organisation collectively constructing their understanding and defining the identity for them, but it fails to acknowledge the power and influence of members in defining and redefining these meanings through the organisation as an independent entity, and this entity influencing its environment and the perceptions of it as an organisation.

3.4.2 b Organisations as actors:

Scott has challenged the argument that institutions merely respond to their environments, claiming that they actively influence their environments. 'Organisations are creatures of their institutionalised environments, most modern organisations constituted as active players not passive pawns' (1995, p132). The social actor view of organisational identity suggests that it lives with the institution as an entity in its own right and 'treats organisational identity essentially as a set of institutional claims that explicitly articulate who the organisation is and what it represents' (Gioia et al, 2010, p5). This could arguably be referred to as the notion of public identity, as it suggests that 'the locus of organisational identity does not reside mainly in the interpretation of the members, but more in the institutional claims associated with the organisation' (ibid, p5). Institutional claims in this context are likely to be reflected the public documents of the organisation, and their published mission and aims as detailed in documents such as the strategic plan.

Seeing these issues as separate in terms of understanding identity is misleading. Gioia et al, in a recent article suggest that 'the social construction and social actor views of identity related processes were not only germane to the formation of organisational identity but that these processes were also mutually constitutive in creating a workable identity' (2012, p1). In developing, maintaining and transforming identity there is evidence that identity understandings (social construction) are influenced by identity claims (social actor), which in turn influence identity understandings. This enables the complexity of the interface between the development of desired future image and the current environment to be explored and links into assertions related to image and identity. Hatch & Schultz (2002) argue that expressed identity leaves impressions on others over and above what Pfeffer (1981) refers to as impression management and can be effectively used to develop a new organisational understanding or identity. I would argue that relative strengths of the projected image, the current understandings of an organisation and the influence of the external environment would impact on the success of image influencing identity.

3.4.2.c Image and Identity:

Much is made in recent literature about the connectivity between image and identity, particularly as a vehicle for supporting organisational change and associated identity shifts, or at least shifts in the interpretations of the labels used, linking with the socially constructed perspective of that which is enduring about an organisation. Image is differentiated from identity in the literature and defined as 'attributes members believe people outside the organisation use to distinguish it' (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, p551), as opposed to what members believe to be its character. This has been redefined as 'construed external image' and this can be seen to complement what Whetton, Lewis & Mischel (1992) refer to as desired or communicated image; a range of characteristics that those in positions of formal authority within an organisation want stakeholders to attach to it. The external nature of image links with organisation as actor theory, as the organisation deliberately seeks to define itself externally not only through publicity and promotional opportunities, but actively through 'how we do things around here'. Alvesson suggests that 'the more sensitive a person or a corporation is towards the subtlety of opinions and attitudes among the target group, the stronger are the reasons for paying attention to 'image' (1990, p376), and this relates to both the internal audience and those external to the institution. Both identity and image will impact the how members of an institution interpret issues, using them as perceptual screens and 'any major organisational change must be accompanied by a significant alteration of the perception of the organisation' (Fiol, 1991). Whilst Alvesson (1990) suggests that investment in image results in the demise of the substance (culture and identity) of an organisation, Gioia & Thomas (1996) suggest that image can be used as an effective tool in changing an organisation's identity. 'The progression, therefore, might not be simply from substance to image but, rather, from substance to image to substance, as organisation members seek congruence between the two' (1996, p399). Personal identities of members are also impacted by image as they are 'formed and modified in part by how they believe others view the organisation for which they work' (ibid, p369).

Hatch and Schultz (2002) extend the issue of image and its relationship with identity, articulating a process of identity development through an inter-relationship between image, culture and developing identity.

'We claim that once organisational images are mirrored in identity they will be interpreted in relation to existing organisational self-definitions that are embedded in cultural understanding. When this happens identity is reinforced or changed through the process of reflecting on identity.'
(p998).

It is important to note that in the higher education sector much of what is offered by institutions is intangible, and therefore there will be some reliance on image as a differentiating element of identity. If this image can be reinforced and embedded it can become a lived identity. The use of image to articulate a new future for an organisation can be effective in supporting transformation, but it is essential that there is coherence between the expressed identity of an organisation and the lived identity.

3.4.3.d Social Identification theory and strategic group identity:

Work carried out by Ashforth & Mael (1989) on the applicability of social identification theory (SIT) to the organisation suggests that departments within an organisation engage in identification with their specific groups, and where there is an 'absence of a strong organisational identity, the desire for favourable intergroup comparisons generates much conflict between differentiated and clearly bounded sub units. This is especially so if a groups status is low or insecure' (1989, p33). They argue that the 'indifference of the high status group is perhaps the greatest threat to the identity of the low status group because the latter's identity remains socially unvalidated' (1989 p33). Group comparisons will be used not just for differentiation but through self-conception impact feelings of superiority or inferiority, identifying as members of in-groups or out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). SIT identifies the significance in the status of groups such that the identity of a low status group is implicitly threatened by a high status group. Applying this to organisations in the stratified higher education sector their position within the hierarchy and the impact of the indifference to their existence from the higher order institutions will impact their identity development through their understanding of organisational worth.

Strategic Group Identity theory, as proposed by Peteraf & Shanley (1997), develops this in the context of bounded groups, defined as 'sets of firms with similar strategies or as groups of firms isolated by common mobility barriers' (p515). This could be applied in the context of the university sector either at what I will refer to as a definitional level; university, university college, college of higher education, or at an identity level where groups are established through distinctiveness as well as through characteristics. Examples here would include the mission groups and other collectives, such as the Cathedrals group.

Human identity theory applied to the organisation suggests that there is a desire to belong to a group, and/or aspire to be a member of an alternative, more prestigious group. MacDonald applies this to leaders of universities, suggesting that they 'in their striving for power or superiority may merge personal and institutional strivings into university identity statements' (2010, p158). Peteraf & Shanley (1997) consider institutional leadership in the context of strategic group identity and suggest that where leaders are brought into a strategic group from outside by the introduction of 'new mental models and norms of behaviour into the industry, they may impede mutual understanding and destabilise' (1997, p177). This may be useful if looking to move the organisation from one group to another with which the leader is familiar, but internal destabilisation will still occur as understandings of the history and identity features of an organisation will be unfamiliar.

3.4.3.e Reinterpretation and Redefinition of an organisation

In considering organisational change as a more deliberate process designed to redefine an organisation, as opposed to a process of reinterpretation, Clarke et al suggest that the 'most profound of all changes occur when there is a significant transformation in what is arguably the most elemental of all schemes, organisational identity itself' (2010, p397). Bartenuk & Moch (1987) would identify this as third order 'traumatic' change, requiring a replacement of understandings of the way we are, as opposed to lower order changes that might require modification of shared understandings.

Marshak (1993) suggests that redefining 'who we are' as an organisation is a process of transforming identity and Fiol argues that 'individuals and organisations alike move through a series of relatively predictable phases when confronted with organisational identity changes' (2002, p663). These phases include deidentification, a process of trust breaking with the old identity, situated reidentification with the new desired identity and 'rebuild trust through identification with something higher than what we do now' (ibid, p663). Gioia & Thomas (1996) argue that it is essential for senior managers to effectively articulate a desired future image in order to induce identity change. I would question the simplicity of this statement. It implies a management process whereby articulating a future image will induce identity change. Identity is constructed, more complex and unlikely to be able to be imposed. Leadership of change is a separate area of research, not explicitly covered in this thesis (see Baker, 2007; Western, 2008). As outlined by McRoy & Gibbs 'just as change is complex, so is the act of leadership which requires those who aspire to lead to be able to communicate the desired vision, model the roles that will lead to effective implementation and possess the managerial skills to deal with aspects of change such as barriers and fear, as well as being endowed with the ability to recognise and engage with informal power agents who may resist the change process' (2009, p687).

3.4.3.f Identity Interpretations for Universities

Delanty (1998) argues the existence of three pillars constituting university identity, which are being challenged in terms of the interpretation of their meaning and their relative importance through Government policy and funding arrangements. The three pillars he asserts define a university identity are its response to research (cognitive rationality), teaching (cultural reproduction), and policy driven training (instrumental rationality). I would suggest that these pillars are definitional and relate to the membership criteria for a university as widely understood. How they are responded to within individual institutions within the membership group will make visible their identity. Others argue that these pillars of identity have developed over time, reflecting individual institutional desires to be distinct, policy priorities and the wider education landscape. Changes in the legislative position as outlined in the context and the earlier sections of this

chapter challenge elements of this definition, particularly the assumption that to be a university a research profile is required, but the strength of this framework as defining the idea of a university may be stronger than the legislative in terms of wider understanding and acceptance giving rise to the question of who has the right to define what is valued. As McLean (2006) suggests, there are complex ideas about the nature and purpose of pedagogic practices in universities. These include ideas influenced by the Enlightenment university, focusing on 'the autonomous pursuit of knowledge and truth (ibid, p.38), the notion of the wider connection between knowledge, broader human and societal development and more modern interpretations relating to equality, citizenship and democracy and more recently ideas 'stimulated by marketisation' (Abbas, 2012). It can be argued that these are elements of the environment, impacting distinctiveness, an element of identity, and individual universities will respond to the different agendas in different ways depending on their identity perspective.

3.5 Summary

This literature review can be summarised in three interconnected sections, the issue of the 'university in crisis', the position of the university college in the university sector, and the constructs and theoretical frameworks relevant in seeking to understand identity within an organisational context.

3.5.1 Definitional Issues – what is a university?

Looking firstly at the issues relating to the assertion of the university in crisis, throughout the literature, the primary purpose of the university has been challenged throughout the 20th Century and into the 21st Century on a number of fronts. The introduction, post the Second World War, of civic universities was the commencement of the challenge as these universities had, as their original purpose, the attraction of a wider set of students, focussed on the development of employer facing skills. However it was quickly evident that there was a desire for these institutions to be university like. The civic universities developed over time mimicking the older established universities in respect of their offering, their selectivity and their focus on research as a primary purpose. The challenge was further developed post-Robbins (1963) where the need for

increased participation and the development of skills based curriculum was highlighted. This introduced the expectation that a priority of a higher education institution should be 'instruction in skills' and that 'courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and wish to do so' (Robbins, 1963). The introduction of the polytechnic sector arguably delivered this different form of higher education, but again 'academic drift' (Teichler, 2008) resulted in the dissolution of the polytechnics and through their transfer, the growth of the university sector. At this point, in 1992, augmented by this policy change many argued that the university was no more. The university was no longer a seat of contemplative learning, but part of a wider sector whose organizations responded to a variety of missions, a high proportion of which related to Government agendas focused on skills and employability, no longer restricting entry to the most academically or financially able and with a requirement to be accountable to Government for their activities. The university was not dead, but it was being redefined in a very different economic, technical and globalized landscape. In line with Newman's 'Idea of a University' (1910) the sector still reflected the fundamental purposes of a university; it was still a place where both teaching and research took place.

In 2004 one of the most fundamental challenges to what it meant to be a university was presented through the amendment of the conditions requiring to be met for an institution to become a university (DfES, 2004). This change removed the need for institutions to have research degree awarding powers, enabling teaching only organizations to become universities. Whilst this enabled some colleges of higher education and university colleges entry to the sector, all have a declared intention to achieve research degree awarding powers and many have. This reinforces the argument made by Shattock (2012), that there is currently no appetite in the UK for any university to be seen as teaching only, although with the recent changes in the criteria (2012) allowing smaller and private institutions to be called universities this may no longer be the case.

3.5.2 What is the place of the university college?

Through the literature it is evident that the university college sector is considered a peripheral part of the higher education sector reflecting its small

membership. It is perceived as lower order, not meeting the widened criteria of a university due to its position on research. Aspirations to join the university sector are evident through the challenges mounted by SCOP during the 1990s and by Guild HE in 2010.

In reviewing the literature relating to identity in the context of the broader sector analysis, what is evident when applying this to the university college is the significance of the external environment in the identity development process. This relates not only to the history of the organisation but the policy shifts and responses by other members of the environment. The position and perception of the place of the university colleges will have an impact on the desire for change, but also on the ability of the organisation to reframe itself. Linking to the empirical and theoretical work on organisational identity, these are matters that have been considered as influential in examining and understanding identity challenge and change. Issues of social construction, mimicry and image are particularly relevant in this context.

3.5.3 Organisational Identity Frameworks

The definitions of organisational identity developed by Albert & Whetten (1985) serve as a useful analytical tool with which to explore the organisation to establish an understanding of its identity. The recognition that organisations are constantly changing and evolving, with the possibility of fundamental identity change as a result introduces considerations of how organisations respond to such change (Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996), linking with the issues of image.

Given the strength of the wider held understandings of what it means to be a university considering the data in the context of the trinity of missions (Delanty, 1998) enables the impact of the desire to be more 'university like' to become apparent. The key themes from the work on university in crisis relate to the place of research, the challenge of the changing nature of curriculum, reflecting a more vocational/technical perspective linking explicitly to the employment agenda, and the response of the organisation to the policy agenda.

The literature review has provided the context and an initial construct with which to review the data and has enabled exploration of methodology and method to best answer the research question.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods

This chapter provides a rationale and account of the methodology and methods utilised in the study, but as the formulation of a research question depends upon one's 'personal ontological and epistemological positioning' (Loxley et al, 2005, p6) the first part of the chapter examines the dominant research paradigms as they pertain to both educational research and organisational identity research. A rationale for an interpretivist approach is then presented, linking through to the chosen methodological techniques employed through use of a case study supported by documentary review and analysis, interviews and participant observation.

Educational research is described by Pring as 'the attempt to make sense of the activities, policies and institutions which, through the organisation of learning, help to transform the capacities of people to live a fuller and more distinctively human life' (2000, p17). How we attempt to establish an understanding will be unique to each of us as we each possess a developed 'paradigmatic lens' through which we view the world (Sparkes, 1994, p11). This lens represents an interrelated collection of beliefs, values, assumptions and methods that will inform how we develop and undertake research, how we interpret data gathered and what constitutes legitimate and worthwhile knowledge as an outcome of the research. These are matters of ontology and epistemology, which when linked with methodology constitute an 'enquiry paradigm' (Golby & Parrott, 1999). This unique position critically shapes the overarching orientation of any research and as Denzin & Lincoln state, 'the gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology)' (2000, p18).

Whilst there is no definitive agreement on the number of enquiry paradigms or 'ways' of knowing' (Heron, 1996) two dominant and apparently conflicting paradigms have shaped recent educational and organisational identity research; positivist, often referred to as scientific or normative, and interpretivist. With the development of the field of qualitative research two possible extensions to interpretivism have emerged; the critical and participatory (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) which are challenging to become

accepted as separate enquiry paradigms. In adhering to a particular paradigm an individual will have a perception of what constitutes valid research, based on how knowledge is perceived. Habermas (1972) attempts to categorise knowledge, and hence research knowledge, suggesting that it serves three fundamentally different types of socially constructed interests. He argues that there are three cognitive interests; (i) prediction and control, which he defines as technical and reflecting the scientific, positivist research paradigm, (ii) understanding and interpretation, defined as practical, requiring interpretivist methodologies seeking to understand, clarify and interpret, and finally (iii) emancipatory interests requiring a critical stance, adopting methodologies including ideology critique and action research.

Much early work in both education and the broad field of organisational theory is positivist in nature, developing what Bloomer and James (2003) define as 'what works' knowledge; reducing education to technical matters requiring resultant technical solutions, redefining activities and rules to have specific generalisable outcomes, reinforcing the positivistic notion of cause and effect. This holds true for research relating to the higher education institution and institutional management (Tight, 2003), with a focus on defining the most effective way to lead, manage, structure and organise. More contemporary educational research has reflected the paradigmatic shift towards the interpretive paradigm, seeking what Weber defines as 'verstehen'; understanding, moving towards the notion that the behaviour of individuals and organisations needs to be understood in the context of their 'life-world' (Crotty, 1998, p7). The recent critical theory movement has arguably developed from the challenge that the two dominant paradigms present 'an incomplete account of social behaviour by their neglect of the political and ideological contexts' (Cohen et al, 2007, p26), and that research should not be merely for understanding, but to fundamentally change situations. Golby & Parrott argue that 'researchers who explicitly espouse interpretivism are likely to be motivated by intellectual curiosity....than by any desire to change or improve current realities or practices' (1999, p52). Bloomer (1999) however challenges this stance, arguing that the notion that an interpretivist researcher seeks only to understand and not respond to those findings through changes in practice is not warranted and that a critical researcher is likely to have a deliberate political agenda or ideological

perspective distorting the ability of the researcher to act objectively and dispassionately.

My position as researcher is that I see a range of realities. I am seeking to understand and have my understandings challenged and to challenge the realities of others to bring about change and development, through the development of shared meanings. I do not however have a fixed specific political or ideological perspective and therefore do not consider my stance to be critical. My paradigmatic lens is in line with the interpretivist, with a constructivist epistemology, accepting the notion of social constructionism recognising the impact of culture and the development of realities through the various interactions with individuals and society.

As acknowledged by Cohen et al (2007) research design must not only reflect the researchers personal stand point, but be governed by fitness for purpose. In order to address this research question an interpretivist approach has been taken as the intention is to gain a situation specific understanding of the identity of the institution, not to analyse this in a measurable scientific way, if such an option were even available. The intention is to make meaning of the situation through understanding values, practices and the broader social context (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Merriam suggests that qualitative research within the interpretivist paradigm can help us to determine the history of a situation and an understanding of an organisation, allowing us to find fresh ways of viewing it in the present (1998). Theory is generated from the data collected through this process, to inform future practice.

Taking a social constructionist approach recognises the impact of the internal and external environment and how this shapes the way in which things are seen, interpreted and felt. Realities and meanings are established, but continually moderated over time following various interactions with both individuals and society. In this case there are strong societal interactions particularly with regards to Governmental policy and the place of other sector organisations. This approach sees historical meaning being challenged, interpreted and changed through interaction with the world. Applying a constructivist perspective to Marjon as an organisation it would be viewed as

'invented social reality' (Cohen et al, 2007 p10); it would not exist independently but would be a manifestation of the meanings attached to it by those interacting with it. This research seeks to understand the organisation, its history, the nature of its work, what it means to those leading it, particularly from the perspective of its identity, and how these meanings are moderated by those interacting with (in) it, enabling a better understanding regarding where it fits in the developing higher education landscape. As O'Brien et al state 'being able to have a broad perspective of the history and the current situation opens the way to making a valuable contribution to the theoretical knowledge in the field' (2004, p135).

Organisational identity can be viewed from many perspectives and as a concept it lacks consistency of interpretation as the field is still in relative infancy. Groups both internal to the organisation (staff and students) and those outside will negotiate the identity of the organisation, some having more power and influence on the way that their meaning is practically interpreted and impacts the day to day activities and priorities of the institution. This research takes a strategic emphasis, looking at the identity of the organisation from the view of senior management and focussing on the factors influencing identity as they pertain to the strategic development of the organisation. As asserted by Steiner et al strategies can be defined as interpretations and developments of guiding values, 'something that organisational actors view as central and sustainable, and as distinctive attributes of the organisation' (2012, p4), with links to institutional theory reviewing what Scott (1995) refers to as 'patterned interactions' between individuals, groups and organisations.

4.1 Methodology – case study

Having adopted a conceptualisation of the institution as a social, historical and cultural construct (Grundy, 1987) a methodology that enables the development of an understanding of the interaction, beliefs and cultures of the environment and the social actors influencing the organisation's identity is required. Given that the primary aim of the research was to gain a detailed understanding of identity construction, maintenance and reconstruction within one institution a methodology that enabled a thorough understanding of the overall operational

context including the historical, environmental, political and social was necessary. A case study enables what Tedlock describes as 'an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context' (2000, p45) and recognises my role as participant observer and insider (Sikes and Potts, 2008), which is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

4.1.1 Case study

The term 'case study' is not used in a standard and fixed way and outside of the research arena is used in many professional spheres, such as medicine and law. Some describe case study as a research strategy, or even a research paradigm (Gomm et al 2000) as opposed to a method or methodology, within which the use of many methods is possible (Yin 2011; Golby & Parrot 1999). Case study in a research context can be effectively described through its differences with other research approaches, whereby the research topic is a small number of specific cases, often just one, studied in depth using a variety of data collection techniques to gain an understanding of the case subject, for example an organisation, which may not result in generalisable outcomes. The methods selected should be dictated by the need of the researcher to gain the necessary understanding of the research question and will generally include multiple methods, including documentary review, participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Yin (2011) defines a case study as a form of enquiry that is empirical in nature investigating a contemporary phenomenon carried out in a specific context, for example an organisation. The notion of context is crucial as a case study enables the development of an understanding of how behaviours are influenced and indeed influence context through the use of rich data collected. Hartley argues that 'case studies have also been widely used in studies of organisational behaviour, especially in understanding organisational innovation and change, as shaped by both internal forces and the external environment,' (Hartley 2004, p211). Case study enables change to be tracked over time as it responds to contextual pressures, but also makes visible the impact of the various groups interacting with the change, both positively and negatively,

supporting longitudinal review and analysis of changes in the environment and the meanings constructed within organisations as it continues its interactions with the environment.

It is suggested that there are two specific types of case study work, one describing or explaining and one that develops or tests theories (Gomm et al, 2000). Dul & Hak argue that case studies can be effectively used for both theory testing and theory building and that this form of research has 'been one of the most powerful methods in operations management, particularly in building new theory' (2008, pxvii). Whilst the task of explanation, as contrasted with that of theory development, will frequently involve tracing part of the sequence of events which eventually resulted in what is to be explained, the reflexive nature of case study research methods allows the researcher to move through explanation and into theory building. Case study is able to 'adapt to and probe areas of planned but also emergent theory' (Hartley, 2004, p324) which is particularly relevant in this case where institutional identity in the higher education sector is an under developed research area.

There are challenges to case study as a methodology. Much has been written on the outputs of case study based research in terms of generalisability of findings and the development of usable theory from this type of work. Many argue that case study research cannot result in generalizable conclusions about the issue being studied and would not, if taking a positivist perspective to research, result in laws that specify order in the field of study (Stake,1978). This assumes that the starting point is that of attempting to ascertain a 'truth' for the purposes of prediction and control, whereas the purpose of interpretivist research is to seek to understand, and using case study that may well lead to an understanding of the particular as opposed to the general. Stake (1978), Guba and Lincoln (2005) and Schofield (1993) among others argue that generalisability as a concept should be more widely interpreted and introduce the notion of 'fittingness' and/or 'naturalistic generalisation', where the findings from a case study can be applied in circumstances that have a level of similarity or fit to the initial case study. Therefore there would be potential for comparability and translatability, but not necessarily the development of new laws or provable truths. Hartley argues that 'the detailed examination of

processes in a context can reveal processes which can be proposed as general or as peculiar to that organisation ... in other words the generalisation is about theoretical propositions not populations' (2004, p225). What is clear is that it is essential for the researcher to provide the necessary context to enable a reader to judge for themselves the validity and applicability through the rich detail that is provided through use of this method.

4.2 Methods

Historiographical research methods fit well with the case study, sharing many of the same sources of evidence including documentation, archival records and interviews, which are the methods used in this research. As O'Brien, Remenyi and Keaney argue where 'there is evidence of a previous event having a special importance on how current decisions are made or how current policy is established' research in this field lends itself to this technique (2004, p138). The award of TDAP could be seen as one of these previous events that has fundamental importance in relation to the more recent direction and identity development of the organisation.

The purpose of historical investigation through this case study extends the discovery of 'facts', and attempts to include understanding of what these facts mean and their inter-relationship (Sweeney, 2005). As argued by Cohen et al, 'the historical study of ... an educational institution can do much to help us understand our present educational system' (2000 p162). In this case the interface between Marjon and the wider higher education sector in terms of identity is explored. Using breadth of method enables a rich depth of understanding of how the drive for TDAP developed and within what context; internally, externally, socially and politically. It also brings visibility to how this change was negotiated/continues to be negotiated and impacts the meanings and beliefs of those making up the organisation as to its purpose and its identity. Taking a multi method approach overcomes 'method-boundness' (Cohen et al, 2007) which can result from single method research, and also adopts the principle of 'methodological triangulation' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) through validation of understandings as they are developed.

Historically based research is arguably a 'disciplined inquiry about past events' (Appleby et al, 1994 p155) but it should be noted that some argue it to be 'a personal construct, a manifestation of the historian's perspective as narrator' (Jenkins, 1991, p12) and debates continue to rage over 'history's relationship to scientific truth, objectivity, postmodernism and the politics of identity' (Appleby et al, 1994 p10). When undertaking historical research it is important to recognise that 'the past, in so far as it exists at all, exists in the present' (ibid, p253). Any qualitative research, and arguably quantitative research undertaken will involve bias of some type as it is distorted by our version of objectivity, impacting the choices we make in topic selection, data selection and interpretation; research in any context, using any method is not neutral. Whilst these difficulties need to be recognised throughout the research process they do not render the preferred approach invalid and as articulated by Newton (1965) in Sweeney (2005 p62) 'the search for...identity is bound up with the social and historical roots that lead to its creation', noting that this will be an interpretation of the past in the current context.

4.2.1 Documentary review and analysis

Through the examination of a number of case studies exploring organisational change and development (Stensaker,2004; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Burrows, 1999) it is evident that documentary review and analysis is an effective research method when seeking to understand how an organisation changes over time. This is particularly relevant when the change is being led by the senior management as is the case with this research. Much of the formal decision making and persuasion activities to support the proposed change are evident in corporate documents and publications. Institutional documents such as minutes, reports and email correspondence are the 'principle by-products of the interactions and communication of individuals and groups' (Forster,1995, p147) and as Prior argues, 'a University (any university) is in its documents' (2003, p60). Documentary analysis enables a 'researcher to learn the official stories' (Reissner, 2003) through which organisations represent themselves to both the internal and external world and to establish a context on this basis.

