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**Exploring Middle Managers Sensemaking Processes during the
Adoption and Practice of Sustainability Strategies in Organisations**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis explores middle managers sensemaking processes of a University's social responsibility and sustainability (SRS) strategy during a period of change. Overall the thesis establishes links between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes, dynamics of loosely coupled organizational contexts and organizational responses to unexpected outcomes as they impact strategy creation processes in organisations. Three main issues evolve.

Firstly, middle managers in loosely coupled organisations consist of two different sets (administrators and academics). Based on their nature of work in particular, administrators and academics select different sets of dominant and subtle sensemaking frames to make sense of organizational strategies. Generally, while administrators select sensemaking frames which emanate from existing strategic processes, academics select autonomous cues which exist outside strategic processes. Administrators and academics sensemaking processes are therefore not a single level or consecutive processes as typically researched, but rather occur as simultaneous sensemaking processes. Six dominant simultaneous sensemaking frames are identified and described.

Secondly, the thesis examines less explored aspects of debates on loosely coupled systems. It investigates specific patterns of coupledness in middle managers strategic work and relationships. It identified and described patterns of administrative work which are tightly coupled and patterns in academic work which are loosely coupled.

Thirdly, distinct links are identified between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes and unexpected strategy outcomes. This further led to exploring how organizations respond to unexpected sustainability initiatives, especially in light of integrating them into already existing strategy outcomes. Three integration strategies are identified and described.

Key words

Sensemaking, sustainability, loosely coupled systems, unexpected strategy outcomes, strategy integration and strategy creation.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself. To the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person. It does not contain material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benjamin', is positioned to the right of the date.

Date 16TH December

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

Esme Ampoma-Martins ('my very own Semenhya').

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There are many people to thank and acknowledge and I know in writing this, it is inadvertent that I will overlook someone, for which I apologise.

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ACRONYMS

ACP	Association of Carbon Professionals
CBCC	Centre for Business and Climate Change
CHSS	College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CSE	College of Science and Engineering
CRGN	Corporate Responsibility and Governance Network
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CS	Corporate sustainability
ECCI	Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HE	High Education
IAD	Institute for Academic development
KPI	Key Performance Index
LfS	Learning for Sustainability
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RCE	Regional Centre of Expertise
SD	Sustainable Development
SME's	Small and Medium size Enterprises
SMP	Scottish Member of Parliament

SRS	Social Responsibility and Sustainability
SDM	Strategic Decision Making
SAP	Strategy-as-Practice
SEAG	Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Group
SBI	Sustainability Business Initiative
SCENE	Sustainable Community Engagement and Energy
UCCCFs	Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWCED	United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of middle managers sensemaking of organizational strategies is imperative to the process of strategy creation in organizations. Middle managers sensemaking of strategic change processes in organizations is thus well researched in organizational and strategic management studies. Generally, these studies explore middle managers cognitive capabilities and activities, in terms of how they search for information, interpret, negotiate, ascribe meaning, and take actions in their day-to-day activities (Weick 1995; Weick et.al 2005; Gioia et.al 1993; Thomas et.al 1993; Maitlis 2005). Middle managers sensemaking studies lay emphasis on the fact that their sensemaking and interpretive capabilities of change and strategic processes is imperative to how they understand and subsequently engage with change processes like the adoption of new strategies in organizations. Of relevance to the thesis are studies focused on understanding phenomena such as organizing during change (Weick 1995; Weick et.al 2005), sensegiving and selling of change (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia et.al 1993; Thomas et.al 1993; Maitlis 2005; Jackson 2005; Rouleau 2005), and sensemaking of organizational strategy and outcomes (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Regner 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Rouleau 2005; Burgelman and Groove 2007; Rouleau and Balogun 2011, 2012; Reginee and Rouleau 2013) among others.

The thesis primary interest to explore middle managers sensemaking process during the adoption of a new organizational strategy is therefore central to sensemaking studies.

Thesis context

Over the years, studies on adoption and practice of social concepts such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainable Development (SD) in organizations have gained increased attention in strategic management studies (Carroll 1991; Lele 1991; Gladwin et al, 1995a; Figge and Hahn 2001; Harris and Ogbonna 2002; Cramer et.al 2004; Fergus and Rowney 2005; Salzamann et.al 2005; Porter and Kramer 2006; Bos-Brouwers, 2010). The interest in adopting such strategies can be summed up as the intent of organizations to explore processes, opportunities and challenges involved in adopting, incorporating and embedding broad social concepts into core organizational processes and practices (Porter and Kramer 2006; Nijhof and Jeurissenn 2006). This

is due to increased campaigns for organizations to behave more responsibly within the larger society in which they operate (Cramer et.al 2004; Porter and Kramer 2006; Salzamann et.al 2005; Bos-Brouwers, 2010). The role of sustainable development and sustainability practices in particular has thus gained widespread acceptance in loosely coupled organizations like schools and universities.

For example, attempts by Westland University to become more socially responsible have resulted in the formation and implementation of a Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) strategy. The strategy sets out guidelines specifying how the University intends to adopt and embed sustainability practices. The SRS strategy is part of six strategic themes that feed into the University's overall Strategic Plan. The aim is to embed principles of social responsibility and sustainability by creating:

“... Conditions under which students, staff and the wider community are inspired and supported to engage with and contribute to social responsibility and sustainability across the University and beyond” (Social Responsibility and Sustainability Strategy 2010).

To achieve the strategy objective, the SRS strategy must be adopted and widely engaged with on an organizational level by University staff and stakeholders. The role of middle managers in implementing and embedding the SRS strategy cannot be understated. Their mandate is primarily to incorporate the concept of sustainable development in everyday organizational work and in the academic curricular. In spite of institutional and other social support received, the University still struggles with the process of adoption, engagement and embedding of sustainable development. The struggle sharply draws attention to the need to examine the extent to which university middle managers themselves engage with their university's sustainable development strategy. To explore middle managers engagement process however, the thesis proposes that the starting point is first to investigate how middle managers understand and make sense of the SRS strategy. It is believed that middle managers sensemaking process is what influences the sustainability choices they make and the resultant actions they take.

Middle managers classifications

Middle managers are often classified as a 'specific set' of managers (Woolridge et. al 2008). For example middle managers have been described as a group of stakeholders (Jackson 2005; Morsing and Schultz 2006; Maitlis 2005 etc.), a set of school and university workers (Mills et.al 2006), a group of contributors to organizational development (Balogun and Rouleau 2012), members of core and small divisions (Balogun and Johnson 2004), and a group of clothing retailers (Rouleau 2005). Consequently, sensemaking studies have generally described middle managers sensemaking capabilities and activities as a "symbolic and collective process" (Teulier and Rouleau 2013:311). As a group, middle managers are said to draw on new cues from the environment to frame new or reframe already existing information and knowledge structure in order to implement and facilitate change processes (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Hope, 2010; Maitlis 2005). Middle managers sensemaking studies have thus examined their sensemaking process as one belonging to a specific group of managers who are engaged in the same or similar sensemaking process in relation to a particular organizational event or process (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun 2006; Rouleau and Balogun 2011).

A closer look at sensemaking studies indicates that middle managers sensemaking studies are situated in the context of traditional organization or tightly coupled organizations. Traditional organizations almost exclude the possibility that middle managers classification may consist of distinct groups or multiple sets of people. Based on their nature of work, middle managers in loosely coupled organizations on the other hand can clearly be classified as consisting of more than one single group of people. However, sensemaking studies exploring the phenomenon of the possibility that multiple types of sensemaking processes are likely to occur amongst the distinct groups of middle managers is however almost nonexistent and certainly understudied. Additionally, sensemaking studies in loosely coupled academic institutions are also very scant. A few of such studies have focused on the sensemaking processes of top managers and CEO's (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Thomas, et.al 1993) to the neglect of middle managers. Clearly, the general context under which middle managers multiple classification and thus multiple sensemaking can occur has also been under-researched in management studies.

Sensemaking choices, actions and outcomes

Middle managers sensemaking processes lead to sensemaking choices, actions and outcomes. Invariably, it is these sensemaking choices and outcomes which lead to the success or failure of change processes and newly adopted strategies for example. An appreciable amount of research exists which explore sensemaking outcomes (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Weick 1993, 1995; Gioia and Mehra 1996; Mills 2003; Maitlis 2005; Schwandt 2005; Weick et.al 2005; Basu and Palazzo 2008). It is not surprising that based on the typical classification of middle managers as a singular group, the study of middle managers sensemaking outcomes is also explored from a collective or singular perspective. Just as middle managers sensemaking processes have generally been under explored from a multiple perspective, similarly, the exploration of middle managers sensemaking outcomes from multiple or simultaneous perspectives have also been overlooked.

Issues regarding middle managers sensemaking processes and middle managers sensemaking outcomes in loosely coupled university context are therefore the key interest and starting points for the thesis' investigations.

Chapter structure

The rest of the chapter is structured in the following order. It starts by introducing the thesis surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process. This is followed by describing the context in which simultaneous sensemaking occurs. After which the relevant theories and literatures based on which the thesis is constructed are then briefly introduced. Research gaps are identified and described out of the theories and literatures. The thesis aims and research questions which form the basis for collecting relevant data are also presented. The chapter ends by presenting a number of contributions which the study makes to theory and practice.

1.2 THESIS SURPRISE DISCOVERY

As aforementioned, sensemaking studies have generally positioned middle managers sensemaking process as a collective process which frames and reframes existing knowledge structure according to new sensemaking cues from the environment in order to make sense of occurring organizational events (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun 2006; Rouleau and Balogun 2011; Teulier and Rouleau 2013). The thesis therefore

adopts the term ‘single-level sensemaking’ to describe this process in which middle managers are engaged in the same or similar sensemaking process in relation to a particular event.

However, not too far into the thesis investigations, the thesis made a surprise discovery or a ‘surprise evidence’ (Pierce 1935:171). The investigations unearthed another type of sensemaking process. The idea of surprise evidence generally introduces new ideas, discoveries and innovations (Pierce 1935; Levin-Rozalis 2010). Through keen observations, and without making any preliminary assumptions (Levin-Rozalis 2010:7), the thesis discovered that middle managers sensemaking process in loosely coupled systems consist of a dual process. The evidence clearly indicated that based on their nature of work in particular, middle managers in loosely coupled systems are made up of two distinct groups of people. Typically, middle managers in universities comprise of administrators and academics. The evidence clearly indicated that administrators and academics engaged in two distinct types of sensemaking processes which occurred simultaneously. The thesis subsequently refers to this type of sensemaking as ‘simultaneous sensemaking’. The term simultaneous sensemaking is thus adopted to describe the occurrence of two distinct types of sensemaking processes which occurs concurrently among middle managers in loosely coupled organizations in relation to a particular strategy.

1.2.1 The nature and context of simultaneous sensemaking

Attempts to unpack the discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking revealed that based on the nature of their work, administrators and academics select two distinct sets of sensemaking frames or cues in their attempt to make sense of their university’s SRS strategy. The evidence clearly suggests that simultaneous sensemaking is peculiar to contexts in which middle managers can be classified as consisting of two distinct groups. This kind of classification is peculiar to loosely coupled organizations. For example based on their nature of works and other factors, middle managers in hospitals consist of administrators and medics while public sector middle managers comprise of administrators and managers. In relation to universities in particular, middle managers can be clearly grouped into midlevel administrators and academics. Administrators generally comprise of core staff while their academic colleagues are typically made up of teaching staff. The roles, responsibilities and behaviours of these two sets of managers are

clearly distinct one from another. The existence of two different middle managers in loosely coupled organizations provides the appropriate context for simultaneous sensemaking to occur.

The thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking is basically in reference to a combination of two types of sensemaking processes: dependent and autonomous sensemaking processes.

Dependent sensemaking process

Observations clearly indicated that administrators' choice of sensemaking frames is predominantly influenced by their administrative strategic roles and nature of work. Generally, administrators' focus on sensemaking triggers and select dominant sensemaking frames which depended on or emanated from the university's SRS objectives. They derived their understanding of the SRS strategy by selecting sensemaking cues from the existing strategy and other closely related contexts. The sensemaking frames and cues they selected were thus internal to the strategic process. The thesis hitherto refers to this kind of sensemaking process as administrators' 'dependent sensemaking' process. Overall, the thesis identified three distinct dependent sensemaking frames: legislation, accounting and reporting and organizational image. These form part of the data sets for the thesis discussions, and will be explored in much depth in subsequent chapters.

Autonomous sensemaking process

On the other hand, based on their strategic roles and nature of work, academics select sensemaking cues by exploring opportunities external to the existing strategic process. Hence the sensemaking frames they selected were generally external to the SRS strategy. The thesis refers to this kind of sensemaking process as academics 'autonomous sensemaking' process. Overall, the thesis identified three distinct autonomous sensemaking frames: academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work.

Evidently, the two distinct frameworks prove that administrators and academics are engaged in simultaneous sensemaking processes. This distinct surprise discovery thus serves as the foundation on which the thesis investigations, findings and discussions are built. The discovery also indicated

that while single level sensemaking process results in similar or collective sensemaking processes and therefore expected outcomes, simultaneous sensemaking processes on the other hand can oftentimes be dissimilar, sometimes even opposing and more importantly can lead to unexpected strategy outcomes.

In spite of its novelty and importance, research studies focused on the interplay between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking in loosely coupled organizations have however been understudied in management studies. Although scant research exists on distinction between middle managers in loosely coupled systems, what is particularly missing is elaborate evidence supporting the existence of simultaneous sensemaking of middle managers in loosely coupled systems. Specifically, an oversight into distinctions between administrators sensemaking and academics sensemaking processes in universities is apparent. The thesis traces the neglect particularly to the oversight of nuanced attempts to explore and systematically analyse the existence and function of simultaneous sensemaking in universities. It is the thesis position that the oversight has dire consequences on the sensemaking theory in particular and on strategic management theory as a whole. The thesis believes that the starting point of such an investigation is to unpack the composition of middle managers sensemaking in loosely coupled organizational contexts.

A framework is developed out of the thesis data to demonstrate that the juxtaposition of administrators' dependent sensemaking process and academics autonomous sensemaking process results in what the thesis refers to as middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. The framework is appropriately situated in the methodology chapter under in **Figure 3.1** of section **3.8**. Summarily, it demonstrates that dependent and autonomous sensemaking processes, are central to administrators and academics situated sensemaking of strategic processes in loosely coupled organizations.

1.3 THEORETICAL POSITIONING

To enhance understanding of the thesis aims and discovery, it is important to clearly situate the thesis aims in relevant theoretical contexts. This section therefore employs appropriate literatures

on the sensemaking concept, loosely coupled systems and strategy creation to position the three main aims in their respective theories.

1.3.1 Sensemaking theory

Since the late nineties, a highly significant number of researches have explored the role of middle managers in change processes (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1996; Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005; Rouleau, 2005; Mills et.al 2006; Mantere, 2008). They describe the role middle managers play in shaping change and strategy development when their organizations undergo various kinds of change. The studies place emphasis on middle managers sensemaking of change processes which occur in their organization.

The concept of sensemaking is described as a subjective, mental activity (Weick 1995; Craig-Lees 2001:518) which individuals employ to make sense of events, themselves and other people. It is a subconscious interpretive process through which meaning is socially constructed by individuals and groups to understand the phenomena which occur around them (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1996; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Weick et.al 2005). Attempts at making sense of events leads to development of plausible meanings of events (Weick 1995; Weick et.al 2005), and not accurate meanings per se. In other words, attempt at making sense of situations results in best possible solutions and not ‘the right way’ of doing things. To develop plausible meanings of new or existing events and occurrences, individuals draw from new sensemaking frameworks in the environment and interpret those frames by selecting relevant sensemaking cues. Sensemaking research thus draws attention to how individuals select sensemaking triggers, cues and frameworks from their environment to create meaningful accounts of what goes on around them. The sensemaking literature has been extended to also focus on the concept of sensegiving. Sensegiving mainly describes how individuals or group of individuals influence other people’s sensemaking of situations (Gioia and Thomas 1991; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1996; Gioia and Thomas 1996). In respect to middle managers in particular, the literature of sensemaking and sensegiving is employed as a cognitive tool to explore how they understand, react and influence change processes in their organizations. Undoubtedly, the exploration of middle managers sensemaking continues to receive increased attention in strategic management studies.

The sensemaking literature is a broad interdisciplinary concept which draws insights from philosophy, sociology, social psychology and cognitive science for example. However, sensemaking aspects as it relates to organizations and institutions in the principal interest of the thesis. Institutional sensemaking has been extensively studied by (Weick 1988; 1995; 1993); Orton and Weick 1990, Gioia and Thomas 1991; 1996; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005), Maitlis (2005) and Brown et.al (2014), to mention a few. It is therefore the thesis belief that the literature on institutional sensemaking is adequate to successfully address the thesis query and aims. This is particularly so as the thesis aims to contribute to research exploring organizational actors' micro level processes which underlie macro level processes in organizations (Weick 1995; Brown et.al 2014). The thesis is therefore focused on exploring and unpacking middle managers sensemaking processes as it relates to the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking (micro level), which underlie institutional processes as it relates to strategy creation (macro level) in the organization.

Middle managers sensemaking

Generally, middle managers sensemaking studies are focused on examining how middle managers understand and interpret organizational events which occur around them. To engage in organizational practices, middle managers must first make sense of organizational process. By engaging in sensemaking processes, middle managers first identify new triggers and information within their organizational environment which they juxtapose against occurring events to enable a current or new understanding of those events. Examining middle managers sensemaking processes is about examining their cognitive capabilities in the way they seek information, interpret it, negotiate and ascribe meaning to it, and then take appropriate actions in respect of organizational events (Weick 1995; Weick et.al 2005; Gioia et.al 1993; Thomas et.al 1993; Maitlis 2005; Balogun and Rouleau 2012). The outcomes of middle managers sensemaking processes have also gained much attention in strategic management studies. Studies on middle managers sensemaking outcomes of strategy creation processes in particular have been focused on examining the role of middle managers sensemaking in (re)shaping strategy when their organizations undergo various kinds of change (Balogun et al 2003, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al 2007; Johnson et al 2003, 2007; Whittington, 2006). They explore the role of middle managers in actively facilitating and mediating between personal and organizational thinking and goals in ways that

reshape strategic directions (Balogun and Rouleau 2008). Exploring middle managers sensemaking of change is critical to demonstrating how they understand and engage with change processes in organizations (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Maillis 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Reginee and Rouleau 2013; Balogun and Rouleau 2012).

In light of the thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process, the thesis identifies a clear gap in as much as earlier studies have failed to explore middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes in loosely coupled systems. The thesis therefore makes a clear shift from its initial intent to explore single-level sensemaking processes and rather introduces and examines the concept of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes.

1.3.2 Sensemaking and institutional theory

It is the thesis belief that the discovery of administrators and academics dominant sensemaking frames can be further scrutinized in the context of institutional theory. Generally, institutional theory is concerned with analysing identifying and describing institutional forces and pressures which impact organizational structure, characteristic and behavior (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Perrow 1985, 1991; Scott 1987, 2008; Oliver 1996). Essentially institutional theory believes that institutional pressures and forces compel organizations to standardize organizational performances and practices in ways that make organizations look similar (or dissimilar) in their industries (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991; Scott 1987, 2008; Kostova, 1997; Rosenzweig and Singh, 1991). The process involved in the quest for organizations to look similar is popularly described as institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

In particular, DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) developed a framework which identifies and describes three types of institutional pressures (coercive, mimetic and normative pressures) which cause institutional isomorphism. Coercive pressures generally emanate from external legislative pressures, industry standards and responses to uncertainties in institutional environments. Mimetic pressures are pressures which generally result from standards and responses to environmental uncertainties. Normative pressures arise out of the need for moral prescriptions and obligations, and professionalism which relates to how different professions in organizations define work conditions and methods as well as legitimize their work.

The thesis adopts DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) framework, to further analyze and explain the thesis findings on administrators and academics simultaneous sensemaking process, especially as it relates to the six dominant sensemaking frames identified. The thesis believes that dominant sensemaking frames as based on legislation, accounting and reporting, organizational image, academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work are appropriate examples of coercive, mimetic and normative pressures. The thesis also suggests that analyzing dominant sensemaking frames through the lens of institutional isomorphism will unearth extents of isomorphism in universities and also help describe distinct patterns of similarity or dissimilarity in their adoption and practice of sustainable development. **Table 4.1** in chapter four of the thesis presents evidence which establish the thesis intent.

Overall, this part of the thesis unravels associated links between sensemaking and institutionalization. It establishes connections between middle managers selection of dominant sensemaking frames as influenced by institutional pressures and institutional isomorphism.

1.3.3 Loosely coupled systems

The term 'loosely coupled' (and 'tightly coupled') is used to describe the degree of connection between elements in a particular system or organization (Weick 1976; Meyer and Scott 1983). While some elements (structure, people task, subsystems etc.) in some systems can be described as disconnected or loosely coupled, others can be described as closely connected or tightly coupled (Weick 1976; Meyer and Rowan 1983; Orton and Weick 1990). In tightly coupled systems, high levels of interdependency exists between elements, as elements are connected to one another and depend on each other to successfully function (Weick 1976). Orton and Weick (1990:205) argue that if there is responsiveness without distinctiveness in a system, the system is tightly coupled in nature. This means that elements such as people, structure and task for example are interdependent on each other. Yet such elements possess low autonomy and identity, which implies that they can barely function on their own distinctively. Operations in tightly coupled systems have the semblance of advance or integrated organic solidarity forms (Tyler 1987:321), or can be described

as typically bureaucratic in nature. Traditional organizations are thus described as typical examples of tightly coupled systems.

On the other hand, schools, prisons, police organizations, hospitals, universities, and the judicial systems are typical examples of loosely coupled systems (Orton and Weick 1990; Bartell 2003). Orton and Weick (1990:205) argue that if there is both responsiveness and distinctiveness, the system is a loosely coupled system. This means that people, structure and task are independent, retain their identity and autonomy at all times (Weick 1976, Orton and Weick 1990), and they do not quickly respond to each other or their environment. Of all loosely coupled organizational types, schools and universities in particular are considered extreme in their degree of loose coupling or connection (Ingersoll 1991). Their elements are more independent of and not heavily reliant on each other.

The study of organizations in loosely coupled systems from the above perspective is usually reliant on classifications of organizations based on extents to which organizational elements are dependent or interdependent on each other. However these classifications have been advanced as organizational theorists posit that simultaneous coupling between loosely and tightly coupled systems exists. They argue for studies to therefore shift the focus to explore patterns of coupling.

Patterns of coupling

Loosely coupled studies essentially focus on coupledness in entire organizations to the neglect of studying patterns of coupling in specific elements for example. For example the focus can be on an entire organization and not only parts of the organization like its members, departments or strategic processes for example. The thesis takes advantage of this gap and therefore shifts its focus to identify and describe specific patterns within organizations and explore their level of coupledness.

For example, although administrative work is described as usually bureaucratic (or tightly coupled) in nature, what the thesis does specifically is to examine patterns in administrative work which have increased levels of flexibility (or loosely coupledness). This reveals that relational patterns between administrators and other elements are more interdependent than usually portrayed. In

essence the study focuses on examining patterns in administrative work which have increased levels of flexibility as well as relational patterns which have increased levels of interdependency (Weick 1982; Orton and Weick 1990; Bartell 2003). In similar fashion, though academic work is generally driven by high levels of autonomy and flexibility (Weick 1976; Bartell 2003), or more loosely coupled in nature, this however does not mean that academic work lacks control or connectedness (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980; Weick and Orton 1990). Thus the thesis explores increased levels of connectedness in academic work and relational patterns of increased interdependency.

The thesis interest in examining coupling patterns is to demonstrate that patterns of flexibility and connectedness in particular provide sensemaking triggers and frameworks from which administrators and academics respectively select subtle sensemaking cues to enhance their sensemaking process. All together, the study of loosely coupled context provides the enabling context for situating and advancing the understanding of the discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. To undertake a systemic analytical exploration of simultaneous sensemaking therefore, there is the need to thoroughly investigate the enabling context of loosely coupled systems.

1.3.4 Strategy

A growing body of studies have explored the importance of middle managers roles and actions in strategy formulation and implementation in organizations (Balogun et al 2003, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al 2007; Johnson et al 2003: 2007; Whittington, 2006). Generally, a shift in literature has been made from describing middle managers as passive actors who simply implement strategy to describing them as people who actively facilitate and mediate between senior managers thinking and plans as well as that of their own thoughts in a way that shapes strategic direction (Balogun and Rouleau 2008). Although middle managers active role in influencing and shaping organizational strategic process especially during strategic change is well researched (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Rouleau 2005 Balogun et al 2003, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al 2007; Johnson et al 2003 & 2007; Whittington, 2006), not many studies have focused on in-depth investigations

into the link between middle managers strategic sensemaking during change and its effect on reshaping and recreating strategy.

Studies on strategy creation in organizations have mainly focused on exploring intended strategy outcomes which occur as part of strategic process (Mintzberg 1978; Giddens, 1979; Eisenberg 1984; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman and Groove 2007). Recently however, research interests regarding unintended or unexpected outcomes are on the increase. The interest is centered on exploring how strategies emerge during the course of strategic processes especially through autonomous actions (Mintzberg 1985; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman 1985b; Burgelman and Groove 2007). More specifically, strategic management studies have focused on middle managers autonomous behavior in organizations, especially how autonomous actions impacts strategy creation (Burgelman and Groove 2007; Balogun and Rouleau 2008).

The thesis thus employs the literature on strategy creation to provide context for middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process and to demonstrate how autonomous sensemaking process in particular results in unexpected sustainability initiatives. A further demonstration illustrates organizational attempts to integrate unexpected strategy outcomes into ongoing strategic processes. It supports the idea that middle managers reframe and reshape strategy processes in organizations.

1.4 RESEARCH GAPS

The theoretical positioning above exposes three main research gaps in strategic management research.

Firstly, the thesis draws attention to gaps in sensemaking studies. Extant research neglects the focus on simultaneous-level sensemaking among middle managers in loosely coupled organizations. Research on middle managers sensemaking has hitherto described their sensemaking during organizational change as consisting of a singular and collective process Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun 2006; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). The thesis however, introduces the concept of simultaneous sensemaking in support of its discovery of distinct classifications of middle

managers in loosely coupled organizations. The classification of middle managers in loosely coupled universities as comprising administrators and academics reveals that the two groups of managers engage in two separate sensemaking processes simultaneously.

The thesis therefore draws attention to the fact that middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process of new strategies and strategic change lacks systematic, analytical and thorough investigations in strategic management research literature.

Secondly, the thesis also identifies gaps in studies on loosely coupled systems. To a large extent, studies which explore middle managers sensemaking process are situated in tightly coupled organizations (Weick 1993; Mills 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Maitlis 2005; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007; Balogun and Rouleau 2012). From a loosely coupled context perspective, studies on sensemaking have focused more on CEO's and senior managers (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Thomas et.al 1993; Gioia and Thomas 1996), and less on middle managers.

The thesis argues that what has received little attention to date is the focus on middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process in loosely coupled organizations especially in term of investigating the complexities of middle managers strategic activities. Specifically, it argues that little research is focused on exploring complexities of examining specific patterns in middle managers interrelation and strategic activities which can be described as loosely and tightly coupled (Weick 1976; Meyer and Scott 1983; Orton and Weick 1990). Especially, little is known of the nuanced interdependency and interrelationships between administrators and academics and other organizational elements during sensemaking of organizational events. What is of most paramount is the failure of existing studies to explore the effect of loosely coupled context on middle managers strategic activities such as on their sensemaking process during the introduction of new strategies.

Thirdly, the thesis identifies that there is a lack of association between middle managers sensemaking and the process of strategy creation. This gap consists of two main parts. First the thesis argues that although studies on middle managers sensemaking abound (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Rouleau 2005; Balogun

and Rouleau 2008), not many studies have focused on in-depth investigations into direct links between middle managers sensemaking (especially middle managers simultaneous sensemaking) and the concept of emergent strategy outcomes. The thesis supports the views of organizational theorist who argue that strategy creation is an emergent unpredictable process as opposed to a linear, predetermined process (Mintzberg 1978; Giddens, 1979; Harris and Ogbonna 2002; Regnee 2003; Burgelman and Grove 2007; Balogun et.al 2012). However it is the thesis belief that what is missing in strategic management studies is exploring studies on emergent strategic outcomes and its links with middle managers sensemaking.

The second part of the gap is a spin off from the first. The thesis argues that studies on sensemaking usually end in descriptions of sensemaking processes and sensemaking outcomes as they relate to periods of change in organizations (Regnee 2003; Burgelman and Grove 2007; Balogun et.al 2012). The studies however fail to explore effects of sensemaking outcomes on the overall strategic process. The thesis posits that it is incomplete to study sensemaking processes and outcomes without investigating their effect on reshaping and recreating already existing strategic processes. Certainly, no research that is known to the researcher clearly establishes connections between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process, strategy outcomes and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations.

1.5 THESIS AIMS

The exposed gaps in the literature set the stage for constructing the aims of the thesis. The principal aim of the thesis is to explore existing links between middle managers sensemaking processes in the adoption and practice of sustainability strategies, and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations. In short, the main concern is to explore links between middle managers sensemaking processes and strategy creation in organizations. Based on the main literatures employed, the thesis aims are grouped into three.

The first research aim is to explore middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes. It especially aims to identify and describe specific processes administrators and academics engage in when selecting and interpreting appropriate sensemaking frames and cues to aid their understanding and engagement of their university's new Social Responsibility and Sustainability

(SRS) strategy. The intent is to identify and highlight dominant sensemaking frameworks which middle managers draw on in their sensemaking attempts. It also aims to establish links between sensemaking and institutionalization.

The second aim is to explore the context of loosely coupled organizations. It is specifically interested in exploring the effect of loosely coupled context on middle managers sensemaking processes. Of greater interest is the aim to investigate specific coupling patterns in administrative work which are tightly coupled and specific patterns in academic work which are loosely coupled. This helps to demonstrate links between coupling patterns and middle managers sensemaking, especially in terms of the subtle triggers which coupling patterns provide to enhance administrators and academics sensemaking process.

The third aim is to investigate the nature of strategy outcomes. It specifically explores SRS strategy outcomes which consequently emerge from middle managers sensemaking processes. In particular, it identifies and describes the emergence of unexpected SRS initiatives. The interest is extended to further investigate how organizations react and respond to the emergence of unexpected strategy outcomes. Thus it identifies and describes specific integration strategies which organizations employ to integrate unexpected strategy outcomes into already existing strategic processes. This research aim therefore demonstrates links between middle managers sensemaking processes, and the process of integrating unexpected strategy outcomes into ongoing strategic processes.

The overall thesis aims is thus configured to demonstrate existing links between middle managers sensemaking processes, loosely coupled organizational contexts, unexpected strategy outcomes and integration of unexpected outcomes into existing strategic processes.

The first theme explores the existing links between middle managers sensemaking process and their nature of work. This unearths the surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process. The second theme examines the context of loosely coupled systems which is believed to engender the concept of simultaneous sensemaking process. It unpacks nuances of patterns of coupling and interdependency in administrative and academic work and its associated links with sensemaking.

The third theme investigates the emergence of unexpected strategic outcomes in particular. It extends existing debates to explore organizational responses to unexpected strategic outcomes and the overall impact of simultaneous sensemaking and sensemaking outcomes on strategy creation in loosely coupled systems.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The thesis inquiry instrument comprises three main sets of questions as they pertain to the thesis main literatures on sensemaking, loosely coupled systems and strategy creation.

First set of thesis questions

The first set of thesis questions was situated in the sensemaking theory. The questions sought to explore the thesis primary interest of middle managers sensemaking processes in relation to how they understood, interpreted and engaged with their university's Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) strategy. The aim was to identify and describe how middle managers selected dominant sensemaking frameworks and cues to aid their sensemaking processes. This raised the four broad questions outlined below:

1. How do you understand the concept of sustainability and sustainable development?
2. What does the SRS strategy mean to you?
3. How do you engage with the SRS strategy?
4. How does the SRS strategy influence your everyday organizational activities?

Based on a more critical look, the questions were further grouped into two categories. The first category focuses on examining the respondents understanding of the broad concept of sustainable development and sustainability. The second category is however focused on examining the respondents understanding of their organization's sustainability strategy.

The following section provides five examples each of both categories of questions. The full list of questions can be found in the thesis appendices on page 327.

Based on the first category of questions, five specific questions related to the respondents understanding of the broad concept of sustainability and sustainable developments are outlined as follows:

1. How would you describe sustainability/sustainable development in your own words?
2. How do you engage with sustainability/sustainable development practices in general?
3. How long have you been engaged in sustainability/sustainable development practices?
4. How has your background (personal or professional) influenced your understanding and practice of sustainability?
5. Do you have any expertise or qualification in sustainability/sustainable development?

Based on the second category of questions, five specific questions focused on exploring the respondents understanding of their organization's sustainability strategy are also outlined below:

1. How do you understand the University's SRS strategy?
2. Are there any similarities and dissimilarities between your sensemaking of sustainability in general and your sensemaking of the University's SRS strategy?
3. In what ways might your colleagues' sensemaking processes of the SRS strategy be similar or dissimilar to yours?
4. What are the main institutional challenges faced in operationalizing the SRS strategy?
5. What role does legislation and conventions play in the SRS agenda?

Of the three main groups of respondents, the thesis first set of questions above were generally directed to administrators and academic respondents in particular. As middle managers, it was their sensemaking processes that, the thesis was interested in.

Second set of thesis questions

The second set of thesis questions was situated in the loosely coupled systems literature. The main aim was to examine the context in which the respondents' sensemaking occurs and its influence on their sensemaking processes. In particular it examines extents to which specific patterns in loosely coupled university organizations can be described as loosely coupled or tightly coupled.

The aim of this set of questions was to explore how specific patterns of control and connectedness influenced the respondents' selection of subtle sensemaking cues in particular.

The following section provides specific questions on loosely coupled systems. The full list of questions can be found in the thesis appendices on page 327

Six questions are outlined as follows:

1. To what extent would you describe the University's SRS strategic process as tightly coupled in nature?
2. To what extent would you describe the University's SRS strategic process as loosely coupled in nature?
3. Which aspects of your everyday work would you describe as bureaucratic (or tightly coupled) in nature?
4. Which aspects of your everyday work would you describe as flexible (or loosely coupled) in nature?
5. As an administrator, how would you describe your working relationship with other organizational elements in terms of existing levels of flexibility/control and also in terms of connectedness?
6. As an academic, how would you describe your working relationship with other organizational elements in terms of existing levels of flexibility and also in terms of connectedness?

Similar to the first set of questions, the thesis second set of questions above were also generally directed to administrators and academic respondents. To generate a broader perspective however, some insight was also provided by a couple of senior managers.

Third set of thesis questions

The third set of thesis question was situated in the strategic management theory. The aim was to identify and describe how unintended strategy outcomes in particular emerge from administrators and academics sensemaking processes. The overreaching idea was to establish existing links between sensemaking and strategy creation in terms of demonstrating how unexpected outcomes become integrated into existing strategic processes.

The following section provides specific questions of strategy and strategy outcomes. The full list of questions can be found in the thesis appendices on page 327.

Seven questions are outlined as follows:

1. What is the nature of the sustainability initiative(s) you are engaged in?
2. What necessitated the need to formulate the sustainability initiative(s) you are engaged in?
3. What types of outcomes have your sustainability initiative(s) produced so far?
4. What kind of support does the SRS department lend to your sustainability initiative(s)?
5. How does the SRS department react to unexpected sustainability outcomes?
6. How do unexpected sustainability outcomes become part of the SRS strategy?
7. What is the nature of the 'new' or integrated SRS strategy?

Of the main, the thesis third set of questions above were directed to different sets of the respondent population. Questions regarding intended sustainability outcomes were directed at administrators, academics and senior managers. Questions regarding unexpected outcomes were directed mainly to initiators of the four unexpected sustainability initiatives. Periphery data from other groups of respondents also provided more insight. Questions regarding strategy integration and strategy creation were directed predominantly to senior managers. This was also supported by insights from the other groups of respondent.

1.6.1 Importance of research questions

The first set of research questions simply seeks to explore middle managers understanding of sustainability as a concept, its application in the University's SRS strategy and their sustainability practices. The importance of this first set of research questions is central to understanding what the sensemaking concept is all about. Central to the sensemaking concept is the quest to answer the question: "what is the story here?" When people confront something unintelligible in their everyday lives, they ask themselves "what's the story here?" (Weick et.al 2005:410). Weick argues

that the answer to the question lies in finding answers to two more questions: “What does an event mean?” and “How does something come to be an event for organizational members?”

The belief is that the question “what is the story here?” has the force to bring an event into existence. In effect by asking the question “what does the SRS mean to you?” the thesis hopes that administrators and academics will individually and collectively construct what they perceive the SRS strategy to be. Their account should explain how and why they engage with the strategy in the way they do. More importantly, their accounts are expected to reveal the dominant and subtle sensemaking they select to make sense of the strategy.

Closely related to the question above is the idea that once an event has been constructed or brought into existence, the ensuing question then becomes “what should I do now”? Weick et.al (2005:410) further argue that “this added question has the force of bringing meaning into existence, meaning that they hope is stable enough for them to act into the future, continue to act, and to have the sense that they remain in touch with the continuing flow of experience”. In essence, the process of meaning or sensemaking is unravelled through selecting sensemaking cues from dominant and subtle frames while engaging with relevant questions. Administrators and academics perception and construction of the strategy is particularly beneficial to organizations as it reveals and explains what middle managers make of organizational strategies. It further explains the impact of sensemaking of particular strategic processes on middle managers overall day-to-day strategic activities.

The second sets of questions seek to explore extents to which specific patterns in administrative and academic work can be described as loosely or tightly coupled. The questions are important in shedding light on middle managers strategic activities in loosely coupled systems. The thesis study of a loosely coupled university context provides evidence in support of established patterns of coupling (tight and loose), directly focused on middle managers strategic activities and relationships. University contexts are highly complex environments for studying tight coupling patterns as they are predominantly described as extreme examples of loosely coupled systems (Weick 1976; Meyer and Scott 1983). However, the thesis supports debates from previous research studies which argue that loosely coupled systems are engaged in high degrees of tight coupling

activities as they are in loose coupling activities (Rubin 1979; Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990). The thesis adopts recommendations from (Orton and Weick 1990) and shifts its interest from simply studying degrees of coupling in universities to focus instead on specific patterns of coupling especially as pertains to middle managers interrelationships and strategic activities. Questions concerned with levels of autonomy in administrative work and levels of rigidity in academic work are therefore important in exploring the thesis interest in patterns of coupling in loosely coupled systems.

The third set of questions generally seeks to explore how unexpected outcomes, strategy integration and strategy creation processes occur. The importance of the questions is central to understanding the idea of emergent strategy and the process of strategy creation in organizations. It debunks the idea of linear, predictable and deliberate strategy creation process for a more non-linear and emergent strategy process (Mintzberg 1979; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Balogun et.al 2005; Balogun 2006; Burgelman and Grove 2007:975). The importance of the questions reveals the effect of sensemaking on strategic processes in terms of sensemaking the outcomes (intended or unexpected) produced. The questions are however not directly concerned about investigating how unexpected outcomes emerge. In fact the thesis line of questioning does not include specific questions on how unexpected outcomes occur because the thesis discovery of unexpected sustainability initiatives emerged unsolicited as a result of analyzing data sets on academics autonomous sensemaking process. The researcher subsequently took a position to identify some unexpected outcomes and later asked the academics who initiated the outcomes to describe their nature and how they emerged.

The discovery of autonomously emerged outcomes is however vital to the third set of questions especially in terms of explaining how organizations respond to unexpected sensemaking outcomes or unexpected strategy outcomes. Questions regarding organizational response and what senior managers actually do with unexpected outcomes paves way to understanding the strategic integration process organizations employ to integrate unexpected strategies into already existing strategic processes to form 'new' strategies. The process of integration has the ability to reshape and recreate existing strategies. This process of reshaping and recreating of organizational existing strategic processes is what underpins the thesis interest in the study of emergent strategy and the process of strategy creation.

The thesis interest in exploring why organizations respond to unexpected outcomes the way they do, is essential to understanding the thesis choice of abductive strategy (Blaikie 2007: 79). The abductive strategy approach is employed to provide detailed insights into the ‘motives’ underpinning the process of integration. The thesis adopts the view that it is not enough to simply understand the process of emergent strategy and strategy creation. It believes that reasons behind reshaping and recreating existing strategic processes must be explored.

Overall, the thesis questions are essential for gathering relevant information and data needed to unravel the thesis overarching aim which seeks to explore existing links between middle managers autonomous sensemaking process and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations.

1.7 PROPOSED THESIS CONTRIBUTIONS

In light of the three research gaps, the thesis proposes to make theatrical contributions to the three theories employed. These are introduced very briefly below and discussed in much depth in chapter seven.

Firstly, it proposes to make contributions to the sensemaking literature in terms of introducing the concept of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. In particular it contributes to understanding middle managers selection process in relation to specific dominant sensemaking frames they draw on.

Secondly, proposed contributions will be made to the literature on loosely coupled. The intention is to contribute to research gaps relating to the dynamics of loosely coupled systems in terms of linking middle managers sensemaking to their nature of work and, patterns of coupling and patterns of interdependency in universities in particular.

Thirdly, in terms of the strategic management literature, proposed contributions will be made to unexpected strategy outcomes in terms of how middle managers simultaneous sensemaking impacts strategy outcomes. Additionally, the contributions on strategy will link unexpected outcomes to the process of strategy creation especially in terms of how existing strategies are reshaped by unexpected outcomes.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The thesis is organized into seven main chapters.

Chapter One

Chapter one introduces the research. It positions the research in the overall context of strategic management as it explores middle managers sensemaking of organizational strategy. The chapter then introduces the thesis surprise discovery. This paves the way to briefly position the discovery in the three appropriate literatures employed by the thesis. The literature positioning unravels three main research gaps which are subsequently described. This helps to outline three main aims of the thesis. The research questions and their importance are subsequently discussed. This is followed by proposing some theoretical contributions in particular. The chapter ends by providing a relevant structure for the remaining thesis chapters.

Chapter Two

Chapter two situates the thesis in appropriate literatures and theories. It reviews literatures on sensemaking, loosely coupled systems, sustainability and the theory on strategic management, with emphasis on emergent strategy and strategic responses. It also introduces the adoption of a peripheral literature on institutional theory which is used to link sensemaking with institutionalization as well as to explain the thesis' main findings. The three literatures and theory are discussed, analysed and synthesized to obtain relevant theoretical data needed to answer the three sets of thesis questions. This chapter is of great importance as it succinctly introduces the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking and juxtaposition it against existing literatures on sensemaking and strategy in particular.

Chapter three

In chapter three, the methodology of thesis is presented. It discusses the research strategy based on a mixed method adoption strategy that helped to obtain thick description to re-describe what the interviewees said they actually did in terms of their day-to-day engagement with sustainability and the SRS strategy. The research adopts a social constructionist epistemological stance to emphasize the idea that administrators and academics construct the strategy cues they encounter into a personal and meaningful reality of what the sustainability strategy means to them. The chapter illustrates the qualitative nature of the research in great depth in the second part of the chapter. Of primary importance to this chapter is the discussion on the thesis choice of an abductive research strategy and its role in linking the thesis theory with its finding. To conclude, the chapter provides an analytical approach drawing on the analytical framework developed in the previous chapter.

Chapters four – six

Chapters' four, five and six present the thesis overall findings in support of the thesis exploration of simultaneous sensemaking of strategy and the process of strategy creation. Chapter four focuses on the sensemaking process of administrators and academics. It draws attention to three dependent and three autonomous dominant sensemaking frames from which administrators and academics respectively select their sensemaking cues. The chapter further describes and analyzes the six dominant sensemaking frameworks through the lens of DiMaggio and Powell institutional isomorphism framework.