Using this as a primary method enables the official stories of the University and the promoted or desired changes in its character and distinctiveness; identity, to be tracked over the time period specified. McCulloch reinforces the use of documentary review for projects such as this, stating that 'at a public level too, our identities are defined by the documents that are kept about us ... (including) committee minutes' (2004, p1). Forster argues that 'Company documents are (con) textual paradigms which are an integral part of other systems and structures in organisations ... in the way that they define understandings of particular problems, prescribe appropriate behaviours and ways of getting things done in organisations ... they are important in their own right. They can be analysed as systems of understanding in the same way as other manifestations of behaviour' (1995, p149). Externally focussed documents such as the prospectuses and annual reports of Marjon are a rich source of 'image' and arguably identity as they enable the researcher to witness what is being formally presented, both internally and externally. The inclusion of less public documents in the research such as minutes and email enables the underpinning stories and understandings in the organisation to become visible.

It is important to understand that all methods have both strengths and shortcomings in providing data for the research. There is little written on documentary research methods, as recognised by Prior (2003) and Robinson (2010) when compared with other types of social research. Platt argues that 'documentary research is not a clear cut and well-recognised category, like survey research or participant observation, in sociological method' (1981, p31) and has fallen out of favour as a research method in educational research (McCulloch, 2004). Robinson (2010) argues that its contribution and potential is often overlooked in education research. It is widely relegated to a peripheral role supporting the provision of a background understanding to the research undertaken. The review of documents is not, in this context, a preparatory stage to data gathering, but 'provides the data for the research' (Cohen et al 2007).

It is essential to consider matters relating to 'authenticity, reliability, meaning and theorisation' (McCulloch, 2004, p42) when analysing documents. It is clear that content is important, but how documents are produced, by whom and in what context is equally important, particularly as 'documents can be recruited

into alliances of interests so as to develop and underpin particular visions of the world and the things and events within that world' (Prior, 2003, p67). This is particularly important in this case where some documents are being used to promote changes in organisational understandings.

As the research focuses on largely available official documents from the past ten years matters of authenticity are less relevant. The documents used are stored in secure form either on the institutional computer system or are available in hard copy form in management filing systems. It must be noted however that even where documents do exist and describe an event, it cannot be assumed that these records, including minutes, are an accurate and undistorted record of what occurred. As Forster suggests, 'documentation may be fragmentary and subjective' and not 'an authentic record of actual events and processes' (Forster, 1995). This is highlighted through the use of my journal in meetings to compare with official minutes and although generally these notes reflected the themes of the minutes of the meeting, there was clear evidence of distillation of discussion in the minutes, as they are not a verbatim record. There were a number of occasions where I recorded certain matters of importance to me that were not considered worthy of minute. This links with issues of selective deposit and selective survival, where only certain documents or the content of certain discussions are retained impacting their reliability. Reliability in this context relates to issues of truth or bias within the documents, and it is argued that retained records, including minutes presenting the 'official' view point are often subject to bias (McCulloch, 2004), or selective recording. For example in HE , where minutes are widely available, or are likely to be reviewed by external parties including auditors, they are often minimised in terms of detailed content such as 'a report on TDAP was presented' giving the researcher little to go on in terms of understanding the discussions that took place or establishing meaning. For the period from 2007 the impact of this on the research is minimised by my position as a participant in the meetings and the use of my journal to support my recollections and interpretations. By using a wide range of documents, including internally focussed meeting minutes and externally focussed publications such as prospectuses and annual reports the impact of a lack of reliability in this context is mitigated.

Although the documents used in this study are relatively recent and largely available and accessible it must be recognised that 'primary sources are not an open book, offering instant answers' (Tosh, 2002, p86). Whilst these are official stories they will not be the only stories and it cannot be 'assumed that documents are neutral artefacts which independently report social reality (positivism), or that analysis must be rooted in that nebulous concept, practical reasoning' (May, 1997, p188). Looking at documents from an interpretivist perspective is to view them as agents, as documents in use as opposed to inert matter (Prior, 2003). Taking this approach impacts the way that documents are analysed and interpreted, understanding that the content and context of a document is not static, but situated as documents are read and re-read over time. Their interpretation will be impacted by the position of the researcher in that they will be confronted with the researchers own histories, experiences, values and purposes (Bowe & Ball, 1992), and the context within which the documents are being reviewed.

McCulloch asserts that what is essential in qualitative research of this nature is 'trying to understand documents in relation to their milieu, or in other words to relate the text to its context' (2004, p6), which can provide links and evidence as to how meanings were and continue to be made in organisational settings and how ideals and practices change and develop. Forster argues that 'company documents do not exist in a vacuum. Whilst they may stand as sources of data in their own right, they can only ever be fully understood within broader organisational contexts and process and with reference to other forms of data' (1995, p153). This influenced my decision to undertake interviews with key informants, to ensure reliability of interpretation particularly in respect of the time periods when I was not a member of staff at the University and to review policy documents relating to the time period.

As this project is reviewing organisational identity in the context of institutional strategic development the focus of documents selected were publically available documents representing the official stories through which the institution represented itself internally and externally, giving a broad context for the review of internal documents and the interviews. The institutional documents were selected as they were the documents best placed to tell the

story of the policy and strategic direction of the institution and from a practical perspective they were limited to a manageable proportion.

Taking this approach it is essential to be mindful of whose story I am seeing. As McCulloch & Richardson state, it has been argued that

‘documentary sources portray a top down view of the history of education, and take for granted inbuilt power balances. They record in the main the dominant views and assumptions of policy makers and administrators.’ (2000, p115).

As this research is aimed at understanding the institution from the perspective of its identity and associated strategic positioning, arguably a key responsibility of senior management (Clark et al, 2010), the intent of the research is a view from the top, but it should still be noted that company documentation are ‘invariably political and subjective’ (Forster, 1995).

Externally facing documents selected include hard copy versions of the student prospectuses for each year from 1998 to 2012, published strategic plans for the periods 2001-2004, 2005 - 2012 and the annual reports for the period, where published. Senior committees and Governors papers and minutes for the same time period were selected to review the way the institution represented itself internally and to understand the introduction and management of the TDAP process and the factors affecting how the institution looked to redefine its identity. The internal documents reviewed and analysed during this research were formal minutes and associated papers from University College Board of Governors (previously Council of Management), the group responsible for the ‘educational character of the institution’ (University of St Mark & St John Foundation, 2012), Academic Board as the key committee responsible for academic matters and its sub-committees; Academic Development Committee and Research Committee, and the Senior Management Team as the key implementing body for policy and strategy matters. A full schedule of the minutes and other documents reviewed appears at appendix 2.

The application to the Privy Council for TDAP and internal and external correspondence relating to the process held in the main filing system and that held by the Deputy Principal, annotated with his comments were primary documents reviewed. Additional documents reviewed in respect of the TDAP process included staff presentations and briefings, the self-assessment and internal correspondence between senior managers responsible for the application and finalisation of the inspection process. Review of papers supporting staff presentations on TDAP and documents associated with the development and finalisation of strategic plans allow the key messages being put across to articulate the change to become apparent, clarifying the internal context and giving an understanding of documents as 'attempts at persuasion' (Tight, 2003, p164).

In order to place this change in its broader context external documentation, such as higher education policy statements produced by the relevant Department of Government for higher education relating to TDAP, policy matters and the structure of the sector during the period from 2004 were reviewed, particularly where they were referred to in internal documentation and were directly relevant to the actions taken. The main documents are largely primary source documents available from the University records and archive, the Higher Education Funding Council (England) and the various government departments responsible for higher education in the UK for the period.

Secondary sources from public archive systems such as web pages have been reviewed when considering comparator issues relating to other institutions when reflecting on matters of mimicry and the impact of the wider environment on the identity development of Marjon.

Some of the primary documents are not public documents, but given my role as a senior manager within the institution all of the documents from the University used are ordinarily readily available to me and therefore there are no separate issues of confidentiality in terms of access. Publishing from the documents has been formally agreed by the Chair of the Governing Body.

In this interpretivist research being able to ascertain meaning, as it was at the time, not as it has been reinterpreted over time is crucial to understanding the rationale for moving forward with TDAP and the impact of this on the way the University understands itself and the work that it engages in and how that has developed or remained the same over the time period in question. Developing an understanding of meaning links to what McCulloch refers to as theorisation, 'a framework through which to interpret the document' (2004, p46). Arguably this can be tackled from a range of perspectives, including the positivist, interpretivist and from a critical perspective. This research is grounded in the interpretivist, influencing the way documents are analysed in terms of their intention, their source and their meaning. This approach to the study of documents looks not only at the text itself, but also asks questions of the author, the context, the audience and the influence, which gives a practical framework for the research and supports the development of guidance for the interviews. Cohen et al (2000) state that during this type of qualitative research the researcher is looking to collect, classify, order, synthesise, evaluate and interpret, requiring sound judgement on behalf of the researcher. The documents in this case have been reviewed in the context of organisation theory and a developing analytical framework derived from Albert & Whetton's (1985) definitions of organisational identity and Delanty's (1998) trinity of missions for universities. This process is discussed in section 4.3 below and the analytical framework used is provided at appendix 5.

4.2.2 Interviews

Methodological pluralism can be achieved through combining documentary sources with non-documentary sources, such as interview, which can also be used to link the past to the present. As outlined by McCulloch and Richardson in case study research of this type one would do well to recognise 'the potential value of combining different kinds of source or method to help understanding of historical problems' (2000, p119). Whilst it could be argued that my position as participant observer would provide additional interpretive validity to the documentary analysis, I was not a participant for the whole period being researched. The key decision to change the position of the organisation in the higher education sector had been taken prior to my appointment and understanding the reasoning behind this decision was crucial to interpreting

later issues. The main purpose of the interviews was to validate the understandings and interpretations I had generated from the documentary analysis and provide further context. Through dialogue and narrative much can be learned about both the culture of the institution; 'the stock of stories constitutes the organisational culture' (Reissner, 2003 p3), and the beliefs and values of the participants.

Interviews enable participants 'to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view' (Cohen et al 2007, p267), which is crucial to the research topic, in that it supports the notion of ascertaining meaning, which can be difficult to generate from documents alone. Interview allows the context to become visible and a clearer understanding of intention, audience and other interests to be ascertained.

There are various forms of interview options available to the researcher and fitness for purpose is the key consideration for selecting the most appropriate form. The interviews used in this research are open-ended and less structured, in order to 'acquire unique, non-standardised, personalised information about how individuals view the world' (ibid, p270). The interviews have been constructed to 'probe a respondent's views, perspectives' (Wellington, 2000), giving them the opportunity to tell their story, in the context of and informed by the documentary review. Selection of the key informants is crucial, particularly when the numbers are small. The rationale for selecting only two interviewees in this case reflects the desire to obtain the official story underpinning the decision to take the institution through the gaining of TDAP. Interviewing those in official positions of power and authority when the decision was taken to seek TDAP is crucial and the key informants are the then Principal of the University College and the senior manager with responsibility for implementation; the Deputy Principal in post at the time. The use of in-depth individual interviews based on open-ended questions allows them to tell their story. In depth interviews also enable, through interactive dialogue, referencing and clarification of elements of the documentary evidence. This type of interview is a powerful and flexible tool for data collection, allowing the interviewer to encourage the respondent to consider their responses more fully, to seek

further explanation and understanding that would not be available from methods such as questionnaire.

Outcomes from interviews are often challenged as regards validity and reliability. These challenges relate to the position of the researcher, interview design and implementation, and the position of the informant and are considered below.

Using interviews as a method of triangulation in respect of the primary method of documentary research it is crucial to recognise the power relationships within an institutional context. The interviews did not take place until after both informants had left the organisation. My relationship with them during the time we were all employed was that David Baker was my line manager and Geoff Stoakes was a valued colleague on the Executive Group, made up of the three of us. Issues of power were not apparent in the interview process, largely as a result of the changed professional relationship between the key informants and me.

The design of the interview and the areas of questioning were driven by the documentary analysis, however the interviews were fluid allowing for clarification of points and follow up of statements made. Both informants were fully aware of my research and had consented to be interviewed at a very early stage. The interviews were undertaken in the summer of 2012, one day apart, at the informant's homes. With agreement they were recorded and these recordings transcribed, with the transcription being confirmed by the informant.

One area of concern was the lapse in time since application for TDAP (2005) and the interviews (2012). The researcher must be mindful of reinterpretation of prior events through the interviews. This has been mitigated thorough documentary review prior to the interviews and interview techniques that enable interaction and challenge as necessary.

Extracts from the interviews are shown at appendix 3.

The process of collection of the data and subsequent analysis is considered in section 4.3.

4.2.3 Participant observation and the use of a journal

As a member of the institution; an insider, observation and participation is a method that is both useful and unavoidable in the research process and the implications of this need to be recognised. Whilst not a staff member, nor even in the higher education sector until 2007, part way through this study period, the impact of being immersed in the institution as a senior manager influencing strategic direction from 2007 cannot be ignored. Entering the institution and the sector at the time of the gaining of TDAP resulted in a personal position of outsider. I did not understand how the institution interpreted the nature of its work, nor its place in the sector and observed what I perceived as an identity crisis from this position. However through my professional role and through conducting the research over the past six years from within the institution I became embedded in the issues, arguably moving me to an 'insider' and a participant observer with a high level of formal influence and authority.

My lack of a history in the sector from a professional perspective has made this distancing easier, as I had no previously generated understanding as to what it meant to be a university. I recognise that colleagues within the organisation would not necessarily consider me an outsider and my position in terms of having responsibility for defining and delivering change within the organisation may have impacted behaviours of those being observed through my day to day interactions with them.

As identified by Sikes and Potts insider researchers are often criticised for 'failure to maintain a distance in order to be able to take a clear and an unbiased non-partisan approach' (2008, p7). As this research required me to not only reflect critically on my own professional behaviour and that of my senior colleagues I remained mindful throughout the process of the impact of this, particularly at the stages of data collection and analysis and in concluding, cross referencing to available evidence to avoid more bias than would be usual in any piece of interpretive research.

Being a member of the institution where the research has been carried out, observational data was available to me, allowing me to 'enter and understand the situation that is being described' (Patton, 1990, p202). As a member of the institution and many of the identified committees, including the senior management team and academic board and 'in attendance' at all of the governing body meetings I would consider myself a 'complete-member-researcher' (Alder & Alder, 1987 cited in Alder & Alder 1994). This allowed access to the main committee meetings, strategy meetings, documentary evidence and other less formal discussions.

Throughout the period I maintained a journal or field diary. The journal is a tool that I use in every day professional practise to record my meetings with staff, actions to undertake, observations at meetings and issues requiring further thought or consideration. The content of the journal fits with what Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate might be included in a research journal, including a record of a daily schedule, a reflective or speculative diary and notes and logs. The journal specifies the date, the people present or the meeting attended and facts, actions or thoughts. The journal was not a tool specific to this research and there was no attempt or desire to use this as a formal recording tool as might be the case where naturalistic observational research is a primary tool. A weakness of my use of the journal in this way is that not everything is recorded in a systematic and thorough way. The data recorded in it are used to support the analysis of the documents and to support a more holistic view of the situations being experienced, providing prompts for me to consider issues and to give depth or thick descriptions to that being observed (Cohen et al, 2000).

Whilst participant 'observation methods are powerful tools for gaining insight into situations' (Cohen et al 2007, p315) neutrality is impossible and it should be noted that you cannot record what you hear, observe or participate in 'without any process of selection, no matter how implicit the selection might be' (Casey, 1992, p186). Done well 'participant observation involves immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so that you can intellectualise what you have seen and heard and put it into perspective and write about it convincingly' (Bernard, 2011). This assumes that the primary purpose for immersion is the research, which was not the case in this research,

as the primary purpose was to engage in my employment. However, this link with ethnography remains valid and enables the researcher to benefit from 'an intuitive understanding of what's going on and allows you to speak with confidence about the meaning of the data' (ibid, p266) that comes with participant observation.

4.3 Analysis of data

In order to ensure credibility and validity through the data selection, review and analysis I have taken a number of measures. Firstly in terms of selection I sought to use a wide data set to secure descriptive validity and auditability (Maxwell, 1992). Being immersed in the organisation for the post-TDAP period enabled an intuitive understanding and confidence about meanings generated, securing interpretive validity (Bernard, 2011) and to support meanings and understandings generated from the documentary analysis I used semi-structured interviews as a form of triangulation.

The initial phase of the research was familiarisation with the corporate documents achieved by reading through the committee minutes, and papers where relevant. This was undertaken in the first instance without any form of coding or categorisation. In line with the interpretivist approach to this research, the initial process of review was a reflexive activity, informing the direction of the research process including the literature review which was revised after the initial review of the documents. This familiarisation work resulted in the identification of a framework for the documentary review, shaped around Albert & Whetton's (1985) organisational identity criteria of central character, distinctiveness and temporal continuity, linked with the 'trinity of missions' of a university (Delanty, 1998), as Marjon had a publically stated intention to get 'university' in its title and then to become a university. This initial process informed the decision to structure the case study in defined time periods and to expand the data to include key external documents to provide context to the activities recorded in the internal documents.

As the second stage of analysis was undertaken the documents were reviewed diachronically by committee using the identified analytical framework, with

themes in the data being identified and grouped (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was done electronically where documents were available in this form (manually where they were paper copies) using a colour coding method grouping phrases or chunks of data in terms of character, distinctiveness and enduring features and also noting references to curriculum, research and response to policy in line with 'trinity of missions' (Delanty, 1998), as evidenced in appendix 4. After reviewing the first three years in this way I became concerned that there was no real opportunity to review consistency of issues and message across the various committees and other publications in a particular time frame. I therefore moved to a synchronic approach, reviewing all chosen documentation in blocks of a year, capturing themes with a view to analysing change and continuities over the extended period. Constant comparison techniques were used through this review period; comparing minutes of different committees, with information published by the institution externally during the same time period, with policy documents relevant and often referred to in the minutes (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). This enabled a level of immersion in a particular timeframe that was not possible with the diachronic approach. This process also made visible themes that were outside of the analytical framework, factors impacting the identity of the institution that needed further explanation or consideration. This enabled what Lincoln & Guba (1985) refer to as a process of identifying discrepant cases. These were highlighted alongside the factors inside the analytical framework. The analytical framework is detailed in appendix 5.

Using a journal ordered by year the data were synthesised by key words, descriptive phrases, themes and style of use of language, which were recorded in each of the sections allowing the prevalence and importance of issues to be recorded (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). More factual information was also noted by year to provide context, including student numbers, curriculum offer, and financial position and sector wide policy statements. An example can be seen at appendix 5.

What became clear through this review was the importance of the strategic planning processes and associated paperwork. As these consultations travel through their original form, through consultation at the various committees the importance of the Academic Board as the main internal committee in influencing

direction and understandings held within the organisation are apparent. It also informed the questions for the interviews and further honed the literature review. The interviews were an important mechanism for triangulation and clarification of understandings developed from the initial data analysis related to the earlier period of the study, before my arrival at the University. The interviews were carried out with the informants at a place of their choice, their homes, and both followed a similar structure, although they were only semi-structured in nature as their individual stories were important to hear. Neither of the informants is currently employed by the University, but were employed at the time of the TDAP application and until 2009 (David Baker) and 2011 (Geoff Stoakes). The interviews were recorded and transcribed, after which they were analysed using the same framework as for the documents, allowing categorisation of themes to be considered alongside those obtained from the initial documentary review (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The review of the documentation and the interview transcriptions led me to reconsider elements of my literature review, particularly with regard to image, maintenance and transformation of identity and the issue of mimicry, which in turn led to a reconsideration of the documents, with a view to considering them from alternative perspectives outside of the original analytical framework. A second review of all documents and the interview transcripts was undertaken and new themes added to the original journal information.

Whilst my analysis did not adhere rigidly to one particular approach it was informed by a range of principles to ensure that the analysis was conducted in a rigorous manner in terms of collecting, collating, transforming and interpreting the data.

During the analysis phase I experienced some challenge to the chosen methodology through being a participant observer for part of the research period. This gave a different perspective on minutes and papers from having lived not only through the meetings, but being immersed in the organisation on a daily basis, observing, engaging in and often developing the organisational narrative. I was initially more accepting of the minutes and papers from the time period before my engagement, with the potential risk that I was applying my

current understanding of the context to them. I was more able to place the later documents in a deeper, well-understood context. To counter the risk identified the intended interviews were delayed in order that I could reframe the questions to establish the broader context I felt was missing. As outlined by Perakyla, 'by using interviews, the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible' (2008, p351). This enabled the documents to be reviewed again with a greater level of contextual understanding.

The process of interpretation, which Wolcott suggests is 'freewheeling, unbounded, idealistic, generative and impassioned (1994, p36), is displayed through the case study in chapter 5, enabling the identity of the University to become evident over time and the attempts at development and change to be seen in the context of internal and external understandings.

4.4 Ethical Issues

There are ethical issues related specifically to my position as a complete-member-researcher, and with the particular methods used to undertake the research, including matters of access to documentation and confidentiality in respect of the organisation and individuals. Ethical concerns in educational research undertaken as 'insider research' in the workplace can be particularly complex and challenging. As outlined by Smyth and Holian, 'what is normal work and what is research, anonymity and confidentiality may not always be quite clear cut' (2008, p44).

The initial point of reference for my consideration of these issues was the British Educational research Association (BERA) Guidelines for Ethical Educational Research (2004, p5) which state that 'all educational research should be undertaken within an ethic of respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of research and academic freedom'. As outlined by Wellington (2000), ethical considerations span the life of the research project and should be considered from design, through use of methods, analysis of data, presentation and on to the conclusions and findings of the research.

Firstly considering my position, I have undertaken this research as a member of the senior management team of the institution, conducting this research arguably from an insider's perspective and from a position of power. I have been open about this from the start of the thesis, enabling any reader to be cognisant of my position when considering in particular the analysis and findings.

As stated earlier I became a member of staff part way through the time period being researched, from a different educational sector and with little understanding of the organisation or the higher education sector. I felt that I was an 'outsider', working *in* the place but not being *of* the place, which enabled me to maintain some distance from matters being considered. Although much of my research is based on documentary analysis I have used my immersion in the organisation and my journal notes to inform my thinking and my interpretation of the data. In line with the ethical guidance I was open with colleagues about my research and when using specific observations that may have been recorded in my journal in the final document they were discussed with colleagues. No items were amended or withheld.

My position, as that of any researcher, is not neutral and as outlined by Golby & Parrot (1999) it is important not to use the research in the workplace as a vehicle for promoting a particular view or standpoint. The research has been used as a vehicle for *understanding* the factors affecting organisational identity and reviewing the way in which the organisation has developed and changed elements of its identity. I have not had a particular perspective as to what the organisation should be in the context of its identity to promote or propose, but have been using the research to support how the future identity of the institution can be negotiated and understood internally to improve the value placed on the organisation through its members.

McCulloch (1994, p48) argues that 'as a result of the general lack of recognition of documentary research as a social process' the ethical dimension of such research is often ignored. Although there is no direct interaction with respondents in the review and analysis of documents there are a number of legal and ethical issues requiring consideration throughout the process,

including access to and reporting of confidential information and whether institutions and individuals should be named in the resultant report. As a senior manager within the organisation access to the documents used in this research was within the scope of my role, however to use them in the context of the research required official permission from the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Principal in post. Matters of confidentiality of information were explored and permission to access the documents and to publish without anonymity with regards to the organisation was granted. New assurances have been gained as the project progressed and senior managers and the Chair of Governors changed.

Reviewing documents, some of which have been authored by those known to me, has meant remaining aware of the possibility of influence in respect the choices being made in the selection of material, the analysis of that material and the interpretations being made. I have tried, through every stage of the research process to reflect critically on my personal perspective and maintain as much neutrality as possible.

I was mindful of my findings being interpreted as critical of the organisation and its management and leadership, possibly interpreted as disloyal by those in senior positions at the time (including myself) and to mitigate this the findings were presented to those affected explicitly. This did not change the findings, but gave an opportunity for clarification or reconsideration of interpretation.

Use of interviews in research brings a range of ethical issues to the fore including informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of the interviews (Cohen et al, 2000). The two key informants were provided with a clear understanding as to the purpose of the research, how it would be carried out and how their contributions would be used. It was agreed that they would be named, as there was an understanding that they would be identifiable by those aware of the University whether or not they were named. Openness, honesty and trust are essential to the active and genuine involvement of participants.

The interviewees are ex-senior managers of the institution and there are no power related issues in respect of my relationship with them. In order to ensure

that my interpretations of the interviews were reflective of the understandings of those interviewed both the transcripts and key assumptions generated were returned to the interviewees prior to the finalisation of the thesis, and their contribution to the published document agreed. In terms of consequences of the interviews the fact that they were no longer employed meant that there were no issues directly related to their, or my, position within the University, but we did discuss possible implications in respect of their wider standing in the sector.

Chapter Five: The case study

A college of higher education, a university college and now a university – are we still us?

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the University to make visible and understand the organisational responses to factors affecting the changes and continuities in its identity over the time period 1998 to 2013. The analysis has been carried out in respect of specific time periods; 1998-2003, 2003-2007, 2007-2013, to capture the changes in both the internal and external environments. In line with the literature review on organisational identity Albert & Whetten's (1985) framework has been used as an initial construct through which to consider the identity of the organisation, ascertaining that which is distinctive, part of the central character of the University and that which is enduring. This is considered in the context of the pillars of identity for a university as defined by Delanty (1998), the response to research, teaching and policy. This is more relevant in the later time periods as Marjon pursues avenues to achieve university status, but it does provide an understanding of the starting place in respect of these issues when applied to the initial time period.

As articulated by Albert & Whetten (1985) organisations rarely ask themselves about their identity except at times of change. Bartunek & Moch (1987) identify three levels of change intensity ranging from incremental or first order change, through second order change requiring modification of shared understandings and third order or 'traumatic' change where there needs to be a replacement of understandings of the way we are. Clark et al suggest that the 'most profound of all such changes occurs when there is a significant transformation required in what is arguably the most elemental of all schemas, organisational identity itself' (2010, p397).

The College gaining taught degree awarding powers (TDAP), academic independence from the University of Exeter and the transfer of the institution to a new position in the higher education order could arguably be a second order change requiring some modification of shared understandings by stakeholders,

including staff and students, but could equally be considered a third order change, challenging the very core of who the institution is, not just what it is. I would argue that regardless of intent, the movement to a higher level classification was a change in the collective status of the organisation requiring a reconsideration of the identity question (Albert & Whetton, 1985; MacDonald, 2013).