The fifth chapter discusses patterns of coupling in administrators and academics interrelation and strategic activities. Fundamentally, it supports existing studies which argue that loosely coupled systems are as tightly coupled in nature as they are loosely coupled.

The sixth chapter employs an in-depth examination of the nature of four autonomous sustainability initiative outcomes which emerged from academics sensemaking of the strategy. It describes the emerged initiatives, especially by identifying the initiators' intent for engaging in such activities. Of paramount importance, the chapter examines how organizations respond to unexpected

sustainability initiatives especially in terms of specific integrations strategies they employ to reshape and recreate existing strategic processes. The last part of the chapter provides some meaning to why organizations respond to emerged outcomes the way they do. This part of the chapter is imperative as it links the thesis findings with the thesis choice of abductive research strategy.

Chapter seven

Chapter seven presents the discussions and analysis for the chapters on findings mentioned above. It establishes the thesis position in respect of the thesis findings while discussing theoretical insights revealed from the study. The chapter also outlines in much depth, contributions the thesis makes to theory and practice as well as proposing future theoretical and practical implications. It further identifies limitations to the study in terms of theoretical and empirical issues which are identified as being beyond the scope of the research.

Overall, the thesis is focused on exploring middle managers sensemaking of strategy that affects a university's sustainability strategy creation process. It reveals two simultaneous cycles of sensemaking (dependent and autonomous) that occurs between a distinct set of middle managers. Based on dependent and autonomous sensemaking processes, two sets of actions occur which is made up of intended and emerged outcomes. The thesis painstakingly examines the nature of emerged outcomes and elaborates the process through which emerge outcomes are grafted into the overall existing strategy. This contributes to the understanding of what happens when a strategy has been made sense of. In essence, the thesis contributes to investigations that link the understanding of strategy with the emergent and dynamic nature of strategy creation.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 AIM

The aim of this chapter is to situate the thesis in the appropriate literatures and theoretical constructs. It provides the theoretical lens needed to investigate the overarching aim of the thesis which is intended to explore existing links between middle managers sensemaking and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled systems. The chapter thus combines relevant literatures on

sensemaking, loosely coupled systems, sustainability, institutional theory and strategic management theory to hypothesize observed related practices.

The literatures and theories are reviewed, analysed and synthesized to obtain insight and answers for the research questions. At the end of the review, an analytical framework is constructed to demonstrate how the main research themes on sensemaking, loosely coupled systems organizationalization and strategy creation are linked.

2.2 INTRODUCING SELECTED LITERATURES

The thesis is mainly aligned with existing research in strategic management and organizational cognition studies. To provide what it believes to be a missing link between cognition, (especially sensemaking) and strategy creation in organizations, the thesis adopts these theoretical constructs in support of its discovery and discussions. In support of the above, the thesis also adopts literatures on loosely coupled systems and sustainability to appropriately situate the discoveries and links between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking of a sustainability strategy and strategy creation in university context. The ensuing sections thus present brief introductions of the various literatures and theories understudy. The aim is to provide general insights into the reasons for choosing the thesis literatures. They will however be discussed subsequently in more depth.

2.2.1 Adopting sensemaking literature

The primary reason for adopting the sensemaking theory is to explore organizational actors' cognition of strategy in terms of how they think of, understand, interpret and perceive organizational strategies and change. Organizational theorists generally propose that there is a link between effective action and successful performance (Mintzberg 1978; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 1987; Carroll 1993). Research studies have thus focused on exploring issues based on organizational behaviour and performance in particular. What is implied is that organizations performance and success is linked to the way organizations behave. Subsequently however, increasing number of studies has shifted the focus slightly to explore not only behaviour but also the role of cognition in organizations (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1977; Thomas 1993; Weick 1993; 1995). To a large extent, cognition studies have focused on cognition-action models and frameworks. The concepts are generally predicated on an assumption that rational thought is

closely linked with how organizational actors behave (Thomas 1993:245). The aim has been to prove that in terms of organizational sensemaking for example, actors thinking and interpreting of organizational phenomenon is fundamentally linked with organizational strategic behaviour and performance (Weick 1993; Thomas et.al 1993; Gioia et.al 1994; Rouleau 2005).

Following in the footsteps of similar research studies, this thesis adopts the literature on sensemaking to explore administrators and academics organizational cognition of Westland's University's social responsibility and sustainability strategy (SRS). The thesis however employs sensemaking chiefly from an institutional sensemaking point of view. This occurs for two main reasons. It is argued that in spite of the importance of sensemaking in organizing and organizations, research juxtaposing sensemaking and institutional theory is rare (Weick et.al 2005). In particular the missing link is the lack of research studies integrating institutional context into sensemaking theorising (Weick et.al 2005; Brown et.al 2014).

The thesis therefore firstly, employs organizational sensemaking literature to demonstrate the usefulness of sensemaking for exploring, interpreting and understanding micro processes which underlie macro processes in organizations (Brown et.al 2014). This is achieved through the construction of a thesis framework (**Figure 3.1**) which serves as a model for examining administrators and academics sensemaking mechanisms in terms of how they identify, select and interpret dominant and subtle sensemaking cues to better understand and engage with an organizational strategic process. The thesis surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking among middle managers is thus best explored by investigating and unpacking specific processes which influence their strategic sensemaking, behaviors and practices. The framework is thus used to discuss six dominant sensemaking triggers as well as sources of subtle triggers based on which middle managers institutional level strategy engagement occurs.

Secondly, the thesis employs institutional sensemaking literatures to establish links between sensemaking and institutional theory particularly in terms of demonstrating how organizing and organizations are achieved through sensemaking. The bedrock of the thesis is to establish links between middle managers sensemaking and strategy creation. On a base level, it demonstrates how organizational strategies come into existence through middle managers sensemaking. On a

broader level however it demonstrates how organizational level processes and by implications how organizations are organized, achieved and established through sensemaking. The exploration of middle managers selection and de-selection of dominant and subtle sensemaking cues to make sense of the strategic process illustrates the effect that middle managers sensemaking has on an institutional strategic process. It is the reintegration of their sensemaking process into the existing strategy that recreates, reshapes and gives birth to a 'new' SRS strategy. The newness is explicitly exemplified through the incorporation of unexpected sustainability initiatives into the existing strategy. The formation process of a 'new' institutional strategy and process of organizing is thus illuminated through unpacking middle managers sensemaking processes. Hence through the lens of middle managers everyday nuanced sensemaking, the thesis provides understanding and insight into strategy creation and the achievement of institutions. By this exploration process, the thesis is successful in establishing links between sensemaking and institutionalization, especially in terms of how organizing and organizations are achieved through sensemaking.

2.2.2 Adopting strategic management theory

The thesis is aligned with strategic management studies as it focuses particularly on the process of strategy creation. The interest in strategy creation relates specifically to exploring how strategies emerge and develop in organizations. Contemporary strategy research supports the idea that achieving organizational objectives does not follow a planned linear process (Eisenberg 1984; 2003; Wooldridge and Floyd 1990; Pettigrew 1992; Whittington 2007). Subsequently, it has been well established that strategy emerges through non-linear, unpredictable, unexpected and unintended processes (Eisenberg 1984; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Regner 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Burgelman and Groove 2007). Basically, these studies have proved that unexpected strategic outcomes emerge in the course of the strategic process. In spite of the established position, the thesis believes that what is lacking is the need to extend the idea of non-linear strategy creation, to explore what becomes of unexpected strategic outcomes when they emerge in organizations.

The quest to disclose and understand how organizations react to unintended strategy outcomes has been very scantily researched. The thesis, thus adopts theoretical concepts from the strategic management theory not only in support of discoveries on how organizational strategies unexpectedly emerge, but also further adopts relevant concepts to expose discoveries into how

organizations react to emerged strategies. To achieve this, a narrower focus employing literatures on deliberate and emergent strategy, and strategic response are additionally employed to support the thesis aim of exploring the process of strategy creation in organizations.

2.2.3 Adopting loosely coupled systems literature

The thesis adopts the view that attempts to observe links between sensemaking and strategy creation in university contexts requires an examination of the nature on loosely coupled systems. The thesis holds the position that as a primary example of loosely coupled systems, the study of simultaneous sensemaking in a university context can better be understood through the lens of the literature on loosely coupled systems. The position clearly delineates that the study of contexts matters in investigating links between simultaneous sensemaking and strategy creation. It argues that the nuanced strategic context of loosely coupled systems is distinctly associated with how strategy is made sense of and how it develops. Additionally, the literature on loosely coupled systems is employed to provide the lens for examining patterns of coupling in university activities which engender middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. The idea is not to investigate the extent to which universities are loosely or tightly coupled but rather to examine patterns of tight and loose coupling in administrators and academics strategic activities and how the patterns engender simultaneous sensemaking. This will be explained in much depth subsequently.

2.2.4 Adopting sustainability literature

The thesis also adopts the literature on sustainability as the theoretical lens for studying the outlined research aims. To explore how middle managers adopt, make sense of and practice the University's SRS strategy, the thesis positions the understanding of the SRS strategy in the broader literature of sustainable development and sustainability strategy. The adoption of sustainability strategies in organization has gained momentum over the years. Its adoption process is however challenged by definitional vagueness in particular. The definition is usually broad, ambiguous and laden with multiple interpretations (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003; Wallace and Hoyle, 2006). Depending on the need or focus, sustainability can be engaged in from environmental conservation, social justice, economic viability, humane conditions and a myriad of other

perspectives (Figge 2001; Fergus and Rowney 2005). Organizational engagement in strategy is generally referred to as corporate sustainability. It is aimed at improving the economic, environmental, social performance and the role of government in organizations (Bos-Brouwers, 2010). Its underlying tenant is to a make ‘business case’ for the practice of sustainability in organizations (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Banerjee 2003; Salzmman et al 2005). Corporate sustainability essentially explores the value and impact of the practice of sustainability in organizations.

The thesis interest is not to engage in the increasing debates surrounding the challenges in meaning, definitional difference, reasons underlying organizational adoption or implementation processes as it is interested in exploring the nuanced details of how middle managers make sense of and engage with their organization’s SRS strategy and its impact on existing strategic processes.

2.2.5 Diagrammatic representation of thesis theories

The thesis adopts the position that the study of sensemaking processes and strategic outcomes alone without linking research findings to the strategic process constitute an incomplete study. The overarching aim of the thesis is therefore to explore existing links between sensemaking and the process of strategy creation in organizations. Thus it integrates well established literatures on sensemaking, loosely coupled systems and sustainability to support the research discovery and its effect on strategy. As such, the theoretical review of this thesis can be described as an amalgamation of relevant literatures and theory. The idea is diagrammatically represented in **Figure 2.1** below.

FIGURE 2.1 A diagrammatic depictions of the primary thesis theories

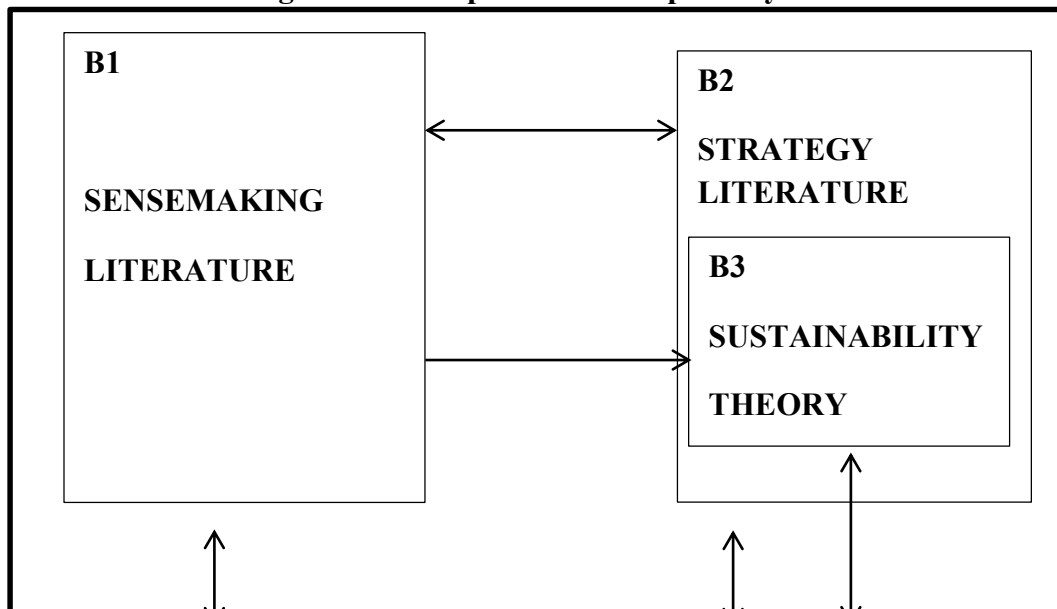


Figure 2.1 above is a depiction of the theories employed by the thesis. Box B1 represents the main theory under focus which is the sensemaking theory. The sensemaking theory is employed to explain the sensemaking process of middle managers in a loosely coupled university context. Its links with institutionalization is also discussed. In box B3, the literature on sustainability is employed to provide an understanding of the University's Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) strategy as well as how middle managers make sense of the strategy. The theory on strategy in box B2 is employed firstly to contextually situate the use of the sustainability literature and secondly it is used to explore links between sensemaking and strategy creation which is the overarching focus of the thesis. The literature on loosely coupled systems as depicted in box B4 is employed to situate the entire study of exploring links between sensemaking and strategy creation as it occurs particularly in a loosely coupled university context. The use of the arrows clearly delineates the interlinkages between the theories.

2.2.6 Adopting institutional theory

Underlying the thesis choice of literatures and theories above is also the use of institutional theory to enhance the research aims. It was needful for exploring links between sensemaking and institutionalization. The main thesis finding on the six middle managers dominant sensemaking frames was further scrutinized in light of the institutional theory to demonstrate how middle managers micro level sensemaking processes underlie and impact macro level SRS strategy creation processes. Though the theory is not projected as one of the main thesis theories illustrated above, its use in theorizing and enhancing the thesis findings cannot be overstated.

Altogether the theories are used to explore and answer the three main thesis questions as generated from sensemaking, loosely coupled systems and strategy creation theories.

2.2.7 Structure of the chapter

The remaining part of this chapter therefore provides in-depth reviews of the above mentioned literatures and theories. It is the choice of the thesis to commence with reviews of sensemaking literatures. This will provide a better understanding to the chapter especially in terms of the surprise thesis discovery and main contributions being sought. The review of sensemaking literature will introduce the surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking, and serve as the gateway to understanding the overall thesis ideas and aims. Subsequently a general review of strategic management theory is undertaken. In particular, the review places emphasis on emergent or unexpected strategic outcomes especially in terms of how unexpected outcomes are integrated in strategic processes. This review is imperative as it provides the base for understanding the links between simultaneous sensemaking and strategy creation. The literature on sustainability is also reviewed to provide an understanding into the nature of sustainable development and sustainability. The aim is to provide insights into the role of sustainability in organizations. This will be followed by a literature review on loosely coupled systems which provide the enabling context for simultaneous sensemaking. Lastly, a short review on institutional theory is also constructed. The thesis employs the theory to enhance the narrative. Specifically, it employs the DiMaggio and Powell (1983) framework to analyse the thesis findings on dominant sensemaking frames.

2.3 SENSEMAKING

Sensemaking starts with chaos (Weick 1993; 1995; Thomas et.al, 1993; Weick et.al 2005). It starts when people are faced with situations that they cannot understand – when there is some sort of incongruence between what they know and what they are currently faced with. Individuals are faced with a myriad of new situations continuously. They are faced with new information, surprise and shocking events, and constant changing scenarios (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Schwandt 2005). Incongruence creates a sense of disorder. Weick et.al 2005 argue that individuals constantly

face ‘evolving disorders’ in which they are forced to constantly institute order. They are likely to attempt to make sense of such situations to establish some sort of equilibrium in their state of disorder (Weick 1995; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Weick 2012). Establishing equilibrium becomes necessary when individuals current state of understanding of a situation or event is disrupted from what is expected. This brings about a state of uncertainty. Uncertainty in sensemaking is described in terms of an existence of equivocality. Equivocality is the uncertainty that occurs as a result of a recognised gap between what is perceived to be and what is expected (Weick 1995). It gives rise to the search for meaning as a way of dealing with imminent confusion and ambiguity (Mills 2003), and attempts to bridge the gap between what people perceive and what they expect things to be. Chaos, disorders and surprises in individuals’ current situations is what drives individuals to engage in explicit efforts at sensemaking (or making sense) of their current situations. This raises the question, ‘what then is sensemaking’?

2.3.1 What then is sensemaking?

Individuals are always in the middle of something (Craig-Lees 2001). They try to make sense of anything – of every lived experience. Sensemaking is a subconscious meaning making process of scanning, interpretation and action which takes place in the context of an occurring event or situation (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et.al; 1993; Weick, 1995). This definition is imperative to the literature review as well as to understanding the meaning of the concept and therefore needs unpacking in much depth.

The scanning process

During the scanning process, individuals notice a range of cues and information around them as they face new situations, information and events. Individuals are encompassed by unlimited mental or cognitive maps and schemas from which they select appropriate cues and deselect inappropriate ones to help make sense of occurring events and situations (Weick 1993, 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et.al 1993; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Maitlis 2005).

An introduction of a new organizational strategy for example will disrupt organizational actors’ on-going sensemaking of the strategic process. Individuals will be provoked to look for reasons that will enable them to resume the disrupted activity and stay in action. They select and deselect

what they perceive as relevant cues based on their own filters and worldview (Weick 1995). The individuals' conscious and unconscious interests, as well as coincidental situational factors, influences the types of sensemaking cues they focus on, select and deselect (Nijhof et al. 2006). The cues they focus on could be both internal and external to their knowledge frame (Cranmer et.al 2006; Morsing and Schultzn, 2006). Organizational actors for example rely on their frame of reference which they pull out from frameworks such as plans, expectations, acceptable justifications, and traditions inherited from predecessors, institutional constraints and organizational premises (Weick 1993) to make sense of a new strategy.

However, the sensemaking cues individuals select may or may not necessarily resolve the disruption. In situations where selected cues do not resolve the disruption, individuals further modify their sensemaking in intricate ways by drawing on other subtle cues over time (Gioia and Mehra 1996:1,229). They draw on additional cues such as from their personality, circle of influence, available instruments and their own scope of understanding (Cramer et.al 2004). Organizational actors must find a way of making sense of a new strategy or change process and be able to synthesize their 'new' or current sensemaking with existing sensemaking processes. In other instances where a more sophisticated revision of the selection process is required, reliance on intrinsic cues (Gioia and Mehra 1996) originating from sources such as personal, social, ideological and occupational sources Drazin et.al 1999:294; Cramer et.al 2004) is relied on to restore order. This leaves individuals in a state of continuous on-going search for meaning making. Through the process of scanning, individuals also attempt to interpret and explain the sets of cues they select (Maitlis 2005:21) in relation to the new situation the face.

The scanning process is complex and dynamic in the sense that individuals are faced with not only unlimited cues from their environment but also faced with limitless number of cues from their own frame of reference. Given a particular situation, some of these cues develop into predominant cues while others form more subtle cues from which individuals select and deselect to make sense of the situation.

The importance of examining the nuances of organizational actors' especially middle managers selection and de-selection of predominant and subtle cues has however not been explored much.

In loosely coupled organizations where middle managers are made up of two distinct groups, the thesis proposes that it is important to examine similarities and differences of predominant and subtle cues between both groups. Examining what constitutes predominant and subtle cues, how they are selected and deselected and their effect on the strategic process is crucial to understanding how strategy cues selected and interpreted and how they subsequently acted out.

The interpretation process

The interpretation process involves giving meaning to selected cues or information. This is generally influenced by the individual's own cognitive frame of reference or worldview of the occurring situation. Individuals interpret new information differently based on social status, ideologies, paradigms, occupations and positions (Thomas et.al 1993; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Drazin et.al 1999:294; Cramer et.al 2004). Organizational actors for example, each invoke their own interpretive filters to enable them make sense of strategic processes. In that sense, sensemaking is retrospective in nature. Individuals background, experiences, knowledge and other frames from their past, directly influence the way they interpret current organizational events (Weick 1995; Drazin et.al 1999; Craig-Lees 2001). What this means is that while sensemaking occurs in the present, it relies heavily on the understanding gained from past experiences and events to understand things that are presently occurring. Organizational actors make sense of organizational activities based on cues and frameworks which have been acquired from past knowledge and experiences. They draw on their knowledge on past events to enable them understand what is happening in the present. Craig-Lees (2001:521-523) describes this part of sensemaking as "attentional". Sensemaking is 'attentional' because it happens in the moment of time that an event is occurring and yet the attention itself is based on what has already occurred in the past. The understanding this develops is that the sensemaking process of whatever new experience, strategy or change occurring presently, will be influenced or understood when whatever experience and strategies that have previously occurred are considered (Craig-Lees 2001). Thus sensemaking is not time bound and has no limits. It is carved out of a flux of lived experience (Chia 2000:517). The duration of retrospective sensemaking can constitute past experiences that occurred as far back in years, or can constitute an experience, knowledge or event which occurred just a nanosecond ago (Craig-Lees 2001; Weick et.al 2005).

Although the idea of retrospective sensemaking is popular in sensemaking studies, the interpretation process however does not only rely on cues and frames from past experience and knowledge to understand the present. Sensemaking is also prospective in that it depends on the future. The future is inseparably linked with the process of sensemaking (Gioia and Mehra 1996; Nijhof et al. 2006). It is very unlikely that an organizational event or strategy for example can ever be constructed without assuming that human actions are meaningfully oriented towards the future. Therefore giving these main properties, sensemaking is can be described as a procensual link between the past, present and future (Nijhof et al. 2006). The understanding is that although individuals attempt to make sense of present events by relying on knowledge from past experiences, sensemaking also occurs in anticipation of possible future occurrences. Making sense of a current sustainability strategy for example is influenced by projections of what is likely to happen to the general and organizational idea and practice of the strategy, the organizational direction overtime, as well as sustainability issues likely to occur in the future. In effect, past and present knowledge and experiences as well as plausible future projections influence the way sensemaking cues are selected and interpreted.

Just as individuals are faced with a multitude of cues, they also draw from diverse frames and filters to interpret predominant and subtle cues (Thomas et.al 1993; Drazin et.al 1999). Hence, by drawing from environmental cues and personal preferences, any single activity can thus lead to multiple interpretations. The idea of individual sensemaking implies that, the selection and interpretation processes of ten members of a particular group for example, can yield at least ten different types of cues selection process and ten different interpretation and outcomes process. Although this may appear chaotic to the sensemaking process, some argue that multiple interpretation of strategy promotes creativity and innovation (Quinn et al., 1988; Ghosal et al. 1999). Creativity is possible because actors are allowed the freedom of being creative in owning and operationalizing their own sensemaking process, views and ideas. Creativity reduces organization rigidity and monotony in strategic processes by creating room for flexibility and imagination (Ghosal et al. 1999). Though multiple interpretations might foster levels of discord and ambiguity in organizational sensemaking process, Davenport and Leitch (2005) also argue that actually, the stimulation of creative ideas generates more collaborative relationships among actors. In essence, multiple interpretations have in them seeds for creativity and collaborative

efforts instead of simply being viewed as a process of chaos and ambiguity. In extreme cases however, it has also been argued that ambiguity in strategy interpretation cannot be remedied or transformed into something good and if unmanaged, it can be ugly and difficult to fix (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003).

To a large extent, existing sensemaking research has not honed in on nuanced studies on multiple interpretations. Examinations on multiple interpretations are generally interested in studying aggregates of groups such as middle managers interpretation of strategic change processes (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Balogun 2006, 2012). The complexity involved in studying different types of sensemaking process among same set of groups, for example middle managers, has however been elusive. The thesis posits that exploring simultaneous interpretations and sensemaking among middle managers will contribute to the study of simultaneous sensemaking, particularly in terms of exploring the nuances of understanding how distinct group sensemaking impacts strategy development.

Actions and behaviours

The process of scanning and interpretation of selected filters and cues influences lines of actions and behaviours that individuals eventually take in reaction to on-going events. It is argued that in sensemaking, what individuals do is invariably a result of how they think (Pfeffer 2005; Moran and Ghoshal 1996). Sensemaking begins as a cognitive process and ends with behavioural actions that are intended to restore some amount of equilibrium to chaos and disorders faced by individuals (Weick et.al 2005; Basu and Palazzo 2008). Sensemaking is organized in a stream of potential antecedents and consequences (Weick et.al 2005) or in a stream of thoughts and actions. In the action process, selected cues are interpreted to create meaning and then externalized into concrete actions (Cramer et. al 2004). They describe actions in terms of being physical (to do something literally), verbal (to talk as an act) or mental (to think about something in a specific manner). Individuals' successful selection of appropriate cues and understanding of events subsequently affects their reaction to events. Action is crucial for sensemaking to occur (Nijhof et al. 2006:317). The actions that organizational actors take in response to a new strategy are principally informed by their interpretation of selected cues.

Although selection and interpretation of cues lead to actions, this does not mean that the sensemaking process has come to an end. Individuals further engaged in creating meaning of their actions (Cramer et.al 2004). By taking action, new data and therefore new cues are generated. This creates opportunities for further sensemaking through further interacting and negotiation to enhance understanding of the action taken (Sutcliffe 2000). Individuals therefore find themselves engaged in a continually on-going process of sensemaking of selected and interpreted filters and cues and their resultant actions.

However, in some extreme instances it is possible that both initial and revised cues may not resolve the sensemaking disorder. In such instance, the sensemaking process of the new event may come to a temporary halt. This is referred to as a no action (Jackson 2009) situation. Particularly, in reference to sensemaking of organizational strategy, such an outcome requires a further redeveloping of the strategy and more negotiations among organizational actors to produce different sets of sensemaking cues that can be relied on to restore equilibrium (Weick et.al 2005; Jackson 2009). This invokes constant negotiation and adjustment between environmental and organizational cues and individuals' personal frames in attempts to make sense of events.

In other situations too, how individuals select, deselect and make sense of events and situations can be controlled or influenced. In some circumstances, deliberate conscious efforts are made by some individuals to influence the sensemaking process of other individuals. This process is referred to as sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Mehra; 1996; Snell, 2002; Rouleau, 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). These studies are generally situated in organizational studies literature. Usually, they examine how a group of managers deliberately influence sensemaking processes of another group of managers in ways that compel the influenced group to select cues which are favourable to their organizations strategic process or to a particular course. Discourse, rhetoric and other discursive tools such as emails, memos, meetings, storytelling and narratives have been employed as sensegiving tools to persuade actors to dialogue and engagement with the strategy process (Balogun and Johnson 2005; Jarzabkowski and Sillince 2007; Basu and Palazzo, 2008; Jackson, 2010; Mantere and Sillince; 2010). This has enabled research investigation into how organizational actors make meaning of the strategic process and how they in turn influence the sensemaking of other actors. The idea of no action does not however mean that

sensemaking stops. Sensemaking “does not begin de novo” or in other words it does not begin anew (Weick et.al. 2005:411). It is a nonstop process that never starts or ends (Weick 1995). The idea that sensemaking does not stop is imperative to understanding sensemaking processes. In particular, it contributes to appreciating the dynamics of sensemaking of organizational strategies especially in terms of the steady link between strategy cognition and strategic actions. Even when sensemaking has been reached (decisions are made), a continuous process is still engaged in as actors try to make sense of the decision and actions they have taken.

Although sensemaking is said to begin as a cognitive process and ends with behavioural actions that are intended to restore some amount of equilibrium (Weick et.al 2005; Basu and Palazzo 2008), however, the iterative process described above suggests that sensemaking is not such a linear process as is portrayed. Action and sensemaking do not occur in a vacuum (Weick 1995). Action occurs within specific environments. They occur as part of a wider context. Individuals, organizations and their environments are interdependent on each other. The thinking, knowing and sensemaking processes of individuals affect and are affected by the external environment they find themselves in (Craig-Lees 2001). Organizational actors for example, develop their sensemaking both from their organization’s internal and external environments (Thomas and McDaniel 1990; c.f Morsing and Schultzn 2006:324). This enables them to define a revised conception of the organization and its environment (Morsing and Schultzn 2006:324). This simply means organizations shape the context in which their sensemaking occurs while also being shaped by the same context in which their sensemaking occurs. No manager or organization makes sense of organizational events, strategies or their organization in splendid isolation (Craig-Lees 2001). Selection of appropriate cues to facilitate sensemaking of events is a multifaceted and dynamic process that involves internal and external influences constantly impacting the individual’s ability to select cues, give meaning to them and act on them. In situations where appropriately selected cues resolve the sensemaking disorder, they provide equilibrium between the old and new sensemaking process (Weick et.al 2005; Basu and Palazzo 2008). Such an outcome synchronizes the old and new sensemaking processes which facilitate better understanding of events. Middle managers sensemaking of their organization’s sustainability strategy for example, is likely to be influenced by sustainability events and other strategies occurring in the organization and the environment at larger. In essence, the emphasis placed on sustainability by the organization or

wider environment directly affects middle managers understanding and engagement with the strategy. Invariable the action stage of sensemaking processes lead to sensemaking outcomes.

Sensemaking outcomes

Sensemaking is not a systematic scientific process nor does it produce systematic scientific outcomes. It is driven by plausibility and not accuracy (Weick 1995). It is based on what is most plausible, probable and acceptable and not what is accurately acceptable (Craig-Lees 2001:523). The argument is that the sensemaking process involves a high reliance on intuition than it does on careful analysis that systematically eliminates ‘bad’ choices from ‘good’ or ‘better’ choices (Weick 1995; Craig-Lees 2001; Weick et.al 2005; Nijhof et al. 2006). The idea of plausibility is underpinned by the notion that there is no ‘right/good’ or ‘wrong/bad’ sensemaking. Sensemaking is about taking the ‘most likely’ decisions based on reasonable explanations rather than a perfect decision making process based on scientific discovery of ‘the real story’ (Nijhof et al. 2006:317). For example, managers take a particular strategic action not because it is the best choice of action but because based on their interpretation of the cues they select, the outcome of their understanding leans towards a particular way. When individuals seek plausibility in their own world reality, they seek a ‘story’ which is meaningful to them rather than searching for accuracy (Morrine-Dersheimer 1987).

Weick et.al (2005:415) therefore argue that sensemaking is not about truth and getting it right but about continued redrafting of an emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporates more of the observed data, and is more resilient in the face of criticism (Weick et.al 2005:415). However, if the problem is complex such that an amicable or plausible outcome cannot be reached, then the sensemaking process will be biased either toward identifying substitute action or toward initiating further deliberation until a plausible resolution is achieved (Weick 1993). Weick et.al (2005:415) however cautions that what is plausible for one group, such as managers, often proves implausible for another group, such as other employees. The idea of plausibility in sensemaking however underpins the outcome of every action that individuals take in response to occurring events.

So far, the narrative has described sensemaking from the perspective of individuals sensemaking. However, sensemaking is much as social process as it is an individual process (Weick 1979; Craig-Lees 2001; Weick et.al 2005). Organizational sensemaking studies have examined sensemaking as a social process which views socialized sensemaking as a network of intersubjective shared meaning (Weick 1979). Socialized sensemaking implies that “the thoughts, feelings, and behaviour of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others” (Craig-Lees 2001:522). The emphasis is on shared understanding of occurring events. The study of organizational sensemaking thus explores iterative communications and links between organizational actors, documents and symbols (Weick 1993, 1995; Mills 2003; Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau 2005; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). Sensemaking becomes organizational (Nijhof et al. 2006 2006:317), as information is shared and sustained through the use of common language and everyday social interaction (Craig-Lees 2001).

The idea of intersubjective shared meaning does not however isolate the degree to which individual or subjective sensemaking in itself is a social process. Weick et.al (2005), argue that although individuals’ sensemaking begins introspectively in an individual’s mind, yet it involves iterative conversations with one’s self (mind) in pursuit of the meaning of on-going events (Weick et.al 2005).

Summary

Sensemaking is a dynamic and complex process. The sensemaking process of any single activity involves drawing meaning from a multitude of diverse sensemaking frames cues and interpretations (Weick 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Drazin et.al 1999). In sensemaking individuals are faced with multiple frames of references at any given point which can complicate the process. For example, in cases where environmental influences and preferences are dominant, individuals are likely to deselect personal cues in favour of prevailing environmental cues (or vice-versa). This may skew the sensemaking process in a particular direction which produces outcomes that are different from intended sensemaking objectives. Dominant cues are thus likely to impact the sensemaking process of individuals and groups, in favour of or against intended sensemaking objectives.

On another level, although two individuals may share similar sets of experiences and backgrounds, their frame of reference with respect to a particular event or activity may differ based on their background and positions (Trice, 1993; Weick, 1995). Two midlevel managers of an organization may have similar organizational training and experience but their orientation towards a particular strategy may differ based on predispositions and personal preferences towards the strategy. Throughout the life of an organization therefore individuals are continually engaged in myriads of sensemaking processes at any given point in time in attempts to make sense of strategy and other organizational activities. This provides rich data for studying sensemaking in organizations, particular in terms of a general examination of different types of organizational sensemaking as well as different sensemaking types that exist among specific groups of organizational actors.

After providing a theoretical understanding of what sensemaking is, the theoretical review shifts attention to gain a theoretical understanding of the organizational process under study – strategy creation. The objective of the thesis is to investigate middle managers sensemaking of an organizational strategy. Specially, the aim is to explore how midlevel administrators and academics understand their organizations sustainability strategy. The theoretical review therefore continues with a general overview of literatures on strategic management and strategy perspectives.

2.4 STRATEGY

Strategy remains a key concept of organizational research and theory for nearly half a decade (Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2006:348). It involves the use of theoretical concepts and frameworks to make long-term and short-term decisions for organizations based on present and past information (Hay et.al1997; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Studies in the field of strategy have been approached from a number of perspectives. Based on the thesis aim, the thesis chooses to explore four relevant perspectives – rational, post-rational perspectives, strategy process and strategy practice. While the first two fit into early strategy perspectives, the last two on the other hand are more current strategy approaches. These perspectives have been carefully chosen to provide insights into the thesis objective of exploring middle managers sensemaking of strategy and the effect of their sensemaking on strategy creation in organizations. Overall, the thesis is interested in the strategy creation process of a university's social responsibility and sustainability

strategy. The interest is specifically in terms of examining how university administrators and academics make sense of the strategy and the effect their sensemaking has on the overall strategic process.

2.4.1 Rational view of strategy

Traditionally, the field of strategy has been dominated by rational conceptions of strategy formulation and implementation (Pettigrew 1973; Mintzberg 1978). The rational view of strategy assumes that strategy is a mechanistic and deterministic process. It assumes that strategy occurs out of a more or less rational calculation in which specific inputs produce desired outcomes in specific context (Eisenberg 1984). Strategic management studies based on the rational view present a logical series of steps that must be followed to achieve a specific desired strategy outcome. It starts with gathering of information from organizational environments, processing the information and systematically implementing them. In this deterministic understanding, strategy process represents a sequential, rational, and analytical activity in which managers must analyse both their external and their internal environments (Barney, 2002; Hutzschenreuter et.al 2006:702). This approach to strategy however typically ignores the salient role of individuals within this process (Hutzschenreuter et.al 2006:702). It assumes that organizational events occur because they have been programmed to do so. It assumes that event exist independently of the programmers or organizational actors.

In relation to the interest of this thesis, the rational view of strategy neglects two things. First it neglects the process of individuals sensemaking. It does not consider that individuals are personally engaged in a scanning, interpretation and action process in terms of understanding and influencing their organizations strategy (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et.al; 1993; Weick, 1995). Middle managers sensemaking of strategy involves active and complex processes of selecting from a myriad of filters and cues, interpreting them through varied environmental and personal frames of reference and then taking plausible actions. It fails to recognize that organizations are constantly engaged in on-going processes of negotiations, socialized sensemaking and sensegiving in order to influence actors to act in a particularly desirable strategic way (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Snell, 2002; Rouleau, 2005; Maitlis, and Lawrence, 2007).

Secondly, the rational view assumes that strategic outcomes are achieved through rational processes in the sense of being achieved as originally planned. The strategic process is thus viewed in a rather deterministic manner. This view does not support the idea that organizations are continually faced with unintended strategy outcomes. The idea that strategy emerges in organizations (Minzberg 1979; Burgelman 1985; Whittington 1996) through human intervention is not common to the rational view of strategy.

2.4.2 Post-rational view of strategy

The post-rational view of strategy however challenges the coherence and credibility of the rational strategy models (Ezzamel and Willmott 2004: 44). It challenges the idea that managers must mechanically follow deterministic models to arrive at strategic decisions. The post-rational view of strategy is anchored in the understanding that strategic activities exist independently of efforts to specify its features and/or prescribe its perfection (Ezzamel and Willmott 2004).

Post-rational studies project the role of management in strategy creation. Studies are viewed through the lens of internal and external practitioners engaged in the practice of strategy. The role and influence that strategy practitioners such as senior managers, professional planners, strategy consultants, and leading academics have on organization performance are fundamental to the strategy process (Whittington 2004:64). The approach is thus interested in the charismatic role of leaders in particular and its effect on the strategy process. It evaluates organizational performance through the performance of strategy leaders. The focus shifts from narrowly appraising overall organization performance to appraising individual practitioners or industries as a whole (Whittington et al., 2003). It is however argued that the leadership tradition ‘managerializes’ strategic activity in that it pays more attention to managerial activities and less attention to the un-heroic work of ordinary actors in their day-to-day practice of strategy (Whittington 1996:734). The overall emphasis of post-rational studies essentially focuses on people doing strategy in organizations in a less deterministic manner. It highlights the power that managers have, to allow

strategy to emerge (Mintzberg 1978; Eisenberg 1984; Mintzberg and Waters 1985). This strategy perspective is aligned with the overall aim of the thesis in terms of the understanding that strategy is something that managers do (Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski 2005; Johnson et al., 2007). Middle managers for example are engaged in sustainability activities in their effort to implement and embed organizational strategy. The objectives of the strategy are translated into their everyday organizational activities. These activities eventually impact not only the way the strategy is practiced but also how strategic practices affect overall strategic processes (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Rouleau 2005; 2011). In essence, middle managers are not only engaged in strategy implementation but are also very actively involved in shaping and developing the overall strategic process. The role of middle managers in strategy development is established in organizational and strategic management research (Mintzberg 1978; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Wooldridge and Floyd 1990; Harris and Ogbonna 2002; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2006; Balogun 2006; 2012).

2.4.3 The Process research perspective

Strategy process research has gained prominence since the 1980s. It streams out of post-rational research studies and covers a broad body of works related to the organizational dimensions of strategy formation (Langley 2007:1). The focus is built around understanding how organizational strategies are formulated and implemented and the processes of strategic change (Van de Ven (1992: 169) and outcomes (Pettigrew 1997).

Process research studies are essentially concerned with two main themes. Scholars have focused on choice processes (strategic decision making) and implementation processes (strategic change). In strategic decision making (SDM) research, analytical tools such as bounded rationality are employed to explain choice behaviour and outcomes (Pettigrew 1973; Mintzberg, 1978). It adopts an input-process-output logic model. The models are commonly used to explain causal relationships between independent and dependent variables in decision making (Van de Ven 1992:170). Strategic change research on the other hand adopts a historical developmental perspective that is interested in examining gaps between strategy formation and implementation. It explores the sequences of incidents, activities, patterns of change and organizations sensemaking of the change process over the course of an events lifespan (Van de Ven 1992:170). The focus is

on why and how distinct periods of change and continuity could be discerned in the overall pattern of strategic development of the organization (Pettigrew 1992:6).

Process research studies are often categorized in three ways in the literature (Van de Ven 1992:169-170). Firstly, process research is categorised as a logic that is used to explain a causal relationship in a variance theory. It adopts an input-process-output logic model. They commonly adopt process definitions to explain causal relationships between independent and dependent variables (Burgelman 1983; Van de Ven 1992). Based on this perspective, strategic outcomes are hence viewed as outcomes that can be easily determined given specific actions and patterns that organizational members take.

Secondly, process research is a category of concepts that refer to activities of individuals or organizations. They provide clear distinctions between internal activities of individual and organizations on one hand and external activities in the organization's environments (Pettigrew 1992, 1997; Whittington 1996). These type of research studies are the most popular as it affords longitudinal studies which examine changes in the logic model (variables) over time. Strategic change studies such as involves strategic sensemaking, strategic outcomes, cultural change and organizational behaviour (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman and Robert 1983; Ogbonna and Harris 1998; Snell 2002; Weick et.al 2005; Rouleau 2005; Basu and Palazzo 2008), are best examined over long periods of time. These studies track the effect of new events such as organizational actors' sensemaking on organizations to help understand how things change in organizations as well as how organizations themselves change overtime.

Thirdly, process research studies examine sequence of events that describes how things change over time. It explores the sequences of incidents, activities, patterns of change process during the course of a particular events lifespan (Balogun 2003; Balogun et.al 2004; Rouleau 2005; Maitlis et.al 2010). They examine a more micro-level analysis of occurring events which explore organizational members understanding of the occurring event.

In spite of this explicit categorization of process research however, Pettigrew (1997:338) argues that only the third of process research studies explicitly and directly observes the process in action. The argument is positioned in the belief that although process research is meant to enable

descriptions and accounts of how organizational phenomenon develop and change in real time, it actually does not. In the context of sensemaking studies like this thesis for example, process research on its own fails to take account of the fact that social reality is a dynamic process that occurs and evolves as organizations, actors and environments engage. The study of the evolution of strategic sensemaking is not an event that exists out there in its finished state ready to be studied. It is a study that involves examining middle managers sensemaking of strategy in flight. This involves examining middle managers sensemaking of strategy in the time of its occurrence, as they are engaged in attempts to understand and implement new strategies. The examination revolves around attempts to understand how and why organizations, organizational actors, strategies, and environments change, act and evolve over time (Hutzschenreuter et.al (2006; Whittington 2007; Langley 2007). The strategic sensemaking process is thus examined while sensemaking of the strategy is still on-going in the organization and not when the strategy is established. What is of interest therefore is to first capture accounts within the sensemaking process, but also extending investigations beyond simply examining processes, to observe what managers actually do in terms of daily strategic activities they engage in.

2.4.4 The practice research perspective

Overtime, another strategy perspective evolved alongside the strategy process research studies. As a body of knowledge, strategy-as-practice (SAP) shifts the strategy emphasis to focus less on the state of organizations and more on the process of organizing (Jarzabkowski 2004; Langley 2007; Whittington 2007; Jarzabkowski et.al 2007; Johnson et.al 2007). SAP focuses less on the performance of organizations, and more on the procedure of practices and practitioners in strategy praxis (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008:101-102). It shifts from examining organizations to examining the people in the organizations and the activities these people engage in. It investigates micro-level activities and practices of prominent organizational actors (Langley 2007).

In strategy practice, strategy is viewed as a kind of work, not just a property of organizations (Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2006:348). It describes strategy as "something that people do" (Whittington, 2003, 2007:1576; Jarzabkowski 2005; Johnson et al., 2007). It is an orientation that pays attention to detailed description of the actual activities that organizational actors engage in. It focuses the researcher's attention on activities and events rather than relationships between things

(Langley 2007:8). Earlier scholars proposed the need to view organizations as processes and not states (Weick 1979). To emphasize the practice component of SAP, researcher employed the use of verbs instead of nouns and they introduced conceptions such as organizing instead of organization, strategizing instead of strategy, structuring instead of structure and innovating instead of innovation (Weick 1979; Jarzabkowski 2004; Whittington 2007; Jarzabkowski et.al 2007). The idea of verbs or simply ‘doing strategy’ advances the notion that SAP is a social activity worth examining (Whittington 2004). This shifts SAP studies away from simply examining processes in organization performance to practices involved in societal activities in organizations. What is proposed is that examining practice, rather than theorizing about practice may yield insight into the existing relationship between organizational theory and process on one hand and strategy practice on the other (Jarzabkowski, Wilson 2006). The change in focus examines practices in planning and strategizing of activities as it occurs in organizational actors day-to-day activities and practices (Vaara and Whittington, 2012: 313).