This research is focussed on the strategic development and direction of the University and the influence the changes in its title have had on the development of its identity, recognising that 'the strategic level of a university's organisational identity emphasises the future direction of university reform' (Steiner et al, 2012, p4)

5.1.1 Marjon

To better understand the identity issues as they impact the University, an understanding of its history and development prior to TDAP is important. Reference back to the broader context of the sector and the development of the Colleges of Higher Education and University Colleges presented in the earlier chapters of this work supports this understanding. In the period to 1998 the organisation is a College of Higher Education, applies for TDAP in 2005 which are awarded in 2007 resulting in a change in position and title to University College Plymouth St Mark & St John and following legislative changes in membership criteria 2012 it becomes the University of St Mark & St John in 2013.

5.2 The pre-TDAP period 1998 – 2003; the calm before the storm

During this time period Marjon was a college of higher education, focussing wholly on higher education provision, with its degrees accredited by the University of Exeter.

The college had 2,435 full time students in 1998/1999, 89% on undergraduate programmes, with the balance of full time students largely undertaking teacher training Post Graduate Certificate in Education programmes (280). There were

over 500 part time post graduate students recorded, all on masters level Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes.¹ The college was not able to offer research degrees in its own right, but through joint supervision arrangements with the accreditation partner offered MPhil and PhD's in English and/or American Literature, Theology and Philosophy,² where the college had pockets of well qualified, research active staff.³

The range of the curriculum offer was focussed on Bachelor of Education programmes leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in both primary and secondary subjects and a complex offering of associated combined honours programmes (BA) in the same subject fields as the core education curriculum (e.g. Theology with history, Sport and Recreation with community studies, History with Education Studies).⁴ Turnover for the 1998 academic year was £14.5 million, putting the institution in the lower decile of all publically funded institutions. Turnover levels at the University of Exeter were £82 million in the same year.⁵

Full time undergraduate student numbers remain relatively constant over the period to 2002, with only 2% growth to 2,205 in 2001/02 and full time post graduate student numbers fell slightly to 270.⁶ Turnover was also maintained at similar levels (£14.7 million in 2002), with a recorded loss in the period of £305k.⁷ The College was heavily reliant on public funding during this period, with over 96% of income coming from Government sources, or directly connected to the student in terms of catering and accommodation, leaving the institution vulnerable to changes in policy.⁸

¹ HESA Institutional Record - All students by institution, mode and level, 1998

² Postgraduate prospectus 2001/02

³ HESA RAE - Results by institution 2001

⁴ College of St Mark & St John Undergraduate prospectus 2000

⁵ HESA Finance Tables - Income from all sources 1998

⁶ HESA Institutional Record - All students by institution, mode and level 2002

⁷ College of St Mark & St John Foundation Financial Statements 2002

⁸ *ibid*

The curriculum offer also remained constant, with the introduction of two new programmes; Drama Studies with a range of minor routes and Education Studies as a major, with a range of minor routes.⁹ The limited curriculum range was also reflected in the Research Assessment Exercise 2001¹⁰ where the college returned 12.5 staff under three units of assessment, 1.5 FTE in English language and literature, 5 in Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies and 6 in Education. Research outputs were rated¹¹ 3a (National excellence in at least two thirds of the outputs), 3a and 2 (National level in at least half of the outputs) respectively.

5.2.1 Identity Perspective

Whilst the above situates the College in the higher education landscape more detailed analysis is required to understand its identity.

Gioia, Schultz & Corley argue that top management of an organisation is 'concerned with projecting an image of the organisation that is based (ideally) on identity' (2000, p66). The main documents used to project image in this regard for a university (college of higher education) would include the mission statement, the strategic plan for the period, annual reports and prospectuses for potential students. Steiner et al argue that these public statements, particularly strategies and longer term plans 'offer insight into the pursuit of central identity characteristics' (2012, p4).

In 2001 the College had a publically stated mission¹² to:

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|--|
| Help all its students to reach their full potential by providing intellectually challenging courses within a friendly active community |
|--|

Themes that permeated the published strategic plan 2001-04,¹³ developed for both internal and external audiences included:

⁹ College of St Mark & St John Undergraduate prospectus, 2002

¹⁰ HEFCE RAE - Results by institution, 2001

¹¹ HEFCE RAE circular 2/99 1999

¹² College of St Mark & St John Strategic Plan 2001-2004 Summary, p5, 2001

- the College contributing to the improvement of the human condition
- widening access to higher education through a wide ranging concern with social inclusion
- affirmation of the Christian origin
- achieving excellence in learning and teaching
- the need to meet Government policy initiatives
- open, friendly, active community
- excellence in teaching, scholarship and research

The plan clearly states that ‘in assessing the options for the future, three long standing objectives are pivotal: preserving the ethos and distinctiveness of the institution as a Church of England College of Higher Education; the achievement of greater flexibility with regard to independent action; and the enhancement of the status and reputation of the College and its attractiveness to students’.¹⁴ The plan also highlights the development of the portfolio in areas that are ‘vocationally sensitive and enable students to make a valuable social contribution’.¹⁵ The achievement of TDAP appears as an objective in this plan in the context of capacity for independent action, but no application is made during the period.

In terms of other externally facing literature during this period there is a consistency with regards to the themes above, with the prospectuses clearly focussed on a sense of community, a Christian underpinning, a sense of heritage with claims such as ‘providing higher education since 1840’,¹⁶ excellence in teaching and a focus on the student.

The College was committed to inclusion and social justice as detailed in the undergraduate prospectuses during the period:

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ College of St Mark & St John Strategic Plan 2001-2004 Summary, p5, 2001

¹⁵ Ibid p6

¹⁶ College of St Mark & St John Undergraduate Prospectus, 2001

The University College (sic) of St Mark and St John seeks to be an open educational community, serving with enterprise, the cause of human development and justice.¹⁷

Returning to study is encouraged:

The College is committed to life-long learning. Many of our students are aged 21 or over. 'Mature' students come from a wide range of situations: seeking a change in direction from raising a family, unemployment or taking time out after secondary education.¹⁸

Using analysis of internal committee papers and documents it is possible to observe if the 'expressed identity' (Hatch & Schultz, 2002) in the external literature was a lived identity. The type of matters discussed and the tone and manner of the discussions are important indicators of central character and espoused distinctiveness relating to the institution operating as an open, friendly, community environment.

The data provide evidence of consistency of key messages across all of the senior meetings (Academic Board, Management Team and Council of Management), with a flow of information between the committees and similarity of presented reports. Worthy of note is the structure and content of Academic Board meetings during this period, where membership includes most of the Senior Management Team and report content are very similar. The report from the Principal highlights both external matters (policy news) and internal matters, including the financial position of the institution and student achievements, followed by a focus on academic matters, other general matters, including human resources and admissions issues. Reports from the standing committees are scant, particularly Research Committee,¹⁹ reflecting the lack of emphasis on and level of importance of research within the institution.

¹⁷ College of St Mark & St John Undergraduate prospectus, p3, 1999

¹⁸ College of St Mark & St John Prospectus, p8, 2000

¹⁹ Academic Board minutes AB303, September 1998 to AB333, July 2002

The student focus is clearly evident in all committee papers in the period, in a variety of forms. Student success, particularly sporting success, is specifically referred to regularly at Academic Board meetings. Examples include:

The College has had another successful year at the British Universities Sports Association (BUSA) competitions: the Ladies' Basketball Team won the BUSA championship at Nottingham in early March, beating Loughborough University in an exciting final; Dan Joel won a gold medal in the men's individual surfing event, Laura Young won a gold medal at the Judo Championships and Andy Hawkins won the heavyweight title at the Boxing Championships;²⁰

Notable student achievements in sport had included the selection of Ross Winney for the Barbarians in Rugby Union Football and the College's men's basketball team winning the Team of the Year trophy in the Plymouth Evening Herald's Sports Personality of the Year Awards.²¹

The broader student experience is regularly considered across all committees, in terms of policies, procedures and student feedback as is the development of quality assurance systems and processes.²²

The student number position is regularly reviewed through each of the senior committees, noting the small size of the student population and the associated institutional vulnerability. Reports request interventions as a response to poor recruitment predictions, but there is no evidence of taking a strategic response to address the long term position,²³ despite clarity by the management team and the wider community that the student population had not increased over this period.²⁴ Data provided are vague and where the viability of provision is put under scrutiny there appears to be little if any follow up action evident through these committees.²⁵ The associated financial position is reported at all

²⁰ Academic Board Minutes March, 2000

²¹ Academic Board Minutes December, 2002

²² Academic Board minutes 308, 1998 and 309, 1999

²³ Academic Board Minutes 301/3v, November 1997

²⁴ Academic Board Minutes 330/4, December 2001

²⁵ Academic Board Report 'A Report on Admissions' 321/11, May 2000

meetings, which shows the institution living on the break-even line, with very much a responsive, retrospective approach to financial sustainability.²⁶ Reviewing the references to financial information provided to Management Team, Governors and the Academic Board during this time frame there is evidence that supporting teaching and the students is the primary focus, even when this is not cost effective, for example where group sizes are small, or where international projects are not in the best interest of the institution from a financial perspective.²⁷ There is discussion about responding to the problems this causes but no evidence of action taken. Curriculum change and development is referenced but over this period is minimal as is the change in the portfolio or student recruitment²⁸. Like the acceptance of financial vulnerability there appears a sense of practicality as to what can be achieved from the present position of the institution as opposed to an aspiration to expand.

The importance of the Christian origins and operating within a Christian context or ethos are clearly outlined in the mission and the strategic plan and this appears to be apparent through specific acts, such as prayers before Governors meetings and Management Team and the active engagement of the Chaplain at all senior meetings, either as full member (Academic Board), or in attendance (Council of Management (Governors)). There is little evidence in the internal documentation to ascertain how this is more widely interpreted across the institution. It is not apparent through discussions at the committees and is more obvious by the absence of any specific agenda items relating to it over the period reviewed besides one which appears in 1999 at the Academic Board:

ethos and distinctiveness of the College: with the agreement of the Council of Management, the Principal will initiate wide-ranging discussions across the College on the ethos and distinctiveness of the College; the paper presented by

²⁶ Management Team minutes 1998 to 2002, Academic Board Minutes 1998 to 2002, Council of Management Minutes 1998 to 2002

²⁷ Academic Board Minutes 318, 1999

²⁸ HESA Institutional Record Student 1998 to 2002

the Principal at the recent conference of the Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion in Toronto will be used to inform the discussions.²⁹

There is no evidence that these wide ranging discussions took place as the matter as outlined above was never reconsidered by the Academic Board, Management Team or the Board of Governors.

An interpretation of the Christian ethos could arguably be the explicit commitment to widening participation, although many secular institutions were engaged in this work. Working with international partners particularly in support of developmental aid projects was a stated objective,³⁰ which was reflected in work carried out overseas in Malaysia and Mexico during the period.

During this period the College was very much grounded in scholarly activity, with staff maintaining an up to date knowledge of the developments in their subject areas, as opposed to research³¹ defined as the creation of new knowledge, with recognition that there was a limited number of research active staff in the institution clustered in Theology and Philosophy. A target in the period was to increase the numbers of teaching staff with doctorates.³² No connection was made in the strategic plan for the period between research and status and reputation, which is instead connected to ethos, distinctiveness and capacity for independent action.³³ Publications such as the undergraduate prospectus do not mention research, or research active staff, but do mention being 'highly rated for teaching quality'.³⁴

To support scholarly activity and research all academic staff are afforded 25 days per annum throughout the period, but there is no evidence of expectations of outputs, although in 1998 the Academic Board endorsed the use of an

²⁹ Academic Board 316/4, October, 1999

³⁰ College of St Mark & St John Strategic Plan Summary 2001-2004, p11, 2001

³¹ HEFCE RAE Results by Institution, 2001

³² College of St Mark & St John Strategic Plan Summary 2001-2004, p11, 2001

³³ *ibid*, p12

³⁴ College of St Mark & St John Undergraduate Prospectus, 2001

individual research report form for all staff.³⁵ This method for recording output was not successful as it was later highlighted that failure to complete by staff could not really be addressed unless dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which was not a preferred route of action.³⁶ Throughout the period 1998 to 2002 there is little if any reference to research matters at Academic Board, where minutes from the committee are generally noted with no comment.³⁷ No reports are presented to the Governing Body on research, except a report on the RAE 2001 in the context of the funding reductions likely. In discussing the outcome of the RAE in July 2001 there is a clear assumption by the committee that research is an activity to be subsidised by HEFCE or by the College. Noting that as a result of the RAE 2001 funding for the College would be reduced the Chair of the Research Committee questioned 'whether it would be possible for the College to maintain its research activities on the basis of this level of funding, particularly in view of the College's inability to subsidise research from its own resources'.³⁸

5.2.2 External Influence

As identity is considered as socially constructed and is developed through an organisation 'defining themselves in terms of what they share in common with certain other organisations and how they are different from all other organisations' (Whetton & Mackey, 2002) what was apparent through the review of these internal documents was a lack of any form of comparison, benchmarking or even general reference to other organisations, whether similar or not. A lack of externally facing engagement was apparent, with the focus of items for report and discussion being largely internal matters of the moment. The wider sector issues were reported during this period, but very much as statements of fact, as opposed to issues for the college to consider and address in term of what these things might mean for future position and development.

³⁵ Academic Board minute 306, April, 1998

³⁶ Report to Council of Management, July 2002

³⁷ Academic Board Minutes, 301 to 333, 1997 to 2002

³⁸ Academic Board Minute 333/8, July 2002

Policy issues are noted at every meeting, but there is little evidence of a strategic interface with policy matters, more of a tone of policy matters being done unto the institution. Where development occurs it appears to be reactive, as a response to outside influencers, including the University of Exeter as accreditation partner and HEFCE.

HEFCE is moving towards requiring institutions to generate full written strategic plans.³⁹

It is possible that the College will be asked to increase its total number of students by as many as 500.⁴⁰

Government policy through this period was clearly focused on widening participation, social inclusion and the vocationalisation of the HE curriculum⁴¹ and the institution was policy informed in this period with academic board papers structured such that National Developments were the first matters noted at all meetings.⁴² The College was seeking to be more responsive to national policy with specific mention of the need 'match the British Government's policy objectives for education and social inclusion' in the 2001-2004 strategic planning document.⁴³

Within the institution there was little active debate regarding the mission during the development of the 2001-2004 strategic plan, with a copy being presented initially to the Academic Board at its May meeting in 2001,⁴⁴ after the plan had been presented to the Governors for their input and review. No changes are made to the mission statement and limited changes to the content of the plan following recorded discussions with the faculties and further review at Academic

³⁹ Academic Board Minutes, 314/5 c (ii), July 1999

⁴⁰ Academic Board Minutes, 330/4, December 2001

⁴¹ Department for Education and Skills 'Evaluation of Foundation Degrees', 2004

⁴² Academic Board Agendas 1998 to 2002, Management Meetings 1998 to 2002, Governors Meetings 1998 to 2002

⁴³ College of St Mark & St John Strategic Plan Summary 2001-2004, 2001

⁴⁴ Strategic Plan 2001-2004, 2001

Board in July 2001.⁴⁵ This could be interpreted as there being a strong mutual understanding across the staff and governors of the identity and purpose of the College. One change that was accepted was a separate statement about the development of non-vocational subject opportunities and the possibilities of single honours degrees in these areas post the achievement of TDAP.⁴⁶ This was the first evidence of a developing debate about the vocational nature of the institution, which becomes more apparent over later years.

The strong push for the acquisition of TDAP by the staff and the Governors is noted in 1998, as reflected in the published statements. The initial target for an application was December 1998, but this was delayed as the procedures for application are reviewed by Government. A working group was set up in July 2000⁴⁷ but no further reports are received as to progress until March 2001⁴⁸ when the Academic Registrar is charged with completion of the critical self-analysis document; the primary report required by the Privy Council for any application. This matter was discussed again in March 2002, where the Academic Registrar suggests that it would take 3-6 months to reassess strategic options and a further 3-6 months to complete a submission.⁴⁹ No progress was made in four years on something highlighted through the strategic plan⁵⁰ as a priority for the future position of the institution.

The previous Deputy Principal, Geoff Stoakes, who was in post throughout this period recalled this as, *'he (the Principal at the time) cut the whole thing dead when I was drafting the CSA by saying we are not ready, we are not going for it. Undoubtedly we weren't ready, but York St John weren't ready either, but they started, improved some things and got it two or three years before us'*.⁵¹ He felt that this resulted in the College missing out on the student number boom during

⁴⁵ Academic Board minute 328, July 2001

⁴⁶ College of St Mark & St John Strategic Plan Summary 2001-2004, 2001

⁴⁷ Academic Board minute 332/7, July 2002

⁴⁸ Academic Board minute 326/7, March 2001

⁴⁹ Academic Board Minutes 331/4 (ii), March 2002

⁵⁰ College of St Mark & St John Strategic Plan Summary, 2001

⁵¹ Interview with G Stoakes, August 2012

the early 2000s⁵² as the College remained tied to the University of Exeter with whom the accreditation agreement did not cover foundation degrees.⁵³ This opportunity could have led to a significant shift in the vocational focus of the institution and an increase in size.

TDAP and resultant title change was associated primarily with institutional sustainability and not a change in the purpose or ethos of the organisation. There was no reference to or apparent understanding of the identity implications of the organisation moving to a new level of classification which would be externally defined leading to internal challenges to the existing identity.

The relationship with the University of Exeter was perceived as positive in other contexts, particularly the value of their status and reputation nationally and internationally.⁵⁴ They were clearly seen as the 'senior partner' in the relationship with the institution not just in respect of the contractual relationship, where they clearly were the senior partner with control over accreditation arrangements, but in the sense of academic comparability with a wider curriculum range and a developing research profile.

5.2.3 Summary 1998-2003

Organisational identity during the period between 1998 and 2002/3 appears stable, with a high level of clarity in respect of mission identity apparent both internally and externally, except possibly in the context of the Christian ethos, which was to be further explored.

In terms of distinctiveness the College was small, community focussed, with a high level of commitment to the student experience and a local or at best regional lower tariff recruitment market. Reviewing its product offering as statement of character this was a limited portfolio, in a narrow academic range focussed on teacher training and associated undergraduate level provision.

⁵² HEFCE Circulars 2000/38, 2002/11

⁵³ University of Exeter 'Accreditation Agreement between the University of Exeter and the College of St Mark & St John', 1991

⁵⁴ College of St Mark & St John Undergraduate Prospectus, 2000

Research was not a dominant feature of character. In terms of enduring features the College displayed a firm commitment to widen participation and espoused a Christian ethos.

During this period there is little evidence of the College attempting to influence its environment, largely avoiding interaction with the wider HE community at senior management level possibly as it operates as an independent 'subsidiary' (practically, not legally) of the University of Exeter. Whilst the College had spent significant time developing and improving its systems, processes and policies particularly in the quality arena there was an evident parent/child relationship with the University of Exeter. The College was technically independent but the academic accreditation relationship defined the curriculum offer, a key element of central character a pillar of identity. It gave a certain status; 'our degrees are awarded by the University of Exeter, a respected university'⁵⁵ in return for a lack of real academic independence.

Using Delanty's trinity of missions of identity for universities; the notion of research, curriculum and response to policy, reviewing the internal and externally facing institutional documents a clear sense of identity was evident. This sense of identity does not correlate with the widely held assumptions and definitions of what it means to be a university, with a very narrow curriculum range, limited research capacity and a reliance on Government funding leaving the institution vulnerable to policy change. The activities of the College were more in line with the provision of what Carr (2009) refers to as higher education as opposed to university education, with a focus on professional training. The identity appears to resonate with the staff and be internally valued. Through the documentary review there is no evidence of the college considering its identity to be unvalidated which may link to the apparent lack of external comparisons or clarity as to its understanding of purpose.

The institution could be summed up as a semi-autonomous inclusive higher education college with a Christian heritage and ethos and a local and regional

⁵⁵ College of St Mark & St John Undergraduate Prospectus, p8, 2000

reach, providing teacher training and other defined undergraduate programmes in a teaching centred, student and community focussed way.

There is no evidence of any of these distinctive features or characteristics being challenged through this period, but as outlined by Albert and Whetton (1985), the identity question will only be asked at times of significant change and there was no change requiring the question to be raised.

5.3 Change and identity challenge (2003-2007)

The 2003/04 academic year was a pivotal year for the College of St Mark & St John, with the appointment of a new principal with a mandate for change,⁵⁶ the recent introduction of foundation degrees to the higher education sector with associated additional student numbers available to HEIs willing to offer them⁵⁷ and the Government consulting on changes to the criteria for university title and degree awarding powers.⁵⁸

Considering identity as socially constructed it is important to recognise the interrelationship between matters in the environment and their impact on the internal priorities and responses of the organisation. As a living entity Marjon responds to changes in the internal and external environment, continually evolving and reinterpreting. Redefinition is however a more substantial change resulting in a change of the 'most elemental of all schemas, organisational identity itself' (Clarke et al, 2010).

5.3.1 Challenges to Identity

Following his appointment the Principal (Professor David Baker) set about the urgent development of a new strategic plan with wide ranging and extended

⁵⁶ Council of Management Extraordinary Meeting minutes October 2002

⁵⁷ HEFCE Circular 00/39, 2002/11 and 2003/48

⁵⁸ Department for Education and Skills Consultation Paper, 'Degree Awarding Powers and University title', September 2003

consultation across all staff groups for a period in excess of an academic year, commencing in April 2003. At a staff meeting in early September 2003, only weeks after his official taking up of office, there was clarity that things were destined to change with a stated need for the institution to consider strategically:⁵⁹

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Position, focus, brand, image |
| Future portfolio |
| TDAP and Title |
| Relationship with Exeter |
| Recruitment (quality and cost) |
| Overheads and Processes |
| Learning, teaching and research |

Extract from Strategic Plan Staff Presentation D Baker 2003

Many of the issues above are fundamental issues of identity, as well as image, they are matters not only of how the business is done but what the business is considered to be. Reconsidering these matters opens up a challenge to the institution to consider its identity.

Albert & Whetton (1985) argue that that the identity question will only be raised when an organisation is faced with specific challenges, for example formation, loss of an identity sustaining element (e.g. a founder), growth or decline or change in collective status. I would argue that the introduction of a new leader is also a time when identity may be questioned, particularly when the new leader is from outside the environment that the organisation operates in. Whilst David Baker was an appointment from within the higher education sector; University of East Anglia, he was not from the higher education college sector, nor from a Cathedral's Group organisation. He would have little, if any, experience of the type of institution he was taking the reins of. He would have developed was a perspective of a college of higher education formed in the university sector, and as is outlined in the literature review there were a declining number of

⁵⁹ Extract from Strategic Plan Staff Presentation, 2003

institutions in the sector and the position of colleges of higher education was as lower order institutions. There were very few university colleges in existence at this time and the higher education literature was largely silent on them. The place of the higher education college and the university college was not understood in the university sector. With reference to this issue in his interview⁶⁰ David said,

*'there was confusion about **what** Marjon was. When I got the job, a lot of my colleagues who were in higher education and had been all their careers said, congratulations David, I am surprised you are going into FE. Getting university in the title is important because it means that it is a higher education institution. A college could be anything; a sixth form college, a typing college, you name it; so there is no uniform currency in the way that university has a uniform currency and it means a higher education institution that awards its own degrees.'*

It was clear that David felt that the institution needed to have university in its title to be credible as a higher education institution. What was also clear from the strategic review questions,⁶¹ used to manage the strategic planning process, was that there was at least a question in his mind as to whether the institution in its current form, with its current portfolio, approach to research and engagement with the wider community could justifiably be defined as a university (college).

5.3.2 Vehicle for change – Contextual Issues

The vehicle that would enable the institution to obtain university in its title was the achievement of TDAP,⁶² facilitating a change in collective status (Albert & Whetton, 1985) through movement up the HE hierarchy. It would provide the opportunity for the College to separate from its parent organisation; the University of Exeter. The other factors stated on the presentation to staff

⁶⁰ Interview with D. Baker August 2012

⁶¹ Strategic Planning Questions – Staff presentation September 2003

⁶² Department for Education and Skills Guidance for applicant organisations in England and Wales (August 2004)

outlined above, including portfolio, learning, teaching and research would be impacted, or defined by the achievement of TDAP, with a resultant redefinition of what the organisation was.

Review of strategy development and consultation documents relating to the 2003/07 period⁶³ provides a perspective on the importance of TDAP for the College. There was no evidence of what Fiol (2002) defines as a clear narrative for change, necessary for effective transformation of identity, nor clarity of a 'future image for this new university (college)' highlighted by Gioia & Thomas (1996) as an essential part of the change process. It may have been that a tacit understanding of what it meant to be a university (college) was assumed to exist, or as David Baker stated above, a university (college) 'has uniform currency.'

The way that this 'uniform currency' was understood was changing. The Government was consulting on the new criteria for taught degree awarding powers and university title in September 2003,⁶⁴ raising this issue to the fore in SCOP, of which the College was a member and David a member of its Executive Committee. This also brought TDAP back to the fore in the College as an application had been deferred previously by the institution, partly in response to the anticipation of changes to the process being declared.⁶⁵

The changes outlined by Government in respect of gaining TDAP and University title at this time were primarily that the criteria were 'to be framed such that they might be met by any organisation which delivers high quality teaching at HE level'⁶⁶, with differentiation between taught degrees, including Masters, and research degrees. In addition there was an expectation that any

⁶³ Council of Management, Academic Board, Management Team and Research Committee minutes 2003-2007, strategic plan consultation documents and documents to support the TDAP application

⁶⁴ Department for Education and Skills 'Consultation Paper on Degree Awarding Powers and University title', September 2004

⁶⁵ Academic Board minutes 310, December 1998

⁶⁶ Department for Education and Skills 'Consultation Paper on Degree Awarding Powers and University title', September 2004

organisation with TDAP would be eligible for university title subject to minimum student number criteria (4,000 FTE undergraduate students). The significance of this move was that the requirement for an institution to be able to award research degrees and for its staff to be actively engaged in research in order to be considered for university title was to be dropped challenging the widely held understandings of what it was to be a university. Teaching-focussed higher education providers would be eligible to be universities subject to size, becoming university colleges where they did not meet the size criterion. The rationale presented in the consultation for this move was the need to 'reflect the increasing diversity of higher education'.⁶⁷ It is not clear why changing the criteria for becoming a university would result in recognition of the diversity of the sector, but it appeared to offer a uniformity of currency through title as a result. By potentially renaming all types of institutions with a primary purpose of delivering higher education universities, whether or not they participated in research activities, led to challenges of the further dilution of the meaning of university, inflaming the 'universities in crisis' debate. In his written Ministerial Statement in March 2004,⁶⁸ Alan Johnson stated that there was a clear divide in the sector on the proposal to 'allow teaching-focussed universities, with universities (including the previous polytechnics) generally opposed and other higher education institutions (HEI's) in support'. The proposal was nevertheless accepted and a number of colleges of higher education moved to university title in 2005, including the University of Chester, Canterbury Christchurch University and the University of Worcester, as they met the student number criteria. Interestingly all three universities gained Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) after joining the university sector, which Deem (2006) suggests reflects the strength of the brand identity or image that is associated with it.