Sensemaking studies generally adopt the strategy as practice perspective as these studies tend to examine social practice involving scanning, interpretation and actions among organizations, organizational actors and their environments (Weick 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et.al 1993; Maitlis 2005). Similarly, this thesis also adopts the SAP perspective to explore how middle managers make sense of organizational change and strategy in specific relation to how strategic sensemaking manifest in their every-day activities and the overall strategic process. Particularly, it examines administrators’ practice in selecting dependent sensemaking cues from the existing strategy and academics practice in selecting autonomous sensemaking cues external to existing strategy. Through the SAP lens the thesis investigates dependent and autonomous sensemaking practices especially as is evident in administrative and academic roles.

The main difference between the process research perspective and the SAP perspective is that unlike SAP, strategy process research studies is criticised for not being actionable in practice (Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2006:348). The idea of actionable practice is what has been described as the ‘practice turn’ in social theory (Whittington 2003). The practice turn is interested in situated, concrete activity such as activities that occur in boardrooms, away day meetings, on phones and in front of computer screens (Whittington 2003:119; Hodgkinson et.al 2006; Jarzabkowski and

Seidl 2008). SAP studies therefore lay emphasis on how strategist, consultants and managers act and interact with people and with things within the entire strategy-making process (Whittington 1993:732). In terms of methodological approach, the practice perspective departs from more established forms of processual analysis by relying less on actors' account of their actions derived through interview responses, and is more concerned about close observations of actors' activities (Ezzamel and Willmott 2004: 44).

The main objective of the thesis study is to contribute to SAP studies in terms of examining middle managers sensemaking practices in loosely coupled systems. The methodology adopted is to closely observe how the change process influences changes in actors' day-to-day strategic activities.

2.4.5 SAP themes

The formation of the strategy-as-practice perspective is underpinned by three main themes. The SAP research approach is distinguished based on its unique categorization and explanation of the praxis, practices and practitioners elements of strategy (Jarzabkowski 2004; Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

Praxis

Strategy praxis refers to the sheer labour of strategy through which strategy is developed (Jarzabkowski 2004; Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008:101). It is about the way and manner in which strategy practitioners are enabled or constrained in their activities or praxis (Whittington 2006). Praxis activities include the flow of formal procedure such as direction setting, resource allocation, and monitoring and control (Jarzabkowski, 2003: 32) as well as informal procedure such as tea break conversations, gossips, storytelling and influencing (Samra-Fredericks 2005; Gioia et.al 1991). They also include activities of strategy done formally or through ad hoc meetings and offline attempts at influencing (Whittington 2007:1588). It is the strategic activities that organizational actors are engaged in as part of their day-to-day organizational work. The idea behind strategy praxis is similar to the process research perspective in terms of its focus on

investigating and understanding events as they occur overtime (Wooldridge and Floyd 1990; Balogun et.al 2004; Rouleau 2005; Hutzschenreuter et.al 2006; Langley 2007).

Practice

Strategy practices on the other hand refer to the routines and norms of strategy work. It involves the various routines, discourses, ideas and technologies through which strategy labour are achieved in organizations (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008:101-102). Practice is about accepting the way things are done and shared between actors and how these accepted practices form patterns and routines. Whittington (2007:1588) refers to practices as ‘the stuff of strategy’, without which strategy work could hardly happen. They include stuff like practices associated with strategy workshops and meetings (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008), narratives (Rouleau 2010), discourse and power effects (Samra-Fredericks 2005), and the use of analytic tools such as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; Jarratt and Stiles, 2010). Practices can be both stand-alone practices (such as forming ad hoc teams or meetings) or they could be embedded in various everyday strategy tools (Whittington 2007:1588). Practice researchers have been trail blazers in respect of their interest in exploring strategy practices such as strategy formation and planning (Mintzberg 1978; Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011), meetings (Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008), workshops (Hodgkinson et.al 2006), restructuring (Balogun and Johnson 2004) and integrating learning (Schwandt 2005). They are interested in the pervasiveness of routines, tools and practices that provide greater significance to the strategic process (Whittington 2007:1588).

The distinction between strategy-as-process and strategy-as-practice is indistinctive, oftentimes blurred and overlapping (Paroutis and Pettigrew 2007). This has received much debate in strategy theory research. Generally the debates revolve around distinguishing whether SAP is an extension of process research (Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002) or explicitly a ‘post-processual’ research field (Chia and MacKay 2007). Others have identified similarities and overlaps in topics, performance understandings and methodologies (Hodgkinson et.al 2006; Hutzschenreuter et.al 2006). For example in terms of research topics, both perspectives focus on decision and strategizing in a manner which appears similar in meaning and approach. In terms of methodological preferences the perspectives are similar as both tend to favour the use of qualitative research (Whittington 2007). The use of loose terminologies and unclear traditions in strategy practice research has been

criticized as unhelpful in differentiating the concepts (Chia and MacKay 2007). In spite of the existing lack of clarity between the process and practice perspective, most research studies still employ the use of both concurrently to examine the logic that explains historical developments of organizational events overtime, causal relationships between variables in decision making as well as everyday activities and tools that organizational actors do and use in the strategic process. This thesis follows in similar vein in exploring links between middle managers everyday sensemaking, strategic practices and outcomes, as well as overall strategy creation overtime.

Practitioners

Strategy's practitioners are a diverse group of people directly and indirectly involved in the strategic process. Practitioners are both internal and external to organizations. They include top managers and consultants, policy-makers, the media, the gurus and the business schools who shape legitimate praxis and practices (Clark 2004; Mantere 2005; Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008:102). Strategy research scholars are thus interested in investigating strategic activities of organizational actors. Sensemaking studies for example are predominantly focused on middle managers practices (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau 2005; Schwandt 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2011:2012) and top management (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996) and support workers (Weick 1993:1995; Mills 2003). Generally, sensemaking of organizational actors differ depending on their positions in organizations. Organizational positions determine the types of sensemaking cues available to practitioners while also influencing the type of cues they select (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Balogun and Johnson 2004). Overall investigating strategic activities of practitioners is therefore essential to understanding exactly who performs everyday practices in organizations, what tools they employ, as well as how practitioners perform day-to-day organizational practices.

2.4.6 The thesis position on strategy

The above review offers a general understanding of the meaning of strategy. It provides insights into the different perspectives of strategy in terms of rational and post rational views of strategy. It also examines strategy strands of literature especially in terms of describing strategy as a process or as practice. The thesis combines both strands by engaging and making research contributions to

both perspectives. First, it is focused on investigations into the University's organizational procedures in terms of understanding the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled university context. Secondly, further investigations are undertaken into exploring strategic activities relating to middle managers sensemaking activities in direct relations to what they actually do that constitutes their sensemaking practices. This second part of investigations makes contributions to SAP research studies by revealing two distinct ways in which administrators and academics engage in sensemaking. It shows how administrators engage with the University's sustainability strategy by drawing on sensemaking cues dependent on the existing strategy while on the other hand academics draw on sensemaking cues autonomous of existing strategy. In general, while administrators are engaged in the practice of exploiting sensemaking cues internally from the strategy and organization, academics are engaged in the practice of exploring sensemaking cues from other external sources. Another important contribution the thesis makes to SAP research studies is to extend process research findings from how strategy outcomes are developed to understanding what organizations do with unexpected strategy outcomes. The thesis takes the position that simply investigating the process involved in how unintended outcomes occur in organization is not enough. There is the need to further investigate the practice of how senior managers integrate the strategic activities involved in strategy development. The focus is on examining the practices in terms of the integration strategies employed by organizations as well as the process of integration.

Summary

Hitherto, the thesis has examined the broad theoretical underpinnings of strategy. Strategy is about macro-level input, performance and outcomes as it about the micro-level procedures involved in achieving outcomes. The focus is on organizations internal and external environments as it is on the people and practices that socially construct the environments. Strategy is about the study of organizational processes and the activities it entails. The review contributes to the understanding of the categorization and explanation of the praxis, practices and practitioners elements of strategy. In specific relation to the thesis, the review provides an understanding of the strategy theory as a lens through which the practice of specific organizational strategies (such as sustainability) can be studied. The section also outlines the thesis' position in respect of the strategy perspectives that have been reviewed.

The above review on strategy theory paves way for the introduction of the chosen strategy under investigation. The overarching aim of the thesis is to explore middle managers' sensemaking of their University's social responsibility and sustainability (SRS) strategy.

2.5 SUSTAINABILITY

This section of the thesis will therefore review literature on sustainability within the wider context of literature on sustainable development. The review is necessary to explore an understanding of sustainability as a social concept that businesses attempt to adopt and embed in organizations. The section is in two main parts. It first begins by reviewing a brief historical perspective of the concept of sustainable development. The second part then situates sustainable development in the context of organizations in general. It describes what corporate sustainability is and discusses the role of sustainability in organizations. The third part presents a narrower focus from sustainability in organizations to review sustainability in higher education which is the context of the study.

2.5.1 Brief historical perspective

Interests in sustainability gained momentum especially in the early nineteen seventies as concerns grew around rapid environmental degradation and uncontrolled consumption of scarce natural resources caused by industrial activities. Such activities have been identified as undermining the ability to ensure longevity, expanding prosperity and economic justice (Waas and Verbruggen 2008; Clugston and Calder 1999). Historically, the term "sustainable" has ecological underpinned roots as reflected in most definitions (Lele 1991; Zink 2005; Bos-Brouwers 2010). However, a myriad of views, definitions and approaches to sustainability abound depending on individual interests and research agenda. Interests range from environmental conservation, social justice, economic viability and humane conditions that must be preserved for future generations (Clugston and Calder 1999; Figge 2001; Fergus and Rowney 2005).

The term sustainability is frequently used interchangeable with the term sustainable development. Sustainable development gained prominence in global economics in the wake of what is commonly referred to as the 'Brundtland' definition. The definition is published in the United Nations World Commission in Environment and Development report (UNWCED, 1987) entitled Our Common Future. It defines sustainable development as that which "seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UNWCED, 1987). This definition is generally broad ambiguous and subject to interpretation. It has been argued that in context where multiple interpretations of a phenomenon abound, no single meaning is considered the 'best' or most coherent interpretation (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003; Wallace and Hoyle, 2006). There are therefore widespread debates about the breath, application, ambiguity and meaning of the Brundtland definition. In spite of this however, the concept is frequently adopted and applied in organizations in particular. The practice of sustainability in organizations is commonly referred to as corporate sustainability.

2.5.2 Corporate sustainability

The practice of sustainability in organizations has gained widespread attention in management studies. Research interests are particularly engaged in debates around making a 'business case' for the practice of sustainability in organizations (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002; Banerjee 2003; Salzmann et al 2005). Part of the debate is concerned with theoretical frameworks built around attempts to explain the relationship and juxtaposition between financial, environmental and social performances of sustainability (Whetten 2002; Salzmann et.al 2005). Other parts focus on the relationships hypothesized in theoretical studies which descriptively examine how companies and managers approach the business case for sustainability in practice, especially with reference to adding value to organizations (Figge and Hahn 2001; Banerjee 2003). Both perspectives are aimed at exploring the value and impact of the practice of sustainability in organizations. The idea behind the business case is to promote organizational buy-in, to enhance bottom-line impact for businesses while also achieving societal benefits as organizations become socially responsible citizens (Porter and Kramer 2006).

The principles underpinning corporate sustainability is fundamentally three dimensional and can be described as aimed at improving the economic, environmental and social performance of

companies (Bos-Brouwers, 2010). A fourth principle has been recently developed which highlights the role of government in achieving sustainable development (Fergus and Rowney, 2005). The economic dimension of sustainability focuses on the profitability of businesses based on ease of cash-flow, guaranteed liquidity, shareholders returns and other financial indicators (Gladwin et al, 1995a). Environmental sustainability is generally concerned with businesses increasing their positive ecological impact while decreasing their negative impacts (Carroll 1991). Social sustainability or socio-efficiency (Figge and Hahn 2001), is anchored in the role of businesses in the wider society in which they operate. The principles are examined in a little more depth below.

Economic sustainability

Although economic benefits may be paramount to business existence, (Friedman 1970; Freeman, 1984), the success or failure of organizations has been argued to be strongly linked with the ability of top managers to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives simultaneously (Gladwin et al, 1995a; Thomas and Lamm, 2012). It is argued that giving priority to one or the other is insufficient for the long run sustainability of organizations (Gladwin et al, 1995a). And yet, the complexities, interplay, trade-offs and conflicts in achieving equilibrium have also been debated (Carroll 1991, Lele 1991). The debate occurs especially around the economic role of business in society. Managers who adopt Friedman's view advocating that "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits"; are more likely to focus their organizational efforts on achieving high economic performance rather than they are likely to focus on environmental and social benefits. The nature of the practice of sustainability is extremely complex as it is contingent on a number of parameters such as technology, regime and visibility that vary between organizations (Salzamann, Ionescu-Somers and Steger 2005:33). As organizations continually operate in uncertain, complex, dynamic and highly competitive environments, managers are engaged in employing the practice of social responsibilities as a competitive advantage (Porter and Kramer 2006; Ghosal et al. 1999). Managers may employ innovative strategies to steer organizations temporarily out of relentless market pressures (Ghosal et al. 1999). Organizations engagement with corporate sustainability may prove to be a useful strategy to enhance economic gains.

Social sustainability

Social sustainability in particular has gained more prominence in recent times partly due to the recognition of the agent-principal relationship between organizations and their societies (Gibbens, 1990; Scott, 2008). The agent-principal relationship is based on the notion that businesses are accountable to the societies in which they operate, and that business and society need each other to survive (Whetten et.al 2002; Porter and Kramer 2006). Successful organizations need a health society in which to operate, while healthy societies similarly need successful organizations to thrive. It is understood that organizations exist to add value to their wider social communities (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002). Strategic management scholars have been engaged in the debate regarding the degree of control and accountability of organizations towards society (Friedman 1970; Porter and Kramer 2006; Carroll 1991; Whetten, Rands and Godfrey, Pettigrew, 2002). The understanding is that businesses have certain social responsibilities and therefore will act responsibly in favour of society. This is however not always the true.

Social responsibility of organizations can be expressed in two main ways. On one hand, businesses can act ethically responsibly by doing what society expects of them or do whatever is necessary to avoid causing harm (Carroll, 1979, 1991; Porter and Kramer 2006). On the other hand, businesses can adopt discretionary or philanthropic responsibilities by taking actions not expected of them but which bring about social benefits (Carroll, 1979, 1991; Gibbens, 1990; Scott, 2008; Amaeshi 2011).

Its definitional vagueness and applicational challenges notwithstanding, the popularity of the term sustainability can be seen in its wide usage and adoption. It is applied to almost anything remotely related to business processes, the society in which those processes operate, as well as the environment in which both processes and society are embedded (Fergus and Rowney 2005:19). Yet irrespective of its widespread applicability, the meaning of the term still remains vague, ambiguous, undefined, and often contradictory (Fergus and Rowney, 2005). Ambiguity is however thought to be important to the strategy process as it facilitates the existence of multiple interpretations among diverse actors who would otherwise perceive linear messages as unclear (Eisenberg, 1984:7). It creates the environment where different groups can interpret different meanings to the same goal thus allowing different meanings to be constructed according to actors' individual interests (Jarzabkowski et.al 2010). Through multiple interpretation and views, actors

exercise their freedom to engage with organizational goals from different perspectives. The practice of corporate sustainability for example permits multiple stakeholders with varied views to coexist as long as they engage with the concept based on any of its fundamental principles. It is argued that mobilization for social concepts such as sustainability is best achieved when different stakeholders with divergent views are allowed to coexist (Obregón and Waisbord 2010). Definitional ambiguity is particularly helpful to managers of large organizations as it helps to reduce the challenge to ‘force’ a common understanding on diverse actors with diverse views (Hargie 2012).

2.5.3 Defining corporate sustainability

A few attempts have been made at customizing the Brundtland definition to define corporate sustainability. Yet the inherent ambiguity in the general definition of sustainability affects attempts to define corporate sustainability (CS). Corporate sustainability has been referred to more as an aspiration and a slogan than it is as theory (Banerjee, 2003: 151-152). Others argue that it is a buzzword (Porter and Kramer 2006), a catchphrase (Fergus and Rowney, 2005) and politically fuzzy (Lele, 1991). Such references are engendered by the definitional vagueness of sustainability. Dyllick and Hockerts (2002), defines corporate sustainability as “meeting the needs of an organization’s direct and indirect stakeholders (shareholders, employees, clients, pressure groups, communities etc.) without compromising its ability to also meet the needs of future stakeholders”. Others have also defined it as “... a company’s activities - voluntary by definition - which demonstrates the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders (Marrewijk and Werre, 2002:1). Corporate sustainability is “a business approach that creates long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risk from economic, environmental and social dimensions.” (Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes 2011).

The definitions are as distinct as they are similar. Although no two definitions are the same, however, a closer analytical look at each one of them can be linked to one or all the four principles underlying sustainable development theory and practice. Organizations adopt or associate with particular definitions with the aim of achieving some economic, social or environmental impact in

favour of organization. Universities for example are becoming more involved in the theory and practice of sustainability through research, policy formation and establishing environmental management programme as a means of contributing to socio-environmental impact of sustainability (Clugston and Calder 1999; Dobson et.al 2010). To overcome the definitional challenges, Fergus and Rowney (2005:19) suggest that what needs to be addressed, by academia, business, and society as a whole, is the need to harness the opportunity to engage in an inclusive discourse around the notion of developing values that lead to sustainability progress in all its varied facets. Porter and Kramer (2006) also suggest the need for organizations to move beyond simply engaging in good corporate citizenship and mitigating harmful value chain impacts, to mount a small number of social responsibility initiatives whose social and business benefits are large and distinct.

What is being proposed is not to agree on a conceptual definition or redefinition of sustainability but rather to broaden the understanding of both concept and practice of sustainability in ways that will enhance bigger economic, social and environmental effects. The idea is that the current understanding and practice of sustainability is not impactful enough. On the other hand some researchers argue that there is some advantage in the definitional vagueness in the sense that it engenders engagement among varied stakeholders in a way that allows practitioners entrenched positions without necessarily creating conflict (Lele, 1991). This means that the broad based definition actually allows multiple stakeholders the freedom to engage from whichever viewpoint they find most comfortable. Although vast engagement is encouraged in organizations as a means of creating awareness and engagement with sustainability, what is of most interest is the value and impact corporate engagement have on the society, environment and economy (Fergus and Rowney 2005; Porter and Kramer 2006).

2.5.4 Sustainable development in higher education

Universities are increasingly considering the current and future impact of their educational, research, outreach and operational activities. The Talloires Declaration (1990) provides significant attempt to define who a sustainable university is. This was signed by more than 265 university presidents and chancellors at institutions in over 40 countries across five continents. The declaration is especially significant in encouraging all universities to adopt the practice of

sustainability along three main levels (Clugston and Calder 1999). Firstly, it persuades universities to engage in education, research, policy formation, and information exchange regarding issues on population, environment, and development. Secondly, Universities are encouraged to establish programmes to produce expertise in environmental management, sustainable economic development, population, and related fields to ensure that all university graduates are environmentally literate and responsible citizens. Thirdly, Universities are expected to set examples of environmental responsibility by establishing programs of resource conservation, recycling, and waste reduction at the universities. The idea is that the more universities are engaged in these activities, the more they move toward becoming more sustainable institutions with sustainable futures.

Sustainability studies in high education institutions

Most academic research conducted on sustainability in high education (HE) institutions have subsequently focused on ‘greening of the curriculum’ and the associated regimes of legitimizing the practice of sustainability (Dobson et.al 2010). Further research shifts the focus slightly to explore conscious reflections of institutional values and practices and the role of the University in its social and ecological systems (Wright, 2004; Clugston and Calder 1999). Generally, debates surrounding why universities should engage and how they can practically engage in sustainability practices are in two main parts. The first revolves around the relative merits of teaching about the environment and teaching for the environment (Dobson et.al 2010). It encourages universities to engage by creating awareness about environmental issues and training graduates to respond positively to such issues in various capacities (Lele 1991). The second debate is concerned with the actual practice or sustainability performance of universities. The concern is about the disparity between what institutions claim to be doing versus what they are actually doing (Wright, 2004; Dobson et.al 2010). Issues of disparity between institutional claims and actions have become necessary as it has been advocated that signing up to Charters and declarations is no longer adequate proof of a commitment towards becoming more sustainable (Walton, 2000). While there have been several international and national conferences adopting sustainability, still little is known about Charter implementation and ensuing sustainable development outcomes after the Charters have been adopted by organizations (Wright 2001; Dobson et.al 2010). Organizations may have ulterior motive for signing on to Charters and declarations. This informs sustainability

actions that organizations pursue, which subsequently affects the type of sustainability outcomes achieved. Depending on the actions taken, sustainability outcomes may not necessarily support overall efforts to enhance sustainability practices in organizations. How university middle managers sustainability efforts contribute to sustainability outcomes is central to the thesis' aims. In particular, middle managers sensemaking and sustainability engagement is believed to be directly linked to the success of their organization's sustainability strategy. This is especially so as middle managers are observed to engage in different types of sensemaking, some of which results in unexpected sustainability outcomes. How organizations respond to unexpected sustainability outcomes impacts the success or otherwise of organizational agendas.

Summary

Sustainable development is a social practice that organizations attempt to adopt as part of their core organizational beliefs and practices. However, its definition, interpretation and implementation remain vague. On one hand, this leads to organizations engaging with sustainability practices in unstructured ways. Generally, organizations engage due to personal interests in economic, environmental, social or legal perspectives. This affects the overall impact of sustainability outcomes that organizations achieve. Invariably, the definitional vagueness creates opportunities for various types of engagement from various stakeholders. High levels of flexibility in strategy interpretation and practice increases stakeholder mobilization for the agenda. Increased mobilization does not however translate into increase in practice impact. Achieving the right kinds of sustainability outcomes is therefore pivotal to embedding sustainability practices in organizations and achieving universal sustainability objectives in relation to economic, environmental and social impacts.

2.6 LOOSELY COUPLED SYSTEMS

The concept of 'loosely coupled systems' was first coined by Weick (1976). It was later developed and popularized by Orton and Weick (1990). The term was first used to describe connections between elements such as (structure, work activities, people, and task) in schools (Weick 1976; Meyer and Scott 1983). The context has subsequently been expanded over time to include universities, hospitals, prisons, police organizations, and judicial systems and other organizations

that have loose connections between structure, people and task and yet retain their identity and autonomy at all times (Weick 1976, Orton and Weick 1990). Meyer and Rowan (1983), described loosely coupled systems as systems or contexts in which structures and outcomes are loosely connected or disconnected.

Universities in particular are a good context for describing and studying the concept of loosely coupled systems. They portray two main coupling elements. It is made up of the authority of office and the technical core (Weick 1976:4). Elements in the authority of office include positions, offices, responsibilities, opportunities, rewards, and sanctions. Technical core elements on the other hand include elements like technology, task, subtask, role, territory and person. The relationships between elements in the both are governed by degrees of responsiveness and distinctiveness. Orton and Weick (1990) posit that the degree of responsiveness in a system can be measured by existing levels of independence (disconnection) and interdependence (connection) qualities, while the degree of distinctiveness in a system can be measured by existing levels of indeterminacy (autonomy) and determinate (rigidity) qualities in the system (Orton and Weick 1990). Essentially, the characteristics of elements in a system can be described as responsive or distinctive depending on the high or low levels of dis/connections, autonomy or rigidity they possess.

Although the concept of loosely coupled systems has been empirically grounded in educational organizations, it has however been extended more narrowly to cover functional departments, individuals subunits, hierarchical levels, intensions, ideas, activities and actions (Orton and Weick 1990; Dubois and Gadde 2002; Dorée and Holmen 2004). Generally, the concept of loosely coupled or loose coupling is based on two main attributes. The concept is best explained in terms of the degree to which elements and activities in a system can be described as responsive or distinctive (Weick 1976: Weick 1982; Orton and Weick 1990).

2.6.1 Loosely coupled attributes

The first attribute is concerned with the degree of responsiveness in a system. The degree of responsiveness in a system can be measured by the levels of independence and interdependence which exist among elements in a system (Orton and Weick 1990). The rate at which, changes in

one element can result in changes in/or rescheduling of other elements (Weick 1976; Dubois and Gadde 2002; Dorée and Holmen 2004) indicates the level of responsiveness in a system. In terms of dependent and interdependent elements, a systems element is described as independent when they have few or weak common features among them, compared to other operating element. Such elements are thus likely to be disconnected or be independent. The more independent elements are of one another the less likelihood that a change in one element is likely to cause a change in others. On the other hand elements are described as interdependent on each other when they have strong common features compared to other operating elements. Such elements are likely to connect and be reliant on each other. The more interdependent structures, work activities, people, and tasks are on each other the higher the possibility that the rate of a change in one will likely affect a change in others. In reference to loosely coupled systems in particular, their nature of responsiveness is characterised by high levels of independence and low levels of interdependence. On the other hand, the nature of responsiveness in tightly coupled systems is characterised by high levels on interdependence and low levels of independence. Therefore in regards to describing loosely coupled systems, Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Aldrich, (1980) posit that the stronger the level of independence there is between elements, the more a system can be described as a loosely coupled system, while the stronger the level of interdependence there is between the elements, the less a system can be described as loosely coupled. How organizations for example develop their structures in response to the contingencies of day-to-day activities is therefore dependant on how responsive the elements are (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

The second attribute is concerned with the degree of distinctiveness in a system. Distinctiveness describes attempts to bring different parts of elements in a system together to form a work flow (Gidado, 1996), while still maintaining the individuality and uniqueness of the elements. Distinctiveness of a system relates to identifying existing levels of indeterminate and determinate qualities in the system (Orton and Weick 1990). Indeterminate qualities generally refer to levels of autonomy which exist among elements. A system is generally indeterminate if its elements are autonomous and unique. Determinate qualities on the other hand refer to rigidity in elements and components of a system. Determinacy describes organizations strict or definite manner in coordinating elements in consistency with daily work objectives. Loosely coupled systems are generally characterised by higher levels of indeterminacy and lower levels of determinacy.

Essentially they exhibit more autonomous characteristic and are less rigid in nature. In effect, the more indeterminate or undefined work flows are in a system, the more loosely coupled the system is. On the other hand, the more determinate or definite work flows are in a system, the less loosely coupled a system is.

Simultaneous coupling between loosely and tightly coupled systems

In spite of some these seemingly definite classifications, systems are not distinctly responsive or distinctive in nature. Organizational theorists in particular draw attention to some overlaps or coupling that may lie in-between the classifications and distinctions. They argue that systems operate in simultaneous coupling. To start with, Weick (1976:3) argues that loosely coupled organizational elements can be responsive but retain evidence of separateness and identity. Grandori (1987: 93-94) later suggests that elements in loosely coupled systems are interchangeable and separable (c.f Orton and Weick 1990). More recently, Orton and Weick (1990:205) advance the debate by proposing that if there is both responsiveness and distinctiveness in a system, the system can be described as loosely coupled. The debates promote the notion that elements in systems can vary in degrees of responsiveness and distinctiveness or that systems can have both elements operating simultaneously. For example, universities have been described as varying in degrees between tightly coupled systems and loosely coupled systems (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980; Orton and Weick 1990). The dialectical interpretation of coupling (Orton and Weick 1990:213), also promotes the idea that looseness on some dimensions should be complemented by coupling on other dimensions. They argue that organizations for example appear to be both determinate closed systems in search for certainty as they are indeterminate open systems expecting uncertainty. In essence the debates downplay the description of elements and systems being described chiefly based on classifications of responsiveness/distinctiveness or loosely/tightly coupled.

Although these general classifications are useful in identifying and studying components and elements in a system for example, theorists suggest there is the need to shift the focus from exploring general degrees of classifications in systems, to rather investigate patterns of coupling in individual systems. They propose the need to explore patterns or activities in loosely coupled systems which might be tightly coupled in nature or patterns in tightly coupled systems which

might be loosely coupled in nature (Weick 1982; Orton and Weick 1990; Bartell 2003). Overall, it is proposed that looseness on some dimensions should be complemented by coupling on other dimensions in systems (Orton and Weick 1990:213).

In view of the proposal, the thesis applied the argument across administrative and academic work. It explored loosely coupled activities in administrative work and tightly coupled patterns in academic work. A closer look at Westland University suggests that aspects of university elements and activities are both loosely and tightly coupled. Thus as has been argued, universities can be described as varying in degrees between tightly coupled systems and loosely coupled systems (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980; Orton and Weick 1990). This argument can also be applied to other types of systems. The phenomenon is described as a dialectical interpretation of loose coupling.

2.6.2 Dialectical interpretation of loose coupling

Orton and Weick (1990:205) use the term dialectical interpretation of loose coupling to describe degrees of (dis) connections in loosely coupled systems. The idea describes four types of coupling systems.

The first type describes ‘tightly coupled systems’. In terms of the nature of responsiveness, tightly coupled elements are characterised by high levels of interdependence and low levels of independence as mentioned above. Essentially there is a strong linkage and high levels of coordination between components and elements as the elements are tightly connected. In relation to their nature of distinctiveness, they are characterised by high levels of determinacy and low levels of indeterminacy. This means their work flow is more rigid in nature. Tightly coupled organizations have features of organic solidarity of organizational components in its advanced or integrated form (Tyler 1987:321). They can be described as being autocratic in nature. Orton and Weick (1990) thus portray tightly coupled systems as generally having responsive components that do not act independently.

The second type of coupling describes ‘noncoupled systems’. These systems have no distinct forms of responsiveness and distinctiveness. Coordination and linkages between elements are neither distinctly tight nor loose. Orton and Weick (1990) posit that a system can be described as

noncoupled if there is neither responsiveness nor distinctiveness. They argue that this type of system is actually not really a system.

The third type of coupling is the 'loosely coupled systems' which has been described extensively in **section 2.6.1** above. Loosely coupled elements are characterised by high levels of independence and low levels of interdependence as well as high levels of indeterminacy and low level of determinacy. High levels of indeterminacy in systems enhance high levels of flexibility and autonomy in engaging with work activities.

The fourth type of coupling describes a 'decoupled system'. Decoupled systems lie in-between tightly coupled and loosely coupled systems. They are characterized by levels of distinctiveness without responsiveness. They are more flexible than tightly coupled systems and yet not loose enough like loosely coupled systems. According to Orton and Weick (1990), if there is distinctiveness without responsiveness in a system, the system is decoupled.

Of the four classifications, research investigation have primarily narrowed the focus to explore relationships between tightly and loosely coupled systems in particular. For example, Rubin (1979) draws on the dialectical interpretation to describe and categorize organizations into types, differences, patterns and relationships between loose and tight coupling. This is also referred to as unidimensional interpretation of loose coupling (Orton and Weick 1990), which describes distinctions and characteristics of tight and loose coupling. The distinctions between the two systems have predominantly been studied in organizational contexts.

Loose coupling organizational contexts

The term loose coupling is typically portrayed as the endpoint of a scale that extends from tightly coupled to loosely coupled (Orton and Weick 1990:205). They are often portrayed as though tight coupling and loose coupling are on opposite sides of a divide. However, there is the need to understand that the concept of loosely coupled system is not merely an unravelling of tightly coupled systems (Tyler 1987:321). For example, loosely coupled organizations are not opposites of tightly coupled organizations. Loosely coupled organizational are not failed bureaucracies or managerial failures, but distinct organizational forms (Orton and Weick 1990). The idea that

loosely coupled systems are more effective than tightly coupled systems is also a misconception (Orton and Weick 1990:219) that needs addressing in literature and research studies. Organizations are not into the practice of one over the other. In support of the debates presented above regarding simultaneous coupling in systems, organizational theorists argue that tightly coupled organizations routinely engage in loose coupling while loosely coupled organizations also engage in tight coupling (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980). In most loosely coupled organizations, actors are constantly engaged in thoughts about 'structural connections, rather than structural disconnections' (Orton and Weick 1990:216). Organizational theorists have been accused of finding it difficult to think simultaneously about rationality and indeterminacy occurring among elements of an organization (Orton and Weick 1990:216). The idea that universities for example can be as tightly coupled as they are loosely coupled is only recently being challenged and explored. More recent studies have drawn attention to some coupling that may lie in between tight and loose coupling. The idea is described as one in which systems are 'tight and loose' coupling (Dubois and Gadde 2002). This refers to systems in which one element may be heavily dependent on another and yet the latter is quite independent of the former (Dorée and Holmen 2004:829).

Regardless of the term employed in literature and research studies, the emphasis is still generally placed on the words coupled and coupling. Yet, the thesis argues that very little attempts have been made to understand these words.

2.6.3 Coupled and coupling

There is no shortage of meanings for the term loose coupling. Coupling has close association with meanings in words such as connection, link and interdependency. Weick (1976:3) however argues that each of these words misses a crucial nuance. Coupling is distinct in the sense that apparent connections among events and systems also preserve personal identity and some evidence of physical or logical separateness of the events and systems. Weick (1976:5) distinguishes between the terms 'loosely coupling' and 'loosely coupled systems'. He argues that loosely coupling refers to things, "anythings" that may be connected weakly or infrequently or slowly or with minimal interdependence. These things may or may not exist in a system. Loosely coupled systems on the other hand focuses on the study of the concepts involved in the perseverance of sets of elements across time (Weick 1976:5). Tyler (1987) refers to coupling as a process. He described tight

coupling as a process involved in operating systems that have responsive components that act independently (Tyler 1987:321). Loose coupling is also described as involving operating systems that have independent components which act responsively (Orton and Weick 1990). Loose coupling is evident when elements affect each other "suddenly (rather than continuously), occasionally (rather than constantly), negligibly (rather than significantly), indirectly (rather than directly), and eventually (rather than immediately)" (Weick, 1982a c.f Orton and Weick 1990:203). The terms loosely coupled and loose coupling are however used interchangeably in many research.

Organizational theorists have been blamed for overemphasizing the presence of disconnectedness in loose coupling (Rubin, 1979; Meyer, 1980; Orton and Weick 1990). The overemphasis is focused on investigating the evidence of coupling in systems and organizations based on existing levels of distinctiveness and responsiveness. Such investigations overlook the need to pay particular attention to patterns of coupling. Weick (1976:12) forewarns that it may not be the existence or nonexistence of loose coupling that is a crucial determinant of organizational functioning over time but rather the patterning of loose and tight coupling. He suggests that exploring loose coupling should be focused on identifying patterns and domains that are coupled and decoupled in a system. After identifying patterns and domains, researchers should be able to subsequently explore the characteristics of coupling and decoupling features among identified patterns. This should ultimately lead to outlining the types of outcomes produced by the domains identified.

Characterizing organizations as tightly or loosely coupled involves studying patterns and change in patterns of coupling as well as the nature and intensity of elements overtime. Identifying coupling and decoupling patterns must involve the study of elements and organizations overtime (Weick 1976). Observing patterns over periods of time is particularly important as elements and organizations appear, change and disappear overtime. The observation must include observing relationship between the patterns and the elements. The nature and intensity of the coupling may itself serve to create or dissolve elements.

Summary

Loose coupling has proven to be a durable concept precisely because it allows theorist to explain the simultaneous existence of the words ‘loosely’ and ‘coupled’ within organizational practice (Orton and Weick 1990:204). The idea is that loose coupling gives meaning to the simultaneous existence to the logics of rationality and indeterminacy without specializing these two logics in distinct locations (Orton and Weick 1990). The use of the word ‘coupled’ is legitimized in the simultaneous existence of distinctiveness and responsiveness, rationality and indeterminacy, and dependency and interdependency. The choice of the word ‘loosely’ (instead of loose) also depicts an image in which a system is simultaneously open and closed, spontaneous and deliberate instead of being depicted as purely open and spontaneous (Orton and Weick 1990).

2.7 STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND RESPONSES

Organizational theorists have established that strategic process in organizations is a non-linear and uncertain process (Pettigrew 1992; Eisenberg 1984; 2003; Wooldridge and Floyd1990; Whittington 2007). Strategy literature suggests that plausible or even clever choices of strategy and implementation processes are not sufficient to achieve intended and planned strategic outcomes (Eisenberg 1984; Mintzberg and Waters 1985). Organizations face nonlinear strategic dynamics which overwhelm their capacity for strategy-making (Burgelman and Groove (2007). They confront multiple situational requirements, they develop multiple and often conflicting goals, and respond with communicative strategies which do not always result in the expected strategic outcomes. Organizations are often surprised when strategy outcomes emerge contrary to what was planned or expected. O'Leary and Sheldon (2008) argue that organizations struggle between strategic choices, varying capacities for planning, leading, anticipating, responding, organizing and communicating all of which they engage with to help them to understand occurring outcomes relative to previous intentions. Strategy literature has hence shifted away from overly ideological adherence of clarity of goals, towards a more contingent strategic orientation (Eisenberg 1984:231). The following section is thus focused on the study of strategy outcomes. This interest fits directly into the overall thesis idea aimed at establishing the process of how strategy creation emerges in organizations especially with regard to sustainability strategies in loosely coupled systems.

Deliberate and emergent strategy

The idea that organizations achieve both realized (intended or desired) strategy and unrealized (unintended or emerged) strategy is well documented in research (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Harris and Ogbonna 2002; Regner 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Burgelman and Grove 2007). Generally, realised strategy refers to strategic outcomes which occur as planned, intended or desired while unrealised strategy are strategic outcomes which occur as surprises, unexpected or undesired. Intended strategies themselves sometimes include patterned action that are not part of managerial intentions (Mintzberg 1978). In effect, sometimes there are portions of intended strategy which occur outside of managerial intentions. Achieving ‘pure’ intended strategy is therefore not guaranteed. It means that strategic processes are not ‘purely’ clear but constantly laden with elements of surprise. Hence, it is argued that clarity is non-normative and not a sensible standard against which to gauge organizational effectiveness (Eisenberg 1984). The concept of unexpected strategic outcomes has popularly become known as emerged or emergent strategy (Mintzberg 1978; Mintzberg and Waters 1985).

Mintzberg (1978) provides a good starting point for the study of emergent strategy. He distinguishes between deliberate and emergent strategies. Deliberate strategies are described as favourable outcomes that are expected even before they become realized. They are the main objectives of the strategy that are hoped to be achieved. Deliberate strategies are in line with overall organizational goals. Emergent strategies are strategy outcomes that are unexpected or unanticipated throughout the strategic process. Emergent strategies are patterns realized despite or in the absence of intentions (1978: 947). In effect, the concept of emergent strategy accommodates expectations of surprises in strategy creation processes. This means that organizations factor in and embrace possibilities of surprises in strategy work. In the light of Mintzberg’s studies, unintended strategy has been studied adopting different terminologies including ‘unintended consequence’ (Giddens, 1979, 1984; Harris and Ogbonna 2002:34; Guowei Jian 2007: 6), ‘unanticipated outcomes’ (Pettigrew 1992; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Balogun 2006), and ‘autonomous and emerged outcomes’ (Regner 2003; Burgelman and Grove 2007; Mirabeau and Maguire 2014). What is common among the terminologies is the fact that unexpected strategies and outcomes are considered as the results of actions that differ from the desired or expected outcome. Generally, emerged strategy outcomes are hinged on the concepts of unpredictability and

surprise. It implies that strategic outcomes emerge indirectly from the strategic process of which strategists have little or no control over. They can be described as ‘acceptable outcomes’ which senior managers had not previously thought of or anticipated. Mirabeau and Maguire (2014) described emerged strategy as strategy that unexpectedly emerges ‘out of the blue’.

Purely deliberate and purely emergent strategies

The concept of deliberate and emergent strategies may therefore be conceived as two sides of a continuum along which strategies fall (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Balogun et.al 2012). On the extreme end of the continuum are positioned ‘pure deliberate’ strategies and on the other end, ‘pure emergent’ strategies. Pure deliberate and pure emergent strategies represent extreme forms of strategic outcomes. The idea that strategy outcomes are likely to occur as purely planned without certain pre-existing conditions is debunked by deliberate and emergent strategy studies. For example, Balogun et.al (2012) maintain that strategies and outcomes can only be described as purely deliberate or purely emerged based on the existence of three main conditions. Firstly, strategic intentions should be clearly explicit without any ambiguities or doubt. Secondly, strategic intentions must be common to virtually all the actors. This must result in collective action where virtually all the actors either share strategic intents as their own or accept top managements’ vision, probably in response to some sort of controls. Thirdly, the collective intentions must be realized exactly as intended without interference of external factors (market, technological, political, etc.). It is however argued that these conditions are unlikely to be present in the strategy process and thus it is doubtful to find any perfectly deliberate strategy or perfectly emerged outcomes particularly in organizations (Mintzberg 1978; Balogun et.al 2012).

Current research expectations subsequently lie in exploring tendencies in the directions of deliberate and emergent strategies rather than perfect forms of either types (Regner 2003; Burgelman and Grove 2007). It is evident that conditions of influencing, engagements, negotiations and resistance are intertwined in the emerged strategic process. On the bases that positive emerged outcomes often arise from individuals’ actions, it is proposed that emphasis should be placed on allowing individuals the freedom to act and interact so as to influence and shape outcomes strategically (Coyne 2006). The element of surprise outcomes therefore supports the idea that strategic processes are in reality implicit more than they are explicit (O’leary and

Sheldon 2008:224). ‘Surprise outcomes’ emerge because no predetermined and explicit set of ordered responses exist in organizational decision processes (Mintzberg 1978). The study of behavioural changes in organizations unintended strategy outcomes has subsequently gained prominence in organizational studies literature in the past decade (Regner 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Rouleau, 2005; Burgelman and Groove 2007). It is believed that organizations and managers embrace the emergence of unexpected outcomes as fundamental to strategic processes.

This belief consequently develops an urge to examine what organizations do with emergent strategic outcomes. The interest is to explore how organizations respond to the surprise of unexpected outcomes which emerge in the strategic process. The following section therefore employs literatures on strategic response to provide some understanding into organizational response to surprise strategic outcomes.

2.7.1 Strategic response

Organizations are oftentimes surprised when strategy outcomes emerge contrary to what was planned or expected (Harwood 2011). This part of the thesis therefore employs literature on strategic response to investigate how organizations react when they are faced with the surprise of unintended strategic outcomes. Fundamental to this thesis is exploring how managers respond to emerged sustainability outcomes in respect of the overall strategic process. In loosely coupled systems where senior managers have only partial control over strategic behaviours of other organizational actors, senior managers may set general guidelines for engagement while still allowing other actors to manoeuvre within set boundaries (Mintzberg and Waters 1985). In effect, those who have the vision do not necessarily control its realization but instead convince others to pursue it (Gioia, and Chittipeddi 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). Unexpected outcomes emerge because organizational actors stray inadvertently or intentionally outside the boundaries. How organizations therefore respond to them is of much interest to strategic management research.

The umbrella strategy

When unexpected outcomes emerge, organizations are forced to respond to them. Although various response strategies are constantly employed by various organizations, the thesis finds

Mintzberg and Waters (1985) proposed response strategy as central to the thesis idea of strategy creation. As such the thesis chooses to explain it in some depth. In particular, Mintzberg and Waters (1985) employ the ‘umbrella strategy’ to create an imagery which describes all organizational strategies as being under one umbrella. They use the image of the ‘arm’ in reference to individual strategies encompassed under the umbrella. Under the umbrella system, the researchers argue that when ‘an arm pokes’ out of an umbrella, it is either pulled back under the umbrella or left out on its own. Relating this to the strategic process, the inference is that when strategic outcomes emerge outside the existing strategic process, organizations can respond to emerged outcomes in three main ways. They can stop, ignore or adjust to the emerged strategies.

They introduce the idea of the ‘umbrella strategy’ as central to addressing the issue of managerial strategic choices. To understand what senior managers actually do with emerged outcomes, they propose that organizational leadership has three main strategic choices. They argue that firstly, senior managers can stop emerged outcomes altogether from further progressing in the strategy process. This is not an uncommon practice as senior managers have been commonly known to pose resistance to outcomes and strategy process from time to time (McCabe, 2010). This choice is especially common in tightly coupled environments where strategy is constructed in bureaucratic fashion which allows little room for actor initiatives and therefore surprise. In particular, emerged strategy can be stopped if the outcome has no direct bearing on on-going strategic processes or when organizational resources are scarce and cannot be committed to develop the surprise strategies. The thesis however observes that in loosely coupled organizations where a high level of autonomous behaviour is common, acceptable and encouraged, senior managers do not have the power to stop autonomous behaviour and strategic outcomes. Secondly, senior managers can also respond by ignoring unexpected outcomes. They can choose to ignore them perhaps for a period of time to see what will happen (Mintzberg and Waters 1985). Overtime, the best outcomes may win or could gradually fizzle out or fail (Burgelman and Grove 2007). However, if outcomes continue to exist, then senior managers must respond to them. Such strategies may eventually be integrated in the strategy process. Thirdly, senior managers could respond to emerged outcomes by favourably adjusting their positions. In cases where emerged outcomes are directly related to the strategic process, organizations are very likely to absorb such into the strategic process (Mintzberg and Waters (1985). By absorbing emerged outcomes, senior

managers rearticulate and recreate the existing strategic process. The context embraces the idea that emerged strategies enable strategy creation and change in organizations (Balogun and Johnson 2005; Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011). They become the driving force for rearticulating and recreating the existing strategic process.

Senior managers however do not absorb emerged outcomes in a vacuum. Emerged outcomes only really appear important when considered relative to conscious, intended choices of strategy objectives (O'leary and Sheldon 2008:225). It is strongly argued that emerged outcomes only gain impetus in light of intended or existing strategy (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman and Grove 2007). Emerged sustainability outcomes for example can only be absorbed in light of the existing sustainability strategy. On their own, emerged outcomes have little significance except when juxtaposed alongside overall intended strategy objectives.

Regardless of whichever strategic choice is employed, it is evident that organizational response to emerged strategic outcomes requires a subtle balance between reactive and proactive engagement among managers, actors and strategy. Burgelman and Grove (2007:967), describe senior management strategic roles as being twofold. The first is to evaluate the extent to which the autonomous opportunity has been validated and secondly to explore the extent to which available cash reserves are sufficient to protect the company from disaster in case the scaled-up autonomous initiative ultimately fails.

The study of emerged outcomes and managerial responses not only aids the understanding of strategy creation but also explains how organizational learning occurs. The emphasis is on how managers in particular learn from the experiences of their own organizations. Organizational learning occurs as strategist and senior managers exercises the option of altering its own vision in response to emerged initiatives and behaviour of others (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007).

Summary

Research studies on strategy distinguish between deliberate and emergent strategies. While deliberate strategies follow planned objectives, emerged strategies unexpectedly materialize outside of planned objectives. Unexpected strategic outcomes are usually a result of unforeseen or

unpredicted actions (Harris and Ogbonna 2002). Unexpected outcomes are usually a surprise to organizations. In spite of the fact that they are not previously planned for, organizations must however respond to outcomes as they emerge.

Mintzberg and Waters (1985) propose that organizations usually adopt the umbrella strategy in their response to unexpected outcomes. The researchers argue that when outcomes unexpectedly occur outside the 'organizational umbrella', organizations have three response choices. Senior managers in particular can stop the outcomes, ignore the outcomes or adjust to the outcomes. Irrespective of the response choice adopted, it is paramount that the choice is exercised in light of already existing strategic processes. Organizational response to unexpected strategy outcomes must not occur in a vacuum.

Besides the main theories described above, the thesis further adopts the concept of institutional theory to achieve its aims. This is needful firstly to create links between sensemaking and institutionalization and secondly to describe and explain part of the thesis main findings. In particular, the thesis employs DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional framework on institutional isomorphism to link the findings on middle managers sensemaking outcomes to institutional theory. Relevant parts of institutional theory as they relate to the thesis main findings are thus briefly discussed below.

2.8 INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

Extant researched has been studied on institutions. Institutional theory is primarily concerned with an organization's relationship or fit with the institutional environment. The studies generally explore the emergence and form of particular institutions (Carroll 1993) based on institutional pressures which are exerted on institutions by institutional environments (Scott 1987). At any point in time, institutions are faced with institutional pressures as well as inter-organizational pressures (Dacin 1997). Institutional pressures are sets of "fundamental political, social and legal ground rules that establishes the basis for production, exchange and distribution" in organizations (Davis and North 1971: 6). They can arise from institutions such as states, standards, professions, public opinion and interest groups (Scott 1987; Dacin 1997). They can also emanate from inter-organizational pressures including uncertainty about task requirement, dependency and

competitive pressures (Dacin 1997). Essentially, institutional theory is concerned with the ways in which institutions confer, or withhold, legitimacy on organizations (Child 2003).

The underlining argument in institutional theory is that the institutional framework of a society can control and regulate economic activities of industries by providing the rules by which organizations are governed (North 1990; Ang and Cummings 1993). Institutional pressures and forces therefore are a set of powerful drivers which affect the type of industries that organizations select (Dacin 1997). Organizations conform to institutional pressures to achieve isomorphism or a fit between organizations and their normative environments.

Institutional isomorphism

DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991) developed a popular framework describing three pillars or pressures which govern institutions. They posit that organizations are formed, structured and governed by coercive, mimetic and normative pressures. Coercive pressures are generally regulative or legislative pressures which are predominantly based on regulations, rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities (Scott 1995, 2008). Mimetic pressures are pressures which generally result from standards and responses to environmental uncertainties in institutional environments which affect organizational formation and behaviour. Normative pressures arise out of societal expectations and moral prescriptions and obligations of appropriate organizational conduct which generally influence the structure and behaviour of organizations in respect of anticipated outcomes (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Scott and Meyer 1994). They emphasize cultural beliefs, shared conceptions and sensemaking frames of social reality (Scott 2008). Normative pressures also arise from issues of professionalism. Among others, professionalism pressures are concerned with defining work conditions and methods among the different professions in institutions in a way that legitimizes the work they do.

Coercive, mimetic and normative pressures were developed to describe how organizations are structured and shaped by institutional forces to extents which make organizations fit into (or otherwise) their environment by becoming similar. The framework describes the types of pressures which influence how organizations select the kind of industry they choose to operate in (Dacin 1997). Institutional explanations on isomorphism emphasise the role of conformity, habit, and convention, rather than the role of organizational power and control in terms of their contribution

to developing organizational structure and behaviour (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Institutional isomorphism is described more in terms of the nature and content of the pressure being exerted and less on the context of organizations. It therefore tends to attribute power, stability and control to institutional environments rather than to organizations.

Institutional theory and structuration

In spite of the importance of its coercive, mimetic and normative roles, it is argued that the study of institutional isomorphism is not enough to describe and explain organizational behaviour. Perrow (1985) posits that institutional theory loses sight of, and takes for granted forces such as institutional rules, myths, beliefs and shared social reality. According to Ang and Cummings (1997), institutional theory tends to discount organizational proactive strategic activities in the process of adapting to institutional influences. Scott (1987) argues that isomorphic frameworks best complement existing perspectives of organizational theory.

Generally, criticism on institutional theory points to an overemphasis on institutional structure to the exclusion of individual organizational idiosyncrasies, power or agency. Theorists clearly point out that the role of active agency, organizational self-interests and organizational responses to institutional pressures and expectations is lacking in institutional frameworks (Giddens 1979; DiMaggio, 1988; Perrow, 1985; Powell, 1985). This particular criticism is critical to institutional theory in terms of pointing out that organizations employ and combine both structure and agency or what Giddens (1979) refers to as structuration in their institutional environments. While agency involves motivations and creativities which influence people to neglect structural patterns and behaviour, structure on the other hand gives form and shape to social life (Giddens 1979). Agency gives flow of people's actions while structure only exists in and through the activities of human agents (Giddens 1984).

The idea of combining structure and agency means that organizations conform to institutional pressures as well as manipulate institutional forces to meet organizational goals (Oliver 1999; Montreal 2004; Peng 1996). Structuration theory thus emphasises that social structures are reproduced and modified by the on-going actions of social actors, both individuals and collective actors. The idea is that institutional processes operate not only in a top-down manner from institutions to organizations but also takes on a bottom-up approach from organizations to

institutions. Through their actions, organizational agents endeavour to modify and redefine structures in ways that will admit different possibilities for future action. This also implies that depending on which activities organizational agents are focused on, the extent and frequency by which organizations are affected by institutional pressures can vary overtime (Oliver 1996).

DiMaggio (1988) later applied institutional and strategy frameworks to explore and explain how institutional forces guide strategic change. By invoking the concept of structuration, DiMaggio usefully linked institutional arguments to Giddens's (1979) structuration theory. Among others, the thesis interest in institutional theory is to link middle managers sensemaking outcomes to institutional pressures and isomorphism. Basically, what the thesis seeks to do is to employ DiMaggio and Powell's (1983), institutional framework as a theoretical lens for describing and explaining the nature of the thesis findings on dominant sensemaking frameworks. The idea that the selection of dominant sensemaking frames are directly influenced by isomorphic pressures especially such as related to legislation, standards and uncertainties, and moral prescriptions and professionalism is explored in much depth in part three of chapter four.

2.8.1 Linking sensemaking and institutional theory

The juxtaposition between sensemaking and institutional theory generally lies in exploring the extent to which positions on institutionalization and agency are maintained or exaggerated in organizational sensemaking processes.

On one hand, the existence of institutional pressures suggests that institutions construct the way things are done in organizations to extents that almost exclude the principle of active agency (Weick, et.al 2003). For example, embedded in the principles of coercive and mimetic pressures are qualities which suggest that organizational actors have little control of organizational events and activities (DiMaggio and Powel 1983; North 1990). It is argued that institutionalization positions organizational actors as people who are mandated to legitimise or accept and engage with organizational directives as handed down to them (Child 2003; Weick et. al 2003). Organizational actors compliance to organizational ground rules embodied in legislation, political, social and legal structures (Davis and North 1971), demonstrates that organizational actors are generally socialized in the sense that these broad factors are established to influence their sensemaking behaviours

(Weick et.al 2003), and anticipated outcomes (Scott and Meyer 1994). Organizational behaviour is therefore shaped by broad regulatory, cognitive and normative forces (Powell 1985). From a sensemaking perspective, institutionalization projects organizational actors' social reality and sensemaking as that which originates from and is influenced by organizations (Orton and Weick 1990; Weick et.al 2003). It essentially downplays proactive strategic activities (Scott 1987), and projects organizational sensemaking processes mainly as an institutionalized process based on deliberate distributed or shared beliefs (Weick et.al 2003).

However, like individual sensemaking, organizational sensemaking of activities and events is iterative, negotiated and embedded in a process of construction and reconstruction (Weick 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007), of a broader context of institutional rules, myths and beliefs to produce a shared social reality (Perrow 1985). It suggests that although organizational sensemaking processes may be initiated by deliberate organizational sensemaking triggers and cues, actors however negotiate the information handed to them and ascribe meaning based on their understanding of the triggers provided (Weick 1995; Weick et.al 2005; Gioia et.al 1993; Thomas et.al 1993). It is argued that based on such actions of active agency, the outcomes of sensemaking processes can be out of the control of organizations (Weick et.al 2003). Consequently on one hand, exploring the associated links between sensemaking and institutional theory lies in exploring extents to which institutional pressures and organized actions influence organizational sensemaking. On the other hand, it explores extents to which organizational sensemaking is negotiated and (re)constructed in ways that influence shared beliefs and impacts expected and unexpected sensemaking outcomes.

What is fundamental to both views is the insight it provides in terms of the understanding that sensemaking is enmeshed in theories, conceptions and studies of organizing and organizations (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld 2005:410). Hence they posit that sensemaking and organizations constitute one another. For example, decisions made in and by organizations are usually accompanied by sensemaking processes that are primed, edited and even perhaps triggered by institutional-level processes (Weber and Glynn 2006). Essentially, organizations come into existence when organizational sensemaking is achieved (Brown et.al 2014). Thus organizations emerge from organizing and sensemaking (Weick et.al 2005:410). They emerge through iterative

attempts of organizational actors to make sense of equivocal inputs around them while enacting that sense back into the world to make it more orderly (Brown et.al 2014).

The significance of sensemaking to institutional theory and organizational studies lies in the pivotal role that sensemaking plays in enabling understanding of micro processes which underlie macro processes in organizations (Brown et.al 2014). In light of this thesis, the significance of establishing links between sensemaking and institutionalization is to explore, understand and establish the use of sensemaking in shaping micro and macro models as well as the iterative process of how institutions in turn shape sensemaking. This is achieved by unpacking middle managers sensemaking as influenced by micro level processes and macro level institutional and functional structures. Invariably, the thesis demonstrates the shaping and recreation of a macro level strategic process through middle managers sensemaking influences. Yet for this to be achieved there was the need to also explore influences of macro processes like the organizational context on middle managers sensemaking.

Chapter Summary on literature review

Overall, the chapter has provided an in-depth review of pertinent conceptualization relating to sensemaking and strategy. It commenced by reviewing the theoretical construct on sensemaking. It provided an understanding to what sensemaking is – a subjective, subconscious, mental activity which individuals employ to understand and interpret events, themselves and other people. The thesis' interest in sensemaking is imperative to its use as a primary lens for understanding how middle managers draw sensemaking frames, and select and deselect sensemaking cues to make sense of organizational strategies.

The chapter further reviewed literatures on strategy to provide some understanding into strategy perspectives. Four main strategy perspectives were reviewed. The rational, post-rational perspectives provided insights into early strategy works while the strategy process and strategy practice perspectives explain issues surrounding more recent strategy approaches and practices. The thesis takes a position by situating its discussions and findings in the strategy process and strategy practice perspective. This position is needful to explore the process of middle managers sensemaking and practice of organizational strategy. The review on strategy also directly examined

the main thesis strategy understudy. It employed the literature on sustainability to explain the concept of sustainable development and sustainability, as well as revealed the complexity in its adoption process in higher educational institutions in particular. What is of most importance to the review on strategy is the demonstration that strategy creation in a nonlinear, emergent process and also more importantly, that strategic sensemaking leads to unexpected outcomes. The literature on strategic outcomes was subsequently drawn on to provide an understanding of how unexpected outcomes emerge. To end the review on strategy, the literature on strategic response was employed to link the emergence of unexpected strategy and organizational response to overall strategy creation. Of particular importance was the understanding it provided into what senior managers do with unexpected strategy or how they respond to them. The chapter also introduced DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) framework on institutional isomorphism as a lens for describing and explaining the thesis main findings. This led to establishing links between sensemaking and institutional theory. Overall, this portion of the chapter links the thesis overarching interest in sensemaking of strategy with the process of strategy creation, to contribute to the notion of institutional influences on organizational sensemaking and its effect on emergent strategy creation in organizations.

Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 AIM

This chapter aims to unpack the main methodological issues relating to epistemological stance, research strategy, research design, data collection methods, and data analysis. Firstly, the adopted epistemological stance and research strategy are presented to theoretically position the type of research methodology employed. Secondly, a section on research design is provided detailing issues such as the purely qualitative nature of the study, the use of a single case study which is

supported by four mini case studies, mixed method approach to data collection, and concerns regarding reliability, replicability and validity in research work. Thirdly, a data collection process is described which details the three main data collocation instruments. The final section on analysis provides clear account of how the data coding and analysis was conducted. A coding and analysis framework was constructed which was modelled after Maribeau and Maguire's (2014) study.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

The research examines the strategic process and existing links between organizational sensemaking and strategy development in loosely coupled systems. It explores middle managers sensemaking and practice of their organizations sustainability strategy. It has been established that organizational strategic process is a dynamic process in which strategy develops through active engagement between organizational actors (Mintzberg 1979, Eisenberg 1984, 2003; Pettigrew 1973, 1992; Wooldridge and Floyd 1990; Whittington 1996, 2003). Active engagement with strategy is primarily a function of organizational actors' sensemaking of the strategic process (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et.al; 1993; Craig-Lees 2001; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau 2005; Weick et.al 2005). Actors select, deselect, and interpret internal and external sensemaking cues relating to the strategic process. The selection and interpretation of sensemaking cues that actors employ informs the strategic actions they subsequently take.

Overall, the thesis is interested mainly in exploring links between middle managers sensemaking of strategy and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations. The thesis is positioned in the strategy as process and strategy-as-practice streams of research. It employs methods in strategy process research to explain the process through which strategy develops in loosely coupled organizations. Additionally, strategy-as-practice methods are employed to explain two main strategic practices. Firstly, the investigations unpack what middle level administrators and academics actually do in terms of their day-to-day sustainability practices. It unveils practices inherent in administrators' dependent sensemaking process and academics' autonomous sensemaking process. The discovery of the simultaneous sensemaking processes between the middle managers' forms the overarching discovery of the thesis investigations. Of principal importance to discovering academics' autonomous sensemaking process is the examination of unexpected autonomous strategy outcomes. Secondly, it unpacks what organizations actually do

when faced with unexpected strategic outcomes. It reveals processes involved in strategic choices senior managers employ in their attempt to integrate unexpected strategy outcomes into the overall strategic process. Specifically, the aim of employing the strategy through the process research approach is to explore how integrating unexpected sustainability outcomes into existing strategy contribute to the way strategies emerge in organizations.

To achieve these aims, the thesis employs the use of thick descriptions (Blaikie 2010:105) and observations (Yin 1996) from administrators, academics and senior managers to describe their sensemaking and engagements processes as well as organizational response to unexpected strategic outcomes. Although the widespread nature of the research is a methodological challenge for the thesis, especially in terms of selecting the appropriate research methods, this chapter presents accounts which explain reasons for choosing the thesis methodology and how the chosen methodology is applied.

The chapter is thus divided into two main parts. Part one outlines the research strategy. This begins with an overview of the research epistemological and ontological stands. It is followed by an in-depth descriptive overview of the research strategy in respect to the thesis choice to employ an adaptive research strategy. It ends with a research design section which descriptively outlines the research design employed in terms of adopting a qualitative, single case study, and issues regarding reliability, replicability and validity. Part two of the chapter presents the data collection and data analysis methods. The research adopts a mixed method approach to data collection to acquire a multi-lens perspective of the study. Additionally, an elaborate section is presented which mainly describes the thesis data coding and data analysis process.

PART ONE

This part of the chapter presents discussions on epistemological stance, research strategy and research design.

3.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE

Creswell (2003) proposes that decisions regarding particular research strategies to employ, must first position research in specific philosophical stance or ideological position. It is believed that this basically informs the choice of epistemology, paradigm and strategy that researchers employ.

Epistemology is concerned with differentiations in scientific knowledge (Creswell 2007). Distinctions are made between describing scientific knowledge as something or a 'reality' that already exist 'out there' or something that is socially constructed (Miller 1991, Bryman 1998; Blaikie 2007; 2010). While the viewpoint on social reality believes that reality exists out there, the social constructionism view argues that the reality of a phenomenon or event is socially constructed.

The thesis adopts the social constructionism viewpoint to explain what middle managers and organizations do in relation to exploring links between sensemaking of strategy and strategy creation. Essentially, social constructivists adopt the viewpoint that the concept of reality is not simply 'out there' or 'given' by nature but rather, reality is socially constructed (Creswell 2007; Blaikie 2007). The emphasis is on how social actors' construct their reality. Reality is viewed as a process of social construction of a social phenomenon which is constructed through relationships and interactions (Vygotsky 1978). For example, organizational actors make sense of the reality around them as they socially construct the meaning of organizational strategies, concepts, work routines and activities. The thesis therefore adopts the view that the reality and meaning of the sustainability strategy for example is not constructed as an abstract concept or a perceived reality, but rather administrators and academics are engaged in real construction processes of what they understand the strategy to mean. Through a socialization process of constant interactions, negotiations and sensemaking, administrators and academics construct the reality of the strategy. The emphasis lies in exploring the social construction process among administrators and academics that allows the meaning of the sustainability strategy to emerge in the University. To explore and understand how administrators and academics socialize the sustainability strategy into being in the way they do, Kvale (1996:1), advises that researchers needs to first ask the people under investigation. He argues that if a researcher wants to know how people understand their world and their life, then there is the need to talk with them about it. It is advocated that this process

should include listening and re-describing the motives and reasons (Blaikie 2007), for socializing the sustainability strategy for example.

Although social constructivists researchers place great emphasis on reality and meaning, Blaikie (2010:144) argues that no consideration is given to the problem associated with meaning or the social actors' construction of reality. The argument is that what constitute the meaning of a social episode (for example strategy), may not simply be solved through interviewing and observation by the researcher. The challenge lies in the fact that meaning can be influenced by social construction (how an actor considers his/her world to be organized) or sociological construction (the social scientist way of organizing the social world). Irrespective of its inherent challenges, the thesis still adopts the position that the thesis aim and discovery can best be explored from a social constructionist's point of view.

Having positioned the thesis under in its appropriate philosophical stance, the next section will now focus on discussing the research strategy adopted.

3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Research strategies are an integral part of research methodological processes. The choice of research strategies depends on the research questions and research aims being explored. Research strategies direct the flow and structure of the research.

Brief overviews of popular research strategies

Most commonly employed research strategies include inductive, deductive, and abductive strategies (Bryman 1996; De Vaus 2001; Flick et.al 2004; Creswell 2003; Blaikie 2007; Charmaz 2009; Blaikie 2010; Levin-Rozalis (2010)). It is argued that most research studies employ one or a mixture of these strategies (Blaikie 2007).

Inductive research demonstrates that the existence of an empirical evidence and seeks to prove that something actually exists as it is (Flick et.al 2004; Haig 2005; Charmaz 2009; Feilzer 2010). It begins by collecting data and then subsequently examines the data to confirm that 'some universal

rule is operative' (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:171). The aim of inductive research strategy is to derive theories about observed patterns (Blaikie 2007).

Deductive research on the other hand proves that something must exist, as a result of logical reasons (Pierce 1935). It starts with identifying a rule and then examining a set of data whose results either confirm or deny the rule (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:171). The aim of deductive research strategy is basically to test hypothesis about existing theories in order to refute them (Levin-Rozalis 2010). It can be argued that the aims of inductive and deductive strategies are definite in their attempt to establish or disprove theories. While inductive research seeks to confirm empirical generalization, deductive research seeks to refute known theory. Inductive strategists are concerned with events and phenomena that are believed to either exist or must be proved to exist and then they support such existence or otherwise with relevant theories.

Abductive research however assumes that something might exist (Morgan 2007; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009) and therefore provides detailed insights into the 'motives' underpinning that social situation (Blaikie 2007). Abductive research involves the process of identifying 'surprise evidence' (Pierce 1935:171) or a hypothesis (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009; Timmermans and Tavory 2012) or the process of introducing and understanding something new (Flink et al 2004:322). A surprise is an unexpected experience and can be in the form of a new experience or an anomaly (Pierce 1958). Unlike inductive and deductive research strategies which are based on solid predictions and testing to prove what is and what must be, abductive research is grounded in the plausibility of discovering new things. In general, while inductive and deductive research strategies are definite about research predictions, abductive strategies are indefinite about research predictions. The understanding is that abductive research has a more logical form distinct from induction and deduction strategies (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:171). Generally, inductive and deductive research leads to generalization of theories, while abductive research develops explanatory theories (Haig 2005; Morgan 2007).

Overall, the preference of one or more strategies over others lies mainly in the type of research under investigations. The following section of the chapter subsequently discusses the thesis choice of employing an abductive strategy.

3.4.1 Choosing abductive strategy

The thesis chooses to employ the use of abductive research as its main research strategy. The choice is based on three main reasons; research questions, surprise evidence and plausibility. Firstly, the choice of an abductive strategy is deemed as best suited for the types of research query that the thesis aims to address (Blaikie 2007: 79). He argues that the choice of research strategy employed is dependent on the type of research question being asked and the purpose of the research.

The thesis' overarching research query aims to explore links between middle managers' sensemaking of strategy and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled systems. It adopts a mixture of 'how' and 'why' questions to achieve its aim. By posing 'how' questions, the thesis was able to explore general sensemaking among university middle managers and to introduce the discovery of simultaneous sensemaking among administrators and academics. It also poses 'why' questions to investigate strategies that organizations employ when faced with unexpected sensemaking outcomes. The purpose of the 'why' question is to uncover organizational motives relating to the process of strategy creation. This fits into the use of abductive research as abductive strategy is deemed to be the best choice strategy to investigate the motives behind social occurrences (Blaikie 2007, 2010). A combination of 'how and why' questions allow the thesis to engage in in-depth descriptions of midlevel administrators and academics' sensemaking and strategy development university-wide. Detailed descriptions of what administrators and academics do, especially in terms of how they make sense of their university's sustainability strategy are gathered through explorations and observations of administrators and academics' everyday routines and practices. The thesis provides thick descriptions of the social phenomenon of strategic sensemaking and strategy creation in loosely coupled systems which can best be explored through the use of abductive research strategy to help unearth what might be (Morgan 2007; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009) in terms of the links between sensemaking and strategy creation.

The second reason for employing an abductive research strategy is supported by the thesis' discovery of 'surprise evidence' (Pierce 1935:171). The thesis discovers a surprise evidence of the existence of two distinct or simultaneous sensemaking processes among university middle managers. Existing research on sensemaking research has hitherto discussed middle managers

sensemaking as a singular process (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2006, 2011; Balogun and Rouleau 2012). Middle managers sensemaking have generally been positioned as a symbolic and collective process of meaning making of social events to facilitate change implementation (Teulier and Rouleau 2013:311). However, the general setup of organizations is such that middle managers are made up of amalgamations of different groups made up of different professions, departments, units, teams etc. Any group of middle managers is therefore made up of distinct subset groups. Therefore, given any particular organizational phenomenon, event or strategy, different subsets of middle managers are likely to draw from different sensemaking frameworks and select and deselect different sensemaking cues to facilitate their sensemaking attempts. Middle managers sensemaking of an organizational strategy is therefore likely to result in different dominant sensemaking processes occurring simultaneously. In spite of such clear observations however, little knowledge exist on the evidence of multiple forms of sensemaking processes among middle managers. The surprise evidence of simultaneous sensemaking among middle managers in universities has been discovered by this thesis. The discovery came openly to the researcher without making any preliminary assumptions (Levin-Rozalis 2010:7).

This surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking enables the adoption of an abductive research strategy based on the primary argument that the abductive theory is the only theory that introduces any new ideas, discoveries (Pierce 1935:171) or innovations (Levin-Rozalis 2010:5). Abductive research promotes a leading away from old to new theoretical insights (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:170). Levin-Rozalis (2010) argues that neither inductive nor deductive research is capable of explaining scientific discoveries or surprises. The process of surprise discovery involves identifying surprise evidences (such as simultaneous sensemaking among university middle managers), entertaining it and pursuing the facts in confidence or through simple interrogations (Pierce 1934). This process is engaged in until a theory is thought of by the researcher to explain the surprise existence (Pierce 1934; Haig 2005; Morgan 2007; Timmermans and Tavory 2012). The logic of the surprise discovery is drawn out of facts and observations and not from any theory (Pierce 1935).

The choice of employing an abductive research strategy is relevant in that it allows researchers to apply their imagination in respect of surprise findings in such ways that then drives them to embark on data collection in support of their surprise findings (Charmaz 2009:137–138). Having engaged in this process, the thesis subsequently provides evidence in support of the discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking in loosely coupled systems and further constructs reasons to support its existence as recommended by Timmermans and Tavory (2012).

The third reason why abductive research is considered as the most appropriate research strategy is based on the idea of plausibility. The idea of plausibility also fundamentally underpins the main research theme of sensemaking. It is thus understood that both sensemaking and abductive research are driven by the idea of plausibility. Firstly, as explained, the sensemaking process is driven by plausibility, probability, and acceptability and not driven by accurate outcomes (Weick 1995; Craig-Lees 2001; Weick et.al 2005; Nijhof et al. 2006). Thus the outcome of an individual's sensemaking process leads to the choice of the most plausible explanation to the phenomenon they are trying to understand. In effect sensemaking outcomes are driven by what is thought to be the 'most likely' decision and not what is the 'best' or 'right' decision (Nijhof et al. 2006:317).

Directly linked to the idea of plausibility in sensemaking is the idea of 'inference to the best explanation' (Pierce 1935; Thagard, 1988; Fox 1998; Haig 2005) in abductive research. Inference of best explanation means that a chosen outcome is thought to be a better outcome in respect of all other outcomes. Inferring that a theory is a better explanation is to say that that theory is more explanatory coherent than other competing theories (Haig 2005:381). This implies that, in light of all other possible explanations that might exist in regard to a given event, a particular choice is deemed to be the most logical explanation (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). Inference to the best explanation is underpinned by the belief that an individual or researcher's knowledge about a phenomenon is based on explanations that are worth considering (Haig 2005:380). It must be noted however that Leake (1993) argues that, it is not sufficient to use plausibility alone to differentiate between researchers explanations. Nonetheless, based on the observation of direct unequivocal links between the idea of plausibility and inference as relating to the theme of the thesis and research strategy respectively, the thesis adopts the position that the choice of abductive research is the best fit for the study.

Based on the three reasons above, the explanation of the distinct selection and interpretation process which established the existence of simultaneous sensemaking in loosely coupled university context fits all the research observations and data. The thesis discovery also confirms findings which indicate that simultaneous sensemaking leads to different strategy outcomes especially unexpected outcomes. It also reveals fresh findings into nuanced strategies that organizations adopt when faced with unexpected strategy outcomes. This finding was particularly important as it supplies the overarching thesis query with facts that linked simultaneous sensemaking to the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled systems.

Thus achieving the research aim would not have been possible without employing the abductive research strategy to logically validate and verify the thesis surprise discovery and explanations. Without the use of abductive research, this interpretation of the discovery as well as the findings would still be unknown to research and be perceived as far removed from reality. A presentation of only the facts without logical validation would have missed the opportunity to reveal facts in support of the observation that as an identified group, middle managers do not engage in a singular or collective sensemaking process. The opportunity would have been missed to verify that in loosely coupled university context in particular, simultaneous sensemaking processes exists among administrators and academics based on their nature of work and distinct selection of sensemaking cues processes. The opportunity to verify and validate research data and theories therefore provides a more comprehensive picture of the surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking.

Summary

The thesis' choice of an abductive research strategy is strongly aligned with the type of research objectives and questions being explored, the thesis surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking and the idea of plausibility in sensemaking studies. The choice of an abductive study enabled the thesis to explore the sensemaking process of university administrators and academics. The emphasis was focused on how administrators and academics select and deselect sensemaking cues to make sense of the University's sustainability strategy. The abductive research is believed to be the best choice because unlike inductive and deductive research, it is the only research type

that facilitates the study of something new or surprise discoveries such as simultaneous sensemaking. The outcomes of sensemaking and abductive are linked to the idea of plausibility and inference of the best explanation of a phenomenon. In essence outcomes of sensemaking process and abductive research are not arrived at based on decisions that are most accurate or right. The outcomes are arrived at based on decisions that are most plausible or likely. Based on this connection, the choice of an abductive research strategy is relevant to enable an exploration into the motives behind the university's response to strategic outcomes of simultaneous sensemaking.

In addition, the thesis adopts a social constructionism research approach. The researcher adopts a social constructionist viewpoint which enables the thesis to observe, interview, listen and provide thorough and thick descriptions of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking and its links to strategy development in universities in such a way that provides a visual picture of the phenomenon to the reader (Flick 1998; Patton 2002; and Denscombe 2003).

The thesis focus is subsequently shifted from the first set of discussions focused on information pertaining to research strategy lenses to the second set of discussions pertaining to research design. The following set of discussions focuses on in-depth descriptions of how the research was actually conducted. It presents a research design which provides insight into the methodology employed and details about the data collection method used.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

This section of the chapter shifts the focus from philosophical stances and research strategy to present a descriptive overview of the research design employed in terms of adopting a qualitative, single case study, and issues regarding reliability, replicability and validity.

In spite of the varied types of research, all research begins with a plan or research design (Miller 1991; Creswell 2003; Blaikie (2006). Research designs are planned sequence (Miller 1991), a catalogue of the various road maps, work plans or sign post (Blaikie 2007), which guide researchers towards their intended destinations and helps them achieve desired outcomes in terms of answering research questions as unequivocally as possible (de Vaus 2001). Research designs can be in the form of fixed standard arrangements of research conditions and methods, which are

usually logical and coherent in nature (Creswell 2003). They could also be more dynamic and involve a logical progression of research task from problem formulation stages to conclusions or theory generation stages (Blaikie 2000; Bickman and Rog 2008).

Research designs are generally grouped into quantitative, qualitative and mixed research designs (Yin, 1994; Blakie 2010; Bryman 2004). Factors such as research purpose and questions, type of investigation, time, research tools and levels of researcher's involvement typically influences the choice of a research design (Blaikie 2006).

3.5.1 Qualitative single case study

The research design employed by the thesis is purely qualitative in nature. The thesis adopts the use of the term qualitative research to describe a specific research design rather than as a general term for non-quantitative research methods (Yin 1981, 1984). The term is used to describe a process concerned with the research interviewee's accounts of their perceptions, attitudes, activities, beliefs, emotions and motives (Hakim 2002). This choice is shaped by the thesis intent to discover and re-describe middle managers account of events, their construction of reality, their sensemaking of organizational strategy as well as organizational motives for integrating unexpected strategy outcomes into the existing strategic process.

Research studies typically employ varied methods to explore different phenomena under study. These include histories, experiments, observations, ethnography, and case studies. Case studies are appropriate for research situated in public and private organizations (Hakim 2002). The thesis employs a case study method as a best fit to explore the sensemaking process of middle managers in a loosely coupled University, because as Yin (2003:2) argues, case studies 'allow investigations to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events'. The choice enabled the thesis to investigate the problem without manipulating the behaviour of participants (Yin, 1994). This provided rich depth across many different levels that generated multiple data sources from organizational, community and national levels (Eisenhardt 1989). At an organizational level, multiple data source was acquired from administrators, academics, senior managers and students. These formed the core source of data used. Community level data was mainly acquired through documentary sources from the Universities archives while national data was derived from accounts

of organizational actors, national documentary sources as well as from a short conversation with the Scottish Member of Parliament (SMP).

Eisenhardt (1989:545) argues that there is no ideal number of cases studies required for research work. However, when more than ten cases are employed, she contends that “it quickly becomes difficult to cope with the complexity and volume of the data”. On the other hand where fewer than four case studies are used, it becomes “difficult to generate theory with much complexity and its empirical grounding is likely to be less convincing unless the case has several mini cases within it”. Therefore to effectively answer the research questions particularly regarding how unexpected strategy outcomes occur, the thesis employs four mini case studies in support of the main case study, to provide in-depth answers to the questions. The mini case studies are typical examples of unexpected outcomes which emerged from academic autonomous activities. The list of mini cases comprises of: The Sustainability Business Initiative (SBI), Learning for Change, Our changing world, and The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI) sustainability initiatives. Individually, the cases revealed the process through which academic sensemaking occurs, issues of interdependency and support in loosely coupled contexts, as well as processes of strategy integration by organizations. A process of cross-case comparison was also needful to validate the strategy integration choices made by senior manager. There was also need to indicate how and why particular integration strategies were more appropriate for a particular outcome and not the other. Essentially, the mini cases were imperative in describing and validating the thesis discovery of autonomous sensemaking processes, in confirming the existence of unexpected strategy outcomes which results from middle managers autonomous sensemaking processes, and also needful in describing strategy integration choices and processes.

Irrespective of its widespread use, the use of single case studies has been criticized for lacking rigor, providing little basis for scientific generalization and resulting in massive unreadable documents (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 1994). The thesis however agrees with the argument that case studies are generalizable to theoretical proposition and not to populations or universes (Yin 2003:10). It is the thesis position that the study of a single organization does not hamper the depth and richness of data acquired. To address this concern further, multiple data sources from a number of mini case studies were used to expand and generalize the research theories (Eisenhardt 1989),

and not necessarily to enumerate frequencies as suggested by (Yin 2003:10). The mini cases provide additional information which makes the research more robust to address issues of representativeness and generalization (Holloway 1997; Yin 1999; 2003:10).

3.5.2 Cross-sectional method of investigation

The research design also involved the choice of cross-sectional method of investigation. It focused on aspects or a cross-section of organizational actors (middle managers) and a specific issue (middle managers sensemaking of the SRS strategy) rather than on issues involving the entire organization. Unlike longitudinal studies which involve repeat measurements of recording information cross different stages during the lifecycle of a research phenomenon (Ruspini 2002), cross-section studies on the other hand enable the study of research phenomenon at snapshot intervals as well as in- depth studies of subjects under study (Yin 1994). A cross-sectional research method was thus found to be the most appropriate to capture the relevant data needed, and to evaluate it against theoretical constructs to provide pertinent answers to the research questions.

3.5.3 Mixed method data collection approach

In terms of its data collection method, a mixed method approach to data collection was adopted. This involved the use of three main sources of data (interviews, documentary sources and observations). These were collated, evaluated, triangulated or crosschecked against each other, to construct a multifaceted and nuanced understanding of middle managers sensemaking process and role in reshaping the SRS strategic process. Effective triangulation ensures trustworthiness (Lincoln and Cuba 1985), and increases the validity of a research (Strauss and Cobin 1998; Denzin 2005). The data collection methods effectively answered the three main research questions regarding: exploring middle managers sensemaking processes in relation to how they understand, interpret and engage with their university's SRS strategy, how patterns of interdependency and interrelationships provide subtle sensemaking frameworks for middle managers sensemaking processes and how unexpected outcomes emerge as well as the integration strategies employed in integrating unexpected outcomes into existing strategic processes.

As suggested by Scott (1990), not only were the interviews evaluated but the research documents were also evaluated to test their validity, reliability, language and meaning.

3.5.4 Reliability, replicability and validity

One of the primary concerns of employing case study research is one regarding issues of reliability, replicability and validity. These are measurements for qualitative research which require a match between data sets, theoretical constructs and extends to the ability to generalize research work (Bryman 2004). Reliability concerns focus on extents to which research is accurate, dependable and consistent (Yin 1994; Blaikie 2006), as well as extents to which existing research can be repeated by employing existing research procedures, similar sample size and still obtain similar findings and draw conclusions as the existing ones (Holloway 1997). The primary interest lies in ascertaining the extent to which research findings and outcomes can be replicated regardless of how, when, where the research occurs (Holloway 1997:136).

The thesis posits that its outcomes regarding middle managers sensemaking in loosely coupled systems can generally be replicated. The sensemaking literature suggests that the sensemaking process of two distinct groups is likely to be different based on the kind of sensemaking triggers they select (Trice 1993; Weick 1995; Orton and Weick 1990; Drazin et.al 1999). Thus based on the nature of work of middle manager administrators in loosely coupled systems such as hospitals, schools, government services and other third sector organizations, they are likely to select sensemaking triggers which promote meeting legislative and organizational goals and image. On the other hand specialized workers such as doctors, teachers and other professionals would likely select sensemaking triggers based on professional freedom as clearly represented in this thesis. The thesis therefore argues that giving a case study in a similar context of loosely coupled systems, a sample size of middle managers, coupled with the use of mix methods of data collection and a similar methodological data analysis process, there is a high likelihood that subsequent research will produce findings and outcomes similar to those of this thesis.

Issues of reliability and replicability also raise concerns of validity in research work. Validity is a measurement for qualitative research which seeks to achieve a fit between research data and theoretical constructs in such ways that enable research findings and outcomes to be generalized across social setting (Bryman 2004). Validity can be achieved through ensuring that research studies are representative in terms of their research ability to effectively represent the research

concerns or answer the research questions (Holloway 1997). The validity of a research is high if it is sound and rigorous based on its research design (Bryman 1996; De Vaus 2001; Creswell 2003; Blaikie 2007).

In terms of validity, the emergence of the surprise evidence (Pierce 1935; Levin-Rozalis 2010), on simultaneous sensemaking among middle managers in a loosely coupled institution provoked an iterative process of crosschecking the evidence against the sensemaking and loosely coupled literatures in particular. To begin with, the emerged data on middle managers sensemaking was juxtaposed against existing sensemaking literatures. The process of triangulation confirmed the theoretical position of sensemaking as being a subconscious process through which individuals and groups scan, interpret and take actions to aid their understanding of occurring events (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et.al; 1993; Weick, 1995). In essence, the research data validated the existing theory which portrays sensemaking as a cognitive and active process of scanning, interpreting and taking action to enable people to make sense of things such as organizational strategy.

Of particular importance to the validation process was the research's ability to effectively answer the primary research question (Holloway 1997), on how middle level administrators and academics make sense of the University's SRS strategy. The evidence validates theoretical understandings which portray how individuals select dominant and subtle sensemaking cues and frames during their sensemaking processes. Through the lens of the theory, the research identified six dominant sensemaking cues employed by administrators and academics during their sensemaking of their organizations SRS strategy. The demonstration of the six dominant cues is one of two primary contributions the thesis makes in validating the sensemaking theory.

PART TWO

This part of the chapter presents discussions on the data collection and data analysis methods.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data collection involves a systematic gathering of information relevant to the research purpose (Miller 1991; Burns and Grove 2002). The research adopts a mixed method approach to data collection. In order to acquire a multi-lens perspective of the link between middle managers sensemaking and strategy creation, a mixed method approach is adopted for the purpose of examining multiple sources of data (Yin 1994; Bryman 1998; Burns and Grove 2002). The three main threads of data sources employed were examined. Firstly, principle to the data collection process is the use of interviews to develop in-depth understanding of administrator and academics sensemaking process and behaviours. The second thread involves the use of documentary sources to contextually position the sustainability strategy and also to obtain a bird's-eye view of strategy creation in the university context. Thirdly, a 'quasi-ethnographic' study approach was also adopted. This process involved first-hand observations of the strategic process under study. This included participant and non-participant observations of strategic meetings such as Marrakesh workshop, steering committee meetings, and sustainability away day workshops.

The following section will thus discuss methods of data collection through interview, documentary evidence and observations of strategic level meeting.

3.6.1 Interviews

The section provides insight into the primary data collection instrument. As the principal data source, interviews provided rich insights into simultaneous sensemaking among administrators and academics especially in respect of administrators dependent and academics autonomous strategic activities. Interviews provide an understanding into interviewees' perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon under examination. Interviews uncover the terminologies and judgments research participants employ to capture the complexities of things they experience and the central themes that influence how they live (Patton 1990; Kvale 1996). As afore mentioned it has been proposed that the best way to understand interviewees' world and their life is to 'talk with them' about it (Kvale 1996:1). The success of this however depends on selecting the right people, gaining access to the right participants and obtaining approval from people in authority to interact with participants (Rubin and Rubin 2012).

Multiple interviews with key actors were conducted to capture various interpretations of their sensemaking of the strategic process. The interviews also captured other strategic activities such as actors' day-to-day strategic behaviours and their resultant strategic outcomes. Although administrators and academics were the central focus, for a comprehensive view of exploring sensemaking and its links with strategy creation in universities, the interview process was expanded to include conversations with senior managers and students. Interviews with senior managers were mostly important as they particularly captured information on how organizations respond to unexpected strategic outcomes, and they also provide the motives behind such actions. Responses from senior managers thus captured the 'why' part of the overall research query. There was also a brief unplanned interview with the minister of the Scottish parliament (SMP) for procurement to buttress the point.