Following the changes to TDAP and university title in 2003/04 HEFCE were encouraging the development of scholarship and research informed teaching through the allocation of specific funding; the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund⁶⁹ and funded the establishment of Centres of Excellence in Teaching and

⁶⁷ Ibid p3

⁶⁸ Department for Education and Skills, Ministerial Statement, 2004

⁶⁹ HEFCE Circular 99/48

Learning⁷⁰ across the sector. As noted by Deem, research informed teaching 'does not require lecturers to actually conduct research. Rather for those in less research intensive institutions it is apparently sufficient to merely read about the research of others' (2006, p288). Marjon had a limited research profile⁷¹ and did not possess RDAP.

From an identity perspective it is important to understand what this legislative change meant for the then College and how it affected the strategic statements for the future identity and direction of the institution. Did it mean that overnight what the institution argued it had been doing for over 150 years had now been recognised as worthy of the title university (college)? From a legislative perspective the College appeared eligible for university college title. Whereas previously a commitment to research in the form of research degree awarding powers (RDAP) would have been required, the prize of university in the title was now obtainable without it. This puts into question whether TDAP was now a strategic change at all or merely some form of validation process of the work currently being undertaken by the College completed by the Quality Assurance Agency, the outcome of which would be university college title. Would university (college) title mean the same thing if a university (college) was now being differently defined and was no longer a place balancing the needs of research, teaching and the wider society?

Whilst it could be argued that the achievement of TDAP itself could be perceived as a validation process, the implications of its achievement for the institution were more far reaching in terms of its future identity, including the option of academic independence. This would have significant implications for the institution and its future identity. Levin, commenting on the impact of the achievement of baccalaureate degree awarding powers for community colleges in North America, states that it changes the conceptual framework, institutional purpose and 'identity as understood from within and without' (2002, p8).

⁷⁰ HEFCE Bid Document for CETLs, April 2004

⁷¹ HEFCE RAE Results by Institution, 2001

5.3.3 Why TDAP?

The rationale for progressing with TDAP and becoming a university college was perceived differently by the two most senior managers in the institution. David Baker, the Principal, was keen to compare the College with others and in reflecting on the reasoning for the application when interviewed⁷² he stated that 'it struck me that the College was lagging behind in terms of its peer group, the other Guild HE (previously SCOP) members that had gone for TDAP for the same reasons, which was having the kite mark of university in the name, but also the ability to work independently of the University of Exeter.' There was also recognition of a level of vulnerability as Exeter sought to develop in a very different direction from the College, expanding its research portfolio from 815 research students in 2003 to over 1000 by 2008 and opening the Peninsular Medical School in 2002.⁷³ David stated that 'there was no guarantee that they would want to be with us for ever ... wanting to aspire to be a very different kind of institution that wouldn't want little tiddlers like Marjon.' David's perspective of the rationale for TDAP had two different dimensions. One related to academic status and credibility, implying the purpose of this change was for the institution to become or be perceived as something different. It was unclear as to whether this retitled organisation would bring with it a change in purpose or behaviours, or whether it was merely to have access to a more highly regarded title. Secondly the statement highlights the vulnerability felt by the institution as regards its size, but also as regards the accreditation relationship. The sectoral existence and academic credibility of the institution was in the hands of a partner, who had a very different mission and identity from the College.

The Deputy Principal, Dr Geoff Stoakes recalls the rationale for TDAP as an economic driver; institutional sustainability. He felt a 'burning platform' (Kotler, 2010) had been created with falling (or not increasing) student recruitment threatening Marjon's sustainability. He believed that the primary reason for going forward with TDAP was more the risk to the institution if this path was not pursued. Other colleges of higher education who had taken this path earlier had

⁷² Interview with D. Baker August 2012

⁷³ Exeter University website www.exeter.ac.uk/about/facts/studentheadcountsummary/ downloaded December 2012

increased their recruitment, largely through additional student numbers awarded through the introduction of foundation degrees.⁷⁴ He also felt that their increase in recruitment was partly in response to clarity as to what the institutions were through the use of university in the title. The primary rationale therefore was around recruitment and survival, being able to be distinguished from further education colleges,⁷⁵ who were perceived increasingly as competitors in line with the Governments drive to increase the amount of higher education delivered by FE⁷⁶ to meet targets of 50% participation in HE. Whilst there was no evidence to suggest that recruitment was being impacted by the perceived confusion associated with the title of college, this was clearly believed within the institution and more widely across the colleges of higher education⁷⁷ to be impacting negatively on institutions within this part of the sector.

This was particularly so locally, where almost all of the FE colleges in the region had developed accreditation arrangements with the University of Plymouth in one of the largest partnership arrangements in England delivering to over 9,500 students in over 20 regional locations.⁷⁸ The need to show clear segregation, differentiation and a perceived level of seniority in the hierarchy was considered very important to the College in terms of its future position. In interview⁷⁹ Geoff Stoakes said 'It was felt that having university in the front of the name would clearly make us higher education, which would help recruitment.' In the evident higher education hierarchy colleges of higher education may well have been perceived as second division (Brennan & Williams, 2008), but the further education colleges were and still remain as lower order institutions and to be confused with them was considered damaging to status and reputation. The other main reason identified by Geoff during his interview for pursuing TDAP related to the raising of internal confidence (or validation); 'you inevitably lack

⁷⁴ HEFCE circular 00/39

⁷⁵ Interview with Dr G Stoakes August 2012

⁷⁶ HEFCE circular 00/54

⁷⁷ SCOP 'The Case for University Colleges'; 1993 Guild HE 'University Title: A Case for Clarity', January 2010

⁷⁸ University of Plymouth Partner Colleges

<http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/universityofplymouthcolleges> downloaded 28/12/2012

⁷⁹ Interview with Dr G Stoakes August 2012

self-confidence, but also perceive yourself to only be there in higher education by virtue of having a more established partner'.⁸⁰

In summary issues that were raised by the two most senior staff responsible for the institution and the TDAP application included improved comparison with other like institutions, differentiation from other groups (particularly FEC's), independence, perceived improved status and image and institutional self confidence. The primary expected outcome appeared to be increased student numbers, improving institutional sustainability. Despite some clarity of rationale for the gaining of TDAP there was no evidence of clarity as to what this new post-TDAP organisation might look like in terms of its revised identity, including curriculum and research position and its key characteristics and elements of distinctiveness. Following a SCOP meeting in September 2004 where David Baker reported back to senior institutional colleagues on the TDAP process as experienced by others he stated that there would be a need to articulate 'what sort of institution will the applicant become if the application is successful' and highlighted the 'need to convince the sceptical that we deserve UC status and can 'join their club''.⁸¹

The development of a revised strategic plan would provide an opportunity for the development of a revised vision, with clarity of not just what, but who this new institution would be.

5.3.4 Strategic intent, TDAP and identity

As outlined by Steiner et al, 'strategies indicate how the organisation relates to longer term plans' (2012, p4), and central to these strategies, particularly strategies that seek to modify or develop the identity, will be the organisations current identity, impacted by the history, contextual environment and the actors of the organisation (Balmer, 2001).

⁸⁰ Interview with Dr G Stoakes August, 2012

⁸¹ Baker, D., (principal@marjon.ac.uk) 2004. TDAP Feedback 30 September. Email to G. Stoakes (gstoakes@marjon.ac.uk)

Marshak (1993) states that redefining ‘who we are’ as an organisation is an issue of identity change, requiring senior managers to articulate a desired future image (Gioia and Thomas 1996). Fiol’s (2002) suggestion that this process involves a break from the old identity and the reidentification with the newly articulated desired identity can be considered in the context of the application for TDAP as a fundamental element of the developing strategic plan.

Within the College broader discussion and consultation on the developing strategic plan continued during 2003/04 with TDAP identified as a non-negotiable element of the future of the organisation in presentations to staff and Governors.⁸² As Dr Stoakes stated ‘this was pushing at an open door’, in that there was already declared commitment from the management and the staff that this was an intended direction of travel.⁸³

The strategic plan was completed prior to the application for TDAP being submitted, but arguably paved the way for discussions as to the impact TDAP could have on institutional redefinition.

The approach to the development of the strategic plan was very consultative and whilst actively facilitated wasn’t actively led in terms of articulating a desired future image of the institution. The new Principal had an extended handover period where for a number of months the outgoing Principal remained in situ and continued to run the College. This gave him the capacity to consult extensively with staff at all levels and develop a structure for a new strategic plan, including TDAP. This continued to be developed over the 2003/04 academic year, commencing with the staff briefing in September where the Principal announced his initial vision as a result of these consultations as being:⁸⁴

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Marjon University (College) | (Inter) National Player |
| Federated with Exeter | 6,000 on two sites? |

⁸² Presentations to staff, September 2003

⁸³ Interview with Dr G Stoakes August 2012

⁸⁴ Staff Briefing Paper, September 2003

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Major Regional Player | The Church College of the South West |
| Best of breed in all we do | At the hub in Cornwall and anywhere else that counts |
| People (incl student) centred | Open and transparent |
| Free from tension or harassment | Equal in opportunity and treatment |
| Targeted resource allocation | High performing across the board |
| Supportive | Fun |

Extract from Staff Briefing Paper; Strategic Plan 2003

The vision presented gave the opportunity to staff to shape the final version further work and consultation was to be undertaken. A detailed timeline for the process was outlined, extending the 2003/04 academic year, ending with ratification by the Council of Management (Governing Body) on 16th July 2004.

The statements above can be separated into 'what we are' statements, how we do our business and 'who we are'; the elements that are more deeply rooted in respect of identity, the elements of character that make an institution distinctive.

The 'what we are' or 'what we could be' statements outlined in the initial strategic vision are not clear and could appear contradictory. Marjon University (college) implies an independent, self defining university, the Church College of the South West could be interpreted as a religiously focussed lower order (college) institution and federated with Exeter implies a continued academic and possibly more formal legal relationship with the University of Exeter challenging institutional independence.

The introduction to the final version of the plan⁸⁵ approved in 2004 looks to articulate the College's identity, or at least its distinctive features, although arguably these will resonate with many higher education institutions:

⁸⁵ Strategic Plan 'Marjon 2010 (Phase 1 2004-2007)' p1, 2004

'the College rightly takes pride in its success as an institution where teaching quality is amongst the best in the UK. Our track record on widening participation in Higher Education, our ability to retain students, and our success in producing employable graduates puts us amongst the best of British Universities and Higher Education Colleges'

Following feedback received as part of the strategic plan development and consultation process, the Principal reported to Academic Board that stakeholders felt that there was a 'need to articulate the College's values more clearly. This will be especially important in the context of our policy on top-up fees',⁸⁶ (to be introduced in 2006) and that there was also a need to 'resolve what we say about the Christian mission'.⁸⁷ A clear identity enables issues such as these to be resolved as it provides the usually subliminal guide for strategic decision making (Gioia & Thomas, 1996), but at times of reidentification there is a need for a break with past understandings and establishment of a new desired identity.

The consultation process resulted in a high degree of support for a TDAP application, continuing support for widening participation and a 'fair degree of enthusiasm/perceived opportunities for research and scholarly activity'.⁸⁸ The notion of a federated operating model with the University of Exeter disappeared through the consultation process but there was still uncertainty about whether the College would use taught degree awarding powers widely if they achieved them, or remain with the University of Exeter for everything except foundation degrees.⁸⁹ Best of breed, high performing across the board and the Church College of the South West, were also lost in the final version. The mission was updated from the short version in use in 2001 to:⁹⁰

'We will be the community university college of the South West, providing high quality, holistic, enabling and supportive learning,

⁸⁶ Academic Board minutes 342, February 2004

⁸⁷ *ibid*

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ Corporate Diagnostics TDAP Research Report, 2006

⁹⁰ Strategic Plan, 'Marjon 2010 (Phase 1)', p2, 2004

teaching and research opportunities to meet the needs of individuals, groups, the region and beyond'

Students had been replaced by a wider market place, the friendly community had been replaced by the community university college, research had appeared for the first time and the Christian context had been relegated to the values statement, where the notion of 'building on our Christian foundation' was a commitment, alongside 'respecting a diversity of beliefs and views'.⁹¹ In a previous version presented in March 2004⁹² the statement on the Christian foundation had been stronger; 'Provide opportunities for Christian service and worship and for the serious study of Christianity', but at a special meeting of the academic board in June 2004 it was agreed that 'the mission and values would continue to derive from the College's Christian foundation'⁹³ and the statement above would be dropped. At the academic board meeting in July where the strategic plan was endorsed a proposal to stop using the Christian calendar to name the academic terms was accepted and it was noted that 'season based term names would be consistent with the principle of inclusivity in the Colleges mission'.⁹⁴ This apparent dilution of the Christian context reflected a mood identified by Peach (2010) in her research on curriculum carried out in the College during this period where staff reflected that the Christian roots impacted the distinctiveness of the institution through the commitment to widening participation, social inclusion and a caring and supportive environment, but had no desire to be viewed as a Christian institution. Thatcher reinforces this view stating that 'Church Colleges were already post-religious, indeed deeply secular, and even fearful of acknowledging their religious roots' (2004). There was clearly a directional change occurring with regards to elements of central character and distinctiveness.

During this period there is evidence of a desire by the organisation to be more university like. Reviewing the developing strategic plan in respect of the pillars

⁹¹ Ibid p2

⁹² Academic Board minutes 343/05, March 2004

⁹³ Academic Board Minutes 345/2, June 2004

⁹⁴ Academic Board Minutes 346/9, July 2004

of identity there is evidence of a directional shift in all three pillars; curriculum, research and response to policy through this period.

5.3.5 Curriculum

The Strategic Plan was completed and presented to Academic Board in July 2004, alongside an academic portfolio review (APR), which recommended the closure of a number of programmes due largely to poor recruitment. These included Theology and Theology and Philosophy, removing all education of a Christian context from the institution except for PGCE Religious Studies and the Church Colleges Certificate, a part time certificate, undertaken by a minority of teacher training students alongside their main programme of study. The APR report noted a need for the institution to be more vocationally oriented, deriving in part from the 'priorities of all major funding agencies' and also in recognition of 'an expectation that the introduction of so-called 'top-up fees' is likely to result in an increased emphasis amongst prospective students on 'value-for-money' in terms of employability'.⁹⁵ There was also recognition that the institution was experiencing declining recruitment for several non-vocational programmes. The strategic plan supported this vocational shift in the academic offer, with a key aim being to 'develop our academic portfolio at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels relevant to our key markets and strengths, focussing on the professions, employment and continuing professional development'.⁹⁶ The academic portfolio review was acted upon in the years 2004 to 2007, with the withdrawal of more traditional academic subjects such as Theology, Philosophy, History, Geography, Sociology and Theology and the introduction of more vocationally focussed programmes responding to Government policy shifts, including as Speech and Language Therapy developed in collaboration with the National Health Service (NHS), a BA in Children, Welfare and Society and an MA programme in Sports Development.⁹⁷ This was clear evidence of the institution remaining policy driven and becoming more sensitive to the external environment in terms of the development of the academic portfolio.

⁹⁵ Academic Portfolio Review Report 2004, p15

⁹⁶ Strategic Plan 'Marjon 2010', p3, 2004

⁹⁷ Marjon Annual Report 2004-05

The change in the portfolio over the period from 2003 to 2007 had no impact on recruitment, with student numbers remaining just under 2000⁹⁸ full time undergraduate students and a slight fall in post graduate students, as a result of changes in allocations by the Training and Development Agency (TDA), the funding body responsible for programmes leading to teaching qualifications. The student mix remained highly local, with 70% of students from the South-West and 96% from state schools with widening participation highlighted as a key priority for the College.⁹⁹

5.3.6 Research

Research now appeared as an aim in its own right in the strategic plan, where the College committed to 'develop and implement a sustainable research strategy relevant to the College's academic values and priorities'¹⁰⁰ and a revised research strategy was adopted by the Academic Board in October 2004. The strategy was considered inclusive, recognising scholarly activity, applied and creative research as equally valid as primary research, which it defined as the acquisition of new knowledge. It outlined the philosophy and character of research in the institution as:¹⁰¹

'The primary purpose of the College of St. Mark and St. John is to provide high quality Higher Education that attains excellent standards of learning and teaching. Research underpins excellence in learning and teaching through its direct and vital contribution to taught courses, by exposing students to the methodological rigours of research and by helping to sustain a community of self-critical learners and teachers. Research is an integral part of the responsibilities of all academic staff at the College; it is an essential element of professional activity.'

The Research Strategy is an inclusive one, stimulating research and

⁹⁸ HESA Institutional Record All students by Institution, 2007

⁹⁹ Marjon Annual Report 2004-05

¹⁰⁰ Strategic Plan 'Marjon 2010' p3, 2004

¹⁰¹ Research Strategy, p2, 2004

scholarly activity across the campus and emphasising knowledge transfer and exchange, professional practice and enterprise.'

The strategy as presented did not appear to move research endeavours to tie in with that which might be recognised as research in a university, with the notion of research clearly linked to teaching and professional practice. Reviewing the research strategies of two local universities; Plymouth (a post-92) and the University of Exeter, the College's partner, the strategies have very different focus.

'We believe research at Plymouth will make a major contribution to business and society.

*Building on strengths and potential, our research is characterized by original and innovative activities in key disciplines.'*¹⁰²

*'By 2015 the University of Exeter will be a top UK research university known throughout the world for research excellence and impact.'*¹⁰³

Research funding and research outputs did not change over the period, with a reduction in the number of research active staff in the institution¹⁰⁴ due largely to the closure of programmes in Theology and Philosophy¹⁰⁵. This affected the submission to the RAE in 2008, where the University College came bottom of *The Times* league table.¹⁰⁶ It was noted that a proportion of teaching staff did not have a masters level qualification and it was agreed that this ought to be the minimum level of qualification for all teaching staff.¹⁰⁷ In externally facing literature the College began identifying itself more obviously with research, which was a shift from previous years.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² University of Plymouth Research and Enterprise Strategy, 2009

¹⁰³ <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/excellence/ourresearchstrategy> downloaded August 8 2013

¹⁰⁴ Academic Staff Profiles – report presented to Management Team 25 September 2006

¹⁰⁵ Academic Portfolio Review, 2004

¹⁰⁶ Research Excellence table, Times Higher Educational Supplement, December 2008

¹⁰⁷ Management Team Strategy Day 'Main Points Document', 2006

¹⁰⁸ Annual report 2004-05 p3, 2005 Annual Report 2005-06 p4, 2006

5.3.7 Response to Policy/Service

During this period the institution becomes more externally focussed, with Professor Baker joining the Council of the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) in late 2003 and using this as a mechanism for ensuring engagement in policy issues, which were reported back to all senior committees by way of written report at each meeting. The College was unable to respond as actively as it would like to the main policy issue of the period; the significant increase in numbers of students to be engaged in higher education through the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) additional student number allocations.¹⁰⁹ The accreditation agreement with the University of Exeter¹¹⁰ would not support the accreditation of Foundation Degrees at the College. This severely limited the ability of the College to respond to policy direction or to grow as other similar institutions did over the period. This was reported negatively in the main committees¹¹¹ through the period and used as an additional justification for the drive to achieve TDAP.

The College was actively working to respond to the other major policy issue of the period, that of the changing TDAP requirements.

5.3.8 Other Factors impacting identity development

Identifying discrepant cases, or issues outside of the analytical framework (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is important through this analysis phase. One such theme is that of financial vulnerability.

The financial position of the College remained a significant issue during this period, with a small surplus of £34k being generated in 2004, moving to losses of £342k in 2005 and £133k in 2006.¹¹² Financial vulnerability is regularly

¹⁰⁹ HEFCE 2003/48, 2004/15 and 2005/13

¹¹⁰ Accreditation Agreement with Exeter University 1991

¹¹¹ Management team minutes 2003 and 2004

¹¹² College of St Mark & St John Foundation Financial Statements 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06

highlighted in detail to all senior committees¹¹³ in the College, including Academic Board, possibly resulting in the burning platform identified by Dr Stoakes as a key driver for TDAP.¹¹⁴

This financial vulnerability was reflected in the way the college was able to respond to develop the nature of its work and take advantage of sectoral changes relevant to its identity. Whilst keen to develop research and the curriculum there was limited funding available to support the necessary investment as reflected by the Principal in 2004 when it was noted in Management Team minutes that 'the Principal expressed grave concern that current patterns of income and expenditure were unable to generate a strategic investment fund'.¹¹⁵ Operating with a heavy reliance on public funding; over 90% of income generated in this period came from Government Agencies or directly associated income, resulted in the institution being vulnerable to policy changes and reductions in allocations of students from agencies such as the TDA and HEFCE. A new Government funding provider, the NHS, gave a newly developed funding stream for the College in 2005 through the introduction of Speech and Language Therapy courses.¹¹⁶

The College continued to struggle to meet recruitment targets throughout the period 2003-2007, resulting in significant hold backs of income, due for return to funding agencies.¹¹⁷ Detailed reporting was now being presented across committees, reflecting a marked difference from the somewhat vague reports given in the previous years. This level of detail in respect of the financial vulnerability of the institution had never been presented to the wider academic community through the Academic Board,¹¹⁸ previously residing with the Governing Body;

¹¹³ Management team minutes 2003-2007, Academic Board Minutes 2003-2007, Council of Management Minutes 2003-2007

¹¹⁴ Interview with Dr G. Stoakes August, 2012

¹¹⁵ Management Team Minutes 04/46 The 2004-05 Budget

¹¹⁶ Annual Report 2004/05

¹¹⁷ Management Team minutes 04/154 College finances: TTA holdback

¹¹⁸ Academic Board 352 October 2005

- i. The 2004-05 position outlined in the paper was not ideal, but there were strategies in place to deal with the deficit, such as the Academic Portfolio review and the Support Staff Review.*
- ii. The College was setting a balanced budget for 2005-06 and would have to maintain budgetary discipline to deliver it.*

Highlighting what was a reflection of wider institutional failings would clearly affect individual and collective feelings of self-worth. A lack of ability to recruit students implies a lack of attractiveness of the institution and a position of increasing financial vulnerability heightens individual and collective concern about institutional sustainability. Ashforth & Mael (1989) suggest that where a group's status is low or they are insecure this has a negative impact on identity when comparing with other groups. I would suggest that it results in a questioning of the identity fit of the organisation within the environment that the organisation operates.

There was clear evidence of frustration with the College's financial position. Growth opportunities were available to the higher education sector but not available to the College because of the relationship with Exeter.¹¹⁹ At the same time the College was not recruiting to the allocations that it had, which the senior staff felt was because the college lacked university in its name and the status and kudos brought by association.

5.3.9 Negative External Comparison

Comparing the institution with others is an important factor with regards to identity development, with the environment impacting how the institution perceives itself as identity is developed through inter-organisational comparison over time (Albert & Whetton, 1985; Henkel, 2000). This is particularly relevant with regards to the College during this period as many members of the higher education college sector were looking at achieve TDAP and university college title, whilst others were taking advantage of the changing legal environment to move on to university status and entry into the university sector. These external comparisons were reported in a largely negative context, showing the College

¹¹⁹ University of Exeter 'Accreditation Agreement between the University of Exeter and the College of St Mark & St John, 1991

as being left behind in respect of its peers and increasing financial vulnerability. It was noted in the management team that 'six university colleges had changed their status to 'University' making it more important than ever for the College to join that league'¹²⁰

In higher education there is evidence that institutions try to achieve prominence by being non-distinctive, by mimicking others from a chosen reference group (Gioia and Thomas, 1996). The desire to not be left behind and to be a member of the chosen group of university colleges was now very apparent.¹²¹

With regards to local comparators, there were discussions across the senior committees relating to the University of Plymouth and the development of their college network being a cause for institutional concern.¹²² This was partly due to the possibility of institutional confusion, but also due to the growth of local and regional higher education providers in the widening participation market, a segment of the market that was a target sector for recruitment to the College.¹²³ This increased the pressure for the College to be distinctive, to stand out locally to maintain and increase its market share.

The highlighting of the academic and financial vulnerability of the institution and the negative comparisons with like institutions could be viewed as an active attempt to destabilise the association with the current identity, a breaking of trust with the old identity (Fiol, 2002) before introducing a vision of a new desired identity.

5.3.10 Summary 2003-2005

Taken on a superficial level the initial proposals presented in the strategic plan do not appear to fundamentally challenge what the College was, but on closer review the development of this new strategic plan opened up for reconsideration a number of elements of character and distinctiveness associated with the

¹²⁰ Management Team minutes MT05/217 April, 2005

¹²¹ *ibid*

¹²² Management Team Minutes MT06/348 September 2006

¹²³ HESA Institutional Data All Students, 2004

College. Challenges included the position of the Christian influence in the institution, both on the curriculum offered and in respect of the meaning of the Christian ethos. This had moved from an intention to 'preserving the ethos and distinctiveness of the institution as a Church of England College of Higher Education' to the somewhat watered down and difficult to clarify in terms of impact and action the commitment for 'building on our Christian foundation.'¹²⁴ The College had been very open about its Christian heritage in previous years, apparent through the published literature, and this formed a clear part of the identity of the institution, influencing the way it behaved. A reluctance to be perceived as a Christian institution was becoming apparent.