In total, a data set of thirty-six (36) interviews was conducted. Included in these were two repeat interviews with the director of sustainability and also with the SRS program coordinator. It also included repeat interviews with (3) academics who were initiators of sustainability outcomes. The main interviews spanned a period of eight months from April – November 2012. Repeat interviews were however dotted in-between the entire research process. Interviewees included one (1) minister of Scottish parliament, three (3) senior managers, eighteen (18) administrators, nine (9) academics and two (2) students.

Selection of interviewees

This part of the thesis outlines how the thesis interviewees were selected. It also discusses how the selection led to the discovery of emerged data patterns. An early decision was made to obtain a detailed overview of the SRS strategy and to ascertain the relevance of the research. Discussions around the University's practice of sustainability therefore first begun with a formal interview conducted with the Director of the SRS strategy at the time. It was imperative to start the investigations with someone highly knowledgeable (Rubin and Rubin 2005, 2012), about the strategy under investigation. Gaining access to the Director was relatively easy as he was keen to engage with people interested in the strategy. The issue surrounding gaining access to participants is essential in qualitative research (Flick 2002). The interview provided a rich chronicle of the University's sustainability efforts spanning over a decade. Insight was provided in respect of

current and future strategic intentions of the SRS strategy. At the end of the interview, it was decided that the thesis will adopt a snowball approach for selecting prospective interviewees (Yin 1996; Patton 2002). Subsequent interviews were recommended and cascaded based on interviewees' roles and engagement with the SRS strategy.

Five names were initially recommended to be interviewed. These included senior managers who had been instrumental in spearheading the practice of sustainability. They had been engaged in the strategy's transition from its inception when it was only an environmental policy to its present state. Interviews with this group resulted in further recommendations. The SRS office was also instrumental in the respondent selection process. In some cases, the SRS Director made the first contact with the potential interviewees. After about twenty (20) interviews had been obtained and cursorily reviewed, it became obvious that specific patterns clearly emerged to the point that additional data no longer added significant insight to refining the thesis overall sensemaking and strategy concepts. The emerged data patterns uncovered two main observable facts.

Observable facts

The first fact revealed that administrators and academics understand their organizations strategic process from two different points of views. The pattern indicated that administrators and academics are two distinct groups of people though they are described as in terms of being a set of middle managers. Hitherto, research on sensemaking of middle managers has described middle managers as one group of people engage in collective sensemaking processes, without making any further distinctions. The omission is likely due to the fact that most of middle managers sensemaking research have occurred in traditional tightly coupled organization (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau 2005; Rouleau and Balogun 2006, 2011; Balogun and Rouleau 2012). Although Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), conducted an ethnographic study of the initiation of a strategic change effort in loosely coupled academic institutions, they employed an interpretive approach to explore CEO's primary role in instigating the strategic change process that occurs in a large, public university. Also Gioia and Thomas'(1996), study on sensemaking in academia investigated how top management teams make sense of important issues that affect strategic change in modern academia. Research studies exploring middle managers sensemaking activities

in academia is scant. Even more scant is research exploring middle managers sensemaking from the view point that administrators and academics occupy two very distinct positions in loosely coupled systems. Their distinct strategic positions and roles directly impact their understanding of and behaviour towards the strategic process. The thesis therefore proposes that it is erroneous to investigate sensemaking of middle managers in loosely coupled systems without considering the effect of middle managers strategic positions on their sensemaking process.

The second observable fact is that the first set of interviews uncovered a ‘surprise discovery’ (Pierce 1935; Flink et.al 2004, Charmaz 2009; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009; Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Levin-Rozalis 2010). Clear patterns emerged distinguishing between the way administrators and academics practice sustainability. A surprise discovery of a simultaneous sensemaking process was uncovered as existing among administrators and academics. It was revealed that as a set of middle managers, significant differences exist between administrators and academic sensemaking process and practice of their organization’s sustainability strategy. The reason for the discovery was traced to an existing research gap in the sensemaking theoretical concepts. The gap is impinged on the fact that hitherto, sensemaking studies have studied sensemaking during strategic change as a singular collective process. When groups of leaders, CEO’s, stakeholders, teams and managers sensemaking have been studied, their sensemaking have been investigated without acknowledging the possibility of varied sensemaking processes occurring simultaneously among smaller demographic groups within the larger group. Middle managers have not been identified as being made up of different subsets that select and deselect distinct sensemaking cues while employing distinct interpretive filters to enable them make sense of organizational strategies. A further unpacking of the surprise discovery, uncovered that the simultaneous sensemaking process consists of ‘dependent’ and ‘autonomous’ sensemaking processes. Dependent and autonomous sensemaking occurs mainly due to administrators and academics different selection of sensemaking cues. On one hand, administrators select sensemaking cues that are ‘dependent’ on the strategic process. Their sensemaking of the strategy are aligned mainly with sensemaking cues they derived internally from the SRS strategy. On the other hand, academics select sensemaking cues that are ‘autonomous’ of the strategic process. Their sensemaking of the strategy is less aligned with the strategic process and more aligned with external cues derived outside the SRS strategy. Administrators dependent sensemaking process

generally occurs from selecting cues from organizational and global sensemaking sources while administrators autonomous sensemaking process occurs from selecting cues from personal, social and other related sources. A further unpacking of simultaneous sensemaking indicates that dependent sensemaking led to expected strategy outcomes while autonomous sensemaking led to unexpected strategy outcomes. Unexpected strategic outcomes are outcomes that organizations had not initially anticipated (Burgelman 1983b; Burgelman and Groove 2007, Regner 2003; Spee and Jarzabkoski 2011). Organizations are subsequently challenged with managing tensions arising from unexpected strategic outcomes (Jarzabkowski and Fenton, 2006).

The aforementioned detected discovery patterns began to reshape the overall research focus. From this point on, it was decided that subsequent interviews will be focused on uncovering simultaneous sensemaking and its link to the strategic process. The second set of interviews therefore focused more attention on academics in order to establish the validity of simultaneous sensemaking and unexpected strategic outcomes. The research instrument was thus revised to accommodate questions on autonomous behaviours. After a few interviews however, additional data no longer became available from academics as it was discovered that not many academics were actually involved in sustainability practices from the University's point of view compared to administrators. Interviews with academics therefore drew to a close. However, the emerged data introduced the need for repeat questioning. It became necessary to go back to previous interviewees for more detailed narratives especially describing the simultaneous sensemaking process and nature of autonomous behaviour and unexpected sustainability outcomes. Further repeated questions were directed at senior managers in particular for the purpose of investigating how organizations react to unexpected outcomes. This was fundamental to the overall understanding of how the SRS strategy process became emergent especially in terms of how strategy develops in universities. It was also important not simply to understand how the university responds to emerged strategy, but also to investigate why it responded to unexpected strategic outcomes in the manner it did. This particular interest provided a third research question investigating why managers do what they do. Overall the thesis line of query influenced the choice of adopting an abductive research strategy.

Contacting interviewees

This section of the thesis details how the research interviewees were contacted. Out of the first five potential interviewees recommended only three were contacted. The two un-contacted had retired from the university and it was felt that attempts at contacting them for interviews will prove challenging. The first respondent was abroad at the time of contact but agreed to be interviewed by a 'Skype' computer chat. The second respondent also preferred a telephone call chat as she did not have the time to meet physically. The third respondent on the other hand agreed to a face-to-face meeting as requested.

Overall, initial contacts were made through direct emails from the thesis researcher to potential interviewees. The emails indicated a preference for face-to-face interview wherever possible. Interviewees were also made aware of the option of telephone interviews in cases where face-to-face interviews were not possible. Those who had already been contacted by the SRS director were followed up by emails. Where applicable, emails to potential interviewees clearly stated that they had been recommended by the SRS director, his office or other organizational actors. There were three particular situations in which interventions were sought through secretaries of the potential interviewee or by a research assistant from the Business School for example. The recommendation legitimized the research and paved easier access to top managers.

Majority of potential interviewees responded within an average of two days of receiving the emails and immediately accepted to be interviewed in an average period of a week. Only one person however declined to be interviewed. He explained that as an academic, he did not think he had enough information to comment on the SRS strategy.

Profile of interviewees

This part of the thesis outlines the profile of selected interviewees especially in terms of their organizational positions and strategic roles. This is particularly necessary to enable an understanding of the organizational context that facilitates simultaneous sensemaking. With regard to the SRS strategy, administrators could generally be described as middle managers primarily responsible for engaging with and mobilizing engagement for the SRS strategy. It is their duty to achieve high levels of sustainability embedding across the University. They were typically made up of managers, coordinators and staff of departments including, Transport and Parking,

Accommodation, Procurement, Estate management, Waste management, Institute of Academic development (IAD), and the University's student association. Their engagement with the SRS strategy was fundamentally dependent on their job descriptions and responsibilities. They aimed to achieve university wide embedding according to set strategy objectives. Their mandate included increasing sustainability buy-in from their colleagues by ensuring an engaging and active consultative process. They employed the use of a variety of techniques to secure input including surveys, discussions and seminars as required. Overall, their day-to-day strategic functions are akin to middle managers functions in tightly coupled systems. They engage in higher levels of interdependency and lower levels of independence in executing their strategic activities (Weick 1976; Aldrich, 1980; Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990; Dorée and Holmen 2004). In essence, administrators' functions are bureaucratic in nature in which administrative operations and elements depended on each other to function. They are more aligned to follow the strategic process. Administrators who actively engaged in the strategy process were generally referred to as sustainability champions. They are described by senior managers as people who '*get it*' (get or understand sustainability).

On the other hand, two main types of academics were identified. A first type of respondents could be described as academics whose view of the meaning and practice of sustainability was closely aligned with the SRS viewpoint. These academics had either voluntarily involved in sustainability practices or had been approached to do so by senior managers. Compared to administrative work, lower levels of collaborations exist between academics and senior manager as relating to the sustainability strategic process. They usually engaged with the process at department, school or university wide levels. These included academics involved in embedding sustainability in the University's curricular or teaching sustainability related courses at different levels or involved in the project of academics annual reporting on their sustainability practices. It must be stated that these academics were engaged in autonomous sensemaking but to a lesser degree than other academics. Sustainability outcomes produced by such academics were generally achieved with some amount of support from senior managers.

A second type of academics could be described as academics who (as some of them phrased it), simply wanted '*to be left alone*' to engage with sustainability on their own terms. They engaged

in autonomous sensemaking primarily by selecting sustainability cues based on their world view of the concept, research requirements and personal interests. Personal interests consisted of a variety of individual 'likes and hobbies', some of which dated from childhood interests and career backgrounds. Other interests were also connected to available research funding opportunities. Overall, their strategic activities can be described as akin to that of middle managers in loosely coupled systems. Academic operations and elements can be described in terms of having lower levels of interdependence and higher levels of indeterminacy or distinctiveness (Weick 1976; Aldrich, 1980; Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990). In essence, academic elements (structure, work activities, people) are independent of each other and are autonomous. Academics strategic activities are predominantly characterized by higher levels of flexibility and autonomy. Academics belonging to this group exercised high forms of academic freedom and their strategic behaviours were autonomous of the strategic process. Their selection process of sensemaking cues was found to be different from other middle managers. The impression created was that sensemaking cues from the strategy contradicted with their selection process and therefore they explored other sensemaking cues external to the university's strategy.

This alternative cue selection process is what uncovered the surprise discovery of the concept of simultaneous sensemaking. It is also the surprise discovery that provided the basis for exploring unexpected sustainability actions and outcomes. Attempts to understand simultaneous sensemaking and explore the link between simultaneous sensemaking and strategy development subsequently become the main focal point of the research. Senior managers' respondents were made up of high profile managers including the senior vice principal external engagement as well as senior coordinators of SRS. These managers had made significant inputs in the formation of the University's social responsibility and sustainability. They set out the agenda for engaging and embedding sustainability at University wide level. In general, senior managers were strong advocates of the strategy. Some of them were described by their colleagues as part of the group of sustainability champions or people who '*get it*'. Their strategic activities were highly bureaucratic and characteristic of activities in tightly coupled systems. Their role in the study became apparent especially after the surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking led to observations of unexpected sustainability outcomes. Their role subsequently was to explain how unexpected sustainability outcomes became part of the overall strategic process.

A brief unplanned conversation was engaged in with the Scottish Member of Parliament for sustainable procurement. The interview was 'a chance interview'. The minister and the researcher met at a Marrakesh training workshop for procurement strategists of Scottish universities. The minister agreed to a brief discussion on the national agenda for sustainable procurement. Plans made for a future interview were later abandoned as the research focus shifted to exploring simultaneous sensemaking and outcomes of administrators and academics. Student respondents were made up of one undergraduate and one postgraduate student. They were both engaged in other similar research on the University's sustainability practices. The interview with the final year undergraduate student recounted rich descriptions of the University's sustainability practices as recorded in her dissertation. Her research was specifically aimed at exploring the successes, opportunities and challenges of the University's annual sustainability awards. Highlights of her personal involvement with the SRS strategy were also discussed. On the other hand, the postgraduate student had conducted a scoping exercise on undergraduate courses that supported the University's commitment to the SRS strategy. The exercise examined course descriptors to identify where and how SRS was incorporated in undergraduate course curricula in three main schools. Both students were supported across board by senior managers, administrators and academic. They were considered as student advocates of the SRS strategy.

Manner of interaction

This part of the thesis describes the mode of interaction through which the interviews occurred. As previously indicated, all but two interviews involved face-to-face interactions. An interview guide was developed to standardize the manner of approach in terms of general introductory questions and questions pertinent to the knowledge and practice of sustainability and strategy. After a handful of interviews it was concluded that the choice of face-to-face interactions was to be the most choice of collecting data. The face-to-face interviews averaged an hour each. They were tape recorded with explicit permission of interviewees with the assurance of providing confidentiality. During the interviews, copious notes were taken on every single point made. This was used as the starting point for reviewing data. It was later used to compliment transcribed data from the tape recordings. Together, these formed the primary source of data. Notes from two away day meetings and a strategic meeting were also recorded and transcribed. Extensive documentary

data, such as strategic plans, progress log reports, meeting minutes, memoranda and university calendars were also collected and studied. Intertextual documentary analysis was undertaken to compare text with text, in understanding the strategists' intention inherent in the documents, (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011).

Overall, it appeared that the lines of questioning afforded administrators the opportunity to think along two particular views for the first time. Firstly, it appeared that most respondents had not given much thought to the day-to-day sustainability routines and activities they are involved in. This was especially clear by their frequent use of the phrase '*coming to think of it...*'. The use of this phrase was typically accompanied by a corresponding posture of either upright sitting or leaning over and taking a moment to think. While some expressed a feeling of surprise at the fact that they had not given much thought to how they perform their daily sustainability activities, a few administrators were slightly embarrassed at their seeming ignorance of the strategy. Secondly, during the interviews a few interviewees said '*I need to think about this some more and get back to you*'. While some did connect later by email, others sign posted the question to other middle managers they said were '*the best person*' to answer the question.

On the other hand however, academics eschewed a high sense of confidence in answering questions. They portrayed a level of independence in respect of their knowledge with the SRS strategy. Compared to administrators who were generally aware of and actively involved in practicing the SRS strategy, academics on the hand were not only generally unaware of the strategy but were also more apathetic about its existence. When asked if they were familiar with the strategy, a considerable number of them responded by saying, '*no I am not aware of the SRS strategy*'.

Interviews with administrators occurred in a more methodical order according to the interview guide. Questions generally flowed one into another as planned. It evolved with very few deviations. In most cases a story telling approach was adopted as administrators narrated their experiences. The narratives were long and revealing. Academics on the other hand, answered questions in a more direct manner. They freely talked about their understanding of the strategic process. To 'hear' what interviewees said, the researcher allowed them to speak for themselves

while listening with minimum interactions and taking cues at appropriate times (Kvale 1996). There were clear indications pointing to the fact that academics drew sensemaking cues from their own perspectives and backgrounds. In contrast, though administrators had varied backgrounds there were clear indications that their sensemaking cues were drawn from cues originating from the SRS strategy point of view.

Altogether, the data was used to develop rich chronological narratives of the sensemaking process and practice of strategy by interviewees. Thick descriptions (Geertz 1973:7; Flick 1998; Patton 2002), provided by interviewees were especially developed on the simultaneous sensemaking processes and outcomes that were identified between administrators and academics. Senior managers' strategic responses to emerged outcomes were also contextualized. The role of emerged outcomes in the overall strategy was also revealed.

Interview instrument

The interviews were conducted in a period of two different time lines. It consisted of two main sets of data collected two months apart from each other. The first set consisted of fourteen (14) interviews while the second set is made up of twenty-four (24) interviews (including five repeat questions). After the first set of interviews, an extensive line by line coding mechanism was employed (Eisenberg 1987). It teased out relevant words and phrases that sort to answer the questions asked. These words and phrases were later regrouped into 12 descriptive parameters. It provided a basis to support qualitative analyses of interviews with specific findings from the data set (Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008).

The overall research questions were modelled after 'how' and 'why' type of questioning. The research first attempted to explore how administrators and academics in particular make sense of the University's sustainability agenda. A cursory research was undertaken to review definitions of sustainable development and sustainability from the Brundtland definition and organizational perspective. This was useful in understanding worldview and organizational definitions and constructs. It was also important to identify similarities and differences between the worldview definitions and the University's definitions. To investigate administrators and academics

sensemaking it was important to discover how administrators and academics draw sensemaking cues. Sensemaking first starts as a process of scanning in which administrators and academics for example notice unlimited cues from a phenomenon such as the SRS strategy. They select appropriate cues and deselect inappropriate ones to help make sense of occurring events and situations (Weick 1993, 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et.al 1993; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Maitlis 2005). By listening to accounts of how they say they make sense of sustainability, the researcher was able to categorise predominant sensemaking cues which administrators and academics select and portray as relevant to their understanding of the strategy. What was particularly important to the thesis was to identify dominant sources of sensemaking internal and external to the strategic process. This was imperative to support the discovery of dependent and autonomous sensemaking. Selected cues were further interpreted to enhance meaning. The interpretation process is influenced by personal and social idiosyncrasies or filters such as an individual's background, experiences, knowledge, social status, ideologies, paradigms, occupations, positions and other frames from their past (Weick 1995; Thomas et.al 1993; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Drazin et.al 1999; Craig-Lees 2001; Cramer et.al 2004). The aim was to identify predominant interpretive filters that administrators and academics employ to enable them make sense of the strategic process. The process of selecting cues and interpreting them through personal filters to create meaning, eventually leads to externalizing cues to create concrete actions (Cramer et. al 2004; Weick et.al 2005; Basu and Palazzo 2008). In particular reference to sensemaking actions, what was important to the thesis was observing strategic actions that administrators and academics took based on selected cues. This led to indications confirming the fact that administrators sensemaking led to strategic actions and outcomes as outlined by the strategic process while academics sensemaking led to strategic actions and outcomes that were unexpected.

Besides interviews, the second mode of data collection was through social artefacts or documentary evidence.

3.6.2 Social artefacts

The use of social artefacts offers the potential to obtain rich insights into information otherwise inaccessible to the research. Social artefacts involve neither natural nor artificial situations (Blaikie 2010:170). They include documentary sources such as strategic reports, minutes of meetings,

photographs and biographies. Social artefacts are particularly useful in the context of decontextualization (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011). Decontextualization refers to the process through which talk (discourse) becomes materialized in written text. As iterative discussions occur, they are decontextualized from speech form into text form. Social artefacts are facts that are documented at different points in time and often physically distant from the actual event of talk (Spee and Jarzabkowski 2011). It involves the traces of social activities left behind by participants (Blaikie 2010:170). Social artefacts thus afford the opportunity to trace past and current pertinent activities, scenarios and conversations overtime. The process captures tensions and decision making processes that would have been obliterated in time. Social artefacts can however be unavailable and in sometimes unreliable.

Three main documents were analysed for the purpose of understanding strategy, actions and outcomes in the practice of sustainability. They included the University's overall strategic plan, the sustainability and social responsibility (SRS) plan, and SRS implementation plans and related papers. **Table 3.1** below provides a list of various documents used as part of the data collection process.

Table 3.1 Documented sources used

Sources	Contribution to research understanding
University strategic plan 2012-16	It broadly outlines the role and intent of six main strategic themes including social responsibility and sustainability in the University's overall strategic plan. It outlines the University's aim to show sector-wide leadership in sustainability, social responsibility and climate change ambitions
Sustainability and social responsibility strategy	It provides insights, operations and justifications of the SRS strategy. The focus aims at understanding the University's aim of becoming a global sustainability leader and how to take that forward.
Annual SRS implementation plans and sustainability highlight reports and papers	They highlight achievements, on-going projects and projects yet to start. They however fail to include failed sustainability practice attempts. Papers provide a report of the key issues arising from meeting held on specific sustainability issues
Climate Action Plan (adopted May 2010)	It outlines the main KPI for measuring carbon emissions activities
Updated Fair Trade Policy	It outlines the university's commitment to fair trade activity
Meeting minutes	It provides detailed insights into specific sustainability practice issues discussed in meetings. Meeting minutes were perhaps the

	best artefacts that contain records of issues of conflicts and tensions in the practice of the strategy
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The section below presents brief descriptions of the nature of the documents mentioned above.

Strategic plan

The University’s strategic plan (2012-2016) officially sets out Westland’s overall commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. Similar to other studies of universities (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Slaughter and Leslie, 1999), Westland’s strategic plan focused on six strategic themes employed to achieve the University’s strategic goals. These included outstanding student experience, global impact, lifelong community, equality and widening participation, partnership, and social responsibility. Included in the theme of social responsibility and sustainability (SRS) was climate change and fair-trade ambitions. The SRS Strategy was (adopted February 2010) and a Climate Action Plan was (adopted May 2010) and updated Fair Trade Policy was (adopted June 2013). The SRS theme was aimed at embedding Westland’s commitment to social responsibility and sustainability in its curricula, policies, strategies and procedures. It also aims at motivating all members of the University community to become effective advocates who actively support best practice, innovation and leadership with regard to social responsibility and sustainability.

Sustainability and social responsibility (SRS) strategy

The SRS strategy (2010-2020) itself was made up of a number of documents and processes. These included issues related with associated governance processes, action planning, performance management and reporting. Fundamentally, the social responsibility strategic theme aimed at minimising the University’s environmental impact while maximising its contribution to society. This was to be achieved under six main sections: studying, research, engagement, climate action plan, support best practice, innovation and leadership. The overall intent was to create conditions under which students, staff and the wider community are inspired and supported to engage with and contribute to social responsibility and sustainability across the University and beyond. A more

detailed focus was on the Climate action plan with its specific targets for emissions reductions for 2015 and 2020. The target was to reduce absolute CO2 emissions by 29% by 2020, against a 2007 baseline (interim target of 20% savings by 2015). Overall the University's target for carbon emission is set to achieve carbon emissions per £ million turnover.

SRS implementation plan

SRS implementation plan consists of process reports on climate action and fair trade activities and outcomes. This document annually chronicled sustainability tasks and outcomes. It recorded 'good' progress along the strategy's six main sections (studying, research, engagement, climate action plan, support best practice, innovation and leadership). Narratives detailing the progress of the tasks were taken from a range of sources; committee reports, departmental reports, email updates, meetings between SRS research coordinator and lead contacts. With particular reference to the 2012/2013 implantation plan, a summary of the progress recorded 42 achieved outcomes in September 2012, while 15 tasks were work-in-progress. The record indicates that most of work-in-progress tasks were either near completion or carried over to the following year. A task within the SRS Implementation Plan 2012-13 was each assigned to a lead contact responsible for achieving progress. At appropriate times, lead contacts reported progress to the Department for SRS Office. There was however no record of failed or unsuccessful sustainability outcomes. This created an erroneous impression that sustainability tasks and outcomes was a 100% success. The SRS implementation plan also had no record of autonomous sustainability initiatives and outcomes.

Unlike other forms of data (like electronic data) which constantly changed or even disappeared (Harwood 2011), documentary sources provided stable direction for the SRS strategy. The contents were reliable as they only changed or were revised over a number of years. While the strategic plan was revised every four years, SRS plan was revised every two years. An updated version of the implementation plan was compiled. Obtaining hard copies was unchallenging. Electronic copies were also easily accessible online.

The third mode of data collection was through observation of strategic level meetings.

3.6.3 Observation of strategic level meetings

This part of the data collection method describes the thesis use of a ‘quasi-ethnographic’ study to collect data. The thesis employs the term to describe the process of “observing directly the behaviour of a social group” (Marshall 1998; c.f Guang et.al. 2015:211). The researcher engaged in first-hand observations of strategic meetings sometimes in a participatory capacity and other times in a non-participatory manner (Guang et.al. 2015:211). In particular invitations to attend Fair Trade strategic meeting and Sustainability Awards events were completely non-participatory in nature, in which the researcher was not allowed to ask questions or make comments. The terms and conditions of the non-participatory nature of the invitation was clearly stated a forehand. The researcher was also invited to a high profile Marrakesh workshop on procurement which was attended by representatives from a cross-section of Scottish Universities as well as the Scottish Member of Parliament for Procurement. This primarily was a non-participatory observation except for the moment when the researcher was granted permission to organize and engage in a short focus group discussion at the end of the meeting. Sustainability away day workshops however afforded the researcher the opportunity to participate in the activities being studied through comments and focus group inputs. The engagement in the quasi-ethnographic method was non-covert in nature, (Guang et.al. 2015:211). In most cases, at the start of the meeting, the researcher was appropriately introduced as a participatory or non-participatory observer. Data was collected through the use of participant notes and diary entries, minutes from meetings and casual interactions before and after the meetings. Besides the aforementioned, other techniques usually employed in quasi-ethnographic method of data collection include the use of video imagery, rapid assessments, depth interviews and observations employed to deliver research results in a shorter period” (Freeman et.al. 2012; c.f Guang et.al. 2015:213).

Four main sources provided opportunities for first hand observation and participation in the strategic activities. These were made up of sustainability away day workshops, sustainability awards, a Marrakesh two day workshop and fair trade steering committee meetings. These are subsequently discussed in more depth below.

Sustainability ‘away day’ workshops

A sustainability away day concept was instituted in September 2011 as a build-up on a workshop with administrators. The main outcome of that meeting was in three folds. Firstly, administrators realised the need to improve communication channels for better mobilization. Secondly, the need to create a more coherent and mainstream SRS strategy was also realized. Thirdly, thoughts around establishing more visible and formally recognised activity were also discussed. This subsequently resulted in the institution of annual summer away day workshops.

Senior administrators and academics, leaders in SRS related subjects and a wide range of practitioners met to present issues on different aspects of the SRS strategy. The room outlay was arranged in cabaret style where ten (10) attendees sat around ten (10) round tables to enable smaller group discussion. Each table was assigned a particular case study ranging from issues on education for sustainability, switch and save, going beyond recycling, transport, sustainability engagement, students life and equality and diversity. The idea was to showcase on-going sustainability initiatives within the University. A facilitator was assigned to each table based on their knowledge and engagement with particular case studies. Case study discussions allowed participants to exchange ideas and experiences as well as learn about good practices, challenges and opportunities and propose solutions to challenges. The aim was to achieve a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities in delivering sustainability and social responsibility task and outcomes as outlined in the overall strategic plan. Participants were asked to note two to three action points on posters at the end of each workshop. Clearly marked postcards were compiled and publically displayed on walls. Ideas were later incorporated into subsequent SRS implementation plans. Summary of stories, discussions and action points was circulated and posted on website.

Participation in sustainability away day workshop helped establish research queries regarding top managers' commitment to the overall sustainability strategic process. In particular their effort to bring both administrators and academics together was evident. It was confirmed that top managers were open minded and embraced both dependent and autonomous sustainability engagements. Away day workshops observation revealed that senior managers agreed that '*sustainability is not meant for everybody*'. They acknowledged that it was '*okay*' if some administrators and academics choose not to engage with the SRS strategy or with sustainability practices altogether. This was important to understanding the power of academic freedom. Essentially, it confirmed that senior

managers acknowledged that academics selected their sensemaking cues from sources outside the strategic process. In effect, senior managers recognized the existence of simultaneous sensemaking process between administrators and academics. This shed some light into the nuances of sensemaking of the strategic process in loosely coupled organizations.

Westland sustainability awards

The Westland sustainability award was first held in May 2010. It was a joint project between the University and its student association. The University committed funding for the first three years and the strategic process was actively supported by top managers. In broad terms the aim was to promote sustainable and ethical behaviour among all organizational actors. This was to be achieved by making the SRS strategy simple and meaningful, increase categories for sustainability practice participation, enable student volunteering opportunities and encouraging sustainability champions. Participants included teams from academic schools, business units and student association departments. Awards were divided into gold, silver, bronze and special awards categories. The awards event provided a platform for recognizing individual and team efforts made to achieve strategic outcomes. Some teething logistical challenges were however encountered in organizing sustainability awards. These included difficulties in identifying and recruiting teams, supporting teams and recruiting volunteers to audit and monitor teams. The number of participating teams increased year on, indicating increases in mobilization and participation among other things. Overall, the Westland sustainability awards were a successful medium for identifying sustainability activities and outcomes in the organization.

Observations from sustainability awards were useful in understanding research quarries pertaining to how actors make sense of the strategic process. The events were also useful in identifying predominant sources of sensemaking cues for administrators, academics and senior managers. It confirmed that while administrators (and senior managers) explored cues originating from the strategic process, academics exploited cues from other external sources. It also helped in understanding the interest in the role of sustainability champions in the strategic process.

Marrakesh workshop

This workshop was a two days away event about applying Marrakesh tools to procurement. It was a national event participated by members of Scottish universities procurement strategy groups. It involved about eight universities. The aim was for participants to learn more about the Scottish procurement reform Bill as well as other laws, policies and public sector initiatives affecting Scottish universities. The First Scottish Minister for procurement participated for the first day. Paramount to discussions was issues surrounding social responsibility and sustainability developments in procurement practices. Individual University's approach, challenges and opportunities to sustainable (economic, social, environmental) procurement were discussed through presentations and question times.

The First Minister afforded the researcher a brief interview on her thoughts on the Bill while focusing on the role of universities in the strategic process. An unplanned focused group discussion was organized on the second day. A total of five (5) groups made up of about three to six (3-6) people participated in the activity. Each session lasted an average of ten minutes. Participants were grouped according to Universities. They were mainly asked to recount each university's with sustainability and procurement activities. Responses enabled both macro and micro level understanding of individual university's engagement and struggles with sustainability. The Westland University was generally adjudged the sector-wide leader in sustainable procurement. At the end, some new collaboration was forged between particular universities.

Participation in Marrakesh training enhanced the understanding of quarries pertaining to administrators dependent engagements. It was established that the University engages with procurement from a legislative viewpoint. Efforts to incorporate sustainable practices in Westland's strategic process was underpinned by requirements of the Scottish law encouraging higher education institutions to contribute national goals in sustainable procurement. The First Minister's participation was indicative of Scotland's commitment to achieving sustainable procurement through Marrakesh trainings for Scottish Universities. It was established that Universities sign up to charters in attempts to satisfy external pressures.

Fair trade steering committee meetings

The University maintains Fair Trade University status as well as steer Westland Fair Trade City Initiative. Among other things, Westland aims to contribute to meeting the global poverty challenge by expanding its range of use of fair trade foods, beverages and apparel, ensure the use of fair trade tea and coffee in all meetings and raise awareness on issues of fairness in global trade through events and online content. The Fair trade Steering Group meets regularly to review and monitor objectives, make recommendations to revise the University's approach to fair trade procurement and awareness-raising and to ensure an on-going commitment from the University. Committee members were made up of representatives from about ten (10) different University units including procurement office, accommodation services, academic network, student members and social responsibility and sustainability office. The meetings were generally active. It embraced views from a myriad of backgrounds. It afforded questions and answer sessions in a collegiate manner. Observations from fair trade steering committee meetings established that Westland University joined the Scottish fair trade forum to enhance its aim to make Scotland a fair trade nation. Like the Marrakesh workshops, Westland's fair trade engagements were primarily in response to nation legislative pressures.

Summary

The section above has discussed in much depth multiple methods employed in acquiring the entire thesis data set. This includes the use of face to face interviews and meetings. These two were the main sources of data gathering. They were also augmented by social artefacts such as the SRS strategic document and implementation plans. Additionally, workshops and awards ceremonies were engaged in to gain a broader perspective of the issue under investigation. The thesis therefore supports the use of multiple data sources (Hartley, 2004; Yin, 1994) to enrich the knowledge in sensemaking and strategy creation processes in loosely coupled systems. Larger knowledge scope validates the data as it also promotes data trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin 1996).

Of fundamental importance to this section is the portion on observable fact. The two earlier chapters have repeatedly referred to the thesis surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking. However, it was actually during this process of data gathering that the distinction between

administrators and academics as two distinct types of middle managers began to emerge. Clear patterns emerged at this stage which indicated different sensemaking processes between the two groups mainly due to their distinct strategic roles. Although their distinct sensemaking process was only unmistakably identified after in-depth analysis, a cursory understanding of the interviews in particular visibly reveal the distinctions. This observable fact changed the course of data gathering and the thesis aim at large.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The section below is the final part of the chapter's discussions. It mainly describes the thesis data coding and data analysis process. The thesis data analysis and coding process is generally modelled after the work of Maribeau and Maguire (2014). In their research, they conducted an exploratory longitudinal case study to develop a model of emergent strategy formation in a technical support organization of a global telecommunications equipment provider. The study theorizes the role of "practices of strategy articulation" in emergent strategy formation and explains why some autonomous strategic behaviours become realized as emergent strategy while others become ephemeral and disappear. Essentially, they demonstrate how emergent strategy originates as a project through autonomous strategy to illustrate their process model of emergent strategy formation.

This thesis is equally constructed around the theory of strategy creation. It explores the role of middle managers sensemaking in producing unexpected autonomous strategy initiatives as well as such impact on an organization's existing strategy creation process. Where applicable, some aspects of Eisenhart (1989) model are also employed.

3.7.1 Data coding process

Maribeau and Maguire (2014) collected and analysed their data sets on two main levels comprising of organizational and project levels. Albeit focused on an organizational level, this thesis similarly collected data along three different levels. This comprised of data on the levels of three different organizational actors: administrators, academics and senior managers. They also constructed a coding structure in figure 3 of the article, through which the data was coded and analysed based

on three main categories. A first grounded data construct or first order codes was constructed. These were made up of broad statements and project descriptions from interviews as well as data from project documents and power point slides as pertaining to specific projects. These were further analysed and developed into theoretical constructs or second order codes. Lastly, aggregates of second order codes were further analysed and transformed into theoretical dimension aggregates.

The thesis generally models after their coding structure. It however extends the coding levels from three to four levels to include outcomes of theorizing processes of the third order codes. The fourth order codes were imperative in identifying three triggers which set the stage for the process of exploring the thesis surprise discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. Additionally, they were needful in establishing the three integration strategies which the organization employed to incorporate unexpected autonomous strategy into existing strategic processes. A basic data coding structure is presented in **Table 3.2 (Basic data coding framework)**. A basic coding framework is consequently constructed and analysed in light of the four levels to guide the discussions of the methodological process. The basic coding framework serves as a primary framework for representing the data set.

Table 3.2 Basic data coding framework

First order codes	second order codes	Theoretical codes	Fourth order codes
<p>A total of seventeen (17) first order codes are initially identified.</p> <p>They are broad statements, responses and summaries describing sensemaking and strategy creation accounts.</p>	<p>A total of fourteen (14) second order codes are initially identified.</p> <p>They represent prevailing data patterns and concepts teased from first order codes.</p> <p>They provide identified sensemaking patterns and concept which began the process of revealing the thesis surprise discovery.</p>	<p>They are prevailing data aggregates from second order codes which provide foundations for theorizing the data set.</p> <p>The codes link emerged sensemaking and strategy patterns and concepts from second order codes to the thesis' chosen literatures and theory.</p> <p>The thesis is situated in the following literatures and theory; Sensemaking, loosely coupled systems and sustainability literatures as well as strategic management theory.</p>	<p>They are outcomes of theorizing processes.</p> <p>They form the identified sensemaking triggers which represent middle managers dominant and subtle sensemaking frames.</p> <p>The identification of these triggers sets the stage for the process of exploring the thesis surprise discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process.</p> <p>They also establish three integration strategies which organizations employ to incorporate unexpected strategy into existing strategic processes.</p>

Overall, the coding set is employed as a framework for representing the thesis data sets in the three empirical chapters (chapters four – six). It serves as the starting point for analysing and discussing sensemaking and strategy creation processes in these chapters. The section below describes the framework above in a bit more depth.

First order coding

The first order coding level forms the widest pool of data set. They are made up of broad statements and accounts provided by administrators and academics (in particular) in their description of their sensemaking process of the SRS strategy. First order coding process began with a line by line teasing of phrases and words from recorded interviews and other supporting sources of data. It delineated specific and relevant words and phrases from accounts, statements and responses provided by interviewees. This subsequently led to the emergence of very broad statements describing their strategic sensemaking activities. The broad statements were subsequently unpacked and regroup into broad themes. The process resulted in large pools of themes which were subsequently classified as data for first order coding process. Overall seventeen (17) broad themes emerged out of the process. First order coding thus form the broadest categories of ideas and accounts of data patterns. An immediate cursory glance however indicated striking similarities among some of the themes. After much scrutiny and analysing, subsumed into appropriate coded. This subsequently resulted in a total of seventeen (17) first order themes. **Table 3.3** outlines first order codes below.

Table 3.3 First order codes

First order codes	
A total of seventeen (17) first order codes are initially identified and outlined below.	
1.	External challenges
2.	Internal
3.	Global challenges
4.	Nature of strategy
5.	Discourse
6.	Engagement
7.	Expertise
8.	Organizational identity
9.	Ambiguity
10.	Ownership
11.	Moral code
12.	Conflicts
13.	Organizational direction
14.	Innovation
15.	Strategy outcomes
16.	Accounting and reporting
17.	Academic resistance

A quick glance reveals that these themes point to sources of sensemaking from which interviewees select and deselect sensemaking cues.

Second order coding

The second order coding level consists of aggregates from the wide pool of data represented in first order codes. They represent prevailing concepts and patterns that have been teased out of first

order codes. The second order coding process is necessary in order to provide a more succinct understanding of the broad first order codes identified. Generally, second order codes begin the process of teasing out sensemaking patterns and concepts from the data sets. Their significance lies in the fact that they reveal specific sensemaking frames from which interviewees draw their sensemaking of the strategy. Of even greater significance is the fact that, it is during the second order coding process that the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process between administrators and academics began to emerge. The codes clearly delineate that administrators and academics do not engage in the same sensemaking process. There clear indications to suggest that administrators and academics draw their sensemaking of the strategy from different sensemaking frameworks.

This new realization led to further scrutiny of the first order codes. This pointed to some similarities in the seventeen (17) themes mentioned above. Three (3) were eventually paired with other similar codes. Of most significance to the process is the fact that a higher level of scrutiny and analysis led to a more precise understanding of first order codes. This led to a process of redefining, readjusting, and renaming of most of the codes. Finally, fourteen (14) main sensemaking frames were identified. These codes were subsequently classified under the heading 'second order codes'. **Table 3.4** presents second order codes below.

Table 3.4 Second order codes

Second order codes
<p>A total of fourteen (14) themes were aggregated from first order codes which were subsequently classified as second order codes. They are outlined below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Global sustainability issues2. Legislations and conventions3. Accounting and reporting4. Discursive appeals5. Moral questioning.6. Engagement with strategy7. Strategic conflict8. Strategy outcomes9. Academic freedom10. Newness of strategy11. Strategy experts12. Resistance to strategy13. Integration strategy14. Management perception

Unlike first order codes which are unclassified, second order codes are classified as data sets belonging to the three groups of managers' understudy. The primary group is made up of midlevel administrators and academics while the secondary group consists of senior managers. Data sets from the primary group of administrators and academics contribute to the thesis exploration of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking and consequent outcomes - which is the main focus of the study. It also enables a study of strategic interrelationships between middle managers in loosely coupled university context. Information on the secondary group of senior managers on the other hand, contributed to the thesis investigations of strategy creation, especially as a result of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking outcomes. The thesis assumes the position that the

study of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process and its outcomes without further exploring organizational response to such outcomes leaves a gap in research studies on sensemaking and strategy creation. Senior managers' strategic role especially in response to middle managers activities is therefore imperative to provide insights to complete the study which links simultaneous sensemaking with strategy creation in loosely coupled organizational. Consequently, out of the fourteen (14) second order codes, seven (7) represent data sets from administrators, five (5) from academics data set and two (2) from senior managers. These will be discussed later in-depth under the appropriate sections.

Third order coding

The third order coding level provides the foundation for theorizing the data sets. Third order coding link second order sensemaking patterns and concepts to relevant research theories and literatures. It provides appropriate theoretical lens through which emerged data patterns and concept are examined and theorized. The process of theorizing is basically one that links emerged data patterns and concepts to closely related theories and literatures. These associated theories and literatures are classified as 'third order codes'. They are also synonymously referred to as 'theoretical codes'.

So far, first and second order sensemaking cues have been coded primarily based on the overall thesis data set. Third order coding however moves the coding process from a data set level to a theorizing level. The need to position dominant sensemaking codes in relevant theories is believed to be essential in supporting the research's choice in employing an abductive research strategy. The idea of theorizing or developing explanatory theories in light of existing data is central to abductive research (Thagard, 1988; Haig 2005: 379). Abductive research involves linking data concepts with existing theories. This involves a process of theorizing about a surprise discovery identified in data by logically connecting data to theory (Pierce 1935, Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009:89; Charmaz 2009; Feilzer 2010; Levin-Rozalis 2010). The process of theorizing involves identifying concepts and categories that provide meaning to an issue and then checking and cross checking the empirical concepts with theories (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:173). The idea is to check and crosscheck data sets in such a way that each data set is informed, questioned, and enhanced by the others (Feilzer 2010:12), and then evaluated and scrutinized against existing theories (Pierce 1955b).

Timmermans and Tavory (2012:173) argue that if the concepts match the theories, then the research simply confirms an existing theory. However if the research, involves identifying an expected finding or anomaly then there is the need to make a preliminary guess about the findings through the interplay of checking and cross checking existing theories and data. They argue that if the existing theories match the empirical phenomenon then the research will simply verify an existing theory. However, if there is a surprise discovery between data and theory, then the findings might lead to the discovery of additional dimensions, misguided preconceptions or changed circumstances.

Table 3.5 below briefly illustrates the theorizing process by linking second order codes to with existing theories.

Table 3.5 Third order codes

Third order codes	Linking codes to existing theories
The fourteen (14) second order codes are juxtaposed against existing theories on sensemaking, loosely coupled systems and strategic management theories	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Global sustainability issues 2. Legislations and conventions 3. Accounting and reporting 4. Discursive appeals 5. Moral questioning. 6. Engagement with strategy 7. Academic freedom 8. Newness of strategy 9. Strategy experts 	<p>These codes were juxtaposed alongside the sensemaking and loosely coupled theories.</p> <p>By and large, the codes were directly linked to the sensemaking theory as most of them were aligned with the idea of dominant sensemaking cues.</p> <p>In terms of their fit with the loosely coupled theory, some of the codes were aligned with the idea of subtle sensemaking cues.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Strategic conflict 11. Strategy outcomes 12. Resistance to strategy 13. Integration strategy 14. Management perception 	These codes were primarily juxtaposed alongside the strategic management theory.

Fourth order coding

Fourth order codes generally represent outcomes of the third order coding process or the theorizing process. They demonstrate and support the first three coding processes with concrete examples or outcomes. The fourth order coding process is essentially a ‘theory-data’ elaboration process. It elaborates the details provided by the first three coding process by aligning the research theories with specific examples from the research data. For example in chapters four, the six dominant sensemaking triggers are employed to demonstrate and elaborate the theory on sensemaking. Clear

examples are provided in support of how middle managers select and interpret the sensemaking cues they identify, as well as how their selection processes impact their strategic behaviour. In chapter five, evidence is provided on how administrators and academics draw of specific interdependency and determinacy sensemaking frames to select subtle sensemaking cues. Furthermore in chapter six, four mini cases are unpacked in depth to support the theory on emerged strategy outcomes. They demonstrate how academic autonomous sensemaking process led to unexpected sustainability initiatives. Additionally, chapter six also employs three integration strategies in support of the theory on strategic responses. The three identified integration strategies clearly depict how the University reacts to unexpected sustainability initiatives in respect of the overall existing SRS strategy.

Altogether, the four coding levels are employed to transform the thesis data sets from ordinary individual organizational actors sensemaking accounts and insights into the overarching research aim of exploring middle managers sensemaking of strategy and its associated link with strategy creation in loosely coupled systems. The basic framework (**Table 3.2** above) is however appropriately modified and applied to provide specific data sets for the three empirical chapters (chapters four – six). Based on the overall thesis aims, the framework is imperative for discussing and analysing empirical issues relating to the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking on one hand and on the other hand, closely related issues on loosely coupled patterns, and unexpected strategic outcomes and strategic responses in organizations.

The following section outlines the coding process for the three subsequent chapters on empirical findings. Based on the basic thesis framework in **Figure 3.1, section 3.8** below, specific individual coding frameworks are constructed and applied to administrators, academics and senior managers data sets respectively. Additional sections on analysis are also included to correspond with the coding processes. Subsequently, the individual coding and analysis processes begin with specific in-depth discussions of first order, second order, third order and fourth order coding and analysis processes of administrators, academics and senior managers.

3.7.2 Coding and analysis process for administrators

The administrators' sensemaking coding and analysis process is made up of four main levels – first order, second order, third order and fourth order codes and analysis. The process is described in much depth below.

First order coding

The administrators' first order codes were selected out of the overall seventeen (17) first order codes. The selection process involved selecting prevailing sensemaking frames which administrators draw on to make sense of the strategic process. Specifically, they represented dominant sources of sensemaking from which administrators selected and deselected prevailing cues in their sensemaking attempt of their organization's sustainability strategy.

First order analysis

The coding process enabled the research to distil and analyse relevant information that helps answer the part of the research aim which seeks to explore middle managers (especially administrators) sensemaking process. An appropriate scrutiny of prevalent words and phrases clearly indicated that administrators draw on two main sensemaking frames. They select sensemaking cues which originate from external (environmental frame - mainly based of legislative and industry cues) and internal (institutional frame - mainly based on organizational and the strategic process).

Second order coding

Second order codes were arrived at through a process of aggregating broad first order cues into much narrower themes. Of the fourteen (14) broad themes which emerged in the first order coding framework, eight (8) of these themes belonged to the data sets of administrators. The list comprised of themes on global sustainability issues, legislations and conventions, accounting and reporting, engagement with strategy, discursive appeals, moral questioning, strategic conflict, and strategic outcomes. These were subsequently classified as the second order codes of administrators.

A further comparison of the data signified that the codes emanated from two main sources – external and internal sources. It was identified that while external sources provided external

sensemaking frameworks (global sustainability issues, legislations and conventions, and accounting and reporting), internal sources provided internal frames (engagement with strategy, discursive appeals, moral questioning, strategic conflict). These codes appear in **table 3.5** as second order codes.

Second order analysis

A critical analysis of the codes subsequently identified strong connections between external sources as well as internal sources. For example, data sets on global issues, and legislations and conventions provided similar accounts. Their underlying concern was based on government and social challenges especially in the form of legislations which they were mandated to adhere to. After a careful analysis, in light of the striking similarities, the data set for global issues was subsumed mainly into the remaining two codes. Thus external frames were further combined into two main codes – legislation and conventions, and accounting and reporting. These subsequently formed the main external sensemaking frames for administrators' sensemaking. Similarly after a careful analysis of internal sources, it was identified that what administrators are most concerned about is to engage in the strategy practice in such as the way that enhances their university's image. The data sets for engagement with strategy, discursive appeals, moral questioning and strategic conflict, were all meant to project a certain perceived and prescribed organizational image. Hence, internal frames were further amalgamated into one main code – organizational image. The data set of codes (strategic outcomes) was however reserved to provide data support of the portion of the thesis focused on strategy creation. The use of this particular data set will be discussed much later.

A further analysis continued, moving between data, emerging patterns (Eisenhart 1989; Maribeau and maguire (2014) until the codes on legislation and conventions, accounting and reporting, and organizational image were developed as the three main sensemaking frameworks from which administrators select and deselect sensemaking cues to make making of the strategic process. These are represented in table 3.5 below as dominant external sensemaking cues that administrators draw on. They also reveal the main motives which drive administrators' day-to-day strategic activities.

Third order coding

The third order coding process began by checking and crosschecking second order codes against existing theories and literatures, especially those relating to the thesis study. Fundamentally, the thesis is positioned in an overall context of strategic management theory. The study is basically interested in investigating sensemaking of strategy in loosely coupled organizations. It therefore specifically employs the theory of strategic management (in the specific context of strategy creation), supported by literatures on sensemaking, sustainable development and loosely coupled systems.

The third order coding process provides the opportunity to link the thesis data sets on administrators to the relevant thesis theory and literatures. This is referred to as a process of theorizing or developing explanatory theories in respect to research data sets (Thagard, 1988; Haig 2005). It involved continually checking and crosschecking as well as comparing and questioning data sets against each other until they are informed and enhanced by each other, and then evaluated and scrutinized against relevant theories (Pierce 1955b; Feilzer 2010; Timmermans and Tavory 2012). The significance of theorizing is to enable research studies to choose from multiple theories, literatures and knowledge to interpret the research data from a multidimensional perspective (Thagard, 1988; Morgan 2007; Feilzer 2010:12). Theorizing therefore essentially grounds or establishes research data and findings in theories and literatures.

In specific reference to theorizing administrators' data set, initial second order codes consist of sensemaking sources in respect of global sustainability issues, legislations and conventions, accounting and reporting, engagement with strategy, discursive appeals, moral questioning, strategic conflict, and strategic outcomes as previously mentioned. These were later classified into external and internal sensemaking frames. While external frames consist of global sustainability issues, legislation and conventions, and accounting and reporting, internal sensemaking frames consist of engagement with strategy, discursive appeals, moral questioning and strategic conflict issues. Generally, the sensemaking frames were checked and crosschecked against the thesis' dominant theory and literature (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:173). This theorizing process was applied to all administrators' sensemaking frames afore mentioned.

Third order analysis

Through further scrutiny and comparison of the coded data set, external sensemaking frames regarding global sustainability issues was directly linked to the literature on sustainable development (or sustainability). This was necessary to provide meaning into what sustainability means, the need for adoption by organizations as well as inherent ambiguities and challenges and in the adoption process. Legislation and conventions, and accounting and reporting sensemaking frames were also checked and crosschecked and linked to literature on sustainability. Firstly, they enhanced understanding of the sustainability concept especially in terms of highlighting government, legislative and accountability influences on the adoption process. On the other hand, internal sensemaking frames based on engagement with strategy, discursive appeals, moral questioning and strategic conflict were mainly linked to the literature on loosely coupled systems. This provided meaning into middle managers (especially administrators) strategic activities in loosely coupled university organization. Although the data sets were mainly linked to the loosely coupled literature, they are also closely link with the strategic management theory as it was necessary to shed light on academics strategic behaviours in respect of the SRS strategy understudy. The data set on strategic conflict and strategy outcomes are directly linked to strategic management theories. It duly positions administrators' strategic activities and provides in-depth understanding into challenges faced in the adoption process as well as types of outcomes which emerge from administrators' sensemaking and practice of sustainability. It must be pointed out that the process of theorizing was not a clear cut process. It involved high levels of iterations before arriving at the most plausible literatures to employ.

The use of multiple literatures and theory provided the possibility to link and position some of the data sets in more than one literature where necessary. The challenge lay in identifying predominant as well as subtle data patterns and then linking them with the appropriate literatures. Additionally, during the theorizing process, the sensemaking literature was employed as the principal literature, for synthesizing and supporting the other literatures and theory. This is particularly important as the primary investigation understudy is about middle managers sensemaking in relation to discussions in other chosen literatures (sustainability, loose coupling and strategy). The choice of employing multiple literatures is imperative in aiding interpretation of the data sets from a multidimensional perspective (Thagard, 1988; Morgan 2007; Feilzer 2010). The outcome of the theorizing process led to a succinct and final regrouping of the data set. This revealed distinct

dominant and subtle sensemaking cues which administrators selected during their sensemaking process.

Fourth order coding and analysis

The fourth order coding process sets the stage for identifying clear simultaneous sensemaking frames. A more in-depth analysis and nuanced exploration of the second order coding framework which was juxtaposed against the relevant theories described above narrowed the codes from eight (8) to five (5) distinct codes belonging to administrators sensemaking data set. They are further grouped into three (3) dominant and two (2) subtle sensemaking frames. The dominant sensemaking framework consists of legislation, accounting and reporting and organizational image. The subtle frameworks on the other hand comprise of two sensemaking frames which include triggers from patterns of coupling and patterns of interdependency. **Table 3.6** represents the final coding and analysis process of identifying administrators’ sensemaking process especially in terms of what shaped their sensemaking process. The dominant and subtle sensemaking frames are employed as the main sources of data in telling the research story on simultaneous sensemaking in particular.

Table 3.6 Administrators’ dominant and subtle sensemaking frames

Dominant sensemaking frames	Subtle sensemaking frames
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legislation 2. Accounting and reporting 3. Organizational Image 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patterns of coupling and 2. Patterns of interdependency

3.7.3 Coding process for academics

Academics coding process is made up of four main levels – first order, second order, third order coding and fourth order coding. The coding process enables the research to distil relevant

information that helps answer the part of the research aim which seeks to explore middle manager (especially academics) sensemaking process.

First order coding

Similar to the administrators coding process, the academics coding process began by selecting from the pool of seventeen (17) general first order codes. Emphasis was placed on identifying primary sensemaking sources from which academics select and deselect dominant cues in their sensemaking attempt.

A cursory look at the phrases and words suggest that academics sources of sensemaking are based on personal frames as compared to administrators external and internal sensemaking sources. First order codes were subsequently synthesized into second order codes as described below.

First order analysis

Academics first order analysis process provides succinct data to answer issues regarding academics sensemaking processes in particular. A cursory look at the emerging themes clearly indicate that academics also draw on two main sensemaking frameworks as pertaining to sensemaking cues internal and external to the organization. Among others, they select internally generated sensemaking cues relating to academic freedom, and externally generated cues relating to the nature of sustainability and academic research drives.

Second order coding

Second order codes are made up of narrower aggregates of first order codes. Out of the total number of the seventeen (17) broad codes which emerged in the basic coding framework, five (5) of these emerged from academics data sets. They consist of themes on academic freedom (The Westland way), new way of thinking, strategy experts, resistance to strategy and strategy outcomes. These thus represent academics second order codes. The first column of **table 3.6** indicates academics second order codes. They form the dominant sensemaking frames which academics draw on in their sensemaking process.

Second order analysis

A sweeping analysis through data comparisons indicated that academics mainly explore sensemaking frames outside the strategic process. This means that unlike administrators, academics selection of sensemaking cues is generally not influenced by cues from the strategic process or from government and legislative influences. Similar to the administrators coding process, a critical analysis of the second order codes reveal strong linkages between the codes. For example, part of the data set on strategy expects was found to be relevant to the discussions on strategy outcomes and therefore relevant portions of strategic experts were subsumed into the strategic outcomes data set. The new code still retained the heading of strategic outcomes. This new data set served as the primary code for analysing and discussing the second thesis interest on strategy creation especially in terms of how unexpected strategy outcomes impact overall strategic processes. On another level, the resistance to strategy code metamorphosed to core business and then later to research work. The underlining issue was in relation to tensions between doing academic work (research) and engaging with organizational strategies. Similarly, the code on new way of thinking also changed to newness of sustainability, as it was realized that issues raised were in reference to debates about the novelty of adopting sustainability strategies in organizations.

At the end of the academic coding process, three main codes (academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work) were employed to unearth academics sensemaking process. What was of essence was that it provided relevant evidence to establish the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking from the academics viewpoint. Another code (strategy outcomes) was used to provide evidence in support of how strategy creation emerges in organizations. Eventually, the four codes (academic freedom, newness of sustainability, research work and strategy outcomes) formed the main sensemaking frames from which academics select their strategic sensemaking cues.

The academics coding process is depicted in **Table 3.7** below.

Table 3.7 Academics' second order sensemaking frameworks

Total aggregate of first order aggregates	Personal sensemaking frames	Social sensemaking frames.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic freedom 2. Newness of strategy 3. Strategy experts 4. Resistance to strategy 5. Strategy engagement outcomes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic freedom 2. Newness of strategy 3. Strategy engagement outcomes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategy experts 2. Resistance to strategy

Third order coding

The academics third order coding process follows the same theoretical process as that of the administrators’ process. Similarly, the theorizing process is adopted and applied in this section. The process involves linking emerged data sets on academics to existing literatures and theories.

As earlier established, academics second order codes comprised of five main sensemaking frames. They consist of themes on academic freedom (The Westland way), new way of thinking, strategy experts, resistance to strategy and strategy outcomes.

Third order analysis

As before, second order codes were checked and crosschecked against the thesis’ dominant theory and literature. In particular, the data set on academic freedom was linked directly with literature on loosely coupled systems. The link is best suited as the idea of higher levels of flexibility for cross-sections of middle managers like academics is most prevalent and engendered in loosely coupled systems. The literature on loosely coupled systems best provides meaning into the practice and implications of academic freedom on strategic processes. Data sets on newness of the sustainability concept and strategy experts were also crosschecked and linked with the literature on sustainability. This first improved understanding of the novelty (or otherwise) of the sustainability concept, as well as ambiguities inherent in organizational adoption of social concepts. Secondly, it exposes issues concerning professional backgrounds of actors engaged in

the practice of sustainability. The data sets on resistance to strategy and strategy outcomes were also consequently linked with strategic management theory, especially in regards to strategy and strategy creation.

Similar to administrators third order coding process, cross-links between theories was also not uncommon. Some data sets were applied to more than one literature or theory. For example, although the data set for academic freedom is mainly position in the literature on loosely coupled systems, parts of it were also applied in the literature for strategy creation. Moreover, as with the administrators process, the process of identifying predominant and subtle data patterns from specific data sets for use in corresponding literatures proved challenging. Furthermore, similar to the administrators coding process, the sensemaking literature was employed as the main theoretical lens for synthesizing and supporting the use of other relevant literatures and theory. As previously stated, the application of sensemaking as the principal literature is of particularly importance to enable the primary investigation of middle managers sensemaking in relation to the issues discussed in other supporting sustainability, loose coupling and strategy literatures. As reiterated, the use of multiple theories if helpful for interpreting research data from a multidimensional perspective (Thagard 1988; Morgan 2007; Feilzer 2010).

Fourth order coding

Similar to administrators third order coding framework, the third order coding process for academics equally identifies sensemaking triggers which represent academics simultaneous sensemaking triggers. The five (5) main codes from the second order coding framework are critically analysed and configured in line with the discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process. They are further grouped into three (3) dominant and two (2) subtle sensemaking frames. The dominant sensemaking framework consists of academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work. Similar to the administrative framework, academics subtle sensemaking frameworks also comprise of two sensemaking frames which include triggers from patterns of coupling and patterns of interdependency.

Fourth order analysis

Of the main, academics dominant and subtle sensemaking frames influenced and consequently shaped their sensemaking process. The five sensemaking triggers are subsequently classified as the third order codes of academics and referred to as academics dominant sensemaking frames. Dominant and subtle sensemaking frames are employed as the main sources of data in telling the research story on simultaneous sensemaking in particular. They are used to describe and explain the thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. The second part of the thesis framework in **Figure 3.1 under section 3.8**, further demonstrates how academic dominant sensemaking frames fit into the overall thesis aim of exploring links between middle managers sensemaking and strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations.

The combination of these dominant and subtle sensemaking frames as presented in **Table 3.8** is what predominantly influenced and consequently shaped academics sensemaking process. The five sensemaking triggers are subsequently classified as the third order codes of academics and referred to as academics dominant sensemaking frames.

Table 3.8 Academics’ dominant and subtle sensemaking frameworks

Dominant sensemaking frames	Subtle sensemaking frames
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic freedom 2. Newness of Sustainability 3. Research work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patterns of coupling and 2. Patterns of interdependency

Altogether, the administrators and academics sensemaking coding processes resulted in a total of six (6) dominant sensemaking frames and four (4) subtle sensemaking frames. Specifically, the dominant frames consist of a set of three administrators’ sensemaking frames (legislative, accounting and reporting and organizational image), and a set of three academics sensemaking frames (academic freedom, newness in sustainability and research work). It is the thesis position that the nature of the six dominant sensemaking frames bare close resembles to examples which emanate from sources of institutional pressure. The thesis therefore employs DiMaggio and

Powell's institutional isomorphism framework to draw links between sensemaking and institutional theory.

3.7.4 Coding process for senior managers

Senior managers coding process followed in similar fashion as that of administrators and academics. This consists of first order, second order and third order coding levels. Unlike the earlier two processes described above, this process provides direct information pertaining to the thesis interest in strategic outcomes and strategy creation. Interviews with senior managers were actually only necessitated on account of the thesis surprise discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking. Basically, the discovery points to the fact that academics sensemaking process generally led to unexpected strategy outcomes. This generated the interest to examine the nature and characteristics of unexpected strategic outcomes. In addition, it became imperative to investigate how organizations, especially senior managers respond to unexpected strategy outcomes. The aim was to investigate what organizations and senior managers do with unexpected strategic outcomes especially in light of that particular strategic process.

This curious interest subsequently led to investigating the nature of strategy creation in organizations. This is meant to provide some depth of understanding into the dynamics of how strategies actually develop overtime in organizations. The interest also further led to investigations into not only types of organizational strategies employed during the process of integrating unexpected strategy outcomes in the overall strategic process, but more importantly to explore the motives behind or why organizations employ particular integration strategies.

First order coding

The process of senior managers first order coding is a replica of administrators and academics and therefore will not be discussed in much depth. It must be mentioned however that interviews with senior managers were slightly different from that with middle managers. Unlike middle managers interviews which were generally based on a questions and answers bases, interviews with senior managers on the other hand mainly involves narratives. Senior managers were simply allowed to share their perspectives without much interruption.

First order analysis

Unlike middle managers interviews which focused on issues around all the literatures employed (sensemaking, sustainability, loosely coupled systems and strategy), most of the senior managers narratives focused on issues around strategy creation in particular. The line by line examination of their data eventually led to broad statements and prevailing phrases which described two main patterns. The patterns consist of organizational integration strategies and senior managers' perception of the strategic process. The data set of integration studies provided insight into three specific integration studies employed senior managers in respect of unexpected outcomes. On the other hand, data sets on managers' perception reveal not only how managers perceive the strategy but more importantly, it explains why they adopt the integration strategies they do, primarily based on their perception of the strategy.

Second order coding and analysis

Second order codes reflect narrower aggregates of first order codes. The two patterns provide distinct second order codes. On one hand, broad statements on the organizational integration strategy unearthed three main integration strategies. These consist of subsume integration strategy, support integration strategy and standalone integration strategy. This understanding is revelational to strategy creation processes in loosely coupled organizations in particular. Specifically, it describes how unexpected sustainability initiatives become part of the overall SRS strategy. The integration of unexpected initiatives into an existing strategy changes the strategic process completely. The strategic process took on a different nature altogether. The existing strategy is therefore recreated. A new strategy emerges. It is this process of (re)creating strategy that the thesis is particularly interested in.

On the other hand, the broad statements describing senior managers perception of the strategic process reveals that they perceive the strategy as a polymath approach to strategy. The theme polymath approach is therefore used to represent the second order code. This is further unpacked to reveal three different analogies (broad journey, super tanker and full moon) which are employed by senior managers to support the description of the polymath approach theme. The analogies are

not considered as individual codes. This is due to the fact they have very little meaning on their own. They gain their significance when discussed together in light of the bigger polymath approach theme. Of most significance, discussions on the polymath approached provide understanding into why senior managers adopt the three integration strategies mentioned above. This insight is imperative to the thesis choice of abductive research strategy. It provides answers to the research question on why organizations respond to unexpected outcomes in the manner in which they do.

Table 3.9 below diagrammatically depicts senior managers’ data coding process.

Table 3.9 Senior managers’ order codes

First order doing	Second order coding	Theorizing coding.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broad statements on senior managers perception of unexpected strategic outcomes 2. Broad statements on organizational integration strategies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The polymath approach 2. Subsume integration strategy 3. Support integration strategy 4. Standalone integration strategy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sensemaking literature 2. Strategic management theory

Third order coding and analysis

As is typical of third order coding processes described so far, the senior managers third order coding process is also a theorizing process. The theorizing process links the four emerged second codes above with corresponding literatures.

As earlier discussed, the data set from senior managers was mainly based on narratives around strategy. While the polymath approach code focus on senior managers perception of the strategy, the three integration strategies describe organizations reactions to unexpected strategies. As such, it was only appropriate to situate senior managers second order codes in the strategic management theory especially aspects which relate to strategic response and strategy creation.

Without the narratives from senior managers, thesis would have likely simply focused on describing the nature and characteristics of unexpected strategy outcomes without further exploration into the effect of unexpected strategic outcomes on existing strategic processes. The thesis took the position that for a complete study to be effected there is the need to explore links between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled systems. The outcome of the theorizing process led to a conclusion on senior managers' data set.

Fourth order coding and Analysis

Unlike administrators and academics theorizing process which further led to succinct and final regrouping of the data sets, the senior managers theorizing process simply confirmed existing codes from the third level data coding process. The process confirmed the three integration strategies that had been established. Essentially, it established that organizations can employ subsume, support and standalone integration strategies in the process of incorporating unexpected strategy outcomes into existing strategic processes.

Summary

The section on coding described above illustrates in much depth the coding process adopted by the thesis. It began by providing a basic framework which is employed to describe the general coding pattern of the thesis. The framework delineates three different levels of coding which consists of first order, second order, third order codes and fourth. First and second order codes provide broad statements and prevailing themes necessary to rearrange and transform organizational actors accounts of their strategic actions into more meaningful accounts by regrouping the thematically. Third order codes however further transform first and second order codes from simple thematic accounts to theoretical account by juxtaposing codes and situating them in relevant theories. The third coding level is thus basically a process of theorizing in which first and second level codes are linked with the thesis chosen literatures and theory on sensemaking, sustainability, strategy and loosely coupled systems. Advancing from the process of theorizing, the fourth coding level presents evidence for the existence of autonomous strategy

outcomes. In particular the coding and analysis process is focused on integration strategies necessary for incorporating unexpected outcomes into existing strategic process.

Chapter summary on methodology

Overall, the chapter has discussed three main aspect of the research methods employed. The first section discussed the adopted research strategy as well as its ontological and epistemological positions. What is of most importance in this section is the discussion on the thesis choice of an abductive research strategy. The choice of abductive research was made over inductive and deductive strategies due to its ability to facilitate the study of surprise discoveries or new events as they occur. The thesis surprise discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking therefore meant that the strategy best suited to undertake the study is an abductive strategy. Additionally, it was essential to test the surprise discovery in the light of existing theories by evaluating and scrutinizing the discovery against relevant theories. Theorizing was enabled through the adoption of multiple literatures and theory. Altogether, the thesis employed the use of sensemaking, loosely coupled and sustainability literatures as well as the strategic management theory. This process should result in developing explanatory theories which only enabled by the choice of an abductive research strategy. Furthermore, the outcomes of abductive research are linked to the idea of plausibility or likelihood of an event occurring as sensemaking also does. The sensemaking process and the abductive study do not engage in accurate or right outcomes and therefore well suited for studies such as this.

The second part of the chapter discusses in depth the mixed method approach to data collection which was employed. This approach was useful in acquiring a multi-lens perspective of event understudy. To explore links between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations. The use of multiple data sources enabled a process of triangulating the data (Hartley, 2004; Yin, 1994), as such enhancing data trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Data triangulation also allowed the researcher to track changes in the strategic process over time. These changes resulted from different interpretations voiced by administrators, academics and senior managers through various communicative media, such as meetings, emails and written responses.

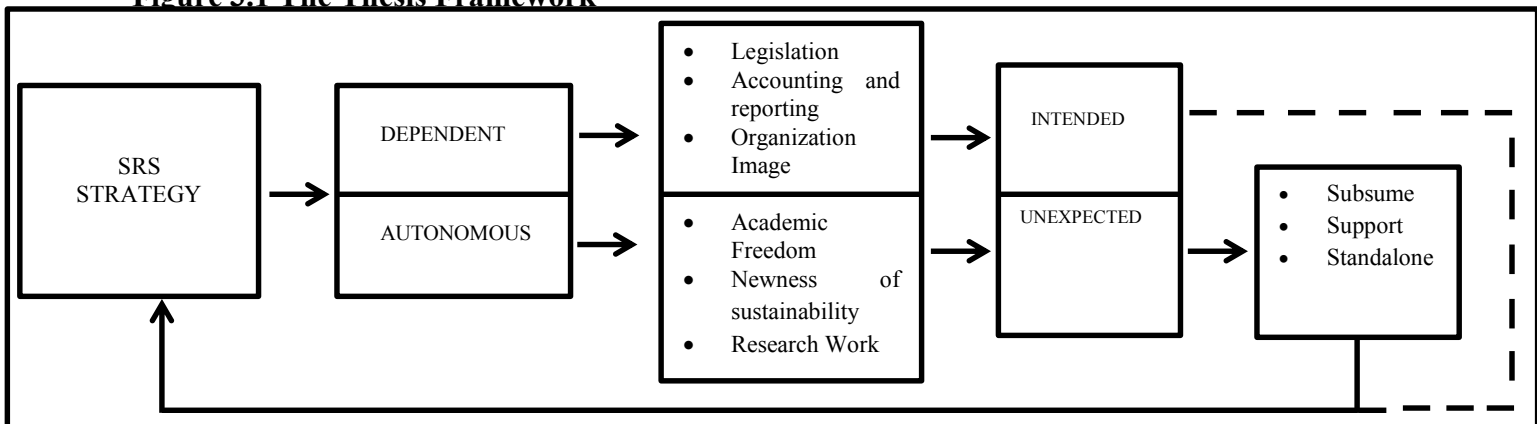
The final part of the chapter presents the coding and analysis process of the thesis overall data set. It presents a four level basic framework which describes in much depth how broad accounts and narratives from interviewees are coded. They further underwent a theorizing process which developed explanatory theories regarding middle managers sensemaking of strategy, unexpected strategy outcomes and strategy creations, especially in response to organizational response to unexpected strategies. The basic framework is subsequently adopted, modified where necessary and applied to administrators, academics and senior managers' individual coding process.

Overall, this chapter on methodology has addressed the thesis methodological aims as far as it has addressed issues of research strategy, data collecting methods and coding process. The process is needful in exploring existing links between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled systems.

3.8 THE THESIS FRAMEWORK

Based on the rich coding process, a framework was constructed to depict the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process.

Figure 3.1 The Thesis Framework



The framework consists of three main parts. The first part is captured in the first box which focuses on the strategy under discussion. It highlights the University's SRS strategy as the strategy that administrators and academics attempt to make sense of and engage with to enable the organization

meet its sustainability targets. Administrators and academics draw their sensemaking from triggers from dominant cues internal and external to the SRS strategy.

The second part of the framework is captured in the second and third boxes. The coding process clearly indicates that administrators draw on dominant sensemaking triggers that are dependent on or are mainly internal to the SRS strategy. These mainly consist of triggers emanating from issues regarding legislation, accounting and reporting, and organization image. On the other hand, academics coding process shows that they select dominant sensemaking triggers external or autonomous to the SRS strategy. Academics autonomous sensemaking triggers are derived from issues concerned with academic freedom, newness of sustainability, and research work.

The final two boxes represent the coding and analysis section which specify that on one hand dependent sensemaking triggers and the dependent sensemaking process leads to intended strategy outcomes. On the other hand, it also shows that autonomous triggers and autonomous sensemaking process leads to unintended strategy outcomes. Following on from the concept of intended and unintended outcomes, the final box is a shoot off from the unintended box. It represents the main types of integration strategies that organizations select in response to how senior managers in particular react to and what they do with unintended sensemaking outcomes. The arrows around the boxes depict how intended and unintended strategies become integrated into the existing SRS strategy. This idea is important to depicting how strategies emerge in organizations.

Overall in a first part, the framework tells the story of middle managers sensemaking of a University's SRS strategy in terms of administrators' selection of three dominant dependent sensemaking triggers as well as academics selection of three dominant autonomous sensemaking triggers. The subsequent story is told of how autonomous sensemaking in particular results in unexpected outcomes and finally, how organizations react to such outcomes in light of the existing SRS strategy.

Chapter 4 SIMULTANEOUS SENSEMAKING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the first of three chapters which presents the thesis findings. Together, the chapters examine links between middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process and strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations. They identify and describe the impact of middle managers nature of work on their sensemaking processes as well as its effect on organizational strategic processes.

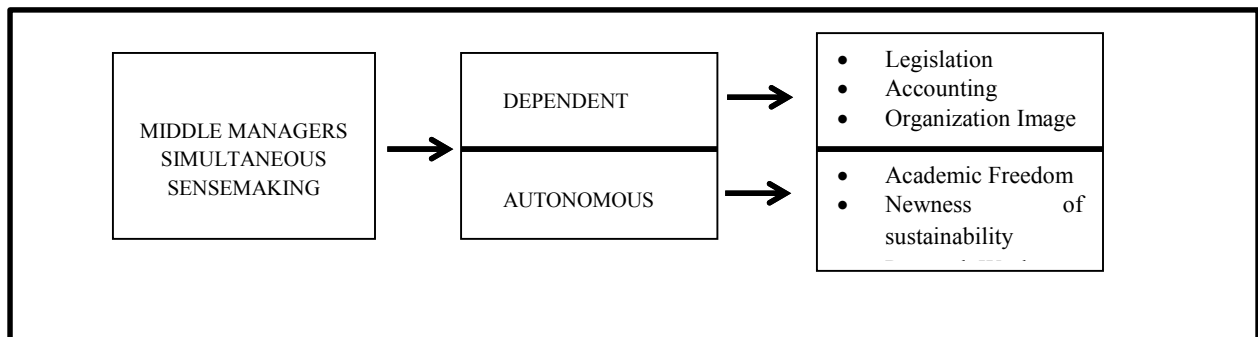
The aim of this chapter in particular is to describe the thesis' discovery of administrators 'dependent sensemaking process' and academics 'autonomous sensemaking process'. Dependent and autonomous sensemaking processes occur simultaneously while administrators and academics attempt to make sense of their University's social responsibility and sustainability (SRS) strategic process. The chapter therefore unpacks rich narratives provided by administrators and academics in their attempt to describe how they draw on distinct sensemaking frameworks and select from a myriad of sensemaking cues to enable them understand, interpret and engage with the SRS strategy.

The chapter unravels the thesis overarching aim of exploring middle managers sensemaking of strategy in loosely coupled organizations. This is imperative because it provides rich evidence in support of the thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process in universities. The simultaneous sensemaking process is established primarily by taking into account clear distinctions and classifications between the nature of work and strategic roles of midlevel administrators and academic, and how their strategic work affect their understanding and practice of strategy. It establishes that in spite of its classification as a group of middle managers, administrators and academics however adopt different types of sensemaking processes in line with their distinct managerial roles. In essence, the nature of (administrative and academic) strategic work informs and shapes sustainability sensemaking and engagement.

Figure 4.1 below is a cross section of the main thesis framework as presented in **Figure 3.1** in chapter three. It tells the first part of the thesis story by identifying the two main types of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking which are linked to the corresponding dominant sensemaking frames which administrators and academics respectively select.

The first part of the diagram represents the primary subject under investigation. This is embodied in the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking. It represents the fact that middle manager administrators and academics are engaged in a simultaneous sensemaking process in respect of their organizations' SRS strategy. The second part of the diagram, further unpacks the process of simultaneous sensemaking. It illustrates that simultaneous sensemaking comprises dependent sensemaking and autonomous sensemaking processes. The terms dependent and autonomous sensemaking processes are explained in much depth below under sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 respectively. A further unpacking of dependent and autonomous sensemaking process in the final section of the diagram indicates that the dependent sensemaking process draws of three dominant sensemaking triggers which comprise legislation, accounting and organization image. On the other hand, the autonomous sensemaking process draws on three dominant sensemaking triggers based on academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work.

Figure 4.1 Cross section of thesis framework



4.2. EMPLOYING SENSEMAKING TERMS

The discussions in this chapter are predominantly positioned in the sensemaking literature. Throughout the thesis, the term sensemaking is employed to describe a process of scanning, selecting and interpreting of sensemaking cues drawn from organizational, personal, social and other filters or frameworks to make sense of an occurring event or situation (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick 1993, 1995; Thomas et.al; 1993), such as the SRS strategic process. The thesis employs the expression 'sensemaking framework' or 'sensemaking frames' to describe broad mental and physical triggers which affect and influence how administrators and academics notice,

think of and engage with the SRS strategic process. Administrators and academics are faced with a myriad of sustainability sensemaking frames in their day-to-day strategic activities. These sustainability sensemaking frames are triggers which essentially emerge out of sustainability related issues and occurrences in and out of their organization. Triggers and frames can be internal or external of a given occurrence or event (Weick 1993). They can also be dominant and explicit as well as subtle and less explicit (Weick 1995). These triggers consciously and unconsciously influence administrators and academics thoughts and practice of sustainability in the organization.

The expression ‘sensemaking cues’ is also used to describe narrower mental and physical signals or pointers which administrators and academics extract from broad sensemaking frameworks to make sense of the strategic process. Sensemaking cues may be conscious and unconscious to individual’s knowledge frame of occurrences (Cranmer et.al 2006; Morsing and Schultzn 2006) such as the strategic process.

The term sensemaking process is generally employed to describe a process which begins as a cognitive process of selection and interpreting of cues and ends in a process of taking action (physical or verbal) regarding selected cues (Pfeffer 2005; Moran and Ghoshal 1996; Weick et.al 2005). In the action process, selected cues are interpreted to create meaning and then externalized into concrete actions (Cramer et. al 2004). Individuals (like administrators and academics) select and deselect sensemaking cues based on influencing factors which include organizational objectives and expectations, organizational challenges, organizational traditions as well their personal interests (Weick 1993).

4.2.1 Dependent sensemaking process

The thesis provides evidence which indicates that based on the nature of their work, administrators in particular select sensemaking cues based on triggers they encounter from the strategic process. Their understanding and engagement with the SRS strategic process is largely informed by organizational triggers and sensemaking frames. Their sensemaking process of the SRS strategy is therefore described as internal or dependent on cues derived from triggers that emanate from the

strategic process. The thesis identifies and describes three such sensemaking frames which influence administrators' sensemaking process. As presented in **Figure 4.1** above, the frames are based on influences from legislations, accounting and reporting, and organizational image. These form the dominant sensemaking frameworks from which administrators' dependent sensemaking process can be examined. The thesis employs the term dominant sensemaking frames to describe primary, prevailing or clearly noticeable triggers or frames which influence administrators and academics sensemaking processes. The thesis findings clearly indicates that, the three sensemaking frames mentioned above, are the dominant sensemaking frames which supports the thesis idea of dependent sensemaking process. The thesis subsequently refers to this process of selecting dominant frame as administrators' dependent sensemaking process. The first part of this chapter is thus focused on exploring administrators' dependent sensemaking process in much depth.

4.2.2 Autonomous sensemaking process

On the other hand evidence is provided to support the discovery of academics autonomous sensemaking process. It indicates that academics generally select sensemaking cues from triggers and frames they encounter outside of the strategic process. The frames which influence their sensemaking of the strategic process tend to be external to the SRS strategy. They generally emanate from sources indirectly linked or autonomous of the SRS strategy. The thesis describes this selection process as academics autonomous sensemaking process. The thesis explores and describes the three dominant autonomous sensemaking frames identified and mentioned in **Figure 4.1** above. These are based on influences from academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work. The second part of this chapter thus explores academics autonomous sensemaking process in much depth.

Altogether, the objective of unraveling the evidence of administrators dependent and academics autonomous sensemaking is fundamentally in support of the primary contribution that the thesis makes to the sensemaking literature. The contribution relates to the thesis discovery of the idea that middle managers engage in simultaneous sensemaking process in loosely coupled organizations, as influenced by the nature of their strategic work.

4.2.3 Employing DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) framework on institutional isomorphism

The thesis employs DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) framework on institutional isomorphism to explain and analyse the findings on simultaneous sensemaking process. Fundamentally, the framework on institutional isomorphism is concerned with investigating environmental pressures and forces which influence structure, characteristics and behaviour of institutions (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). The underlining idea of isomorphism is that conformity to institutional norms creates structural similarities among organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 1987; Zucker 1987; Dacin 1997; Scott 2008). The framework describes three particular institutional pressures made up of coercive, mimetic and normative pressures. Coercive pressures arise from legal, regulatory and formal pressures. Mimetic pressures emanate from standards and responses to institutional uncertainties. Normative pressures on the other hand stem from moral obligations and professionalism.

The thesis employs the institutional framework to explain the findings of the six dominant sensemaking frames. Basically, as represented in **Figure 3.1** in chapter three, the six dominant sensemaking frames are considered as specific examples of coercive, mimetic and normative pressures in loosely coupled institutions. The aim is to establish links between the sensemaking and institutional theories. The adoption of the DiMaggio and Powell (1983) framework in relation to middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes is thus discussed in the final part of this chapter.

On the whole, the chapter is divided into three main parts. Part one begins by presenting findings which demonstrates administrators' dependent sensemaking process with particular reference to the three dominant sensemaking frames which administrators select. Similarly, in part two, the findings illustrates academics autonomous sensemaking process with particular reference to the three dominant sensemaking frames they select. In the third and final part, the DiMaggio and Powell's framework on institutional isomorphism is employed to explain the findings of the six dominant sensemaking frames. The aim is to illustrate links between middle managers sensemaking process and institutional theory.

PART ONE - DEPENDENT SENSEMAKING PROCESS

As mentioned above, this first part of the chapter focuses on administrator's dependent sensemaking process. It presents three main sensemaking triggers which influence administrator's selection of sensemaking frames. They comprise of legislation, accounting and reporting, and organizational image sensemaking triggers. These triggers generally emanate internally from the existing strategic process. They make up the dominant sensemaking frameworks from which administrators' dependent sensemaking process can be examined. The following part of the chapter therefore describes the three dominant sensemaking frames in much depth.

4.3 LEGISLATION

In 2005 the UK government launched a new sustainable development strategy dubbed, 'securing the Future: delivering UK sustainable development strategy'¹. The strategy stresses on the role of the education system, such that schools, colleges, and universities in raising awareness among students and providing them with needed skills to put sustainable development into practice. Core to the strategy is a framework that sets out a common goal for sustainable development engagement across the UK. The aim of the framework is to:

“To enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations (p: 10).

With respect to Universities in particular, fundamental to UK's sustainable development strategies is the challenge to develop sustainability literacy as a 'core competence' among graduates. Based on the UK strategy, the Scottish Government subsequently adopted its own sustainable development strategy. The overall purpose is to focus government and public services resources on creating a more successful country, through reconciling the three pillars of sustainability: sustainable economic growth, environmental and social equity.

This is to be achieved through the collective effort of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors in Scotland. Scotland's history has been dotted with sustainable development engagement since late 1990's. The first policy was accepted in 1999 after the first Scottish government (The Scottish Executive) was established. Subsequent policies include Waste, Energy and Travel

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/...data/.../pb10589-securing-the-future-050307>.

(2002), Choosing our Future (2005), which was written in conjunction with the UK shared framework for sustainable development, Climate Change Bill (2007) and Climate Change (Scotland) Act (2009). Since then there has been successions of initiatives within the EU, UK and Scotland to promote engagement and embedding of sustainable development in Scottish Universities. This has been enhanced by the establishment of the UN Decade long Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project. Scotland subsequently adopted its own version of ESD in 2013, dubbed ‘Learning for Sustainability (Lfs).

Similar to the UK framework, embedded in Scotland’s sustainable development strategy is the challenge to develop sustainability literacy as a core competence among graduates. By this, Scottish higher education institutions (HEI) are expected to adopt good sustainable development practices into their strategic plans to enhance institutional teaching and curriculum development. Sustainable development practices are to be continuously engaged with and embedded in academic disciplines and also extended to the wider community through supporting research that builds sustainable technologies for the benefit of the larger society.

Scottish universities are therefore expected to adopt good sustainable development practices into their organizational strategic plans to enhance institutional teaching and curriculum development. Their practices must generally be aligned with government’s policies and legislations to meet both national and organizational goals and achievements.

In line with this objective, it is Westland University’s aim to:

“Make a significant, sustainable and socially responsible contribution to Scotland, the UK and the world, promoting health and economic and cultural wellbeing”. (SRS Strategy Review Update October 2014:3).

Taking a good look at the above mentioned strategic documents in particular, it is abundantly clear that legislative triggers are the starting point for sensemaking of sustainable development practice in Scottish public sector organizations. Thus the first attempt of administrators in Westland University to understand the SRS strategy is by drawing their first mental frames from legislations that govern sustainable development and sustainability. Issues regarding legislations therefore

provide primary triggers that describe the dependent sensemaking process of administrators in terms of their understanding, interpretation, negotiations and engagement with the University's SRS strategy. Embedded in legislations are issues concerning energy consumption, climate control, global warming, carbon emission, recycling, water and sanitation, total wellbeing of the planet and its people. These topical issues serve as first trigger points which influence administrators' thoughts of the SRS strategy and sustainable development practices in general. Administrators therefore draw sensemaking cues from appropriate legislations which directly impact their strategic work to enable them arrive at an understanding of what they think the University's sustainability goals are, and to make sense of what they think the University expects of them.

The Talloires Declaration (1990) is the primary legislation that drives universities engagements in sustainable development. The declaration defines the mode of sustainable engagement for universities worldwide. It encourages universities to engage in policy formation, environmental development, train environmentally literate graduate and responsible citizens, establish programs of resource conservation, recycling, and waste reduction. Westland University incorporates some of these issues in its sustainability strategy. For example, legislations based on energy and carbon emission, waste and recycling have been incorporated into the strategy. These form dominant triggers which guide administrators understanding and engagement with the SRS strategy.

On a national level, the UK (2005), and Scottish (2005), strategies on sustainable development predominantly drive UK and Scottish Universities sustainable development and sustainability agenda. These strategies are supported by other sustainable development policies relating to Waste, Energy and Travel (2002), choosing our Future (2005), Climate Change Bill (2007) and Climate Change (Scotland) Act (2009). National sustainable development strategies and policies are a rich source from which administrators draw sensemaking cues of the SRS strategy.

Like the Talloires Declaration (1990), the UK and Scottish legislations also tend to emphasise environmental and economic benefits of sustainability. For example, to achieve its low carbon economy agenda of a 30 percent carbon reduction by 2020, the Scottish government is collaborating with public services including higher education institutions (HEI) to support this agenda. Clear targets are set for universities as part of their contribution. Failure to comply to set

targets results in penalties for individual universities. This point is clearly explained by an SRS executive member:

“Government initiatives are set by the UK and Scottish parliament such as the climate action plan. There are penalties for institutions that do not meet objectives”.