There was a stated desire to increasingly vocationalise the curriculum, in response to the broader policy agenda and to embed research within the institution, albeit within a fairly wide definition focussing largely on advanced scholarship which would not be recognised by the wider university sector as research activity. The influence of the wider policy environment was becoming apparent and was a factor influencing the identity of the College through curriculum developments and response to policy initiatives. TDAP was perceived as the route to achieving a new identity, one where the College would be seen as a member of a credible university community and where access to growth through response to the Government growth agenda would enable the College to be less vulnerable financially.

5.4 TDAP - the application and review 2005-2007

The changes outlined above were underpinned by the primary objective of the strategic plan; to 'Gain taught degree awarding powers and achieve university college status',¹²⁵ arguably a third order change (Bartunek and Moch, 1987), moving the institution from a college of higher education to a university college thereby relocating it in the higher education hierarchy. Use of the term university in the title of the institution brings new meanings and interpretations of what the

¹²⁴ Strategic Plan 'Marjon 2010, 2004

¹²⁵ Marjon 2010 (phase 1) 2004, p3

institution is, not only externally as anticipated by the leaders of the institution in terms of clarification and distinctiveness from the further education market, but also strategically and internally in terms of the pillars of identity (Delanty, 1998), professional identity of staff and in respect of 'academic drift' (Teichler, 2008).

The significance of this change in terms of identity was not apparent in the documentation produced by the management team in respect of the TDAP application and the **process** associated with attaining TDAP became the focus of communication and activity.

5.4.1 TDAP as a validation process

In his interview Professor Baker stated that he did not expect things to change within the institution post TDAP, stating 'I think the kind of formal change for Marjon was actually going to be relatively painless,'¹²⁶ which was echoed by the Deputy Principal who felt that what was distinctive about the College would not change with a change in title and that the institution would remain 'small, with a community feel, practically and vocationally based.'¹²⁷

Following the changes by the Government to the application process for TDAP in 2004 the College prepared for a submission in 2005 and in the presentations to staff and Governors during 2004 and 2005 the rationale for applying for TDAP was included in the presentation document as:¹²⁸

- University College title
- Status and Identity
- Opportunities and Development
- Competitive Positioning
- Improving Recruitment
- An index of quality and secure standards

Extract from TDAP Presentation to Staff, 2005

¹²⁶ David Baker Interview notes, 2012

¹²⁷ Geoff Stoakes Interview notes, 2012

¹²⁸ TDAP Presentation to Staff, 2005

In the notes retained with the slides¹²⁹ the recurrent theme of explanation through this document was one of clarification of position; the College would be clearly in the university sector and not mistaken for a further education college, which would assist recruitment. The competitive positioning referred to other institutions already on the journey to university college title, stating that the College was losing ground and lagging behind its peers. The remainder of the presentation (13 slides) was given over to the process.¹³⁰ The dominant discourse in SCOP and within the institution was one of validation. This process was merely validating what was apparently already known; the institution was 'a mature, self-critical academic community' which has 'enjoyed accredited status with the University of Exeter for ten years; it has demonstrated that it is a mature institution capable of effectively handling responsibilities increasingly devolved by the University.' 'The College's application for TDAP represents the next logical step in its development as a higher education institution.'¹³¹

This is how the argument for university college title had been rehearsed by SCOP (1993) over a number of years in their lobbying and this appears to have been the approach taken by the College, in both the messages to staff through the process¹³² and in the more public documents, such as the formal Application sent to the Privy Council in 2005.¹³³

The message internally was that continuing with what was being done would result in becoming a university college, highlighting the process perspective. It also signalled the process being a form of validation, suggesting that the barriers to university (college) title were artificial. The College was worthy of the title, but had to undergo the process to prove this. There was no messaging to the wider external stakeholder community relating to the application outside of soliciting letters of support for the application from local and regional institutions.

¹²⁹ Notes for the TDAP Presentation to Staff, 2005

¹³⁰ *ibid*

¹³¹ Marjon 'Critical Self- Evaluation Document submitted to the Privy Council', 2005

¹³² TDAP Staff Presentation, 2005

¹³³ Marjon 'Critical Self Evaluation Document submitted to the Privy Council', 2005

In the Annual Report 2004/05 there was reference that an application had been made, but the implications of a successful outcome were not outlined.¹³⁴

The TDAP process took over two years, commencing with internal work in 2004, an application in May 2005 and an extended year-long review process with a number of external assessors during 2006. The process was a very bureaucratic exercise requiring significant institutional data to be included in the application report, including of student applications, admission and qualification data for a five year period and evidence on quality assurance and the taught environment.¹³⁵ The less onerous requirements relating to staff engagement in research under the revised arrangements were now cited as ‘knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area’ (QAA, 2004), which were consistent with the stated objectives of the College as ‘avowedly, a teaching-led and student-centred institution’ and was in line with the developing inclusive research strategy, which focussed on advanced scholarship. Given the size of the institution this type of intensive scrutiny process took up a significant amount of senior staff time proving a significant distraction from day to day activities, which is evidenced through both the committee reports and minutes, but also the extensive correspondence between the project co-coordinator and other members of the senior team.¹³⁶

5.4.2 Ready for independence and identity change?

At the initial stages of the TDAP process in early 2005 when the critical self-analysis document,¹³⁷ the primary document for submission to the Privy Council to seek approval for the granting of taught degree awarding powers, was being prepared the College was not confident in regards to a separation from the accreditation partner. The Principal outlined the position to colleagues at Exeter University in respect of the use of taught degree awarding powers:

¹³⁴ Marjon Annual Report 2004/05

¹³⁵ Marjon Application to the Privy Council Appendices, May 2005

¹³⁶ Geoff Stoakes TDAP correspondence file 2005/2006

¹³⁷ Marjon Critical Self-Evaluation Document submitted to the Privy Council, 2005

*'we are not proposing to use them to any great extent (other than perhaps foundation degree validation) within the lifetime of our current strategic plan (i.e before 2010). We firmly believe that the Exeter link is a very important one for us, and we do not wish to depart from that without careful research into market conditions and trends.'*¹³⁸

External research was commissioned with current and previous students, local general public, staff, sixth form and college students and employers questioning whether the College, if awarded TDAP, should award their own degrees or Exeter's.¹³⁹ The results, though not overwhelmingly conclusive suggested that the transfer to using TDAP should only happen once the College had established 'reputation and credibility as a University College'.¹⁴⁰

Researching the TDAP process through the public statements of the College, through the narrative of various internal committees and through the messages given to the institutions internal community is essential to understand how the identity question had been addressed, as no specific statements were evident relating to the identity change expected as a result of the achievement of TDAP. There was 'no desired future image' (Gioia & Thomas, 1996) presented to the institutional stakeholders by the senior management.

The Principal did recognise the need for further work to be undertaken in terms of clarifying what TDAP would mean in his Year Ahead document presented to the Academic Board in November 2006; 'Over the next few months we will therefore determine the name, brand and future identity of the College, given that, if awarded TDAP, we will be able to call ourselves a 'university college'.¹⁴¹ Instead of presenting a narrative clarifying what this new post TDAP organisation would look like the paper identified a number of questions for consideration by the internal community including what the portfolio might look

¹³⁸ Baker, D., (principal@marjon.ac.uk) 2005. TDAP Update 18 January, 2005. Email to Steve Smith (S.Smith@exeter.ac.uk).

¹³⁹ Corporate Diagnostics TDAP Research Report, 2005

¹⁴⁰ Ibid page 2

¹⁴¹ Marjon 2010 Year Ahead 2006/07 Academic Board Paper 359-07, November 2006

like going forward, what a research profile might look like, what the priorities for investment might be and what the impact of the Christian foundation should be.

This opportunity for defining what it would mean for the institution going forward was not taken forward and when the QAA Board agreed on 14th March 2007 to recommend the College to the Privy Council for the granting of TDAP and university college title the College was ill prepared for the impact of such a challenge to its identity.

5.4.3 Summary 2005-2007

During this period much of the management time was focussed on the application requirements and process. In terms of identity one of the significant issues was the focus on the anticipated change in title and status as one of validation of the organisation. There was no recognition of the implications of what it meant to the organisation to be academically independent and the impact of the tacit understanding of what it means to be a university.

5.5 Post-TDAP 2007/8 Identity crisis or meanings void?

Having been appointed as a senior manager of the University College just as TDAP had been granted the overwhelming feeling evident across the institution could best be described as one of relief. The achievement of TDAP seemed to be considered by the wider staff as an end in itself, as a result of the process described above, celebrated as a specific achievement.¹⁴² After the two years of work, a full year of external scrutiny and the associated build up there was a lack of clarity as to what it actually meant for the College going forward, besides a new name. Being a member of the University College community from 2007, the documentary evidence presented below is supplemented by my reflections as participant observer, largely as recorded in my journals through the period and through my immersion in the day to day life of the organisation.

‘University’ was now to be in the new name; University College Plymouth St Mark & St John, and the College had joined some of its peers, but at a time that

¹⁴² TDAP Celebration event, 2007

many of them¹⁴³ had moved, or were moving on to full University title. Once again the institution was left behind in an ever declining sector of institutions remaining on the periphery of the expanded university sector. A number of those that remained in this group were similar to the newly titled University College; very small institutions in terms of their turnover and student numbers who had developed from teacher training colleges with a religious foundation.¹⁴⁴

It was becoming evident that whilst there had been no specific vision of what the institution was meant to be as a university college there was evidence that the identity was being challenged, and the institution was looking to the wider university sector for its identity comparisons.

The wider external environment was also changing, with the growth in student numbers experienced during the first half of the 2000s now tailing off. In 2008 additional numbers were to be targeted to vulnerable subjects and co-funded work with employers¹⁴⁵ and by 2009 changes to funding priorities were announced ending the growth in student numbers.¹⁴⁶ Gaining TDAP had always been associated with enabling the institution to grow, to access student numbers made available by HEFCE to widen participation in HE through the introduction of foundation degrees. If the institution had missed the boat with regards to growth what were the implications?

Another Government change affecting the sector was the introduction of so called Top-up fees in 2006, allowing institutions to charge students up to £3,000 per year for their degrees.¹⁴⁷ The College had decided to charge lower fees, varied by subject area with the least popular subjects attracting the lowest fees, hopeful that additional students would be attracted by financial incentives. The rationale for lower fees was stated in the prospectus as reflecting that 'Marjon

¹⁴³ Canterbury Christchurch University, University of Chester, Edgehill University, University of Worcester, Bath Spa University, Winchester University, York St John University

¹⁴⁴ Newman University College, Leeds Trinity College, St Mary's University College Twickenham and Bishop Grosseteste University College

¹⁴⁵ HEFCE Circular 2008/05

¹⁴⁶ HEFCE Circular 2008/18, 2009/01

¹⁴⁷ Higher Education Act, 2004

cares about students and genuinely recognises the financial burden that most students face in studying for a degree.¹⁴⁸ This was in line with the continued commitment to widening participation, an enduring identity feature of the College.

5.5.1 Matters unresolved

During 2006 as the institution became more confident that TDAP would be awarded there is evidence through the main committee minutes that a further range of identity issues began to arise; issues that had not been adequately addressed through phase 1 of the strategic plan.¹⁴⁹ There were challenges relating to the curriculum pillar of identity emerging through Academic Board questioning the institutions espoused distinctiveness as ‘a teaching led institution ... committed to raising educational standards, to extending opportunities and providing educational and training which are socially useful.’¹⁵⁰ A paper presented by the Principal questioned whether there was a mechanism in place to ‘ensure we are developing a portfolio that fits with our mission and strengths and will ensure sustainable recruitment.’¹⁵¹ The development of the curriculum was becoming more firmly linked to Government policy objectives and opportunities for growth for financial sustainability and there was not necessarily the direct connection with the output being socially useful. This was reflected through the introduction of popular subjects such as media practice, computing and information technology, interactive digital technologies, which were not consistent with the previous subject areas. By 2008, the University College offered its first foundation degree, in Child and Youth Studies.¹⁵²

There was increasing debate in academic board and management team relating to the use of TDAP powers and whether it would be more institutionally beneficial to remain with Exeter to take advantage of their perceived academic

¹⁴⁸ Undergraduate Prospectus p1, 2006

¹⁴⁹ Strategic Plan ‘Marjon 2010 Phase 1’, 2004

¹⁵⁰ Marjon ‘Critical Self Evaluation Document submitted to the Privy Council’, 2005

¹⁵¹ Academic Board AB 359-07 November 2006

¹⁵² Marjon Undergraduate Prospectus 2006, 2007 and 2008

credibility. It was reported that externally commissioned research suggested that 'other stakeholders had suggested a preference for the University of Exeter awards',¹⁵³ highlighting the impact of institutional low self-confidence on key identity issues. Discussions occurred relating to the breadth of curriculum and the need to retain a mix of vocational and academic programmes in order to justify having university in the title even if this meant a risk to the financial position.¹⁵⁴ In his interview Professor Baker said that 'Marjon was fairly sleepy and lazy in one sense by being part of Exeter. They didn't have to work too hard as Exeter degrees had a certain pull'. There was serious concern that Marjon awards would not have the same kudos and that students would not continue to come to the university college to gain a Marjon award.¹⁵⁵

The religious foundation was cited in the critical self-analysis document as significantly influencing the mission of the institution in that it has 'consistently reflected the distinctive origins and development of the institution',¹⁵⁶ arguing later in the document that the institution provides a distinct and valuable contribution to the region 'by providing higher education in a Christian context and with an emphasis on the ethical dimension to the study of humanities, social sciences and professional training and development.'¹⁵⁷ Whilst the other institutions in this decreasing sector appeared keen to market their Christian beginnings as being current and a key element of their distinctiveness, the University College was debating how the Christian context was relevant to the new institution. At the Academic Board of March 2006 in discussions relating to the potential of using the Christian Foundation to encourage recruitment in faith based international markets, the need to be more broadly market sensitive was considered more important than being more overt with the Christian ethos. There was concern that as a university college it was important to be inclusive in an increasingly secular society. This concern was also reflected when potential new names for the institution were discussed at Academic Board¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Academic Board 358, June 2006

¹⁵⁴ Academic Board 359, September 2006

¹⁵⁵ David Baker interview notes, 2012

¹⁵⁶ Marjon 'Critical Self Analysis Document presented to the Privy Council' 2005

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, p4

¹⁵⁸ Academic Board Minutes AB 358, June 2006

where it was noted that ‘there was no obligation to retain any reference to the Saints in the title’. This was discussed further over the next year, in parallel with the TDAP process and the two final options presented by Academic Board to the Council of Management (Governing Body) in March 2007 were:

- (i) *Plymouth St Mark & St John University College, or*
- (ii) *University College Plymouth St Mark & St John*¹⁵⁹

Both options clearly retained the use of the Saints in the official title. The Academic Board minutes note that the College felt that it should retain the Saints in the title to ‘avoid potential difficulties with regard to the College’s status as a Church College’¹⁶⁰ as opposed to it being part of the identity and distinctiveness of the institution.

It is worth noting that the official title retained the Saints, but the newly design logo used in all branding and published materials from 2008 used the title UCP Marjon, the well-known nickname and abbreviation of the Saints.



This could be considered as one of the most significant challenges to what had been a distinctive and enduring element of the institutions identity for over 150 years and it was approved by the Management Team, with no evident institutional debate.¹⁶¹ The rebranding appeared to reflect an interpretation of the appropriateness or otherwise of the Christian ethos for a secular University College interpreted by the Management. Whilst this approach was inconsistent with those institutions remaining in the university college sector, this marginalising of the Christian Heritage was comparable with the way that it was being dealt with at the new universities with Christian Foundations. This was further evidence of the impact of the external environment and other institutions

¹⁵⁹ Extract from Council of management Minutes, March 2007

¹⁶⁰ Academic Board Minutes AB 361, February 2007

¹⁶¹ Management Team minutes, October 2007

within in it on the developing identity of the institution. The University of Winchester for example relegates reference to their Christian heritage to their value statements stating:

‘Spirituality:

The University celebrates its Christian foundation, and welcomes people of all faiths and none. Together, we aim to explore the mystery of life and to grow in wisdom and love.’¹⁶²

York St John refer to their Christian Foundation in their mission, stating:

‘York St John University is committed to the provision of excellent, open and progressive higher education that embraces difference, challenges prejudice and promotes justice, and is shaped by our Christian foundation.’¹⁶³

The strategic plan Marjon 2010 (phase 1)¹⁶⁴ published in 2005 had removed the commitment to Christian service and the serious study of Christianity and the website and other publications made only passing reference to the Christian foundation in the context of the institutional values. The impact of this change was becoming clear in the institution. Where loss making or break-even contracts overseas that related to capacity building and development work had been previously supported by the institution without question teams were now being challenged to ensure that work undertaken was financially beneficial to the institution. There being a Christian value to it was no longer accepted as a rationale for cross institutional subsidy.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Spirituality statement www.winchester.ac.uk/aboutus/missionandvalues downloaded 28/12/2012

¹⁶³ York St John University Mission extract www.yorksj.ac.uk/cms_files/strategymap_downloaded 28/12/2012

¹⁶⁴ Strategic Plan ‘Marjon 2010 (Phase 1)’, 2005

¹⁶⁵ Extract from Council of Management Minutes 06.04.6, March 2006

5.5.2 Marjon 2010: The next stage consultation (2007)

The Principal, possibly in response to the increasing challenges about where the institution was going and what TDAP and university college title really meant, used the development of phase 2 of the strategic plan as a vehicle to engage the institution in the debate towards a new identity.¹⁶⁶ In presenting a review of the future direction of the institution in February 2007 he recognised that the lack of clarity and direction was impacting morale and effectiveness of the institution stating:

*'The Management Team believes that the best way to respond – and to engender a high-morale organisation – is by providing clear direction and as much certainty as possible now that we are a 'grown-up university college.'*¹⁶⁷

The process was again consultative and collegiate. No 'desired future image' (Gioia & Thomas, 1996) was presented as a framework within which to respond. The way forward appeared to be open for negotiation possibly reflecting the inclusive culture of the institution, and/or the leadership style of the Principal. The summary of responses to the consultation on the strategic plan from managers and staff across the institution raised a number of factors of identity for consideration in developing this clear direction for the 'grown up' institution, some of which were conflicting.¹⁶⁸ Details of responses relating to the image and pillars of identity of the institution are detailed below:

In terms of title and TDAP:

- Should the title selected for the University College be one that could be adapted for **when** we are a university (p4)
- With regards to using Marjon awards this should be as soon as possible, 'any hesitation would be seen as a sign of weakness' (p5)
- 'The Exeter brand is highly esteemed and a great selling point to parents and applicants' (p5)

¹⁶⁶ Academic Board Minutes 361, February 2007

¹⁶⁷ 'Marjon 2010: The next stage' Presented to Academic Board, February 2007

¹⁶⁸ Ibid p6

In terms of the portfolio there were more differences of opinion evident:

- 'we do not have the status advantage that is going to be needed to generate large numbers of non-local students' (p7)
- 'The portfolio should be developed through 'developing niche activity'
- 'we must not build a totally vocational portfolio which is subject to the vagaries of limited funders' (p6)
- Many recognised 'an increasing tendency among students to prefer courses that are job-relevant, and are not disconcertingly academic' (p7)
- 'We need to resolve academic-vocational/professional-training tensions' (p8)
- Some 'expressed concern about the College moving toward entirely vocational programmes. Some have said this would relegate us to the status of an FE college' (p9)
- 'We should not lose sight of the values of Higher Education, such as the wider development of the mind (p9)

Reviewing delivery arrangements the issue of being teaching-led was challenged:

- 'Marjon has always been a teaching led institution. A number of academic staff have advocated reducing contact time, but this has always been met with strong resistance' (p12).
- 'Given the needy nature of many of our students, we should be cautious to reduce contact time' (p12)

There were no specific references to research except that resources needed to be made available to 'continue the work of creating a research culture in the College'.¹⁶⁹ In the context of the timing of the next Research Assessment Exercise (2008) the lack of any reference in the consultation paperwork was surprising.

The confused external message in terms of identity was referred to in the response paper, suggesting that the development of a new brand could counter

169 'Marjon 2010:The next stage Summary' Presented to Academic Board, p5, 16.02.2007

the 'uncertainty in the public perception as to what Marjon stands for, and what kind of institution it is' (p16).

Low staff morale was referred to; 'perhaps precipitated by the 'very depressing situation for the future of Higher Education' (p33) and there was a question raised about the institution's ability to survive and maintain independence.

One of the most fundamental issues raised in the next steps document related to identity; 'what is the core purpose of a small University College in 2015?'¹⁷⁰ and requested that the vision be renewed, learning from institutions that had been 'where we are now a few years ago'.¹⁷¹

The 'Next Stage' consultation was part of an institution wide consultation process and the precursor to the penultimate strategic plan of the period; Marjon 2012(2008), which more specifically addressed the strategic direction, aiming to provide identity clarity for those both within and external to the institution.

5.5.3 Summary 2007-2008

Post-TDAP there is evidence of a developing meanings void. There was a lack of understanding internally and externally as to what it meant to be a university college and how this positioned Marjon as evidenced through the responses from the wider staff outlined in the Marjon 2010: The Next Stage Detailed Summary¹⁷². The change in status had put into question a number of characteristics and elements of distinctiveness as Marjon struggled to understand whether these remained valid on joining this ill-defined sector. This

¹⁷⁰ 'Marjon 2010: The Next Stage Detailed Summary' presented to Academic Board, 316-05, 16.02.2007

¹⁷¹ *ibid* p34 citing Northampton, Worcester, Winchester, Chester, Roehampton and Christ Church Canterbury

¹⁷² 'Marjon 2010: The Next Stage Detailed Summary' presented to Academic Board, 316-05, 16.02.2007

lack of clarity was reinforced by the movement of institutions out of this sub sector and on to full university status.

5.6 'Marjon 2012', the 2008 strategic plan

The strategy sought to provide a clear 'desired future identity' and was developed and consulted on over a one year time frame before being adopted in February 2008 with a revised vision:

Our vision is that we become **Marjon University**, adding to the best of what we are and always have been by growth, teaching and research that serves and develops society for the common good.¹⁷³

Almost immediately as TDAP had been officially awarded the stated position 'to remain a University College for the foreseeable future rather than necessarily seeking to grow in size in order to meet the criteria for a University title'¹⁷⁴ was reversed. The desire to become a university was the new stated principal aim,¹⁷⁵ with an associated need for extensive growth to meet the required 4,000 FTE student threshold defined as part of the formal process for application for university title.

What was clear through the revised vision was that the University College was again on a journey, this time to full University status, accepting that the hard fought for current position of university college was just a stopping off place. What were the identity implications of this decision? The institution had become a university college, an organisation ill-defined in identity terms in the higher education environment, but defined in legislation as a university in all but size, at a time when there were few comparator organisations. There was no stated rationale for the need to now aspire to full university status, but this was a recognised journey that had been undertaken by other university colleges.

¹⁷³ Strategic Plan 'Marjon 2012' p1, 2008

¹⁷⁴ Marjon Critical Self Assessment Document as presented to the Privy Council, 2005 p6

¹⁷⁵ 'Marjon 2012 Draft Five-year strategic plan' Presented to Academic Board 02.11.07

5.6.1 External Environment

A key difficulty for the institution in any quest to become a university was that the level of growth required to meet the statutory criteria for university status was likely to be unachievable. In 2008 the University College had 2090 recorded full time undergraduate students and 235 full time post graduate students. Policy changes were impacting the sector, including a cap on HEFCE fundable student numbers,¹⁷⁶ which would mean that maintaining student numbers would become increasingly difficult as the higher education environment became more competitive and growth almost impossible. Once again it seemed that the University College had missed the boat, and would stay one step behind other similar institutions that had taken the TDAP journey earlier and grown sufficiently to be awarded university title.

In identity terms little had been done over the period to address the challenges outlined by staff through the Next Stage¹⁷⁷ document. The institution had moved from being a Higher Education College with a reliance on the University of Exeter for accreditation to a university college with its own degree awarding powers. Before defining itself in this new independent state a revised vision had been agreed; not to remain as a university college, but to move on to full university status.

Whilst there was now an image or vision of the future; to be a university, making that compelling for organisational members would be essential to ensure intentional strategic change was enacted. There was evidentially 'a tacit understanding of what it means to be a university' (Barnett 2000) widely understood by members of the institution, but what it meant specifically for this organisation needed to be defined and understood. What type of organisation was it seeking to be? Which university sector club was the institution intending to join in a sector where there is a clear hierarchy and mimetic behaviour is a key factor in identity formation and maintenance?

¹⁷⁶ HEFCE Circular 2009/25

¹⁷⁷ 'Marjon 2010 the next stage, 2007

Growth was the first target of this new plan and as this was unlikely to be achievable was the vision of the institution as a university valid? The institution was a university college for the foreseeable future and therefore seeking to mimic a 'real' university through its strategic objectives may have appeared inappropriate and difficult for members of the organisation to engage with. Having not previously developed a vision of the future as a university college there was no clarity of identity for the institution to cling on to during its time as a university college. Through the documentation, as outlined in section 5.5 above, there was evidence of a de-identification process occurring, with a number of elements of the previous identity being challenged, but there was no evidence of clarity for a re-identification process to occur.

5.6.2 Towards a 'university'?

The strategic plan,¹⁷⁸ as a vehicle for identity redevelopment and change required in addition to excessive growth (30% over 5 years) a commitment to the University College changing some of its fundamental characteristics and distinctiveness. Growth was to be achieved through increased applications from students both home and overseas, a challenge as the current profile of students was that 70% of them came from the South West.¹⁷⁹ The up-front commitment to widening participation, a key element of the identity of the institution arguably since inception was replaced in the plan by a broad value statement to provide 'intellectually challenging programmes to all who can benefit from higher education and training'¹⁸⁰ and a new commitment to selecting students as opposed to recruiting them¹⁸¹ was introduced, with an intention to increase the academic requirements of incoming students. The reach of the institution was to be increased with students being attracted from more national and international locations.¹⁸² The portfolio was to be broadened, with new programmes being introduced annually over the life of the plan,¹⁸³ including the introduction of

¹⁷⁸ Strategic Plan 'Marjon 2012 5 Year Strategic Plan', 2008

¹⁷⁹ Marjon Annual report, 2007

¹⁸⁰ Strategic Plan 'Marjon 2012' Values as presented to Board of Governors March 2008

¹⁸¹ Ibid p3

¹⁸² Ibid p 2

¹⁸³ 'Marjon Strategic Plan Action Plan' 2007/08, Feb 2007

foundation degrees and top up programmes for foundation degree students. Being teaching-led and research informed remained, but there was a commitment to improve the research profile of the institution, moving towards delivering research degrees through gaining Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP).¹⁸⁴

These proposed changes appeared to reflect the identity characteristics of a university as widely perceived, a place where academically able students were selected to attend, where the student population was a mix of regional, national and international students and where there was a recognisable staff research profile measured through external ratings and outputs including the delivery of research degrees.