As clearly stated in the University’s sustainability documents:

The University accepts the legal and moral responsibility to take effective action on climate change. Public bodies in Scotland are bound by the Climate Change Public Bodies Duties set in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009². (Sustainability Reporting February 2014

Universities subsequently set individual sustainable development targets based on national legislative requirements. Achieving legislative objectives therefore influence and shape administrators selection of sensemaking frames.

The view point above is shared by an environmental coordinator of the University’s student association:

“We act based on legislation. Government targets influence our policies and drive. I would say what we do is sixty to seventy percent legislation lobbying and thirty to forty percent actually doing sustainability”.

The assertion that sustainability practices in the University are primarily driven by legislation was reiterated almost unanimously in the interviews with administrators in particular:

“The SRS strategy is driven by legislation, interested parties and stakeholders”. (A staff of the Procurement Department)

“In relation to politics, government drives the overall sustainability strategy and now has a revised sustainable procurement strategy”. (A staff of the Procurement Department)

² www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/climatechange/howyoucanhelp/publicbodies/publicsector

“It is driven by legislation, student perception of a social university, prestige and competition”. (A staff of the IAD Department and a member of the SEAG committee)

“Outcomes (sustainability outcomes) are also motivated by legislation”

It is further advocated that the concept of SRS should be:

“Adopted, adapted or developed from initiatives to which the University has made a commitment, such as the Universitas 21, International Sustainable Campus Network, international standards and national guidance etc”. (SRS Strategy Review Update October 2014:3)

Some explained that the reason why the SRS agenda has a strong institutional backing is because stakeholders, legislators, lobbyist and interested parties believe that sustainability is ‘good for the University’. In the University context therefore, administrators’ select legislative triggers as their predominant sensemaking cues, while deselecting non-legislative or more subtle sensemaking cues.

In spite of the fact that administrators predominantly select legal sensemaking cues, a general observation based on interviews in particular also points to the fact that most administrators either questioned or disapproved of the idea of selecting cues underpinned by legal compliance. They disapprove of the fact that their everyday sustainability activities are triggered by legislative goals. The bases of their disapproval can be traced to what they perceive as a dampening of the independence and freedom in university work and existence. They argue that legal compliance is a hindrance to independent engagement of the strategic process. They perceive the strategic process as an extra demand from government and external stakeholders rather than an organizational practice to be freely engaged in.

The SRS department is thus saddled with the challenge of influencing administrator’s sensemaking process to ensure that the university meets its national and legal obligations. Organizations and its members are therefore typically engaged in processes of influencing each other to achieve intended organizational outcomes. The sensemaking literature describes the process of influencing other

people's sensemaking processes as sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). Organizational sensegiving in particular involves attempts to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991: 442).

To influence its organizational members' sensemaking process, the University, led by the SRS department created distinct mental frames to influence their selection and interpretation of sensemaking cues. The following section discusses two sensegiving strategies employed in the SRS strategic process.

4.3.1 Organizational Sensegiving

Organizational sensegiving involves attempts by individuals and groups to influence how other organizational members perceive and understand their organizations and organizational activities (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991, Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). The aim is to influence actors' behavior positively in favor of set organizational objectives and goals. The University employs two main sensegiving strategies. The strategies involved incorporating legislative cues into the overall university strategic plan, and establishing an SRS department.

Sensegiving through the overall university strategic plan

The first sensegiving strategy describes the process of incorporating sustainable development as a clear legislative objective in the University's overall strategic plan. To help meet legislative targets in particular, the University has incorporated the concept into its overall Strategic Plan as one of six main strategic themes. The theme was first incorporated in the strategic plan in the year 2010. It has since been revised in its current edition (2012-2016) strategic plan. The SRS strategy is the highest organization document which aims at gaining official recognition and widespread support for the strategy. At the center of the Strategic Plan is the University's set targets on carbon emissions. These targets are clear, succinct and easy to understand in terms of desired outcomes sought. An accommodations manager and a coordinator for student affairs lay emphasis on the set targets respectively:

“The university’s climate action plan has to do with reducing carbon emission by 29 percent by the year 2020”.

“The University has set a target to reduce carbon emission by 40 percent by 2020”.

Achieving carbon reduction goals is therefore a fundamental sensemaking trigger employed by strategist and senior management to influence administrators’ sensemaking and practice of sustainability. Hence the document serves as the starting point for verbal and nonverbal conversations, negotiations and construction of an intersubjective sense of shared meanings of the strategic process. Most administrators admit that their selection and interpretation of sensemaking cues is drawn chiefly from triggers for carbon emission reduction. Some actually confessed that they understand the Strategic Plan simply in terms of carbon emission. This is supported by the fact that most sustainability activities set by heads of departments responsible for accommodation, waste management and procurement for example can be traced to meeting legislative targets on carbon emission. In spite of the seeming shared understanding and sensemaking, most administrators however expressed concerns about the set targets because they perceive the target as too high.

Sensegiving through SRS department

The second sensegiving strategy the University employed in influencing its members sensemaking process was to set up an SRS department responsible solely for promoting and coordinating sustainability activities across the University. The department employs key administrators to help drive the strategic process. The department’s primary mandate is to formulate and implement the SRS agenda based on the tenets outlined in the overall strategic plan. The first SRS strategy (2010-2020) consists of documents and processes relating to issues on governance processes, action planning, performance management and accounting and reporting. In particular, the strategy delineates the University’s climate change and fair-trade agendas in-depth.

Since its inception, the department has been actively engaged in promoting the SRS activities from the University’s viewpoint. As stated in the SRS Strategy Review Update (October 2014:4), the SRS department engages with the SRS on two levels. On a first level the University is aware that

SRS notions and implementation are contested. On a second level, it wishes to address certain issues, and to change the way certain things are done based on its own judgements and also informed by the most thorough current understanding.

The SRS coordinator also explains that:

“Part of my role is to influence and encourage understanding of things we (the University) are likely to be bound by”.

The department therefore engages in constant consultations and negotiations with organizational stakeholders with a primary aim of influencing their sensemaking and practice of the strategic process. Their aim is to ensure that organizational members are actively engaged in sustainability practices in ways that enable achieving set institutional (especially legislative) targets. This is done primarily by influencing members’ sustainability activities through the support they provide. Members of the department outlined some the support provided by them:

“The role of the SRS team is to nurture and provide support and succor for the initiatives”.
(A staff of the SRS department)

“The vision for this new department is not to tell people how to do things but to support and provide coherence of how things are done”. (SRS Programme Manager)

“We are moving from the practical stuff to providing support”. (SRS Programme Manager)

The more supportive the department is of organizational members’ day-to-day sustainability activities, the more it is able to influence their sensemaking process and practice of the strategy. The Strategic plan and SRS departments are tangible frames that provide strong visible cues from which administrators are influenced to draw sensemaking cues for their understanding and engagement of the strategic process. Most administrators welcome the presence and support of the department. They actively look to the department for support in the sustainability activities they are engaged in. Their selection process of sensegiving cues is high and usually leads to achieving expected organizational outcomes.

Further observations from interviews and SRS Strategy Review Update, however indicated that a smaller group of administrators do not particularly embrace the presence and perceived interference of the department. They viewed the SRS department's efforts as intrusive to their sensemaking and engagement process. This was especially so because they perceive the department as providing support mainly on the bases of influencing legislative compliance. Their selection process of legislative sensemaking cues as therefore observed to be lower.

The SRS coordinator however argues that against such beliefs and says:

“We are trying not to use this (the SRS strategy) as a political tool. We recognize that we have social responsibilities and we must be seen to be doing”.

This assertion is supported by statements in some specific SRS documents arguing that the SRS strategy is framed as less instruments and more social:

“Not just about benefitting the University but benefiting society, including the local, regional and global community”. (SRS Strategy Review Update October 2014:4).

Essentially, the SRS strategy provides the University the opportunity to clarify its role with civil society. (SRS Strategy Review Update October 2014:4).

The idea of sensemaking and sensegiving from a predominantly legislative compliance point of view is however not without its challenges. The findings just discussed present a couple of complexities. It exposes conflicts in achieving external and internal goals, as well as challenges regarding lack of organizational buy-in for the SRS strategy. These complexities are discussed below.

4.3.2 Complexities of legislations

The thesis refers to the complexities as challenges inherent in selecting sensemaking cues primarily based on legislative triggers. The section below discusses two main complexities: disconnect between legislative and University goals, and lack of organizational buy-in.

First complexity

Firstly, administrators are concerned about the seeming over reliance on meeting legislative targets. Generally, most administrators argue that the University is forced to take on responsibilities beyond its core objectives. They perceive that there are disconnects between achieving legislative goals and achieving the University's core sustainability goals. Two administrators clearly make this point:

“There is a tension between complying with the law versus engaging with sustainability. The laws become our drivers and targets”. (A staff of the Estates Department)

“Funding councils influence organizational outcomes. But some of these are not sustainability inspired. The outcomes are motivated by legislation”. (A staff of the Transport and Parking Department)

The challenge of reconciling legislative demands with organizational capabilities is therefore at the forefront of institutional discussions and debates. Some administrators also expressed further challenges in incorporating sustainability practices in their day-to-day activities. It was pointed out that their struggles were in the form of ongoing conflicts between drawings on legislative cues versus drawing on non-legislative. This point was made by a member of the SRS team:

“The university is signed up to various public commitments such as the Universitas 21 agenda but the challenge is that we are doing the social part of the sustainability agenda”. (A staff of the Procurement Department)

Part of this social sustainability challenge was attributed to a lack of proper research prior to the adoption of the strategy. A small number of interviewees were of the view that although most of the University's policies are embedded and supported by extensive research, the SRS strategy was not supported by rigorous consultative academic research. They argued that strategists did not pay particular attention to the fact that implementation of social strategies in universities must be supported by research. A staff of the procurement department argues that:

“The challenge is to get policy makers to see that what they ask of us is not necessarily supported by research or information”.

The complexity mainly lies in the domain of actors’ sensemaking of what they think should drive the strategy process and what they perceive to be driving the practice. The researcher observed during hours of ongoing strategic meetings such as procurement strategic meetings and away day meetings that some administrators basically preferred to draw their sensemaking from non-legislative cues. They were particularly interested in environmental and social triggers than they were in legislative triggers. As a result, some actors questioned government’s interference as well as the role of politics in sustainability practices in organizations. To them, government interference raises the questions of whether universities actually act sustainably or whether they simply ‘tick boxes’ through legislative compliance. Most administrators are of the view that ordinarily, legislation should not be the main driver of the strategic process.

However, in spite of the inherent complexities, some administrators believe that the best way to enhance sensemaking and mobilize participation for the practice of social concepts in universities is through legislative triggers. They argue that the only way people will actively engage with the strategic process is if they were mandated by law. Two administrators expressed this in their comments:

“It is difficult when end users are not interested in change. And therefore this is when it has to be backed by legislation for change to occur”. (A staff of the Accommodations Department)

“Some are interested in the agenda and others are not, hence unfortunately the need for legislation to drive it”. (A staff of the Procurement Department)

Overall, the interviews and the researcher’s general observations clearly indicate that in spite of seeming oppositions, legislative targets are widely accepted by administrators as the most effective way to drive the strategic process. Although most heads of department indicated their wish for other members to engage voluntarily to ensure behavioral changes, they conceded that legislative drivers are better sensemaking cues if organizational goals are to be achieved. While

administrators select legal sensemaking cues to achieve legislative objectives, heads of department in particular hoped that they will not altogether deselect organizational cues in ways that will hamper achieving organizational goals.

Second complexity

The second legislative complexity borders on challenges in the strategic process. A primary challenge identified is a lack of support for or lack of organizational buy-in for the strategic process. This means that far less people support or engage in the process than is expected. The SRS coordinator was first to acknowledge that the biggest challenge faced by the department is how to achieve buy-in for the strategic process. He posed a question which was subsequently reiterated by nearly all the administrators:

“How do we get people to come on board”?

Generally, administrators too criticized the absence of buy-in from senior management and key stakeholders. This point was supported by the following comments from heads of the Waste Management, Student Association departments:

“The big change needs to come from the top. The top needs to lead by example”.

“Personally I think we need principals, heads of schools and line managers to lead by example”.

“What we will like to see is a buy-in into the sustainability agenda up to the top”.

“Not all heads of school are on board. They should be aware of SRS but are they? I don’t think so.”

Even in cases where buy-in existed, some interviews also pointed out that senior management, however did not engage with the process in the same manner as they demanded from administrators. The argument as put forward by a member of the Transport and Parking department is that senior managers do not necessarily follow it in a structured manner:

“Senior managers engage in it but perhaps there needs to be more structure”.

Beyond senior managers and key stakeholders, some administrators also expressed lack of support and buy-in from their fellow colleagues. Strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations generally involves less rigid forms of managerial control and increased levels of autonomy. Heads of department engaged in sustainability activities also criticized lack of support at departmental levels. For example, the heads of Transport and Parking and Student Association comment in support of this criticism:

“I feel I don’t have buy-in from those I need it from”.

“Opinion from staff members is low so we need to do better”.

Even though there appears to be a high rate of inclusion from organizational actors, an equally high rate of divergent view about the strategic process is also observed. Although administrators may generally collectively select legislative and other sensemaking cues to achieve organizational goals, yet observations indicate that individually, actors have personal opinions about sustainability in general as well as the strategic process. This point is supported by a staff of the SRS department:

“There is a taken for grantedness that the main point is becoming inclusive, however everyone in the office have their own view point”.

Irrespective of the process of selection and deselection of what administrators consider to be the most appropriate sensemaking cues, it is obvious to the coordinator of Student Association that:

“People are no longer afraid of engaging in it (sustainability) anymore”.

What is meant is that, people are more engaged in the strategic process based on divergent, individual views. This gave room for negotiations with the hope that administrators will select appropriate sensemaking cues that will increase buy-in as well as shape the vision.

The work of the Communications team has been significant in enhancing buy-in. Among others the department works to:

“Create the conditions under which students and staff are inspired and supported in order to engage with – and contribute to – social responsibility and sustainability across the University and beyond”. (SRS Strategy 2010:20).

The Communications team also develops communications campaigns that will inform people:

“About the issues, changes, and best practice surrounding SRS, including annual highlights report, best practice/guidance, event and engagement materials, and department briefings and presentations”. (SRS Communications Strategy and Plan 2014:2).

The more negotiations took place, the more sensemaking frames and cues were negotiated and changed. This led to a process in which the organization generated wider sensemaking frameworks which enabled actors to subsequently select and deselect broader sensemaking cues to better understand the strategic process. Observations therefore indicate that loosely coupled systems engender dynamic sensemaking and sensegiving processes.

Summary

The discussions above have so far focused on the first sensemaking framework which administrators select in their sensemaking process of the SRS strategy. It establishes that external legislation and policies are the primary sensemaking sources or frameworks from which administrators select and deselect their sensemaking cues to enable their understanding of the strategic process. There are clear indications that generally administrators do not wholeheartedly embrace the idea of legislation being the dominant sensemaking framework. However, giving their organizational roles as heads of schools and departments in particular, such administrators actively push the legislative compliance agenda so as to meet organizational, industry and national targets. On the other hand administrators, who were not directly involved in setting and ensuring that legislative targets are met, expressed their preference to select sensemaking cues from social and

other sources and rather wished to deselect cues based on legislative frameworks. However, irrespective of their preferences, most administrators agreed that the best way to enable participation and support for the strategy is to embrace and select legislative sensemaking cues.

The discussions further progressed to unravel a couple of complexities embedded in the legislative framework. The first complexity focused on challenges arising from the need to achieve national legislative goals versus achieving organizational goals. This challenge clearly emanates from the operative legislative framework and selection of legal cues. The other challenge discussed a lack of organizational buy-in. The main point of reflection relates to how lack of buy-in from organizational members leads to negotiations and generation of wider sensemaking frameworks and therefore a wider array of sensemaking cues from which administrators select appropriate ones to understand and engage with the University's sustainability strategy.

Besides employing sensemaking frames built around legislation, the second main framework from which administrators select sensemaking cues based on issues surrounding accounting and reporting of the University's sustainability efforts.

4.4 ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING

Accounting and reporting on sustainable development has become an increasingly important organizational process in recent years (Lele 1991; Wright, 2004; Fergus and Rowney, 2005). The process aims at reporting on organizations sustainability performances and overall impact on sustainable development. Accounting and reporting enables organizations to measure and track sustainable development practices overtime. The intent is to manage sustainability impacts and promote transparency and accountability in organizations. Higher education institutions are also actively engaged in annual reporting on sustainable development practices. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework is the most widely used standardized sustainability reporting framework in the world. The GRI G3 in particular measures organizations sustainability efforts through triple bottom-line disclosures. This includes reporting on sustainability activities based on environmental, social and economic issues. With particular reference to universities, selected

indicators capture five main areas. These include higher education institutional obligations, university undertakings, public sector compliance, other compliance and voluntary commitments.

Westland University began reporting its sustainability activities a year after the SRS strategy was adopted. As a founder signatory of the Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland³ (UCCCFs):

“The University submits an annual report in May. The University provides a commentary on progress and metrics concerning carbon emissions, consumption and expenditure on a range of sustainability areas (energy, procurement, travel and waste)” (Sustainability Reporting February 2014).

It published its first Social Responsibility and Sustainability Report in the year 2011. The University has:

“A reporting framework for its social responsibility and sustainability strategic documents. These include the Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) Strategy 2010-2020 (adopted February 2010) and the Climate Action Plan (adopted May 2010). The Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Group (SEAG) and sub committees support delivery of these strategies”. (Sustainability Reporting February 2014).

Adopting the GRI G3 framework, the reporting captured indicators of the University’s sustainability progress over the 2009-10 academic years. Overall, the University has a number of sustainability themes but the three prominent ones are reduction of energy consumption (reducing carbon footprint), Waste management, and Transportation. In practice however, the University’s social and sustainable reporting is measured mainly by its key performance index (KPI). This is based fundamentally on a quantitative measure of the University’s carbon emission activities. The measure calculates emissions based on the proportional relationship between energy consumed and pound turnover.

³ Universities & Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland www.eauc.org.uk/ucccf/home

Bound by Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the University:

“Through its operations contribute to carbon emission reduction, contribute to climate change adaptation and act sustainability. Having an effective reporting framework in place assists the university to demonstrate its compliance with these climate change duties” (Sustainability Reporting February 2014).

The SRS accounting and reporting agenda is therefore employed as a dominant sensemaking framework. Organizational actors focus on the agenda and the issues therein to enable them understand the University’s goals in terms of what it seeks to achieve. Issues focused on energy consumption, recycling, and transportation form the dominant triggers which influence administrators’ engagement with the SRS strategy. If the University must meet its accounting and reporting targets, then administrators’ in particular must draw sensemaking cues from these issues to enable an understanding of the strategic process and what is expected of them. Their sensemaking and engagement with the strategic process is thus predominantly influenced by cues extracted from energy and waste management issues. An SRS staff, the coordinator for students association and accommodations manager respectively comment on the importance of energy to the University:

“A lot of the SRS strategy is about energy and managing it in a more efficient manner”.

‘The university’s biggest expenditure is in relation to electricity, gas and water. The University takes consumption or our carbon footprint very seriously’.

“Energy is the future isn’t it? Energy is quiet costly to use as a business and industry, so to reduce it makes people more responsible for the future”.

One of the practical ways the University engages in carbon footprint reduction is through its ‘Switch and Save’ campaign. The campaign is one of the SRS strategy key programs which aim to encourage organizational actors to save money through low use of electricity. It is divided into two main activities. These consist of switching off unused lights, and using communal electronic appliances like printers and heating radiators. The ‘Switch and Save’ campaign is a distinct sensemaking source from which administrators’ in particular select appropriate cues to understand

and engage with the strategy. The campaign is perceived as easy to understand, identify with and practice. The sensemaking message is very clear. Organizational actors easily understand that when they switch lights and electrical appliances off, they save energy and hence reduce the University's carbon footprint. As a result, the campaign is very popular and has been successful in the University community. For example, newer University buildings have subsequently been fitted with sensor lighting systems that automatically save energy. There are award winning schemes for actors actively engaged in Switch and save as well as other energy reduction activities.

Additionally, the Accommodations department in collaboration with other departments has also instituted successful recycling activities. These include the use of communal recycling bins in all University buildings. This has further led to changes in the way the University disposes of its waste as well as improved landfill activities. Overall, the Student Association coordinator asserts that:

“At a macro level there has been a reduction in the amount of waste to landfills and a net reduction in utility consumption, especially electricity”.

Outcomes of Switch and save, recycling and related activities are reported in the SRS strategy implementation report. More importantly, the outcomes form part of energy saving indicators measured and reported in the GRI framework.

It is evident from the sustainability reporting documents, GRI framework and interviews that administrators draw strategic sensemaking cues from practices that promote responsible behaviours. Particularly, practices that form part of the University's accounting and reporting guidelines. They engage in responsible practices because they are mandated annually to account for and report on their sustainability practices. Their sensemaking cues are thus derived from an understanding of the need to be accountable for their everyday strategic actions.

Although it is widely accepted that energy reduction is the main accounting and reporting indicator, some administrators argue that some other equally important 'softer' aspects of sustainability practices have been neglected. They argue that behavioral changes and related outcomes receive less attention. This view point is essentially based on arguments surrounding over prioritization of environmental dimension of sustainability versus marginalization of social

dimensions of sustainability in organizations. The argument is affirmed by a coordinator of the Students Association, who argues that:

“It seems that the reason why everyone is getting on board in sustainability is for climate change but I think it masks some of the human induced problems”.

He further explains that this may be as a result of the fact that:

“Behavioral changes are quite difficult to measure. To find a technology for monitoring what is quantitative is quite subjective”.

In spite of these later concerns however, it is very clear that accounting and reporting indicators are primary sensemaking frameworks from which administrators select and deselect sensemaking cues to enable their understanding and engagement with the SRS strategic process. A deeper probe into the above assertions indicates that overtime; administrators’ selection of energy cues is decreasing while their selection of softer cues is on the rise. Administrators’ are selecting cues from indicators that enhance accounting and reporting of long-term behavioral changes, and deselecting their selection of none behavioral cues.

The discussions above bring into sharp focus the need for a balance between energy related reporting and other types of sustainability reporting. It raises a number of challenges in the University’s accounting and reporting agenda especially as it affects actors’ sensemaking process. Two of such complexities are discussed in the following section.

4.4.1 Accounting and reporting complexities

The University’s accounting and reporting attempts reveal two main complexities. The section below first discusses the challenges involved in meeting carbon emissions targets in the face of increasing rates of inflation. Secondly, it also discusses the challenge embedded in inadequate reporting indicators.

First complexity

As previously pointed out, the University's carbon emission effort is measured by an overall turnover price index. This is calculated in terms of amounts of energy consumed in a specific year versus equivalent British pound turnover. The turnover price index is however directly influenced by national inflation rates. Changes in inflation rates invoke commensurate changes in carbon emission recordings. This means that when inflation rates increase or decrease, the University's carbon emission counts also increase or decrease correspondently. In effect, measurement and reporting of emissions are not particularly accurate in the sense that changes in inflation rates create disparities between absolute and relative measurements. This calls to question the methodological implications of measuring the University's emissions as well as reporting its findings. Some interviewees expressed their concerns about what they see as a disparity between the measurement, methods and reporting outcomes. This concern was clearly articulated in the interviews below:

“What is the school measuring? Our carbon footprint in absolute terms increases or decreases annually, but in relative terms increases and decreases account for uncontrollable circumstances such as severe winter or business and operational changes. I think measurements should be looked at it variable terms”. (A staff of SRS Department)

“I would love to see an approach that is more structured or organized – a more meticulous approach. The sustainability agenda has not been able to achieve that yet – it is very loose. There is the opportunity to streamline, share information and knowledge and find models of best practices”. (Coordinator of Student Association)

The gap between strategy measurements and strategy outcomes is of great concern to actors especially as future predictions clearly suggest that over the next few years, the University's carbon emissions will increase rather than decrease. In spite of the significant efforts being made the University is also faced with projected net increases in utility demands and campus expansions. This means that as the University continues to engage in widespread expansions, it will consume more energy thereby increasing its carbon emissions. Some heads of departments clearly confirm the argument:

“We may not meet our energy target. The conflict is that our energy consumption data is increasing mainly because of an expanding campus”. (Transport and Parking Manager)

We are not quite hitting our carbon emission target yet. In terms of carbon emissions, we are actually going in the opposite direction (because the school is growing). The size of our estate is arguably too big. We need to find a way of optimizing our activities to get more for less”. (Estates Manager)

“Nigel Paul (Vice Principal and director of Corporate Services) says it’s a struggle for us to meet the challenge. He did not say how much behind we are but the word challenge means we are behind”. (Coordinator of Research and Knowledge Exchange)

The prediction of higher increase in carbon emission targets is of great concern to administrators. Nevertheless, a senior administrator defends this assertion by arguing that:

“It is too early to say if we will achieve our carbon emission target”. (Coordinator of SRS department)

Others however argue that senior management is unwilling to accept the ‘reality’ of the situation. The belief is that the University is not engaged in efficient use of resources. The idea is affirmed by the coordinator of the Student Association:

“Management is scared because of the continuous increase: To save money, you have to reduce carbon and efficiently use limited resources but that is not the reality on the ground”.

In reality the SRS Reporting document (2012), indicate that, carbon emission measurement figures for the year 2011 for example reported an overall lag in absolute emission partly due to a 50% growth in overall school activities (such as increases in campus expansions) and only a 25% increase in actual carbon emissions. This indicates that the University’s expansion rate is twice as much as its rate of actual carbon emission. For example, in a particular project, the ‘Switch ad Save’ sustainability initiative responsible for reducing energy consumption reported a 4%

reduction across 22 buildings. Even though a 4% reduction was recorded, it was also reported that emissions from the same sites recorded an overall annual increase of 6% of energy use. Findings therefore points to overall increases instead of decreases in energy consumptions. Indications suggest that as long as the main measure of sustainability remains focused on energy reduction, then there is the possibility that the University's accounting and reporting of sustainability practices will continue to record net increases instead of deceases.

The implication of this on administrators' sensemaking is imperative to the success of the SRS strategic process. If assertion over increased carbon emission is embraced by actors, then this means that they select 'wrong' or inappropriate sensemaking frameworks in respect of meeting desired carbon emission goals. 'Wrong', in the sense that if administrators continue to draw cues from the carbon emissions sensemaking framework, in the long run, they will produce negative instead of positive results. If they therefore embrace the fact that selecting carbon emission cues will not led to an overall reduction in carbon emissions, in time they may choose to deselect emissions sensemaking framework and cues and focus instead on other cues that they think will yield more tangible and desirable results. This assertion is supported by the fact that observations clearly indicate that overtime; administrators are increasingly drawing cues from different sensemaking frameworks in recognition of the awareness that in the long-term, the University's carbon emission targets will still increase in spite of their efforts.

This practice confirms the sensemaking theory that meaning making or sensemaking and action are intertwined (Cramer et. al 2004, Jackson 2009). Specifically, Cramer (et.al 2004), argues that while an action may result from sensemaking, a series of continued actions on the other hand gradually creates meaning of individuals actions. The combination of sensemaking and action should resolve individual's disruption and produce expected outcomes. However in cases where sensemaking does not match actions or result in expected sensemaking outcomes, individuals may modify their sensemaking in intricate ways by drawing on other subtle cues over time (Gioia and Mehra 1996:1,229). This sensemaking theory is confirmed by administrators' actions especially as they realize the incongruence between their sensemaking process and the University's long-term carbon emission targets.

Second Complexity

The second accounting and reporting complexity is reflected in the imbalance between environmental (especially energy) sustainability based reporting and non-environmental reporting. As previously stated, indicators and measurements that promote non-environmental sustainability activities are scantily included in the GRI standards.

Administrators argue that the list of indicators is not exhaustive in respect of the University's peculiar reporting needs. The argument is based on the premise that while many of the GRI G3 measurements are relevant to the University, other sustainability activities relating to the core purposes of the University is however not captured in the reporting standards. For example, they argue that indicators that capture sustainability practices related to research, teaching, and knowledge exchange are not distinctly represented in the GRI G3. This concern is based on the fact that such activities clearly underpin university actors' everyday strategic practices. Hence, in a particular away day meeting, some administrators openly challenged the need for accounting and reporting on sustainability activities based predominantly on environmental and low-carbon measures. Majority of interviewees argued that the University might be engaged in GRI reporting simply because it is expected of them to do so. In effect they viewed the University's accounting and reporting practices as a tick-box exercise. A staff of the Transport and Parking department attempts to explain the situation:

"I think University's interest in the sustainability agenda is primarily due to the need to be seen to be doing. I wonder if sustainability reporting is done for the sake of reporting rather than for the sake of actually engaging in sustainability".

Overtime however, the University has stretched its sustainability reporting practice to incorporate non GRI indicators. These additional activities are recorded as supplementary data or as appendixes in the University's accounting reports. What this means is, administrators' refuse to rely on GRI G3 indicators as their dominant sensemaking framework, in respect of accounting and reporting. It clearly indicates that in cases where actors reject dominant sensemaking frameworks as being inadequate or non-exhaustive, they can negotiate for additional frameworks to be constructed to enable comprehensive sensemaking of the strategic process as well as enable

comprehensive accounting and reporting practices. Although administrators may be clearly active in choosing their sensemaking and strategic behaviours, the characterization of dependent sensemaking process however visibly indicates that administrators' sensemaking process is predominantly based on selecting sensemaking cues which emanate from the organization and the SRS department in particular.

In spite of these challenges, Sustainability Reporting documents (2011-2014), however indicate that the University's reporting commitments, for internal and external purposes, has increased since the adoption of the SRS strategy. The Department for SRS is further committed to developing a reporting framework on wider sustainability and social responsibility issues – under the Sustainability Reporting Guidance published by Scottish Government (Sustainability Reporting February 2014:3).

Summary

The above section has so far focused on the second sensemaking framework. Accounting and reporting of sustainability practices is an integral sensemaking source from which administrators select and deselect sensemaking cues to make sense of the SRS strategic process. Indications suggest that although the University places premium on reducing its carbon footprints, in the long-term, carbon emission will however increase instead of decrease. This is due to uncontrollable factors such as campus expansion, increasing inflation and, poor measurement and methods. As such, administrators choose to deselect carbon emission cues in favor of other softer or non-energy cues. The discussions were further extended to unpack a couple of complexities in the accounting and recording practices. The first complexity discusses some challenges involved in meeting carbon emission targets. The primary concern here is about gaps in employing high measurements that yield low strategy outcomes. Administrators reject what they perceive as 'wrong' sensemaking frameworks that yield low outcomes in favor of less dominant frameworks that yield more tangible and desirable results. The second complexity is anchored in the fact that reporting indicators are not exhaustive or inclusive enough to capture activities pertinent to the University. As such, the University has extended its reporting indicators to include measures that form part of their core values and everyday sustainability practices. These subsequently form dominant sensemaking

frames from which administrators draw sensemaking cues to better understand the strategic process.

Besides employing sensemaking frames built around legislation, and accounting and reporting, the following section further discusses the third main framework from which administrators draw sensemaking cues. This revolves around issue on organizational image.

4.5 ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE

Theories on organizational image explain how organizations project themselves and how they want to be perceived by internal and external stakeholders. In regards to its SRS agenda for example, Westland University wishes to be perceived particularly as a socially responsible organization which is actively involved in sustainable development and sustainability practices.

As clearly articulated, the SRS vision is:

“To be a truly global university benefiting society as a whole. The vision is to be recognised as a leading Responsible University with global influence, a contributor to a Socially Responsible and Sustainable Scotland (Direct Impact), as well as a contributor to a Socially Responsible and Sustainable Scotland (Service Impact)”. (SRS Strategy Review Update June 2014:3)

This is affirmed by the Vice Principal of Community development:

“The University’s ultimate goal is excellence in what it does. We want to be seen to be up there making an impact on the sustainability agenda”.

Westland is in competition with other leading universities in relation to best sustainability practices. The University thus aims to project itself as an industry leader in terms of being perceived to be at the forefront of exemplary sustainability practices. This aim is echoed by a staff of the Procurement Department:

“It (Westland) wants to be perceived worldwide as a leader in sustainability issues - as leverage to attract overseas student. As a research led university, it realizes the need to use resources in a way that will make it a leader in sustainability”.

The University is ranked among the best 25 universities in the world⁴. Building an image in leadership is thus seen as foundational to the University’s sustainability strategic process. To meet this objective, organizational actors, especially administrators, are encouraged to engage with the SRS strategy from the point of view of projecting the university as sustainability led university. Their sensemaking processes are influenced in ways that persuades them to favourable select sensemaking cues from frames based on organizational leadership.

The organizational image sensemaking frames are evident in three main areas. Westland University strives to be a sustainability leader at organizational, community and industry levels. These three levels form sensemaking frameworks from which administrators’ sensemaking selection process is anchored. The frameworks will be discussed individually below in terms of how they are developed and how they influence administrators’ sensemaking process.

4.5.1 Organizational image – University level framework

In recognition of the fact that the University is in competition with other universities in terms of attracting potential students, staff and other resources, the University is actively engaged in embedding sustainable development in every part of its curricular. For example, specific sustainability courses have been introduced to help maintain its leadership position. In particular, an innovative postgraduate program in Carbon Finance has been introduced in the Westland Business School. At the time of its introduction, it is acclaimed to be the first of its kind worldwide. Additionally, also first of its kind was the University’s successful introduction of an undergraduate course in Sustainable Development. This is a milestone achievement in the history of Scottish Universities. Westland University thus holds the leadership position in terms of teaching and embedding sustainability in the University’s curricular. A staff of the SRS department confirms this:

⁴ <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2012>

“We want to be a key educator in sustainability. We want people to see that we take our social responsibility seriously”.

Beyond curricular embedding, leadership image building can also be observed in other areas in the University. Westland’s School of Social and Political Science focuses its sustainable development efforts on environmental legislation. It engages with different levels of communities to influence national environmental policies. It influences the process of engagement between the University and government. Additionally, the procurement department collaborates with the Scottish government procurement department to ensure high levels of sustainable procurement practices in the University. Westland is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of purchasing and supply and actively promotes the Institute’s agenda. Also, the department of Engineering is engaged in innovative research regarding energy and heat systems. The department of Geosciences also offers masters and long distance programs on sustainable development. Additionally, the Edinburgh centre for carbon (ECC) innovation engages with the business community especially small and medium size enterprises (SME’s). Among others, the aim of the ECC is to promote sustainability practices in SME’s.

To be perceived as a leader in sustainable development practices, required active participation by administrators in the above mentioned activities. The University framed the practice of sustainability as an organizational image and leadership agenda which then became a key sensemaking source for administrators’ sensemaking selection process. For most interviewees, gaining leadership status was of great importance to them. Both in terms of the positive effect it had on the University and on them personally. Many of them believed in the need to project and maintain the University as leading world-class institution. They therefore identified with the practice of sustainable development and the introduction of the SRS strategy as an opportunity to achieve their leadership goals. Their sensemaking cues selection process consisted of drawing from a combination of external sources (organizational motivation) as well as from internal sources (personal motivation). Most interviewees were observed to exercise high levels of personal satisfaction from their engagement and association with the innovative activities mentioned above as well as many others. Observations therefore suggest that in contexts where sensemaking frames are based on enhancing positive organizational image and leadership positions, administrators

identify with leadership triggers and therefore select sensemaking cues appropriately to achieve set goals.

4.5.2 Organizational image – Community level framework

Leadership in sustainability practices at the community level is evident in the University's engagements with its wider community. Engaging with the community involves establishing good sustainability practices in collaboration with the University's wider community. Westland believes that community level engagement is important because the University is an integral part of its communities and therefore its activities must positively impact its community.

As such:

Opportunities are provided for staff and students involving engagement with local organizations and how this links to the Community Engagement Strategy of the University. (SRS Strategy Review Update October 2014:4).

The coordinator of the SRS department asserts that community engagement is what makes the University a leader in sustainability practices:

“Westland is at the forefront of sustainability because we are doing the social part of the sustainability agenda”.

One of the practical ways the University engages with its community is engaging in innovative ways of solving social problems in their community. For example a staff of the Waste Management Department explained:

“Westland is leading in the kind of things we engage in with our community. For example, a partnership has been reached with a local company (The Vergerwear Company) to provide no biodegradable packaging...”

This partnership provides innovative means of sorting and categorising waste packages into distinct biodegradable categories to fit specific landfill sites. Ultimately the aim of the project is

geared towards landfill sites reduction, job provision and community building. Despite the initial cost involved in the project, an administrator believes that the project will not only pay off but also enhance the University's leadership position:

“This is an expensive gamble but in the end we will be leaders and also reduce our cost. It is also good public relations”. (A staff of the Accommodations Department)

Additionally;

The University ensures relationships with suppliers and contractors are socially responsible and sustainable based on the Marrakech model and APUC framework. (SRS Strategy Review Update October 2014:4).

Also fundamental to the University's community agenda is the introduction of “Our global world lectures”. It is used as a platform for organizing lectures specifically for the community. The aim of the lectures is to keep the community informed about the University's sustainable development activities as well as to build collaborations between the University and the community. Sometimes external speakers are given the opportunity to educate the community on important sustainable development activities happening around the world.

These community based engagements and collaborations provide sensemaking frameworks for organizational actors' sensemaking selection process. A significant number of administrators showed active interest and participation in community engagements, especially those who had prior background and experience in external relations and outdoor learning. The research data set therefore suggest that, their primary motivation was influenced by the understanding of the need to extend best practices and support communities in which the University operates.

4.5.3 Organizational image – Industry level framework

Westland's leadership goal is not simply to be a leader in sustainable development practices in the Higher Education Industry. A major part of its image building aspirations is also evident in its collaboration effort with other industry organizations. The University is involved in a number of research collaborations with other Scottish Universities. For example, Westland is in partnership with Herriot Watt and Napier Universities relating to different levels of sustainable development issues. Westland also spearheads strategic meetings on sustainable procurement for Scottish Universities. The University's industry role and collaborative efforts enhances the perception of being a sector leader. Its active involvement is to establish its presence and lead in the industry.

The SRS Communications Strategy and Plan (2014:3), indicates that:

The University positions itself as a leader in Social Responsibility and Sustainability. This includes attendance and contribution to platforms within the university and externally to share best practices, encourage debate, and facilitate collaborations.

This thought is shared by the accommodations manager:

“This University more than others wants to be at the fore-front of things. We influence our sector through what we do”.

One of the prominent collaborative achievements is Westland's strategic role in establishing the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project in Scotland. The ESD project is a UNESCO managed project adopted by many nations and governments and implemented across all levels of education. It encourages teaching and learning across broad areas of sustainable development, especially issues surrounding climate change, biodiversity and poverty reduction for example. It aims to promote changes in sustainable development through critical thinking and collaborative decision making. Westland University spearheaded the role in establishing the project in Scotland. In collaboration with other sector institutions, it committed the necessary support to run and maintain the project even beyond its lifespan as intended by UNESCO. As explained by the project initiator, the aspiration is to position the project as a:

“... catalyst and enabler to get other organizations to make changes in sustainable development practices”

There are clear indications suggesting that the University has been highly successful in building a sustainable development leadership image for itself especially at a sector level. Indications suggest that other sector institutions look up to Westland for guidance and support. This view is acknowledged by a staff of the procurement department:

“We have been approached by other universities who are asking ‘what are you doing and how are you doing it’?”

Caution has however been raised about the motives behind the University’s pursuit for industry leadership. A particular comment from a staff of the Transport and Parking department states:

“I hope we do not take a lead approach to be up the ladder just trying to tick boxes. This should not be what we should be about. We better take our time and make sure we are embedding sustainability”.

Others are concerned that like other social concepts, adopting sustainability practices in organizations is viewed especially by strategists as something nice to have instead of it being a must have strategy. The concerns focus on the use of sustainability as a reactive tool (for organizational image and identity building). They insist that Westland’s motives for adopting the concept should be explored.

Overall, sector level leadership ambitions are tangible sensemaking frames that influence administrators’ sensemaking selection process. This sensemaking selection process is particularly high among administrators who identify with the need for sustainability collaborations across industry and national levels. For other administrators, sector level frames were less visible especially as it involved a lot of effort and a myriad of external actors and stakeholders including governments. Administrators who preferred to engage with sustainability practices at the

University level therefore deselect sector level cues in favour of university level and community sensemaking cues. Observations show that fewer administrators select sensemaking cues from sector level frames compared to those who select from university and community frames.

In sum, the discussion on organizational image sensemaking frame has established that Westland University wishes to be perceived as a socially responsible University and a leader in sustainable development and sustainability practices. To achieve this aspiration, administrators select sensemaking frames from three main sources. They select from myriads of cues arising from organizational, community and industry levels. Organizational level sensemaking cues arise from activities involved in embedding sustainability practices internal. Community sensemaking frames emanate from desires for relevant collaborations with the University's community. Administrators select industry sensemaking frames from triggers meant to establish the University's sustainability impact in the industry. Altogether these sensemaking frameworks provide dominant sensemaking cues for administrators' sensemaking process.

Summary of part one

The section above has discussed administrators' dependent sensemaking process. Dependent sensemaking occurs as administrators draw on sensemaking frames derived from existing information and knowledge structure. Administrators' select sensemaking cues from legislation, accounting and reporting and organizational image frameworks to aid their interpretation and understanding of the strategic process. The legislative sensemaking frame is the most dominant framework from which administrators select sensemaking cues. Although most administrators criticised the rigidity of selecting legislative cues, overall, they agreed that legislation has to be the driver of the strategic process in order to mobilise the level of participation need to ensure strategy survival.

Administrators also draw on accounting and reporting sensemaking frames as part of their sensemaking process. The need to account and report on their sustainability engagement forms the basis for active engagement with the strategic process.

Additionally, administrators select sensemaking cues that project the image of the University as being a leader in sustainability practices. In particular, selected cues enable administrators understanding of meeting the University's carbon emission targets. The need for carbon emission reduction therefore forms the main basis for engagement to meet the University's KPI targets. It is argued however that image building through sustainability practices is fairly easy, especially as the practice of sustainability is believed to be a concept that is not 'hard to sell'.

It is evident that administrators exploit these three dominant sensemaking frames from the strategic process. Administrators' sensemaking process can therefore be clearly described as being dependent on the strategic process.

PART TWO - AUTONOMOUS SENSEMAKING PROCESS

This part of the chapter shifts the focus away from dependent sensemaking process to focus on academics autonomous sensemaking process. Three main sensemaking frames are presented which represents dominant sensemaking triggers which influence academics cues selection process. The sensemaking frames are generally external to the SRS strategy thereby enhancing the autonomous sensemaking process. The sensemaking frames comprise of organizational culture, innovation, expertise, and strategy ownership. The section below presents findings on these three main dominant sensemaking frames in depth.

4.6 AIM

As previously indicated, the aim of this chapter is in two main parts. Overall, it examines the discovery of simultaneous sensemaking processes among middle managers in loosely coupled systems. In much depth, it discusses administrators' dependent sensemaking process and academics autonomous sensemaking process of their University's SRS strategic process especially as they occur simultaneously.

4.6.1 Introduction

So far, the first part of this chapter has discussed in much depth, administrators sensemaking process in respect to how they select sensemaking cues from university generated sensemaking

frameworks. These are made up of three sensemaking frames based on legislation, accounting and reporting and organizational image. These frames are predominantly dependent on issues arising from or directly associated with the SRS strategic process. Overall, the University's administrators' sensemaking process can be described as a strategy dependent sensemaking process.

The following second part of this chapter will discuss academics sensemaking process of the SRS strategy. It examines the efforts academics make in their attempts to make sense of and engage with the strategy. The aim is to explore how academics notice and select sustainability information and cues, how they interpret strategy cues and how their interpretation subsequently influences the way they practice sustainability.