If achieved, this would result in significant shifts in the identity of the University College, which to date largely had retained its pre-TDAP identity position, despite the change in title and an attempt to de-identify with the identity of a college of higher education. There needed to be a strong and continued narrative to mediate the process of weakening the previous identity and strengthening the new one (Schneider et al, 1995). This would be increasingly difficult to do convincingly as the primary objective of the plan; growth to gain university title was not realistically achievable in the more hostile external environment.

The lived identity of the institution had already been challenged by the implications of TDAP. This identity was partly wrapped up in being part of a prestigious university and that had been removed, by a form of self-agreed abandonment as the University College decided to move wholly to awarding its own undergraduate degrees at the earliest opportunity. The University of Exeter had decided to terminate the agreement relating to the awarding of research degrees with the University College, leaving it without a partner for new research students.¹⁸⁵ Professional identities were also being challenged by this shift. No longer were academic staff attached to the University of Exeter,

¹⁸⁴ Ibid p4

¹⁸⁵ Minutes of Council of Management, July 2008

delivering their awards, they were now delivering the awards of a newly established university college with no kudos or track record. Concern was expressed that moving to Marjon awards would lead to declining student recruitment.

In research undertaken in 2005/6 by Corporate Diagnostics¹⁸⁶ for the College a high proportion of students had stated a preference for staying with the award of Exeter degrees, but the decision was taken to move outright to Marjon awards for all new students from 2007. A percentage of the staff also felt that the institution should remain with Exeter;¹⁸⁷ they weren't ready for this independent future and the high levels of uncertainty surrounding it, particularly as there was no clear picture of what this independent future looked like.

If this revised vision, of Marjon as a University, was not realistically achievable was there a risk that the desired future image would be perceived as a change that was more 'image than substance' (Alvesson, 1990), with an increasing risk of identity fragmentation as the University College was unable to meet the newly defined requirements to look like a 'real university'? Or could the University College deliver the requirements of the strategic plan that resulted in a revised identity without having to change its title?

5.6.3 An external perspective

Reviewing externally facing literature for the period 2007-2010 corporate branding, image and published messages were not always consistent with the revised strategic plan. The 2009 prospectus retained a commitment to life-long learning and widening participation, stating that 'The University College is committed to fulfilling its mission to be the Community University College of the South West',¹⁸⁸ a reference to the previous mission of the institution and this statement also appears in the 2010 prospectus.¹⁸⁹ In 2009 entry tariffs for

¹⁸⁶ Corporate Diagnostics 'TDAP Research Report', May 2006

¹⁸⁷ Marjon 2010: The Next Stage Summary of Responses, p5, 2007

¹⁸⁸ UCP Marjon Prospectus, p112, 2009

¹⁸⁹ UCP Marjon Undergraduate Prospectus, p107, 2010

students remained at the same levels as 2008,¹⁹⁰ with limited movement in popular programmes in Sport in 2010, but this did not result in a change in the entry mix of incoming students and the University College remained 5th from bottom in terms of entry tariffs in the *Guardian* League table in 2010.¹⁹¹

There was evidence of portfolio development with the introduction of 3 foundation degrees and a suite of Masters level qualifications in the period.¹⁹² The 2009 undergraduate prospectus advertised degrees in Sociology, Psychology and Philosophy, but these closed due to poor recruitment and did not recruit in 2009. The portfolio remained narrow over the period 2007-2010, focussed largely in sport, education and media.¹⁹³

The profile of research in externally facing documents was more apparent, with the annual reports¹⁹⁴ highlighting grants received by staff and the appointment of Professors and Readers and it was noted that an approach had been made to the Open University to become the research awarding partner of the University College. The University College had submitted to the 2008 RAE and had performed badly, appearing last in the *Times Higher* Research League table.¹⁹⁵ This was not widely reported in a negative vein and at the Council of Management the RAE was referred to as having 'resulted in some notable successes and we now have some funding'.¹⁹⁶

Marketing and branding strategies became more challenging as there was an attempt to marry a new and dynamic secular institution with a 150 year old institution with a Christian heritage. The institution had an external reputation and public identity for widening participation, community feel and excellent student support, but corporate publications were now focussing more on the espoused identity, with an increasing research focus, excellence in teaching

¹⁹⁰ Ibid p28 and 33-103

¹⁹¹ Guardian University League Table, 2010

¹⁹² UCP Marjon Annual report 2007/08

¹⁹³ UCP Marjon Undergraduate Prospectuses 2007-2010

¹⁹⁴ UCP Marjon Annual Reports 2007/08 and 2008/09

¹⁹⁵ Times Higher Education Supplement Research League Table, December 2008

¹⁹⁶ Council of Management Minutes, 20 March 2009

and curriculum development.¹⁹⁷ In external publicity, such as the student prospectus and on the website there was an attempt to be clearer and more positive about the status, in line with what Albert & Whetton (1985) call publically presented identity which is usually more positive and monolithic than internally perceived identity. Attempts to clarify and define the position of the University College were made:

‘What is a University College?

It is a small University with less than 4,000 full-time equivalent students. We offer specialist career-focused courses, delivered by highly experienced and professional lecturers, in small group sizes with plenty of contact time. At UCP Marjon, you’ll be studying in a supportive community where you will quickly make lasting friendships and get to know both staff and students on a first name basis.’¹⁹⁸

This external message clearly stated that the University College was a University in all but name (or number).

5.6.4 Internal perspectives

Internally there was limited evidence that the drive to be a university, or ‘university like’ was being responded to despite the existence of a strategic plan with key targets and KPI’s in place to drive this change. An increasingly negative discourse was evident within the management team of the institution, despite achieving the primary goal of the original strategic plan for the period; TDAP. The institution was still not meeting its student recruitment targets and remained at 2090 undergraduate students in 2008/09, with post graduate numbers falling to 235,¹⁹⁹ remained financially vulnerable in spite of making surpluses in excess of sector norms in 2008 and 2009,²⁰⁰ after taking on significant borrowings²⁰¹ to improve the sports facilities and student accommodation. Concerns were being expressed about the ability to meet the

¹⁹⁷ UCP Marjon Annual Report 2007/08

¹⁹⁸ UCP Marjon Undergraduate Prospectus, 2010

¹⁹⁹ HESA Student Data, all Institutions, 2008/09

²⁰⁰ College of St Mark and St John Foundation Financial Statements 2008 and 2009

²⁰¹ Academic Board Minutes 374, December 2008

strategic planning targets in the changing external environment.²⁰² There was a sense of a lack of institutional confidence and increasing reference to the University College having missed the boat in terms of being able to benefit from TDAP. As noted in my journal, 'the issue of not being able to access the growth that other UC's had accessed as the world had moved on was raised again'.²⁰³ In November 2008 the Principal announced his resignation and intention to leave the University College in the following July, an event that could in organisational identity terms be considered the departure of the 'founder' of the University College and the owner of the revised strategic identity (Albert & Whetton, 1985).

Internally there was evidence of deteriorating self-image which results in incremental adaptation of identity over time (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). From an identity (re)development perspective it was clear that the organisation was beginning to experience a meanings void (Gioia et al, 2010), a situation where the institutions previous identity is no longer meaningful to the developing organisation, but a revised identity had yet to be accepted. The institution had spent two years obtaining a new status that was still not credible, not validated within the university sector and there was no evidence that it was making a positive difference to recruitment and sustainability. A new vision and espoused identity associated with that more widely recognised as a university, was not recognised by the internal community, was open to interpretation and was not being consistently acted upon.

5.6.4.a Research

There was limited response by staff to the targets relating to research, with no improvement in research outputs or the generation of research income.²⁰⁴ In my journal I note a discussion from a Deans Meeting²⁰⁵ where academic staff through the appraisal process state to the Deans that they had no time to take research leave as their teaching and student liaison and support took all of their

²⁰² Council of Management Minutes July 2009

²⁰³ Personal Journal notes from Planning and Resources Group, March 2009

²⁰⁴ Academic Board Minutes 378, June 2009

²⁰⁵ Personal Journal notes, October 2009

time. The discussion centred on what action should or could be taken to ensure that research was given adequate prioritisation. I noted that the Dean stated 'when they say they could not do their research because they had no time I ask if I would think it would be okay if they hadn't done their teaching.'²⁰⁶ The Deputy Principal had no response to offer the Dean. These are matters of identity, both institutional and professional. At Marjon the identity is clearly as a teaching led, student focussed University College; the student comes first and research, in spite of targets set through the strategic plan, was not seen as priority activity by the wider staff body.

5.6.4.b Portfolio

Academic Board challenged the narrowing of the portfolio through the closure of non-viable programmes, but programmes closed. It also expressed concern about the drive to improve the academic quality of entrants to the University College and 'affirmed the importance of non-standard entrants to the University College, and welcomed the fact that the admission of any student would be determined by an assessment of their potential 'to successfully complete and benefit from their proposed programme of study', rather than by way of a mechanistic approach based solely on entry qualifications.'²⁰⁷ Aspects of the strategic plan appeared open to interpretation, for example the stated intention to become more selecting as an institution resulted in one of the faculties increasing tariff scores for incoming students.²⁰⁸ This arguably challenged the lived identity of the University College as inclusive. This was not replicated across the other faculty who had interpreted selectivity as engaging more with students at the recruitment process, through interview or written contact to enable academically less able students with other life experience to be recruited. I note in my journal 'interesting debate amongst the managers relating to definition of selectivity. Most agree that this relates to selecting on grades, but one team in particular hung up on selectivity more attuned to WP'.²⁰⁹ These issues were challenges to the newly defined identity pillars outlined in the strategic plan which sought to mimic more closely a university.

²⁰⁶ Personal Journal notes, October 2009

²⁰⁷ Academic Board Minutes 378, June 2009

²⁰⁸ UCP Marjon Undergraduate prospectus, 2011

²⁰⁹ Personal Journal notes from Change Academy event June 2012

5.6.5 Summary 2008

In the period from the development of 'Marjon 2012' in 2008 little had actually changed. Student application and admission rates had not increased;²¹⁰ entry tariffs had remained low by sector standards,²¹¹ the University College continued to recruit as opposed to select students, staff research outputs had not improved, no research partner had been identified meaning that the University College was unable to recruit new research students and there was regular and increasing debate regarding the way that the institution presented itself externally, through the website and external publications. At the Management Team 'concern was raised over how it was possible to ensure that the UC remained true to its widening participation roots while trying to improve selectivity.'²¹² It could be argued that external factors significantly impacted whether the University College could secure these changes to its identity, particularly as it was heavily reliant on public funding and therefore subject to Governmental changes in priority. The external environment was not conducive to a growth agenda, one of the key planks of the strategic plan. However there was clear evidence of a lack of acceptance of the stated desired identity as evidenced through the actions and outputs of the university college community.

5.7 A Final Push? Another Strategic plan Consultation 2009-2012

In 2009 the University College was still struggling with who it was and where it fitted in the HE landscape when a new Principal was appointed, opening the organisation up to further identity challenge. A new strategic plan was developed after consultation and familiar issues were considered in the Strategic Plan Consultation:²¹³

- What did it mean to be a Christian foundation and should this be given a greater or lesser emphasis in the strategic plan?

²¹⁰ HESA Student Return, 2008

²¹¹ Guardian University League Table, 2010

²¹² Management Team minutes, May 2009

²¹³ Strategic Plan Consultation Questions, 2009

- Is there a need for a clearer vision?
- How is inclusivity squared with selectivity?
- What does research and scholarly activity look like in a University College?
- Why aim for University title?

Responses resulted in opposing views expressed across the staff body, which arguably reflect the identity crisis, or meanings void:²¹⁴

| | |
|--|--|
| We are teaching led and research informed | We need to improve our research profile and gain RDAP to have academic credibility |
| Widening participation is at the heart of everything we do | We need to improve the academic entry levels of students and become a selecting university |
| We need to focus on our strengths and maximise financially sustainable recruitment | We need to maintain and improve curriculum breadth to be a 'university' |
| The Christian foundation should be recognised | The Christian heritage should underpin our approach, but not be writ large |

Table Extract from 'Strategic Plan Responses Summary', 2009

A new mission was developed to support another strategic plan, approved in 2010; Marjon 2010-15:

*'The University College Plymouth St Mark & St John is proud of its unique heritage and Christian foundation which underpins a continuing education philosophy to value and respect all learners and to continually build on and develop our distinctiveness.'*²¹⁵

The notion of working towards university title was retained, but a focus on widening participation and inclusivity returned with targets to exceed the national benchmarks in the numbers of students from the lower socio economic groups. The research commitment was diluted to enhancing the volume and

²¹⁴ Extract from Management Team Strategic Plan responses summary, 2009

²¹⁵ UCP Marjon Strategic Plan 2010-2015

quality of research and advanced scholarship and improving the numbers of staff with doctorates. The portfolio was to be focussed on the professional and vocational, with increases in part time student access and growth was to be sought from international work.

Reviewing the impact on the pillars of identity over the period 2007 to 2012 of the presentation of a desired future image more in line with a university shows little movement. Curriculum remained narrowly focused,²¹⁶ arguably as a result of student number controls imposed by HEFCE²¹⁷ and the TDA²¹⁸ in this period, and a change in focus to be 'professional and vocational' had limited impact as the University College kept open provision such as English Literature as it was struggling to make its overall recruitment targets. There was no increase in part time or on-site international students during the period²¹⁹ despite significant internal investment in staffing and other resources to support recruitment, but there was an increase in international accreditation work, largely an attempt to increase income to the institution. The University did maintain its commitment to widening participation, recruiting students from lower socio-economic groups,²²⁰ with lower tariff scores, resulting in the University College appearing as the 12th lowest for entry tariffs of English HEIs in 2012.²²¹

A defined identity pillar for a university is research and progress in this respect within the institution continued to be limited,²²² such that the University College decided in 2011 not to enter the REF²²³ for fear of damaging the institutional reputation if appearing bottom again, as in 2008.

The Christian ethos remained visible within the institution in terms of published literature and actions such as prayers at Governors meetings, but its place in a

²¹⁶ UCP Marjon Prospectus 2010, 2011 and 2012

²¹⁷ HEFCE Circular 2009/22

²¹⁸ TDA Allocations summary, 2010

²¹⁹ HESA 2010, 2011

²²⁰ HESA 2010, 2011

²²¹ Guardian University Guide 2014

²²² Research Outputs report to SMT, June, 2011

²²³ Academic Board Minutes, March 2013

University College continued to be actively debated at a range of committees.²²⁴ At the Board of Governors there was an attempt to 'bring theological studies to the foreground of the UC's academic offer as this is an important part of what makes the UC distinctive.'²²⁵

This revised strategic plan appeared to reflect the existing identity of the organisation in terms of distinctiveness and character but there was limited recognition of the meanings void that had developed in the period post-TDAP. This was explored by the wider management team in June 2012 at an externally facilitated Change Academy event attended by 15 of the most senior staff in the University College, at which I was present as an observer. The agreed feedback to the Principal's Office Group highlighted a staff body lacking in confidence, defined as a 'developing child, vulnerable and lacking in self-esteem following separation from the parent (Exeter University), unclear about future direction in a hostile environment'.²²⁶ The group identified their desire to respond to change and:

- embrace the concept and title of University
- feel proud of the institution in which we work and our students study
- Grow from our strengths, becoming a selecting centre of excellence
- Continue to work in partnership and develop key professional links
- maintain our reputation for excellent teaching, informed by scholarly activity and applied research
- change our systems and processes and focus investment in the flexible and dynamic institution we need to become.²²⁷

This output shows that there was a clear meanings void at the wider management level within the institution. The managers had de-identified with the old College and were seeking to 'embrace the concept and title of university', but were seeking to define what that meant for the University College.

²²⁴ Academic Board 2011

²²⁵ Board of Governors 6.1 18 November, 2010

²²⁶ B. Allmark Change Academy Feedback, 2012

²²⁷ K Stockham Change Academy Presentation to Principal Office Group, 2011

A lack of what Habermas (1972) refers to as 'communicative competence' was evident following TDAP. The importance of narrative when a meanings void is evident was ignored and dialogue which makes meaning and enables participants to reach understandings with others about those meanings was absent. Assumptions were being made that the institution understood its place in the higher education landscape and its history and the relationship of the university college with the university sector was not recognised. Abbas argues that within organisations where there is threat of widespread change 'communication becomes distorted and people resort to strategic action and engage in inauthentic debate that does not constitute real communication' (2012, p160). TDAP gave the institution an opportunity to redefine itself in a meaningful way that interfaced with its history and sought to provide it with validity in the newly developing higher education landscape, but this opportunity had been missed.

5.8 2012/13 Unexpected change

In 2012 David Willets (Minister for BIS) announced a surprising change to the legal definition of a university. In line with the lobbying undertaken by Guild HE²²⁸ the arbitrary student numbers required by an institution with TDAP to be classified as a university was reduces from 4000 to 1000. Once again the University College was able to change its status without actively changing anything about itself. By default it is now part of what many argue is not just a more diverse, but further diluted university sector in terms of meaning, and the issues evidenced through the data analysis remain issues for the new University.

This legislative change enabled the organisation to become a university; the University of St Mark & St John, which was finalised in March 2013, coinciding with the appointment of the first Vice-Chancellor, from a Russell Group

²²⁸ Guild HE, 'A case for University Title', 2010

university. A revised strategic plan was adopted in April 2014²²⁹ with a target to transform the organisation through changes to the 'pillars of identity' for a university (Delanty, 1998). The portfolio is to move from predominantly undergraduate to include a mix of post-graduate and research degrees, a research culture is to be established through the appointment of an executive manager to lead the area and a number of professors and more 'academic' subjects are to be introduced into the portfolio to balance the current vocational focus. Ambitious targets are in place to increase staff and student recruitment, nationally and internationally and entry tariffs for students are to be increased to introduce a level of selectivity in the recruitment process as detailed in the KPI's attached to the strategic plan.²³⁰

These changes, if achieved, would align the University with the widely held understandings of a university and the membership criteria as currently defined by those within the sector. This highlights the impact of the minimum membership criteria to be defined as a university, but does the possible level of mimicry implied by this work against the Government agenda of a more diverse university sector (Willets, 2013)?

5.9 Conclusion

Through the period 1998-2013 Marjon faced challenges to its identity as a result of reclassification from a college of higher education to a university college, arguably a higher order sub sector of the stratified HE sector. This sector was ill defined and in terms of identity development through inter group comparison was a weak strategic group, not valued, widely recognised or understood. This resulted in the development of an identity crisis or meanings void within the organisation. In response a desired future identity was articulated in 2008 in the guise of full membership of the university sector. This was at a time when legislative constraints rendered this almost impossible. The idea of university membership as interpreted by the management of the organisation met the pillars of identity as a definitional construct for membership and fundamentally

²²⁹ 'Challenging Horizons' Strategic Plan, University of St Mark & St John, 2014

²³⁰ *ibid*

challenged the characteristics and distinctiveness of the identity of Marjon as developed through its history.

The impact of the challenges through the period 1998 -2013 on the change and continuities in the identity of Marjon and challenges to and development of existing theories in the field of organisational identity are addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

Through the case study there are a number of themes emergent that make visible the changes and continuities in the identity of Marjon and the factors influencing these over the specified time period. These interconnected themes develop and challenge the existing theoretical constructs and contextual frameworks in use in understanding the development of organisational identity. This chapter explores the research findings and introduces a new conceptual framework to support the understanding of organisational identity development; a key contribution to the field of organisational identity.

6.1 Importance of identity to organisational health

My research strongly supports the notion that organisational identity serves as an 'important guide for strategic decision making, issue interpretation, and how organisations approach relationships with stakeholders' (Gioia et al 2010). Dutton & Dukerich (1991) argue that a strong identity enables fundamental questions relating to how an institution responds to the day to day and strategic questions to be answered, through the provision of a compass or tacitly understood framework to guide decision making. This allows resources to be effectively allocated to support the development of the organisation, arguably more important in terms of sustainability in small and financially vulnerable organisations such as Marjon. Hatch & Schultz (2004) assert that when identity is not clear there is significant risk to the overall health of the institution.

This is supported by the case study data in the post-TDAP period. When identity is being challenged there is evidence of lack of organisational cohesion, damaging organisational effectiveness. Differing and contradictory interpretations of desired future identity and associated priorities is evident (5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.6.4, 5.7). There is a lack of prioritisation of activities that would support the achievement of targets defined to meet the stated revised identity (5.6.4.a, 5.6.4.b). Public facing documentation is contradictory, much of it reflecting the historical identity position of Marjon, not the characteristics of a university (5.6.3, 5.6.4). There is evidence of multiple identity interpretations, internally and externally (5.5.1, 5.5.2).

The lack of identity clarity impacted the successful development of the organisation. The clearly defined strategic targets remained unmet by the end of the review period (5.6, 5.7) leaving Marjon as one of the smallest institutions in the sector, with a similar portfolio and no evident development in research.

There are multiple factors affecting an organisation's identity and its ability to maintain it, or as necessary redefine it or re-identify. The case study has highlighted in particular the impact of externally held definitions and sector stratification as fundamental to the understandings of and responses by the new University.

6.2 Issues of definition and membership

The character, distinctiveness and temporal continuity of an organisation can be seen through the research to reflect its identity, but there is strong evidence that how meanings are made about the value and validity of that identity is heavily impacted by the organisations relationship with and positioning in the external environment within which it operates. This is visible through exploration of the implications of definitions and membership criteria applicable within the university sector on the identity development of those organisations seeking to join. The research findings confirm the assertions that organisational identity is constructed through environmental interaction over time (Albert & Whetton, 1985; Czarniawska & Sevon 1996). Through the context chapter and the case study there is support for the argument that whilst what it means to be a university is under definitional pressure, there are widely accepted minimum criteria for membership (Delanty, 1998). These are more rigorous than the current legislative requirements that enable organisations to use the term university in their title (DBIS, 2012). The criteria are long standing and have impacted the identity development of the civic universities and the transfer of the polytechnics and individual university colleges to the university sector over time (2.3, 2.5, 2.6).

The interconnectivity between definition and identity development is visible through the data presented and challenges the work of Albert & Whetton (1985). They imply it is easy to define and establish 'what' an organisation is

and that this has limited impact on the deeper question of the identity of the organisation. They define organisational identity as the answer to the 'who' question, which is a reflection of the uniqueness of the organisation. The data presented challenge this assertion.

The case study makes clear that **what** an organisation is has far reaching implications for **who** it is, impacting its character and primary purpose, fundamental elements of its identity. For an institution to be accepted as a member of a particular group it must meet specific criteria which are likely to have been defined by those in the group (Peteraf & Shanley, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 2004), and these include activity, characteristics and status. This enables 'in-group' and 'out-group' comparisons reinforcing stratification and hierarchy in organisational behaviour as is evident in the HE sector (Sections 2.5, 2.6). These criteria enable an understanding of what it means to be a member, differentiating the collective group from other groups.

The identity development of Marjon is affected by a number of issues pertaining to definition. Firstly there was confusion as to whether the change to university college status through the achievement of TDAP constituted a genuine change in the positioning of the organisation, requiring a reconsideration of identity (Bartneuck & Moch, 1987; MacDonald, 2010). Secondly the lack of clarity as to the membership criteria and position of university colleges in the HE sector impacted the ability to develop identity through mimicry (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Billot, 2010). Thirdly the impact of university college status being a temporary position on the journey to full university title affected the value and validity of 'university college' as a destination with which to redefine (Peteraf & Shanley, 1997).

In seeking TDAP there appeared to be initial management recognition that this would change the status of the organisation; 'we will therefore determine the name, brand and future identity, given that if awarded TDAP, we will be able to call ourselves a University College' (Baker, 2006). However this was contradicted by claims both internally and externally that the TDAP process was a validation process, suggesting that the organisation was already a university in all but name (5.4 and 5.4.1). This had been played out in policy debate by SCOP (1993) through their lobbying and during this period there was

Governmental shift in the definition of a university. It was now possible to become a university without possessing research degree awarding powers (DFES, 2004), enabling many in the university college sector to apply for university title without enacting any change in their approach to curriculum or research.

By reinforcing the outcome of TDAP as validation of the current identity of the organisation identity confusion, or a meanings void, became evident (5.5.2). There was a lack of acknowledgment by the management team that the change was one of collective status likely to result in identity reconsideration (MacDonald, 2013). Internal and public documentation highlighted a desire to remain an avowedly teaching-led community focussed organisation, with a continued emphasis on widening participation (5.4.1, 5.4.2). However this lack of change in purpose and position was being challenged internally (section 5.5.1, 5.5.2) and was contradicted by developed strategic plans and associated targets (5.6). These sought to articulate a move to a higher status organisation in line with the membership criteria of a university, reflecting what Teichler (2008) refers to as 'academic drift'.

The process of sectoral positional change is reflected on by Levin, when considering the achievement of baccalaureate degree programme awarding powers for community colleges in North America. Levin suggests that 'what has altered, then, is not only the conceptual framework or the world view that 'shape(s) and guide(s) members' values, perceptions, attitudes and behaviour...(as well as) the organisations purpose, policy, priorities, procedures, and structures, but also institutional identity, as understood from both within and without' (2002, p8). This world view was however not evident in the context of the 'university college'. The position and membership criteria of a university college in the HE sector were unclear and changing (2.6; 3.3.2). They were not widely understood or defined outside of the legal definition but where recognised were considered as being on the periphery of or lower order members of the wider HE sector (Teichler, 2008, Brennan & Williams, 2008).

Mimicry is an evident identity development tool in English HE (3.4.1.b). The absence of a distinctive and compelling strategic group identity for the university

college sector resulted in a drift to mimic a membership group more widely recognised and valued. Having 'university' in the title made explicit the strength of the tacit understandings relating to the term (Barnett, 2000) held internally by the collective staff and externally by other sector members, regardless of its applicability and the deficit position that it creates within an organisation not meeting the criteria (5.5.2, 5.6, 5.7). These understandings are likely to have been partly developed and reinforced through Marjon's relationship with the long standing partner university, the University of Exeter, classified internally as a 'real' university.

The university college sector was becoming recognised as a stopping off place on the journey to university (section 2.6, 5.5), where there is evidence of organisations then conforming to the widely held understanding of a university as a place of teaching, research and wider societal responsibility (section 2.6, 5.5). This weakens the attractiveness of the university college sector in terms of strategic group identity (Peteraf & Shanley, 1997) resulting in a negative identity association. Becoming a university college had been a declared objective of the organisation, but as it was achieved it no longer appeared a valid or valued destination.

The tacit understanding and the pull of the perception of what it is to be a university had a destabilising effect on the organisation through the increased questioning of the value of the current/historical characteristics and distinctiveness of the organisation (5.5.1, 5.5.2) as compared to the 'real' university sector. These negative comparisons impacted on staff morale and institutional effectiveness (5.5.2). Not clearly understanding **what** the institution was had an impact on how it sought to understand **who** it was. The previous identity was no longer valid, the interim destination of university college did not have clear characteristics with which to identify and was not a valued destination. This identity crisis was exasperated by the fact that the legislative and political context would mean that that achieving university title appeared impossible (5.6.1).

In the higher education sector in England at this time there appears to a predetermined set of understandings relating to the identity of the university that

are closely aligned to a research university (Burrows, 1999; Shattock, 2011) impacting on the identity development of those seeking recognition as a valid part of the university sector. The capacity and willingness of an organisation to meet these criteria are therefore key factors in how organisational identity develops.

6.3 Willingness and capacity to change

Changing the identity of an organisation requires a fundamental shift in meanings and understandings regarding the organisation, including the purpose and the way that the work of the organisation is undertaken (Bartenuk & Moch, 1987). I argue that fulfilling such a transformation is not just reliant on strength of leadership and the importance of an articulated future vision (Gioia et al, 2010), but is substantially impacted by organisational capacity and willingness to change. This is reflected by the strength of the existing identity (character, distinctiveness and enduring features), the perceived value of the current identity to the members of the organisation, the wider contextual environment and factors such as the legislative and economic ability of the organisation to be in a position to make a change. Willingness and capacity to change is insufficiently addressed in the conceptual frameworks currently available for consideration of organisational identity development and change.

Albert & Whetton (1985) argue that the history of an organisation is a crucial factor in its willingness to adapt over time. This is supported through the data analysis. Marjon has developed a strong identity associated particularly with the way that it carried out its work and for whom evident from 1998 (5.2) through to 2012 (5.7). The institution, developed from a Christian foundation, has an underpinning ethos associated with social justice not only evident through widening access and encouraging non-traditional learners into higher education (5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.7), but also through the prioritisation of student focus over other elements of work usually associated with a university such as research. It is clear through the case study that the strength of these enduring features resulted in many of the strategic objectives developed to initiate or support identity change being left unmet as other more valued work was prioritised (5.5.3; 5.6.4 a; 5.7). In addition to the strength of the current identity of Marjon,

the case study evidence shows a lack of staff confidence, or possibly fear, to embrace the desire to be more university like, with in particular a high level of inexperience in matters of research (5.7).

If a desired future identity is perceived as not achievable, as was the case during this period due to the unachievable student growth targets and other internal and external constraints, it is rendered invalid. This increases the risk of an identity crisis occurring, harming the health of the organisation. For Marjon to become a university in 2008 it would have had to grow from 2060 full time home undergraduate students to 4,000 at a time when home student numbers were capped by Government (HEFCE, 2009). The desire for Marjon to be a university was not realistically achievable, but it could become more 'university like', increasing its research profile, being more selective in terms of recruiting students and targeting international students to increase its numbers. This would require a redirection of resources and a change in behaviours and priorities of staff. This did not occur (5.6), and reflects a number of internal constraints.

Financial sustainability is a key factor for smaller more vulnerable institutions and this issue of survival becomes an element of their identity or distinctiveness, impacting their capacity and willingness to respond to opportunities for change. Burrows highlights this phenomenon when reviewing identity in Catholic Baccalaureate institutions in America. She states that they '... depend on their local or regional communities for students. They are tuition fee dependent and live close to the changing conditions and demands of society and the market. Identity for these institutions is not simply a matter of principle, but also one of survival' (1999). The higher the level of financial vulnerability the lower the organisational risk appetite is likely to be, limiting the willingness to change. This is supported by the case study data. Whilst there had been an attempt to redefine the characteristics of Marjon in terms of curriculum and research (5.6.2), decisions continued to be made contrary to the redefined identity. Defining itself as professional and vocational (Marjon, 2010) Marjon continued to recruit to more academically focussed programmes such as English Literature to meet student number targets to ensure its financial stability for the year. Opportunities opened up by the funding agencies enabling

institutional growth are taken forward, even if they are outside of the declared desired identity, diluting this declared identity and challenging the validity of the proposed change of identity.

I would argue that despite financial vulnerability the case study shows that the internal allocation of resources to support priorities is largely led by the current (past) and not future identity of Marjon, and reflects the strength of the enduring features (history) of the organisation. Diversion of funds away from teaching, learning and student support towards developing a research agenda is evidently possible in practical terms. This did not take place (5.6.4.a). Understanding the underlying reasoning for this would be an additional piece of research in an interpretivist vein, to get a deep individual understanding of organisational members' perspectives on actions and inactions. Was it that the revised identity was not accepted by the internal community as being more important than the current identity, or was the change unachievable due to resource or other constraints?

6.4 Management of identity change and reclassification

Reviewing the current theory in respect of identity change there is an assertion that through clear narrative (Fiol, 1991; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al, 2010) and purposeful de-identification and re-identification the move to a desired future organisational identity can be developed and achieved by any organisation. The case study evidence renders this assumption wanting. Issues of validity, capacity and willingness to change are not sufficiently addressed through current theory.

6.4.1 Evidence of strong narrative

In the initial period from 2003 to 2007 there was arguably a lack of clear narrative as to the desired future identity of the organisation (5.3), making it difficult to evidence impact on change. However, once the desire to be a university was declared in 2008 and specific targets and objectives developed through the strategic plan (5.6), movement towards these goals would be evident through the data. Strategic planning and associated consultation

processes are used as the vehicle for articulating the future vision of the organisation (Gioia et al, 2000). A managed and deliberate approach to identity change ordinarily occurs after a desired future image has been articulated, a new future image painted for the organisation enabling sense making to be undertaken, before the detailed elements of a new identity are negotiated.

A clear outline of the criteria and associated characteristics of what being a university means to Marjon is articulated through the plan and the scale of the challenge to the existing organisational identity made visible (5.6.2). The various strategic plans of the period (5.3.4, 5.5,5.6, 5.7) required Marjon to double in size, become more selective, recruit more widely and develop a research profile. As stated by Fiol changing an organisational identity is a complex and challenging process that needs to be supported by strong narrative, requiring trust to be rebuilt with 'something higher than we do now' (2002, p663). Despite the delivery of this narrative for change there was limited evidence of a rebuilding of trust towards the new vision and a lack of apparent will to challenge failure to move to the new direction (5.6.4.a, 5.6.4.b). This may in part be a reflection of the culture of the institution, where non-compliance is widely tolerated and action is not taken in response to the non-delivery of targets by managers, teams and individuals, often referred to internally as 'the Marjon way.' However had the desired future identity been one that was accepted at senior management level and widely across the organisation progress towards change ought to have been evident. This would have ensured that key objectives were prioritised, resourced and at least partly delivered, even if modified by the difficult internal and external environment. This was not the case (5.6.5, 5.7), challenging the assertion that identity change can be effected through management and strategic planning tools, without due consideration of wider internal and external influencing factors.

6.4.2 Negative external comparison as a tool to de-identify

Linking with the management of identity development and the use of a strong narrative to effect change Gioia et al (1994) highlight the use by university leaders of social categorisation to compare the organisation both positively and negatively to other groups. This can be actively used to destabilise identity as

part of a de-identification process before re-identification with a revised desired future identity, legitimising the need for change.

Prior to the application for TDAP there is evidence that negative external comparators were actively used by management to paint a picture of Marjon as 'lagging behind its peers' (Baker, 2011), as being vulnerable and being held back by its relationship with the University of Exeter (5.3.3, 5.3.8 and 5.3.9). TDAP and independence were heralded as the way to save the vulnerable institution; with 'university' in the title student recruitment would improve and Marjon would be sustainable (5.3.3). This creates a 'burning platform' for change (Kotler, 2010). In the post-TDAP period the negative external comparators relate more to how the University College compares with a 'real' university through challenges relating to the 'pillars of identity' (Delanty, 1998). The definition and value of research is questioned (5.5.2, 5.6.) and the lack of breadth and vocational/professional nature of the work of the organisation was opened up for debate (5.6.4.b). The place of the Christian foundation in a university (college) was challenged and actively diluted in terms of the portfolio (5.5.2). UCP Marjon is used as the formal expressed name, in the logo, on the website and through official paperwork, as opposed to the full title, with its religious connotations. This mirrors changes in the external environment (5.5.2).

Use of negative comparators in respect of the external environment created more of an acceptance of the need for TDAP within the organisation (5.3.2; 5.3.4), and started a de-identification process with the old identity but has had on-going negative impact in regards to institutional self-esteem (5.7) affecting the ability of the organisation to re-identify with a desired future identity. As the skills of staff, academic portfolio and financial capacity were not in place to effect the change this left Marjon in a position where the current identity was no longer perceived as valued, but there was no higher order option immediately open to the organisation, resulting in an identity crisis (5.7).

6.4.3 Non-deliberate Reclassification

It is important to note that reclassification of an organisation can occur without deliberate management intervention, having similar implications for identity. The

legislative change in 2012 giving Marjon university title is an example of such a change. This change moves the institution into the university sector without it yet meeting the membership criteria. The organisational response has been a more urgent and targeted strategic planning process with expectation that the organisational identity is modified to meet the criteria reflecting a university (Section 5.8). Further research will need to be undertaken to assess progress.

6.5 An extended model for conceptualising organisational identity

Through the case study research what has become apparent is that the conceptual frameworks for consideration of identity underplay the impact of the definitions and understandings relevant to the HE sector, and the capacity and willingness of the organisation to effect identity redevelopment. A revised conceptual framework is proposed at Figure 1 providing a more holistic tool with which to consider organisational identity development. This enables consideration of the relative strengths of the factors affecting identity that have become evident through the case study, which are likely to impact the success of any identity development process, whether being internally driven or externally imposed.

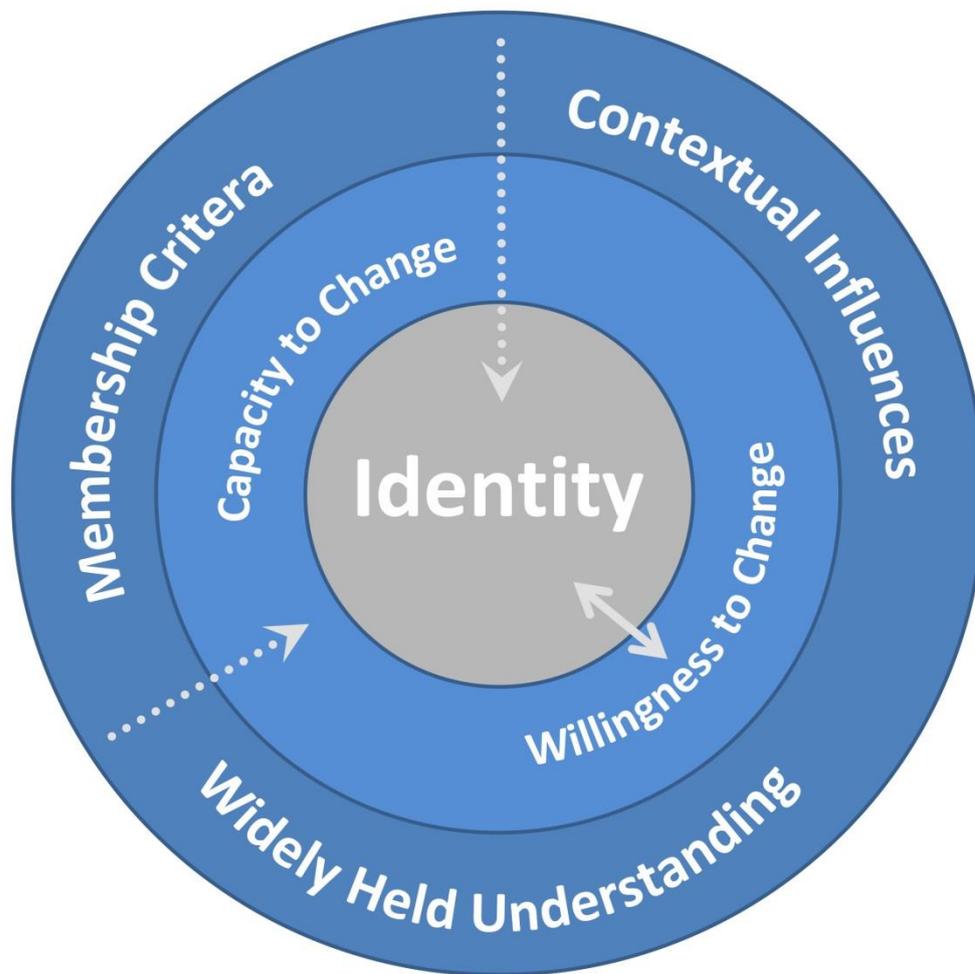


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework for understanding the factors impacting on organisational identity development

The outer ring reflects the wider environment within which an organisation operates and will include consideration of three elements, the first being environmental contextual influences. This will include economic factors, legislative conditions, and the influence of other sector members and relationship of the sector with Government. At the current time the impact of the strong link to economic outputs, the desire for massification and a push for diversity in the sector through an increase in the type of providers would be examples of the contextual environment pertaining to the HE sector.

A second factor is membership criteria associated with the sector, which in the case of a university will include a perspective on research and teaching, selectivity of entrants and breadth of portfolio. This will be influenced by the history and development of particular organisations and be reflected through

stratification and strategic group behaviour. This is evident through for example membership of various mission groups.

Thirdly the influences of widely held understandings need to be considered. In the case of a university this would reflect both member (those engaged within the sector) and public perceptions of what it means to a university, as reinforced by social interaction over time with reference to reinforcement tools such as league tables and media interpretation. The matters reflected in the outer ring will provide an overall context, but also highlight what is considered valid and valued in terms of characteristics and purpose.

Moving inwards to the second ring capacity to change will reflect matters both internal and external to the organisation. External legislative constraints may affect an organisation attaining a revised identity position. Wider resource constraints will impact capacity to respond to a change agenda, including financial ability to invest in the change, workforce skills, experience and potential to effect the change. The capacity of senior managers and informal leaders to sustain a credible narrative articulating a desired future image will also be a key factor in the success of an identity change. Willingness to change is an internal matter and will link heavily to the strength of the currently held identity, the perceived value of a revised identity and confidence and fear levels of organisation members in enacting change.

Central to the framework is the current identity of the organisation as reflected through its character, distinctiveness and that which is enduring, often described as the essence of an organisation. The strength of the current identity will be impacted by elements in the outer ring as understandings, validity and value of the held identity is moderated over time. This will impact the organisations willingness and capacity to change.

When considering organisational identity and change, either through a deliberate attempt to change or through organisational reclassification, the relative strengths of these interconnected factors need to be understood and addressed to maintain organisational health. It should be noted that in

considering organisational identity as socially constructed the strength of influence of each of these factors will vary over time.

6.6 Recommendations

6.6.1 Implications for Marjon

Analysis of the case study data suggests that Marjon has been suffering an identity crisis. As shown in Figure 2 below the currently held organisational identity does not reflect that of a university, as defined by members of the university sector or the widely held understandings of the public or sector membership. TDAP gave the institution an opportunity to redefine itself in a meaningful way that interfaced with its history and sought to provide it with validity in the newly developing higher education landscape, but this opportunity was missed. Being awarded university title prior to making any changes in the way the organisation understands itself and is positioned in respect of the university sector leaves the organisation with the potential for an on-going meanings void.

A strong identity is essential to organisational health and applying the conceptual framework to Marjon the factors for consideration identified through the case study are shown in Fig 2 below. These factors need to be understood and addressed by a leadership approach that enables proper consideration of the organisations current identity and the development of a desired future identity that is valid in terms of the internal community and external context, recognising the constraints including capacity and willingness to change.

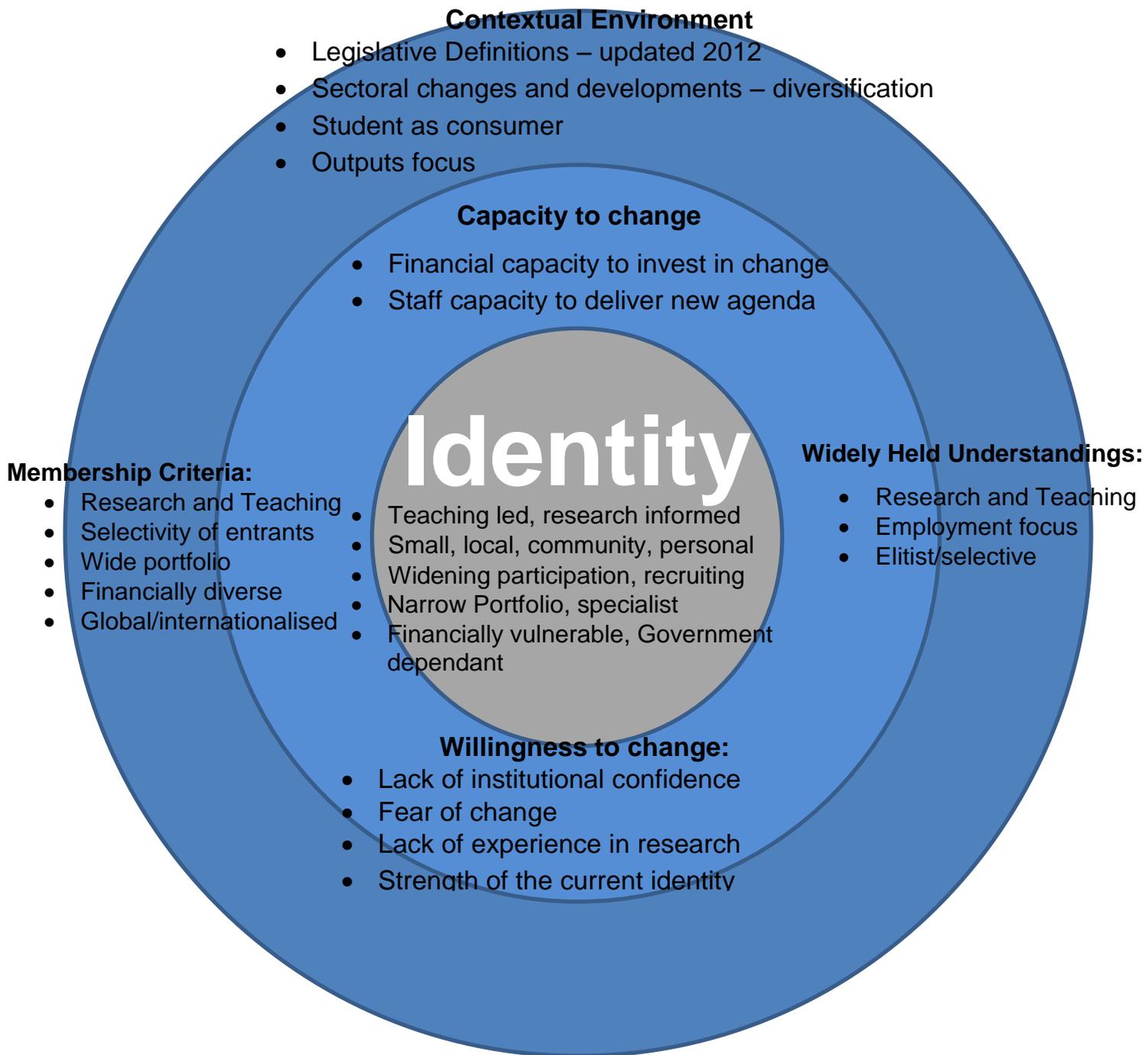


Figure 2 Marjon Identity Position 2013

6.6.2 Issues for the sector

At a wider sector level the research has led me to reconsider the conceptual frameworks available for considering identity change and continuity, highlighting in particular the importance of externally developed meanings and membership criteria in defining sectoral position. This is particularly relevant in terms of the changes announced by DBIS in 2012 to increase the diversity of the sector, allowing providers, private and public, with only 1,000 undergraduate students and TDAP to gain university title.

As outlined above receiving the title does not mean entrance to the sector. Membership criteria are likely to remain, in the short term at least, reflective of the current membership definitions, including a commitment to research. Until meeting these criteria is complete and a level of compliance achieved the new universities will not be considered genuine members of the university sector. It is likely to result in further stratification of the sector and organisations will need to consider how and whether they are able to respond to the strength of these understandings in terms of their identity development.

Using the conceptual framework in Fig 1 on an individual basis or more collectively at an organisational level gives managers and leaders of change a tool to consider the factors impacting identity and its connection with proposed change. It ensures that time is not only focussed on the end state, but on understanding where an individual or organisation is at the start of the journey, reflecting on and ensuring respect for the current identity. Addressing matters of capacity and willingness to change will be crucial in delivering the change.

6.7 Review of Research methodology and methods and areas for further research.

Reflecting on the research methodology and methods used in this research they did enable the identity of the institution and changes and continuities to become apparent at the strategic level over the specified period. However, whilst the documentary evidence highlights the narrative and impact it falls short in terms of a deeper understanding as to the reasons for certain actions or inactions, which could have been supported by wider use of interpretive methods such as

interviews, focus group discussions or questionnaires with a wider group. As the documents reviewed related to the management of the organisation the student voice and that of the various staff groups is not evident. Whilst it was not the purpose of this thesis to look at these aspects, engaging with these groups using methods outlined above would ascertain if the change of title and status impacted the identity understandings of current or prospective students and groups and individuals making up the staff body.

Through this research a number of areas for further work have become apparent. The first is the testing of the revised conceptual model in supporting identity development. The change to university title in 2013, and the development of a challenging strategic plan to ensure that the new University meets the membership requirements of the sector as widely defined, provides an opportunity to use the framework to make apparent factors likely to impact the success of the change. This will enable practical interventions, including investment, staff development and communication strategies to be put in place in a context of greater awareness.

A connected theme is that of leadership and the impact of the histories and understandings of leaders from outside the particular sector on the development of new identity, developing the link established at strategic group level by Peteraf & Shanley (1997). Their research suggests that at strategic group level the appointment of a leader from outside the group has negative impacts on the maintenance of a strong group identity through the introduction of models and norms not consistent with the current understandings or histories of the group. Exploring whether, where identity change and a break with the current identity is an objective, the introduction of a leader from a group with which the organisation aspires to belong through its desired future identity has a positive effect on identity change, or whether the differences in understandings between the leader and the organisation impact negatively. This could be explored in a number of the new universities in England.

Given the recent changes in the sector a review of the identity changes of those newly entering over a defined period to assess the definitional pull of the traditional university would be a valuable piece of research. This would

evidence the strength of strategic groups and membership definitions on identity development. It would also support an understanding of whether the changes announced by DBIS in 2012 genuinely allow for the development of a diverse sector more consistent with the legal definitions of what it means to be a university to be considered valid and different but equally valued.

The research presented highlights the existence of the university college sector and how it is perceived in the higher education sector. A more detailed historical/policy review of the university college sector during the period to 2014, when the final original member (St Mary's University College Twickenham) received university status, would add to the wider history of the sector in terms of completeness. Although the sector still exists from a legislative perspective the definitions for membership have changed and apply to different types of organisation.

6.8 Personal and Professional Learning

Through the process and findings of the research I have acquired a deeper understanding of the sector, its development and the influences and prejudices as they pertain to different types of institutions. This has led me to reflect not only on change management, but on how these understandings influence the behaviours of individuals, groups and organisations.

My thinking in this regard has developed considerably over the research period, a time when the sector has experienced its most significant changes since the 1960s. At a conference in April 2014 the significance of these changes were presented starkly, when discussing organisational developments with a senior manager of a small, for profit, new university college, University College of Football Business (UCFB). The organisation, located at Burnley Football Club offers undergraduate degrees in football with a business option accredited by Bucks New University. The profit focus of the organisation, the wholly vocational/professional training approach (including the intention to provide students with all of the texts needed to complete their programmes on computer tablets to avoid the need for students to (re) search for necessary materials to support their learning) and the lack of wider pastoral and other services showed

marked contrast to those organisations previously designated as university colleges, such as Marjon. UCFB are legally designated a university college, but their ethos and primary purpose of profit through higher level training are at odds with my understandings of a university college.

This diversity developing within the sector begs the question as to whether the use of the term 'university' is now relevant as a meaningful descriptor, or whether a system of appropriate classification would now be useful to enable members, students and other users to differentiate between the types of organisations now operating in the diversified university sector. This may support the development of a HE sector where different types of organisation are valued for their relative contributions to the range of priorities including research, teaching, high level skills training, and supporting and developing students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Without this formal differentiation I would be concerned at the future dilution of the 'university' brand in England and the impact on its position as a sector in the global landscape as this diversity becomes more evident.

As a leader and manager in the sector my research has provided a tool for greater reflection and understanding when considering identity development, which I intend to share with colleagues through various networks and publication channels. This research has significantly developed my thinking and my practise, providing me with a framework to explore identity and positioning that is not only relevant in the HE sector, but can be applied across all organisations, groups and even at an individual level. This will support a clearer understanding of what is achievable in terms of identity development through ascertaining and exploring the relative strengths of internally and externally held beliefs, resource and financial capacity and wider sector influences.

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Appendix 1 SCOP members

STANDING CONFERENCE OF PRINCIPALS

SCOP Institutions & Addresses

| | |
|--|--|
| Bangor Normal College Bangor Gwynedd LL57 2PX | Bath College of Higher Education Newton Park Bath Avon BA2 9BN |
| Bedford College of Higher Education Cauldwell Street Bedford MK42 9AH | Bishop Grosseteste College Lincoln LN1 3DY |
| Bolton Institute of Higher Education Deane Road Bolton Lancashire BL3 5AB | Bretton Hall College of the University of Leeds West Bretton Wakefield W Yorks WF4 4LG |
| The Buckinghamshire College Queen Alexandra Road Higher Wycombe Bucks HP11 2JZ | Camborne School of Mines Pool Redruth Cornwall TR15 3SE |
| Canterbury Christ Church College Canterbury Kent CT1 1QU | Cardiff Institute of Higher Education Llandaff Campus Western Avenue Cardiff S Glam CF5 2SG |
| Central School of Speech and Drama The Embassy Theatre 64 Eton Avenue London NW3 3HY | Cheltenham & Gloucester College of H E PO Box 220, The Park Cheltenham Gloucester GL50 2QF |
| Chester College Cheyney Road Chester CH1 4BJ | Dartington College of Arts Higher Close Totnes Devon TQ9 6EJ |
| Edge Hill College of Higher Education St Helens Road Ormskirk Lancs L39 4QP | Falmouth School of Art & Design Woodlane Falmouth Cornwall TR11 4RA |
| Gwent College of Higher Education Allt-yr-yn-Avenue Newport Gwent NP9 5XA | Harper Adams Agricultural College Newport Shropshire TF10 8NB |

| | |
|---|--|
| Homerton College Cambridge CB2 2PH | Kent Institute of Art & Design Oakwood Park Maidstone Kent ME16 8AG |
| King Alfred's College Sparkford Road Winchester Hants SO22 4NR | La Sainte Union College of Higher Education The Avenue Southampton Hants |
| Liverpool Institute of Higher Education PO Box 6 Stand Park Road Liverpool L16 9JD | Loughborough College of Art & Design Radmoor Loughborough LE11 3BT |
| Luton College of Higher Education Park Square Luton LU1 3JU | Nene College Park Campus Boughton Green Road Northampton NN2 7AL |
| Newman College Bartley Green Birmingham B32 3NT | Westhill College Selly Oak Birmingham B29 6LL |
| North Cheshire College Padgate Campus Fearnhead Warrington Lancs WA2 0DB | The N E Wales Institute (NEWI) Plas Coch Mold Road Wrexham Clwyd LL11 2AW |
| University College, Scarborough The North Riding College Filey Road Scarborough N Yorks YO11 3AZ | Norwich: City College Ipswich Road Norwich Norfolk NR2 2LJ |
| Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication Walden Road Elmstead Woods Chislehurst Kent BR7 5SN | The University College of Ripon & York St John Lord Mayor's Walk York YO3 7EX |
| Roehampton Institute Senate House Roehampton Lane London SW15 5PU | Rose Bruford College of Speech & Drama Lamorbey Park Sidcup Kent DA15 9DF |

| | |
|--|---|
| The College of St Mark & St John Derriford Road Plymouth Devon PL6 8BH | St Martin's College Bowerham Road Lancaster LA1 3JD |
| St Mary's College Waldegrave Road Strawberry Hill Twickenham Middx TW1 4SW | University College Salford Frederick Road Salford Greater Manchester M6 6PU |
| South Devon College of Arts and Technology Newton Road Torquay Devon TQ2 5BY | Southampton Institute of Higher Education East Park Terrace Southampton Hants SO9 4WW |
| Swansea Institute of Higher Education Townhill Road Swansea W Glam SA2 0UT | The London Institute 388-396 Oxford Street London W1R 1FE |
| Trinity & All Saints' Brownberrie Lane Horsforth Leeds W Yorks LS18 5HD | Trinity College, Carmarthen College Road Carmarthen Dyfed SA3 3EP |
| West London Institute of Higher Education Gordon House 300 St Margaret's Road Twickenham Middlesex TW1 1PT | Westminster College Oxford OX2 9AT |
| West Surrey College of Art and Design Falkner Road Farnham Surrey GU9 7DS | West Sussex Institute of Higher Education The Dome Upper Bognor Road Bognor Regis W Sussex PO21 1HR |
| Wimbledon School of Art Merton Hall Road London SW19 3QA | Winchester School of Art Park Avenue Winchester Hants SO23 8DL |
| Worcester College of Higher Education Henwick Grove Worcester WR2 6AJ | Writtle College of Agriculture Writtle Chelmsford CM1 3RR |

Appendix 2 Published Documents Reviewed

Academic Board Minutes 1998-2014 (AB 307, September 1998 – AB405 February, 2014)

Annual reports

25 Years in Plymouth 1998

Annual Report 2004/05

Annual Report 2005/06

Annual report 2007/08

Annual report 2008/09

Annual report 2009/10

Council of Management/Governing Body

Report on Research 2002

Extraordinary meeting minutes October 2002

Minutes 1998 - 2014

Marjon Financial Statements 1998/99 -2012/13

Research Committee Minutes RC 58, 2003 to RC114, 2013

Senior Management Team (also known as Management Team 1998-2007)

Minutes September 1998 to February 2014 excepting the period 2000-2002 as minute records missing

Prospectus

Prospectus 1998

Prospectus 1999

Prospectus 2000

Postgraduate Prospectus 2001/02

Postgraduate Prospectus 2002/03

Undergraduate Prospectus 2001

Undergraduate Prospectus 2002

Undergraduate Prospectus 2003

Undergraduate Prospectus 2004

Undergraduate prospectus 2006
Undergraduate Prospectus 2007
Undergraduate Prospectus 2008
Undergraduate Prospectus 2009
Undergraduate Prospectus 2010
Undergraduate Prospectus 2011
Undergraduate Prospectus 2012

Strategic Plans and associated reports, papers and presentations

Strategic Plan Summary 2001-2004 (2001)
Strategic Plan Staff Presentation (September 2003)
Strategic Planning Questions - Staff presentation 2003
Strategic Plan Marjon 2010 (2004)
Strategic Plan Marjon 2010 Phase 1 (2004)
Strategic Plan Marjon 2010 The Next Stage (2007)
Strategic Plan Marjon 2010 The Next Stage: summary of responses
(2007)
Strategic Plan Action Plan 2007/8
Strategic Plan Consultation Questions 2009
Strategic Plan responses summary 2009
Strategic Plan 2010-2015 (2010)
Strategic Plan Marjon 2012 (and drafts) (2008)
Strategic Plan- Challenging Horizons 2014

Miscellaneous Documents and Reports

Accreditation Agreement with University of Exeter 1991
Application to the Privy Council for the Grant of Taught Degree Awarding
Powers; critical self-analysis (2005) and appendices 2005
UCP Marjon, the Vision: 2012-2015 and onwards
Academic Portfolio Review May 2004
Geoff Stoakes TDAP correspondence files 2005/07
Geoff Stoakes TDAP presentation to staff 2005
Research Strategy 2004
Academic Staff Profiles Report (2006)
Management Team Strategy Day Main Points document 2006

Research Output Report 2012

Change Academy Feedback 2012

Change Academy presentation to Principal's Office Group

Appendix 3 Interview extracts

Acting Principal, Karen Cook (KC)

Previous Principal – David Baker (DB)

Comments

KC Ok. The first issue for me is what were the reasons behind going for TDAP?

DB Well they were pretty straightforward really it was the number one point on the strategic panel at the time. Well I say at the time, as I developed it with the Institution; but it struck me that the College was lagging behind in terms of its' peer group, the other Guild HE members which had gone for TDAP and got TDAP for the same reasons which was having the bench mark and the kite mark of the University in the name, which we couldn't have post the 1994 Education Act but also the ability to work independently of the University of Exeter, nothing wrong with the University of Exeter link, but there were obviously areas where we couldn't do what we wanted to do because they wouldn't allow it, either in terms of curriculum development or the way in which we taught. The other thing of course was that there was no guarantee that they would be with us for ever, and they might, especially as Steve Smith came in, as they did, wanting to aspire to be a very different kind of Institution that wouldn't want sort of little tiddlers like Marjon. So it was a kind of a strategic positioning driver ultimately, coupled with the ability to have greater flexibility. There were one or two other reasons which were less obviously stated, because at the time the College was very divided over whether to go for TDAP or not and the subjects that were confident about Sport, antiquated education, that believed in themselves that there was a Marjon brand you just had to get an outside degree at the end of it, O no we'll go for TDAP, infact if you asked the students they thought they were going to get a Marjon degree anyway, the areas where they were not, well at worst in some areas, anti TDAP, were the areas where they were weakest, where they survived because people were getting an outside degree via Marjon, and interestingly I think pretty well all of those subjects are now no more, and I wanted to, I think my phrase at the time, at least privately was, they will either stand or fall, this will sort them out; because it had to be done once and for all, that was not publicly stated but it was very much privately stated and indeed it came to pass that this was what happened. So I guess those were the broad reasons for why we went for ^{total} degree awarding powers and I guess also it freed up my hand in terms of negotiations, like negotiations with other Institutions, whether it be the University of Plymouth about a closer association or other Institutions where there were, off the record, discussions about closer links with Dartington before they moved to Falmouth or a three-way federated partnership between Falmouth, Dartington and Marjon and you can't come to the table with quite the same power that you have if you have got your own autonomy in a way that you are never going to have if someone else is awarding your degrees.

Original comparator.

We don't belong to the real world.

Division due to subject credibility

Autonomy

status

KC Ok. In terms of the other institutions where you said that people had gone earlier, quite a lot had gone through in 2005, and they had grown significantly. Was that part of a rationale as well, about that being able to maintain.

*Mixed
the best*

DB Yes it was I mean David Brown said at the time, the trouble was that Marjon went too late, and if we had gone five or ten years sooner, we would have reaped what he called the TDAP dividend and as you have pointed out, a number of those Colleges that got University College status say in the late 1990's or early 2000's were able to reap the significant growth in HE and get University title under the last round with the 3,000-4,000 threshold in place and that was always one of my regrets, that they hadn't done it sooner, we were the last of the Church of England Colleges to get TDAP, should have been done at least 5 years sooner, so you look at somewhere like Bath Spa University, Worcester, that group. Ten years previously they were more or less at the same point that Marjon had been but Marjon didn't go over, it is history, you can't go back.

KC They had thought it about before, before you were appointed. And then it stopped.

*concerns
over
confidence*

DB It stopped because the previous Principal never had the guts to do it to put it crudely. I don't like talking about predecessors or successors, even though I have been doing! I think he was frightened about what would happen if he failed and it would reflect badly on him and it was about risk, you stand or you fall I mean I think we felt in the Governors, certainly my Chair of Governors, Christine Haige and I were determined you know we either stand or fall and we even had our resignation letter drafted, seriously, if we failed at TDAP. When we got the report, that we went through, that we went through and challenged, we thought are we going to get through or not, it is a curious situation, you get the report but you don't see the draft mark as it were, and so we said well we will resign, if we don't get TDAP we will resign because we have failed, it was stand or fall, but for me that was the whole institution. Because if it had fallen at that point, what would it have said about the organisation, it would say that this Institution isn't up to awarding its' own degrees.

confidence

KC You said about this notion of getting the University title or University being in the title being important. Why is that?

*sectoral
positioning
lack of
clarity over
university
colleges*

DB I think there are a number of reasons that are kind of home and away. The ^{main} reasons are at the time, I guess probably still, confusion over what Marjon was. When I got the job, a lot of my colleagues who were in higher education and had been all their careers, said, Congratulations David, I am surprised that you are going into FE, in all seriousness, because the word college could be anything it could be a sixth form college, it could be a college of nursing, it could be a business college, typing college, you name it; so there is no uniform currency, in the way that University for good or ill has a uniform currency and it means a higher education institution that awards its own degrees. The ordinary man or woman in the street will probably understand that something is a University in a way that they wouldn't know what a college was.

KC Or they would understand college in a different context.

Acting Principal – Karen Cook (KC)

Past Deputy Principal – Geoff Stoakes

KC Queue rationale. The reasons behind TDAP. What do you think they were?

Vulnerability
Differentiation
Status
being left behind

GS It basically boils down to being about recruitment, series of interlocking things which relate to recruitment I think. One of the things that really dominated our thinking at the time was distinguishing the College of St Mark & St John from colleges of further education and sixth form colleges and the fact that it wasn't distinctive enough so having the University in front of it would clearly make it higher education. One point on recruitment would be simply the status of having the University College in the title would help recruitment itself. A third one that relates to that would be that other institutions like Falmouth were becoming University College Falmouth so it was felt that we would off-set the advantage that they had by having a University College title. There was one other though which in a sense I would separate and that was seeing TDAP as a quality mark for the institution – and not just the quality mark from my point of view, earning the quality mark i.e. improving systems. Just looking back at my notes, the files I had on this, we wrote to the students on behalf of David, the week before the assessors came, spelling out the reasons why we were doing it. Local competition was obviously a key feature as I have already said really, competition with Plymouth will underlay most of what I have already said, those are the reasons, distinguishing ourselves from other partners, competitors if you like, but also a quality mark but I think there were only a few of us that shared the idea that this would improve quality.

KC Looking at some of your slides that you did, you did little summaries for people, one of the things that came up there was the notion of independence. What was the thinking behind that?

Lack of confidence
Being part of another org is less individual and less confidence

GS That is the extra connection that you haven't mentioned yet I suppose, that we shouldn't remain within the orbit of Exeter University aligning with them for their regulations for assessment. It was interesting that when we drafted the critical self-analysis, we put out some external media and he came back and said that he didn't think that the first draft conveyed a really self-confident institution and there is one reason which Paul picked up from the research that relates to that, and that was we were going to apply for TDAP but we hadn't definitely decided we were necessarily going to use them which he read as you are not confident enough and the other thing he said was why we were just going for University College why don't you express a longer term interest to the University. So it was about independence from Exeter no doubt about that but there were other reasons why we were probably hesitant and looking back on it, was probably a lack of confidence because we had been with Exeter for ten years or a bit more.

KC The Institution previously cited a desire to get a University College title and then it disappeared. There seemed to be like a false start.

GS It used the title University College, in similar places.

subscribed to Exeter in terms of character

they weren't going to look at foundation degrees so we missed out on that entire post 2003 boom if you like in places, there were no places for anything else really other than foundation degrees but since Exeter wouldn't allow us to approve them, they didn't want them on their books, we weren't able to go ahead so the false start had its consequences.

KC You used the term 'status' as appose to 'title'. You used the term 'University Status'. Is it fair to say that if you just get the title of University you are a University or if you just get the title of University College you are a University College? It seems to be that 'what is in a name' really. So you said we went for a University College status rather than title.

GS Just a slip

KC No it may not be actually. How would you perceive the difference between a higher education institution and a University? Is there a difference in the current landscape?

GS In one sense there isn't, there is less of a difference than there used to be, because the qualification of being a University have now largely been removed and the artificial cap at our threshold of 4,000 students, 3,000 undergraduate level has now gone so it is now more of a question of the ability to deliver undergraduate awards at the appropriate quality that is really the only criteria that is there now so there is less of a difference than there was before, at least now I can see that there would be less of a difference, this is probably the problem, many back in the earlier period, pre TDAP these looked like significant steps, and therefore you get into, particularly in a validation relationship, a quotation relationship sorry, where another institution is dictating whether you can create awards in a certain area of foundation degrees being the best example, you inevitably probably lack self-confidence, but also perceive yourself to be only there in higher education by virtue of having a more established partner.

confidence
Notion of
not being
valid in
own right

KC A relationship with another, so you are not there in your own right.

GS So that is basically what getting TDAP would enable the University College to do. To award in its' own right obviously. Is that a status thing or just a title. In title I think you are just thinking recruitment primarily, University in the title helps you to be distinctive in terms of the market place, status is still there.

KC Are you by getting the University title, joining a different club.

Look
of
clarity
on what
is a university
college

GS You were in a different club because people perceived you were because People could perceive a confusion with the word College. The key dimensions was always thrown at us, internationally people do not recognise a college as being higher education. So you have got to have University in the title or if not, all you do is you cite the fact that you are part of the University of Exeter and that is what we did with international recruitment. We are always part of the University of Exeter, so we had even less distinct status when we were marketing ourselves internationally. Can I stay on status. There are difference perceptions, (and it is very personal) there are difference types of University, and there always will be. There are Seven Russell Group Universities which are distinctly different from the rest, Oxford, Cambridge,

Appendix 4 Extract of Analysis of Documents

Academic Board 1/11/2006
Extract.

359/02 Confirmation of minutes

Received and noted

Minutes of the 358th meeting of the Academic Board held on Friday 30 June 2006.

Agreed

To confirm the minutes of the 358th meeting of the Board as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following amendments:

p5, minute 358/06.ii – "care" should read "support";

p5, minute 358/06.iv – "CPR" should read "CAPR";

p10, minute 358/13.i – "Promising Professors and Researchers" should read "Visiting Professors and Promising Researchers".

359/03 Matters arising

a. 358/03.i – (re Matter arising from AB356/06, International Strategy) The College had appointed Mr Todd Pressman to the post of Marketing and Communications Manager with effect from 1 December 2006.

b. 358/03.ii – (re Matter arising from AB357/05, Learning and Teaching Strategy) The Careers Coordinator will present a proposed Careers Strategy to the next meeting of Academic Board and a proposed Employability Strategy to the first meeting in 2007.

c. 358/03.iv – (re Matter arising from AB 357/09, relocation of Plymouth History Centre) The Plymouth History Centre would be located at Windsor House.

d. 358/06 – (re Continuing Academic Portfolio Review) The revised paper had been approved and the action was now completed.

e. 358/07 - (re Admissions Policy) The revised policy had been approved and the action was now completed.

f. 358/08.ii – (re the Appointment of Visiting Professors) The proposed amendments had been agreed by the Management Team and the action was now completed.

g. 358/13.i – (bullet points 1 and 7 re Research Support and Regional Profile) The College had combined two sources of funding to create a full-time post for Research Support and Regional Affairs. Academic Board welcomed the appointment of Ms Mandy Barnet to this new post with effect from 6 November 2006 and noted that she would attend Research Committee meetings on an *ad hoc* basis for discussion of funding opportunities.

Renew
Portfolio
→ Renew paper*
Commitment
to research
agenda

Financial Viability

- i. The surplus achieved in 2005-06 was due to hard work in all budget areas and the recovery of monies owed. The College continued to operate on very tight budgets.
- ii. An accounting adjustment to cover a paper payment of support staff pension funds meant that the valuation of the College estate appeared lower, but this was set against a valuation last conducted in 1993.
- iii. The 2006-07 budget had been set to produce a small surplus but the TDA census implied some loss of income. Furthermore, HEFCE could hold some funding back to recover overpayments it claimed had been made in previous years.

359/05 Taught Degree Awarding Powers

Received

An oral report from Dr N Casey on the TDAP process.

An oral report from Mr B Lee on market research on preferred names for the College after TDAP.

Noted

- i. Since the last meeting of Academic Board, the assessors had observed meetings of Subject Assessment Boards, Progression and Award Boards and Council of Management and had held arranged meetings with staff in October 2006. The College had provided further documents, as requested
- ii. Themes of particular interest to the assessors had appeared to include Research and Scholarly Activity and Academic Strategy, but there had been and would be no formal feedback from the assessors.
- iii. The College would receive a draft report during the week commencing 6 November and would be invited to comment upon its factual accuracy. The final report would be considered by the QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers in December and the College could expect a decision from Privy Council in February or March.
- iv. The College would have to put in place a number of new regulations particularly in relation to the conferment of academic awards and the appointment, rights and responsibilities of External Examiners.
- v. The final decision about the use of TDAP would be taken by Council of Management who would have to formally resolve to award named taught degrees with effect from a particular date. Opinion in the College appeared to be gravitating towards a "big bang" approach in which students would enrol in 2008 or 2009 on programmes leading to a Major honours degrees. It was likely that foundation degree programmes would start in 2007.
- vi. Questionnaires had been administered at three open days to potential students and to parents, family and friends accompanying them. The full results were available on the College Newsletter.

Research & portfolio

Increasing confidence to use TDAP

359/07 Strategy and Structure and the Year Ahead

Received

Two papers by the Principal titled "Marjon: Strategy and Structure 2006" and "Marjon 2010 The Year Ahead 2006-07" (AB 359/07).

Noted

- i. It had always been intended to review the Strategic Plan at or about the half-way stage. The TDAP assessment had proved both a driver and an opportunity to consider progress against the Plan. This year, therefore, the Year Ahead document contained more questions than answers.
- ii. The structure proposals would not be completed before the end of term as had been intended. Instead, the consultation exercise would go on until December so that final proposals could come to Academic Board in Spring Term, leading to a final decision at Council of Management in March 2007.
- iii. Members were invited to offer feedback in three areas: the results of the two strategy days; comments on the Year Ahead Document; and responses to the questions in paragraph 7 of the Strategy and Structure paper.

Vocational
vs
academic
or AND?

inclusivity vs
exclusivity

Statement of
belief/
confidence

iv. There was a need for clarification of the term "education for life".

v. Staff were not clear about how workloads were calculated.

There were anxieties in the College about the notion of social, critical vocationalism, particularly its impact on staff research and scholarly activities. However, the two were not mutually exclusive; the concept required a strong academic base for programmes that were clearly linked to a particular vocation. Indeed, it was important to show a clear curriculum philosophy in programme approval documentation to demonstrate the depth of academic work in vocational programmes.

There were increasing pressures from Government and fee-paying students for HEIs to consider employability of their students.

viii.

Agreed

The process of consultation should continue with proposals coming to Academic Board in the New Year. Members would forward further comments to the Principal by e-mail.

MT STRATEGY DAY,
SEPTEMBER, 2006

KEY POINTS

Confidence TDAP

- Using our powers, once awarded, is a sign of institutional self confidence
- Majority in favour of 'big bang' approach from 2008/9 [Foundation Degrees from 2007/8]
- Minority view in favour of a more incremental approach preserving the Exeter awards for some programmes
- The award of TDAP will be an index of fitness for purpose of our academic quality assurance processes
- While we are well below the numbers threshold for university title, we should go for the title when the opportunity allows (ie we grow and/or the threshold is taken away)

Journey to University

Academic Portfolio

Vocationalism

- Processes 'getting there' with CAPR and CDC
- Need a curriculum strategy that ensures we are clear about programmes to develop or to close; the concept of socially critical vocationalism in our courses – 'education for life' - should be embraced
- Currently a big gap in intelligence, with much better marketing required
- Need to include more staff in the discussion of the portfolio – much energy is put into course development but some feel a sense of being 'knocked back' by the bureaucracy
- Very difficult to ensure sustainable recruitment (and growth) given the limitations imposed by HEFCE, TDA and NHS
- Need to continue closer working with LA's and especially Plymouth through workforce development programmes, where there is much transitional funding for training and assessment that we could tap into
- Need to look at suites of programmes that can metamorphose and that build on the expertise of staff who are capable of adapting to new agendas
- Cannot afford to keep programmes open for the sake of it

Rely on public purse/policy

Research

Development of Research Clusters

- The key priority was to get research going and sustainable rather than developing clusters
- It was too early for clusters; there were too few research-active staff in some areas to sustain a cluster
- Clusters would emerge organically; they cannot be created from above e.g. programme development would be a key generator of clusters e.g. 3-Year B. Ed team

Assumes research activity is college funded skill

Action: The College continues to invest in individual staff until sustainable research clusters emerge.

Accelerating the process of appointing Professors and Readers



MARJON MANAGEMENT TEAM

STRATEGY DAY

14 SEPTEMBER 2006

BOARD ROOM

OUTLINE PROGRAMME

0845 Coffee and Tea available on arrival

0900 Opening Prayer

0905 Life after TDAP (DMB)

Gain taught degree awarding powers/ achieve University College status

We expect to have received confirmation of the conferment of taught degree awarding powers early in 2007. The 'careful market research and consultation with all our stakeholders' has already begun. We now need to determine what the next stage actions are, as we prepare to gain and use our TDAP. The key questions, then, are:

Seems a little hesitant, unclear & underdeveloped

First formal mention of the title

- What do we have to do in order to be able to award our own degrees?
- Where do we first promote our own degree awards and what is the longer term strategy and process to moving to a position where we award all Marjon degrees, assuming we decide to do that?
- What do we wish to achieve in terms of future strategic partnerships (eg with the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth) having gained TDAP?
- Should we start to consider going for university title?
- What further work and information is required in order to answer these questions?

Management of Scholarly and Research Activity

No action on these points!

- A more systematic approach to enhancement was necessary – appraisal forms include target setting and review of SandRA activities, but follow-up was not fully implemented.
- Feedback on fellowship work into schools was patchy
- Some staff start but do not finish Masters programmes.

Agreed:

That a master's degree was the minimum level of qualification needed to teach at the College. Those appointed without this

Appendix 5 Analytical Framework and sample

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Pillars of Identity | Year by documents | | |
| Research | | | |
| Curriculum | | | |
| Response to policy | | | |
| Other issues | | | |
| Identity Characteristics | Distinctiveness | Character | Enduring Features |

Summary. 2006/07 Academic Board Review

| Comments / themes. | Reference. |
|--|---|
| | <u>AB 359 Nov 2006</u> |
| Distinctiveness - collegiate / community | Tulle - wider consultation Year ahead document |
| Distinctiveness Character - portfolio / curriculum challenge | Anxiety over 'educ' for life Socially critical vocationalism Vocational vs academic programme |
| Is this a characteristic of the inst ⁿ ? Financial vulnerability | Finance - vulnerability - high level of detail |
| Character Δ Research - movement | <u>AB 360 Dec 2006</u> Readers & Prof's criteria agreed |
| | <u>AB 361 Feb 2007</u> |
| Identity Δ but no picture of a desired future identity | TDAP Likely - mention of 'rebrand' - Lack of clarity as to what this will look like |
| Enduring feature - heritage? | Name - retain Saints - avoid challenge by Church |
| Increasing confidence to be seen as something different | Move to confer all awards / drop Exeter |