As has been adopted throughout the thesis so far, the term sensemaking is employed to describe a process of scanning and interpretation of cues through social and personal cognitive frameworks to make sense of a phenomenon such as the SRS strategic process. Unlike administrators' dependent sensemaking process, academics are generally noted to select cues autonomous of university generated sensemaking frameworks. They select cues external or indirectly related to the strategic process. Academics can therefore be described as engaged in an autonomous sensemaking process.

As presented in part of **Figure 4.1**, academics autonomous sensemaking process is drawn mainly from three identified autonomous sensemaking frameworks. These consist of 'Academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work sensemaking frameworks.

This second part of the chapter therefore unpacks rich narratives of these three sensemaking frames. It unravels rich evidence of academics sensemaking process in support of the thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process in loosely coupled university context. Academics autonomous sensemaking process is subsequently discussed below.

4.7 ACADEMIC FREEDOM: 'THE WESTLAND WAY'

The first autonomous sensemaking framework which academics draw on is primarily based on organizational culture with specific emphasis on 'the Westland way' culture. Loosely coupled

systems are typically characterized by high levels of collegiality and academic autonomy (Weick 1976; Bartell 2003). This is often referred to as academic freedom. Academic freedom underpins academic behavior in universities. Academic freedom enables academics to connect with organizational elements and strategies in highly flexible manners. They enjoy less managerial interference in their strategic activities. Academic freedom is therefore a prevailing organizational culture in universities and other loosely coupled organizations.

As an organizational culture, academics are enabled to engage with organizational elements such as strategy, in a less rigid manner. Westland refers to this type of organizational culture as ‘The Westland Way’ of doing things. What is meant by this is that beyond certain basic organizational limits and boundaries to which academics must comply, academics enjoy higher levels of flexibility while engaged in strategic processes. Academics generally explained the term through the following comments:

“The Westland Way is doing things in our own way”

“The Westland Way means taking ownership of strategy and doing it our own way. This is the way we do things here”.

“The Westland Way is not to tell people what to do”.

“Apart from what is stated in the strategy it (SEAG) cannot tell people or schools what to do” (Professor, Centre for Integrative Physiology)

In essence, The Westland Way is about the practice of autonomous sensemaking and behavior in strategy creation process. It is about the exercise of high levels on independency and low levels of managerial interference in academics everyday strategic work. In terms of the SRS strategy, academic freedom serves as an overarching sensemaking framework for understanding and practice of the strategy. It supports the fact that academics engage with the SRS strategy by selecting external sensemaking cues that are based on their personal research interests, backgrounds and goals. The more academics select cues from The Westland Way or academic freedom sensemaking frame, the more independent and autonomous their strategic engagement become.

By selecting externally generated sensemaking cues based on academic freedom frame, the outcomes of academics sensemaking process generally led to the emergence of sustainability initiatives that are external to the set strategy objectives. This observation is imperative because it supports growing studies on the concept of emergent strategy in organization (Mintzberg 1987; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman, 1983b; Burgelman and Grove 2007). The concept of emergent strategy lays less emphasis on strategy creation in a linear manner in terms of organizations ability to meet outlined strategy objects, and rather lays more emphasis on the idea that strategy and strategy outcomes emerge during the course of practice. The importance of this to the thesis research is the understanding that selection of sensemaking cues leads to autonomous sustainability initiatives and outcomes. Therefore, academics (re)shape the SRS strategic process when they engage in higher levels of autonomous sensemaking process.

The following responses described the extent to which academics react when there is an infringement on their freedom to engage in the academic freedom concept:

“The more you tell academics what to do, the more they dig their heels into not doing it”.

“It is the nature of the beast. If you tell us to do something, we put all our energy in making sure it is not done”.

In terms of the SRS strategic process therefore, academics are committed to drawing their sensemaking from frames that support academic freedom concept.

The practice of higher levels of autonomy is very closely associated with lower levels of institutional support in academics everyday sustainability activities. The SRS department in particular exists to provide institutional support especially regarding advice, training and collaborations. The Westland Way however impedes institutional support in that high levels of autonomy imply that academics do not frequently select cues based on institutional support. In fact, some academics are simply unaware of the institutional support available for sustainability practices. They have no engagement with the SRS office or other senior managers and as such

their day-to-day practice of sustainability is not supported by University resources. Even in instances where their attention is drawn to available support, they still maintain their intent to engage in the practice with little institutional support. As a matter of fact, a number of academics claimed that they lend support to the SRS department support and not the other way round.

This is reflected in the following comment by an initiator of a sustainability outcome:

“I gave them support instead. I gave them papers. I don’t look to them for any support”

The point must however be made that, having undergone some restructuring the SRS department is at present more engaged in with academics. The department has created a network for academics and thus enhancing more collaborative efforts between the two groups.

In cases where SRS support is embraced, academics explained that The Westland Way concept enabled them to select external frames that allow them to seek support from external stakeholders such as research partners, colleagues and students. Academics preference not to embrace institutional support contributes to understanding the extent to which selecting sensemaking cues from academic freedom sensemaking frame impacts the autonomy of their sensemaking and strategy outcomes process. The less institutional support and institutional influence received in the strategic process, the more academics sensemaking process can be described as autonomous to the strategic process. The more institutional support academics embrace, the less their sensemaking and strategy creation process is likely to be described as an autonomous sensemaking process.

On some level, while it is possible to view academic freedom as a form of resistance to change in organizations and therefore not peculiar to academic alone. Interactions with academics however clearly indicate that they engage in higher levels of resistance than administrators and other organizational actors. What is of importance to this thesis is to explore links between academic freedom (or the perceived level of resistance), and academics selection of sensemaking cues. Consequently, the thesis asserts that higher levels of resistance (to academic freedom), is directly linked to academics autonomous sensemaking process and the strategic process.

This feeds into the next section which explores in more depth the effect of The Westland Way on the strategic process.

Effects of organizational culture on strategy creation in loosely coupled systems

The Westland Way impacts the SRS strategy creation process in two main ways. On one hand, academics autonomous sensemaking process impedes the strategy process. Overall, the aim of senior management and the SRS department is to increase the achievement of collective strategy outcomes as intended in the strategic process. However the emergence of autonomous sustainability outcomes does not contribute to achieving intended SRS strategy objectives. This means that although a number of academics are involved in the strategic process in one way or the other, not all the sustainability initiatives achieved are aligned with the expectations of the strategy. The SRS department is therefore faced with the challenge of having many sustainability initiatives and activities which do not directly meet outlined strategic objectives. In this instance, unexpected strategy outcomes can become a challenge to the strategic process especially as organizations must react to them.

On the other hand, academics autonomous sensemaking and outcomes confirms the culture of strategy creation in higher education organizations. Unintended strategic activities are not new to loosely coupled university systems. Autonomous sensemaking and practice generates strategy outcomes that senior managers might have overlooked or simply failed to factor into the strategy process. Senior managers may choose to incorporate such autonomous outcomes into the overall strategic process. Incorporating such outcomes implies that autonomous outcomes are considered as an integral part of the SRS strategy creation process. It supports the idea that the SRS strategy objectives are achieved as a result of both autonomous and intended behaviours.

The emergence of unexpected sustainability outcomes presents a dynamic situation in the sense that although the SRS strategy precedes unexpected sustainability initiatives, yet unexpected initiatives guide and shape the strategy. The SRS strategy is developed as a result of a dynamic mix between stated strategy objectives and unexpected outcomes.

Senior managers, the SRS department, academics and many other stakeholders agree that in order to embed sustainability practices in Westland University, autonomous sensemaking and individual interests must drive the University's sustainability strategy. They agree that selecting cues from academic freedom triggers is paramount to successful strategy creation in Universities. The

research data set therefore suggest that, in university context where it is agreed that organizational objectives can be achieved by both intended and unintended outcomes, academics predominantly select autonomous sensemaking cues drawn out of organizational culture sensemaking frames that produce autonomous sensemaking and outcomes.

Summary

The academic freedom sensemaking frame is underpinned by organizational culture especially regarding freedom in strategy creation in loosely coupled university systems. As a predominant organizational culture, Academic freedom sensemaking framework empowers academics to select sensemaking frames and cues that are autonomous of the strategic process. Therefore in relation to the SRS strategy, what is fundamental to this research is to understand how academics selection of autonomous sensemaking cues based on organizational culture can shape the SRS strategic process.

Besides the academic freedom sensemaking framework, academics also select sensemaking cues from the ‘newness of the sustainability’ frame.

4.8 NEWNESS OF SUSTAINABILITY

The second autonomous sensemaking framework which academics draw on is the ‘sustainability newness’ framework. Debates are mounting as to the newness of adopting strategies in organizations. People are attempting to understand what is new about adopting sustainable development strategies in organizations. While some argue that the practice of sustainability is new to organizations, others disagree with this assertion.

In Westland University, the novelty of sustainability practice is referred to as a ‘new way of thinking’. The term was reiterated by most of the academic interviewees in particular. Academics employ the concept as a sensemaking framework from which they select sensemaking cues. The term represents the idea of doing something different or doing something new. In respect of the strategic process, academics relate to the concept of newness more in terms of newness in process and less about newness in practice. The framework is simply about employing innovative

processes in the practice of the SRS strategy. In essence, although the practice of sustainable development has existed in organizations overtime, what is important at present is employing innovative procedures in the way it is practiced. The perception is that introducing newness or levels of innovation into the strategic process is a way of engaging differently from earlier practices organizations engaged in. Academics draw on external innovative ways of engagements as sensemaking frames to aid their understanding and practice of the strategy.

Commenting on the practice of these policies a staff of the SRS department explains:

“We are not doing anything grand standing. We are simply doing practical innovative stuff”.

The general belief is that the understanding of the term ‘new way of thinking’ enables innovative behaviours and outcomes. Academics understand the concept fundamentally in terms of undertaking innovative research. Drawing cues from this frame, academics have infused innovative strategies in their personal research work. For example, some academics are engaged in ground breaking research in science and renewable energy studies in particular. Through their schools and departments others have also introduced a myriad of innovative sustainability courses into their curricular in areas of outdoor learning and community lecture series for example. The outcomes of some of these research works have been acclaimed across university, community, industry and regional levels. A cursory search through the University’s strategic documents and portals reveal a number of national and international awards received by renowned academics engaged in different fields of innovative and sustainable research. The adoption of innovation in organization is however not without it challenges.

The research data indicates through the interviews in particular that the new way of thinking sensemaking frame is predominantly selected by academics due to existing high levels of flexibility in academic work which promotes high levels of innovation. This is however not to imply that administrative work does not promote innovation in sustainability practices. Although innovation is central to sustainability practice in organizations, in loosely coupled university

organizations, it is observed that academics actively select the new way of thinking frame as fundamental to their sensemaking process and practice of the SRS strategic process.

New way of thinking challenges

Some organizational actors, especially administrators, have however argued against the idea of drawing on the ‘new way of thinking’ concept as a sensemaking tool. In particular, administrators argue that there is nothing new or innovative about current sustainability practices compared to what existed in earlier years, especially as the University is said to have been engaged in similar sustainability practices over two decades. From an environmental perspective there is enough evidence indicating that the University has been actively engaged in sustainability practice since the late 1990’s. Over these years, Westland has been engaged in implementing climate change, waste management and transport policies in particular.

The comments below not only confirm the practice of sustainability over the years, but also points to novelty in practice at the time:

‘I do not see sustainability as a new thinking. When we were young, things broke down and we fixed it because we were not wasteful. There is a slight change of emphasis from repair and reuse to recycle and reuse’. (A staff of the Procurement Department)

“We have been doing SRS for a long time and doing it big time. Though what we have not done is to record what we do or explain what we do”. (A staff of the Accommodation Department)

“Twenty-one years ago I was interested in the waste associated with extra packaging. It was quite avant-garde and fringe at the time”. (Environmental coordinator of the University’s student association)

These comments support their argument that novelty in sustainable development practices has been long practiced.

On another level of challenge, other actors, especially academics argue about the relevance of adopting the SRS policy in the first place. They argue that the policy is a duplication of effort and it undermines other existing strategies. They disclose that the principles underlining sustainable development permeate already existing policies such as ethics, diversity and equality, health and wellbeing, fair-trade, safe working environment and other similar University-wide policies. Some academics thus resist engaging with the SRS strategy on the bases that they believe that the strategy imposes itself on what they refer to as other existing ‘good’ strategies. They believe that these existing policies form significant parts of sustainability practices and therefore there was no need for the SRS strategy. The director of the procurement department made the point in particular reference to procurement:

“Generally sustainability was not talked about in work places then but we were aware of it. When I arrived in Westland, it was also here... Though it was a general ethical approach to buying but it was sustainability”.

"It (the SRS strategy) does not particularly have a significant effect on us. We will generally adopt University standards in what we do anyway". (Environmental coordinator of the University’s student association)

By and large, many organizational actors shared a general view that nothing new was being done except to re-label and rebranded existing or complementary policies as ‘new’ policies. The summary of this argument is made by an academic who simply states that:

“The University over complicates things”

Some also argued that the current trend in organizations was simply to prefix sustainability onto old policies in the name of engaging in sustainability. Some academics posed the following questions and comment:

“Must we prefix sustainability? Must we label it as sustainability before it can work?”

“What has sustainability got to do with undergrad math courses? They (SRS department) have to be specific about what they want”.

“Sorry I don’t have time to think about what sustainability in my context would mean. It’s often just a talk shop, irrelevant and disruptive to people’s work”.

The idea of adopting the SRS as a new strategy is thus challenged because actors do not see the need to do something ‘new’ which they believe is already being achieved through different policies.

However, the challenge notwithstanding, although actors do not necessarily regard the general concept of sustainability as innovative, they however agree that old policies can be enhanced through innovative processes. As earlier mentioned, the argument remains that the ‘newness’ of sustainability practice is in the process and not the concept. In the main, academics are noted to draw on the frame of new thinking to select sensemaking cues that enable them engage in innovative processes and engagement in the entire strategic process. In essence, although academics may oppose the fundamental principles of adopting the SRS strategy, they will however engage with it if it provides opportunities to select sensemaking cues which will support and enhance their ability to engage in innovative sustainable research.

4.9 RESEARCH WORK

The third autonomous sensemaking framework which academics draw on is based on their core business or ‘research work’. As is typically of organizations, universities pursue multiple goals simultaneously. The research work sensemaking framework is embedded in the principles of teaching and research. In particular, university policies that impact academics research activities are fiercely guarded by academics. Very often, academics resist other university policies that they perceive to conflict and detract from achieving their research objectives. Generally academics appeared to be engaged less in the SRS strategic process because they viewed the process as an ‘extra’ strategic activity which interfered with their ability to engage in their core business of doing research in particular. They argue that not only is the SRS strategy too broad and overlapping other existing policies, but also that academics are too busy to engage in policies that impede performing

research work. Academics therefore deselected sensemaking cues that interfere with performing their core business. The following comments represent some views on doing extra strategic work that detracts from doing research:

“People are incredibly busy and sustainability like it or not is only among many. It does not necessarily feature in everyone’s radar”.

“I do not feel the need to connect with it (sustainability). I just don’t have time to get involved with anything that detracts from my work”.

“Do we have to add more?” “Are we not already doing enough as it is”, “We don’t have enough time for research”?

Their unwillingness to engage with the strategy process as set out by the strategic process, compels academics to draw on alternative sensemaking cues to enable them understand and engage to some extent with the SRS policy. As such alternative sensemaking cues are generally external to the strategic process, by selecting alternative cues, academics thus engage in autonomous sensemaking and behaviours external to the strategic process. To make sense of and engage with the SRS policy, they rely less on university policy frameworks and more on cues that enhance their core business of teaching and doing research. This includes selecting cues from personal and other organizational sensemaking frames such as their personal understanding of sustainable development and how that relates to their research work, as well as university ethical and generally accepted policies and standards. By so doing, academics are enabled to engage in research work while still engaging with sustainability practices as well as incorporating it into their research work.

Senior managers however disagree with academics assertion of being compelled to engage in extra strategic activities. They argue that academics are simply asked to be more efficient in their day-to-day sustainability activities instead of being asked to engage in extra strategic work. As a member of the SRS department explains:

“We are not asking people to do something different, except to do what they already do in a more efficient manner”.

To facilitate increased academic engagement, academic workshops are held periodically:

“To explore how the concept of SRS could be incorporated into the University using the Living Laboratory approach”. (SRS Strategy Review Update October 2014:5).

As stated in the Update on SRS Review (June 2014), through the Living Laboratory approach, academics can be engaged in, and can respond to, the problems of inequality, injustice, climate change, environmental degradation etc. Academic insights are helpful in informing the design, implementation and understanding of these processes, while learning from and informing related developments across the world.

In spite of this growing contention between academic and administrative views, academics generally draw on autonomous sensemaking frames and cues to minimize the possibility of selecting cues from the strategic process that hinder their freedom to act autonomously. Therefore in situations where academics perceive that their ability to do research work is hampered due to the introduction of what they consider to be an ‘extra’ strategic policy, academics will deselect cues from the policy framework in favor of autonomous personal and other organizational cues that will enhance both research and engagement with sustainability and the sustainability policy.

The SRS department, SEAG and other high level committees however insist that in spite of the existing high levels of academic freedom, the SRS department continues to seek increased levels of collaboration and support with academics. For example:

The SRS department supports colleagues and works with the Global Academies to ensure research strengths are applied to global problems. There is also support for identify prospects for undertaking research in emerging areas: circular economy, responsible finance, etc. (SRS Strategy Review Update October 2014:4).

Another reason why academics select cues based on the research work frames is because academics argue that there is a disconnect between achieving the main SRS target on carbon emission reduction and its effect on their everyday research activities. It is claimed that carbon

emission reduction directly contradicts academic research goals. This is especially so for academics involved in scientific research that is fuelled by high levels of energy consumption. These academics often tease the idea of energy saving campaigns such as switching lights off, using communal printers and heaters etc. They intimate that in spite of the achievements made, such gains are highly disproportional to the amount of energy consumed by a single research project conducted by university scientists. Academics generally argue that strict adherence to carbon emission objectives interferes with and compromises academics research activities. The argument is captured in the following comments:

“To reduce carbon and efficiently use limited resources, you have to reduce the amount of research. But that is also core to what we do”.

“...for research purposes cookers, freezers and high powered laser equipment must be left on for a long time”.

They are therefore unlikely to select sensemaking cues from carbon emission targets and other related frameworks. In effect, for academics engaged in high level energy consumption, there is a disjunction in their sensemaking process especially in their attempt to reconcile between meeting carbon emission targets and their research activities. This is by no means to say that academics are opposed to the idea of carbon reduction. Their concern is that carbon reduction should not interfere with intensive research work. Academics therefore select alternative sensemaking cues from personal sensemaking frames that do not compromise their core research activities. Indications consequently suggest that in situations where meeting the University’s KPI targets seems to interfere with academics core strategic activities, academics draw on alternative and more subtle personal and organizational sensemaking frames autonomous to the strategic process to enable them make sense and engage without compromising on doing research. These autonomous sensemaking frames therefore form the dominant lenses through which academics make sense and engage with the strategic process.

Summary

The second section above has discussed administrators' autonomous sensemaking process. Essentially it has outlined three dominant sensemaking frameworks from which academics select sensemaking cues to understand and engage with the University's SRS strategy. The three sensemaking frames are made up of academic freedom, newness in sustainability and research work frames. The findings support the idea that academics draw on autonomous sensemaking frames which do not emanate from the strategic process. Academics draw on the academic freedom frame which enables them to make sense and engage with the strategy by appropriating the freedom to engage in strategy more independently and with higher levels of flexibility. Based on the newness in sustainability frame, they select cues that enable them engage with the strategy in innovative ways, particularly in terms its processes. Academics also draw on the research work sensemaking frame by rejecting other frames and cues which detract and interfere with their core business of doing research work. As such, they select cues which enable them to engage in extensive research. Altogether, academics select sensemaking cues based predominantly on research, personal, social and organizational policies and standards to aid their sensemaking and practice of the SRS strategy.

So far, the two sections above have unpacked rich details pertaining to the thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. These findings explain the first part of the thesis framework in **Figure 3.1**, (as well as **Figure 4.1**). The framework has been contextually explored to reveal middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process from the view point of administrators and academics in a university. It provides clear illustrations which prove that giving their strategic roles, administrators draw on sensemaking frames which stem from or are dependent on the SRS strategic process, while academics draw on sensemaking frames which emanate outside of or are autonomous to the strategic process. Altogether, the thesis identified three dependent sensemaking frames (legislation, accounting and reporting and organizational image), and three autonomous sensemaking frames (academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work).

The section below presents evidence in support of the thesis idea to juxtapose the six dominant sensemaking frames against DiMaggio and Powel's framework on institutional isomorphism. The intent is to establish links between the sensemaking literature and institutional theory.

PART THREE - APPLYING INSTITUTIONAL THEORY TO SENSEMAKING

Generally, institutional theory is concerned with analysing institutional forces and pressures on organizations especially in terms of how institutional environments influence organizational structure, characteristics and behaviour of institutional (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Carroll 1993; Scott 1995; Dacin 1997; Scott 2008). In particular, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) outline three main factors which describe types of institutional pressures which make organizations look similar within a given industry. Subsequently, other organizational theorists have also discussed factors which make organizations look dissimilar in industries (Kostova, 1997). Scott (1995) also establishes a framework useful for analysing institutional forces and pressures that organizations are faced with.

4.10 LINKING ISOMORPHIC PRESSURE WITH THE CURRENT THESIS FINDINGS

The thesis adopts DiMaggio and Powell's (1983), three institutional pressures - coercive, mimetic and normative pressures – to analyse and explain the thesis findings on administrators and academics simultaneous sensemaking process particularly in light of the six dominant sensemaking frames. Essentially, coercive, mimetic and normative pressures are directly associated with everyday pressures based on the nature of work that administrators and academics do. These everyday pressures directly impact administrators and academics sensemaking process in terms of their selection of dominant cues as they attempt to make sense of their University's strategy.

Table 4.1 below presents a simple representation of how DiMaggio and Powell's framework will be used to explain the finding.

Table 4.1 DiMaggio and Powell's Framework

	Coercive pressures	Mimetic pressures	Normative pressures
Dependent sensemaking process	Legislation	Accounting and reporting	Organizational image

Autonomous sensemaking process	Academic freedom	Newness in sustainability	Research work

A more detailed use of the framework is presented in **Table 4.2** under section **4.10.4** below.

4.10.1 Coercive isomorphism

In general, coercive isomorphism is associated with coercive pressures which arise from external legislative pressures, standards and responses to uncertainties in institutional environments. The thesis findings on sensemaking frameworks relating to ‘legislation and convention’ and ‘academic freedom’, provide good examples of coercive isomorphism. The findings suggest that administrators’ acquiescence to legislation and convention, and academics exercise of academic freedom are functions of their response to coercive isomorphism pressures.

With regards to legislation and convention in particular, demonstrations of coercive pressure are clearly evident in the form of government pressures and other political and policy influences which force Scottish universities to conform to set national and international standards and regulations governing sustainability practices. As universities mandatorily conform to legislative standards and processes, they become actively engaged in industry isomorphism. By adopting similar legislative standards, processes and practices, universities become similar or isomorphic in nature. The thesis findings clearly indicate that the adoption of sustainability strategies by universities enable institutional isomorphism in loosely coupled university environments.

On another level, the thesis finding on the concept of academic freedom is also observed to be directly related to coercive isomorphism. Unlike legislative pressures, this is evident specifically in terms of coercive pressures relating to legitimacy. It is obvious that academics employ academic freedom to legitimize the exercise of high levels of flexibility in the strategic process. In loosely coupled university environments, academics establish and maintain accepted levels of distinctiveness in their everyday strategic roles and responsibilities. The concept of academic freedom thus legitimizes academics behaviour in loosely coupled systems. Within the thesis

context, academics ensure this high level of academic freedom is similarly exercised in the process of adopting and implementing the University's SRS strategy. The findings indicate that the higher the level of academic freedom, the greater the extent of academic legitimacy established in loosely coupled systems. Consequently, the greater the extent of academic legitimacy established, the greater the amount of institutional isomorphic behaviours that takes place with respect to sustainability adoption in universities.

Generally, coercive isomorphism involves soft or hard regulatory pressures on organization behaviours, especially regarding organizations adherence to global and national charters. The findings indicate that legislative and legitimacy coercive pressures tend to be direct and explicit as well as subtle and less explicit in their occurrence. Legitimacy pressures however appear more subtle and less explicit than legislative pressures.

4.10.2 Mimetic isomorphism

Mimetic pressures are pressures which generally result from standards and responses to uncertainties. Uncertainties in industries can arise from issues relating to poor technology and ambiguity in goals for example (DiMaggio and Powel 1983). These uncertainties may force organizations to engage in isomorphic behaviours. The thesis findings on sensemaking frames relating to accounting and reporting and newness of sustainability indicates that they arise from mimetic pressures. In respect to the accounting and reporting sensemaking frame for example, industry pressures compel organizations to document annual reports on their sustainability activities. Although accounting and reporting of sustainability practices is less mandatory and more self-governing than coercive pressures arising from legislations and conventions compliance for example, the idea behind universities reporting their sustainability behaviours is similarly aimed at achieving levels of industry uniformity.

On another level, the newness of sustainability sensemaking frame is linked to mimetic pressures arising from organizational responses to ambiguities which are inherent in the practice of sustainability strategies. In general, the adoption of sustainability strategies in organizations is underpinned by uncertainties in environmental, social, legal and other key areas. For example, in the face of uncertainties regarding ambiguities in the meaning of sustainability and how it is to be

operationalized and reported, organizations mimic what they perceive as best industry practices to help reduce such ambiguities. This usually leads to achieving industry isomorphism. The findings on the newness of sustainability sensemaking frame especially suggest that academics are in search of new ways of engaging with the sustainability concept, in the quest to arrive at a collective meaning of sustainability. To establish isomorphic behaviour in respect to the new way of thinking frame, academics advocate for a shift in focus from focusing on the innovativeness in adopting the strategy, to identifying and engaging in unique innovative processes in the practice of the strategy. They believe that there is less novelty in adopting the sustainability concept, and more novelty in engaging in innovative processes in the practice of the concept. The findings indicate that innovative processes can be harnessed and standardized overtime. For example, mimetic pressure can lead universities to copy innovative practices such as efficient energy saving methods from industry leaders, which then leads to transfer of innovative practices and standardization within the industry.

The need for industry standardization is unavoidable in the sense that despite the fact that some organizational theorist argue that organizations actually strive to look dissimilar (Kostova 1997), DiMaggio and Powel (1983:152, however argue that there is very little variation in diversity for institutions to select from in order to enhance dissimilarity. This means that organizations are more likely to acquiesce to institutional coercion especially in their quest to resolve organizational and strategic uncertainties

4.10.3 Normative isomorphism

The concept of normative isomorphism focuses on issues regarding moral prescriptions and professionalism. By professionalism, the theorists mainly refer to collective struggles by members of particular occupations or professions to define conditions and methods of their work, control work production, and legitimize their work (DiMaggio and Powel 1983). The thesis findings relating to normative isomorphism is linked directly to the sensemaking frames on ‘organizational image’ and ‘research work’. These provide clear examples of normative pressures.

The issues discussed under organizational image and research work indicates that both sensemaking frames are concerned with socialization of work patterns or specialized work based

on distinct professions. By responding to normative pressures, administrators and academics draw on dominant sensemaking frames to enhance the University's image as a collective group of professionals actively engaged in sustainability practices. In particular, administrators draw on sensemaking frames to enhance their roles mainly as SRS strategist and managers of SRS initiatives, while academics enhance their role as professionals who are primarily engaged in teaching and research. Administrators and academics thus comply with normative pressures to preserve their respective professions. It is therefore established that based on their professions, academics from Business studies backgrounds are engaged in sustainability practices from a business perspective, while academics from Science studies backgrounds engage mainly from scientific and environmental perspectives. DiMaggio and Powel (1983), argue that the greater the extent of professionalism in the field, the greater the amount of institutional isomorphic change that occurs. Evidently, normative pressures based on the need for industry professionals to work and behave similarly are the drive behind the thesis observation of isomorphic behaviour in relation to administrators' dependent sensemaking process and academics autonomous sensemaking process. The role of administrators in achieving deliberate sustainability initiatives and the role of academics in achieving unexpected sustainability initiatives are directly linked to issues of professionalism and the continuous struggle for professionals to clearly define and socialize their work in favour of institutional isomorphism. `

4.10.4 Expanding links between sensemaking and institutional pressures

Table 4.2 below presents an extended tabular representation of the application of DiMaggio and Powel's model on institutional isomorphism to the thesis findings on simultaneous sensemaking. In line with the discussions above, the table provides examples of coercive, mimetic and normative pressures identified from the thesis data. These are mapped against some specific themes on sensemaking. They include summaries on sources of sensemaking frames which administrators' and academics draw from, complexities and challenges inherent in their sensemaking processes, as well as some implications of administrators and academics sensemaking on the nature of middle managers work in loosely coupled organizational contexts.

Table 4.2 Linking sensemaking and institutional theory

	Coercive pressures	Normative pressures	Mimetic pressures
Administrators Dominant Sensemaking Frames	Legislations and conventions	Accounting and reporting	Organizational image
<i>Sources of sensemaking frames and cues</i>	Pressures from global campaigns, debates, discussions. Talloires Declaration (1990) UK and Scottish Government strategies on sustainable development. Westland University's SRS strategy	Pressures to comply with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework. University KPI goals aimed at carbon emission reduction targets. Self-governing goals on reporting sustainability practices.	Pressures to achieve organizational aims of becoming an industry leader in the adoption and practice of sustainable development.
<i>Complexities and challenges in administrators sensemaking process</i>	Complexities regarding disconnect between legislative and University goals. Complexities concerning lack of organizational buy-in.	Complexities involved in meeting carbon emissions targets in the face of increasing rates of inflation. Complexities embedded in inadequate reporting indicators.	Challenges in engaging more with internal and external communities and stakeholders in respect of sustainable development practices.

<i>Implications of sensemaking on the nature of academic work in loosely couple systems</i>	Administrators generally acquiesce to legislative pressures in line with the nature of their work. In loosely coupled organizations, sustainability objectives are generally achieved as intended due to administrative compliance.	Administrators are actively engaged in accounting and reporting, even as a self-regulatory practice.	The role of administrators in projecting and managing the University's sustainability image is paramount to the SRS strategic process.
Academics Dominant Sensemaking Frames	The Edinburgh Way (academic freedom).	Newness in Sustainability Process	Research work (Academics core business).
<i>Sources of sensemaking frames and cues</i>	Pressures from academics claim to legitimacy in relation to their ability to exercise greater levels of flexibility in their work.	Pressures arising from inherent ambiguities in understanding the meaning of sustainability. Uncertainties involved in how sustainability strategies are operationalized in organizations.	Pressures emanating from academics intent to achieve greater extent of professionalism. Pressures arising from the need to socialize work patterns and specialize organizational work based on professions.
<i>Complexities and challenges in academics sensemaking process</i>	Challenges involving what academics perceive as a lack of institutional support. Resistance to organizational change with regards to sustainability practices. Effects of organizational culture on the SRS strategy creation process.	Complexities regarding the extent to which the concept of sustainability adoption and practice in organizations can be considered as new. Challenges surrounding duplication of sustainability related policies.	Challenges in high levels of commitment to teaching and research, yet lower levels of commitment to other important strategic activities.
<i>Implications of sensemaking on the nature of academic</i>	Based on their nature of work, academics exercise of academic freedom leads to	Academics are actively engaged in establishing innovative	Academics commitment to their core strategic activities helps

<i>work in loosely coupled systems</i>	unexpected strategic outcomes. Unexpected outcomes affirm the idea of emergent strategy formation in loosely coupled organizations.	processes in sustainability strategies than they are in the idea of simply adopting an innovative strategy.	extend sustainability practices beyond everyday administrative initiatives into teaching and research.
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Summary

The DiMaggio and Powell (1983) framework provides a nuanced understanding of other factors which were likely to have influenced middle managers sensemaking selection process. In essence, middle managers selection process was likely influenced by both internal factors in the form of sensemaking triggers as well as external factors in the form of isomorphic pressures. The framework thus is useful in drawing links between cognitive and institutional triggers and pressure which impact middle managers sensemaking of organizational strategic processes.

Overall, the thesis findings provide clear links between institutional isomorphism and sensemaking. The dominant sensemaking frames that administrators and academics draw on to make sense of their University’s SRS strategic process provide distinct examples in support of DiMaggio and Powel’s (1983) three types of institutional pressures. There are obvious links between legislations and academic freedom sensemaking frames and coercive pressures. While administrators draw on legislative and convention sensemaking frames due to external legislative pressures, academics draw on the academic freedom sensemaking frame in response to uncertainties related to establishing legitimacy in their organizational roles. Furthermore, the accounting and reporting, and new way of thinking sensemaking frameworks also emanate from mimetic pressures. While administrators draw on accounting and reporting frameworks due to institutional pressures related to standardization, academics draw on the new way of thinking sensemaking framework as a result of pressures related to ambiguities in sustainability strategies and the need to standardize meanings of sustainability. Finally, findings relating to sensemaking frames on organizational image and research work result from normative pressures. These sensemaking frames arise from pressures to socialize work patterns and specialize work based on professions.

Chapter summary on simultaneous sensemaking process

Extant research on the sensemaking concept has generally positioned sensemaking as a singular process which usually occurs between individuals or a group of people. Middle managers for example have been classified and studied as a specific singular set of managers (Woolridge et. al 2008), who engage in a singular process of sensemaking (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Hope, 2010). This thesis however has identified and classified middle managers in loosely coupled organizations such as Westland University, as comprising of two distinct sets of organizational actors – administrators and academics. The distinction is made primarily based on the dynamics and differences in their strategic roles and nature of work. This subsequently led to the discovery of two different sensemaking processes between the two sets. The thesis discovers that as two distinct sets of middle managers, university administrators and academics engage in different types of sensemaking processes to order to understand, implement and facilitate strategic change in their organization. The two sensemaking processes are observed to occur simultaneously within the strategic process.

The thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking processes is thus established through the findings which confirm that while administrators draw on sensemaking frames internal to and dependent on the SRS strategic process, academics on the other hand draw on sensemaking frames external to and autonomous of the SRS strategic process. In essence, administrators generally draw on and reframe already existing information and knowledge structure within the strategic process, while academics mainly draw on new frames from the environment especially from personal and social knowledge structures. It is evident that the dependent and autonomous simultaneous sensemaking processes are akin to administrators and academics strategic roles and nature of work in their organization. Administrators draw on particular frameworks mainly dependent on the administrative strategic work they engage in, while academics also draw on specific frames based on the academic strategic work they engage in. The thesis therefore establishes that strategic roles and the nature of work impacts middle managers sensemaking process in loosely coupled systems. The data suggests that it is unlikely for administrators and academics to draw on the same sensemaking frameworks or undergo the same sensemaking process at the same time.

In spite of this revelation however, the discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process has hitherto been gravely overlooked to the detriment of sensemaking studies. The thesis' overarching aim is therefore established by demonstrating in depth that administrators draw on legislations, accounting and reporting, and organizational image sensemaking frameworks, while academics draw on academic freedom, newness in sustainability process and research work sensemaking frames in their attempt to understand their University's SRS strategy. The thesis also adopts DiMaggio and Powell's framework on institutional theory to further analyse the six sensemaking frames. These sensemaking frames provide relevant examples in support of the model's coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphic pressures. The findings suggest that isomorphic pressures provoke and enable administrators and academics selection process of dominant sensemaking frames.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates the existence and configuration of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes as particularly related to the dominant sensemaking frames they select and the associated links between the dominant frames and institutional isomorphic pressures.

The thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process identifies both dominant and subtle sensemaking frames. Administrators and academics select both dominant and subtle sensemaking cues to aid their sensemaking of the SRS strategy. Dominant cues alone do not always provide all the appropriate cues needed for individual's sensemaking processes. Resultantly, individuals intrinsically modify their selection and interpretation of cues by drawing on less dominant or subtle sensemaking frames. Subtle cues augment dominant sensemaking cues by providing additional information needed to make sense of complex information and situations. The thesis is therefore interested in exploring administrators and academics selection process of subtle sensemaking cues in the chapter five below.

Chapter 5 SUBTLE SENSEMAKING FRAMES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to support the argument that loosely coupled university organizations are not predominantly loosely coupled but are also tightly coupled to some degree (Rubin 1979; Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990). The thesis findings indicate that depending on their nature of work, tightly and loosely coupled patterns and activities provide appropriate context for administrators and academics to select subtle sensemaking frames to enhance their sensemaking process. Resultantly, the chapter's findings demonstrate that institutions impact administrators and academics selection of subtle sensemaking frames.

Universities and schools are atypical example of loosely coupled system because they are largely autonomous and responsive, and less rationally controlled (Weick 1976; 1982; Meyer and Scott 1983; Orton and Weick 1990). University context are characterized by weak or relatively absent control, influence, coordination, and interaction among events, components, and processes (Pajak and Green 2003:395). They have high levels of decentralization and disorganization and abnormally low levels of coordination, consensus and control (Ingersoll 1991:7). Additionally, organizational elements and patterns in universities are responsive and distinct in the sense that they are generally independent of each other (Orton and Weick 1990). The essence of responsiveness, distinctiveness and independence means that organizational elements are

independent of each other in terms of their functioning abilities. In other words, organizational elements such as people, tasks structure and subsystems are not interdependent or do not closely rely on each other to operate. The more independent elements are of each other, the higher it is that the rate of a change in one element will not affect a change in the others (Weick 1976; Dubois and Gadde 2002; Dorée and Holmen 2004). In general, loosely coupled systems are described as such because their elements operate in a predominantly flexible, independent and autonomous manner.

In spite of this general classification however, researchers increasingly argue that as a loosely coupled organization, universities are not predominantly loosely coupled as has been repeatedly portrayed (Rubin 1979; Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990). This argument is further explored in much depth as the bases of the chapter's overall aim of exploring links between middle managers sensemaking process and loosely coupled organizational context.

5.2 LOOSELY COUPLED SYSTEMS ARE NOT PREDOMINANTLY LOOSELY COUPLED

Tyler (1987:32) argues that the existence of predominantly loose coupling activities in a loosely coupled system does not necessarily imply the absence of tight coupling activities in the system. For example, the existence of low levels of coordination in academic work does not imply that academics lack a shared sense of strategic direction (Vironment c.f Weick 1982:675) or connectedness (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980). This school of thoughts point to the fact that university systems vary in degrees between tightly coupled and loosely coupled systems. Organizational elements and linkages in loosely coupled systems are affected not only by loosely coupled interdeterminacy and interdependency activities, but are also affected by tightly coupled determinacy and dependency activities (Orton and Weick 1990). In other words elements and activities in loosely coupled organizations are affected by tight coupling patterns as they are by loose coupling patterns.

Although the idea that loosely coupled systems do not exclusively practice loose coupling, has gained acceptance and popularity overtime, yet the degree and extent of 'coupledness'(Weick 1976; Orton and Weick 1990) in loosely coupled systems is still unknown. In essence degrees to

which loosely coupled systems are tightly coupled (or not simply loosely coupled), have not yet been explored in much depth. Researchers have not completely ignored investigating degrees to which universities are a combination of tight and loose coupling systems, yet it receives far less attention and investigation than it should.

The increased interest in investigating degrees of coupledness is generally attributed to the fact that the debate on coupling has been extended from simply examining degrees and extent of coupling in systems, to investigating patterns of coupling in systems. It is argued that organizational classifications based on degrees of tight and loose coupling practices should not be the crucial determinants of organizations degree of coupledness (Weick 1976; Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990). In other words, to determine the extent to which an organization is coupled, describing it as a predominantly tightly or predominantly loosely coupled alone is not enough. The researchers argue that the crucial determinants for describing the extent of coupledness should be based on exploring patterns of coupling in organizations. To explore patterns of coupling means to identify characteristics of both tightly and loosely coupling features which exists in organizational activities over a period of time. This calls for identifying specific organizational practices and activities that can be described as tightly coupled patterns and loosely coupled patterns over a given period. The understanding is that identifying patterns of coupling instead of simply identifying degrees or extent of coupling is imperative to understanding the complexities of coupledness inherent in coupled systems. This research gap is therefore being called to attention.

The thesis interest in this research gap is to demonstrate the fact that patterns of coupledness provide sources of subtle sensemaking cues for administrators and academics sensemaking process.

5.2.1 Subtle sensemaking frames

In the previous chapter, the thesis demonstrated that the loosely coupled nature of universities influences how midlevel administrators and academics select dominant sensemaking frames. The essence of their sensemaking process is essentially to resolve disruptions in their understanding of the University's Social Responsibility and Sustainability Strategy. People usually draw on dominant sensemaking frameworks and select appropriate sensemaking cues to make sense of any

given situations. However, when selections of dominant sensemaking cues do not resolve the disruption, the sensemaking process is modified in intricate ways which allow individuals to draw on additional cues (Gioia and Mehra 1996:1,229). Such cues are usually less dominant and more subtle in nature. Subtle cues can be drawn from additional information and frames useful in establishing meaning in complex situations. Subtle cues can be drawn from an individual's respective beliefs (Trice, 1993; Weick, 1995), from their personality, circle of influence, available instruments and their own scope of understanding (Cramer et.al 2004). Subtle sensemaking frames compliment dominant sensemaking frames in a manner that provides a holistic approach to individuals sensemaking processes.

In the context of this thesis, from interactions with actors and personal observations it became clear that subtle sensemaking frames are drawn predominantly from other coupled patterns and activities which administrators and academics are actively involved in. Generally, the thesis describes subtle frames as less obvious frames which administrators and academics draw on as part of their sensemaking attempts of the SRS strategy. In respect of administrators, the evidence of subtle sensemaking frames in this research demonstrates that even though administrators' sensemaking process may be predominantly dependent on the existing strategic process, they additionally select subtle sensemaking frames. For example, although administrators' strategic work is described as predominantly rigid and bureaucratic in nature (Bartell 2003), the findings suggests that administrative work is actually more flexibly than has been studied. Interactions and highlights about administrators in the strategic documents in particular confirm that administrative work is more flexible and its elements (task, goals, structure, subsystems and people) are more independent and responsive than already portrayed. In essence, as much as administrators draw on dominant sensemaking frames which are dependent on the strategic process, their sensemaking of the strategic process is also enhanced by selecting more subtle sensemaking cues, some of which emanate outside the strategic process.

Similarly this chapter also presents evidence to demonstrate that although academic sensemaking process is fundamentally underpinned by an autonomous sensemaking process, academic work is however less flexible than has been explored. It is argued that elements in academic work are more interdependent and interdeterminate than has been studied (Weick 1976; Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980;

Orton and Weick 1990). Essentially, academic work is coupled with increased levels of patterns of connectedness and control and also more coordinated than previously presented. Hence, although academics draw on dominant sensemaking frames which are autonomous of the strategic process, their sensemaking process is also further enhanced by drawing on subtle sensemaking frames.

Essentially, the chapter establishes links between middle managers selection of subtle sensemaking frames and patterns of coupling in loosely coupled organizations.

5.2.2 Linking patterns of coupling and subtle sensemaking frames

This chapter is essentially aligned with the thoughts of organizational theorists who advocate for more research to focus not only on identifying and investigating degrees of loosely coupled patterns but also degrees of tightly coupled patterns in loosely coupled systems (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Aldrich, 1980; Orton and Weick 1990; Dubois and Gadde 2002; Greena and Swanson 2011). This idea that loosely coupled systems are not predominantly loosely coupled but also tightly coupled in nature supports the thesis observation that indicates that administrators and academics additionally engage in tightly coupled patterns of work to compliment predominantly loosely coupled nature of work. In effect, the nature of administrative and academics work is influenced by a combination of loosely coupled and tightly coupled patterns. The thesis further demonstrates that the combination of tight and loose patterns of work directly impacts administrators and academics sensemaking process especially as it enables them to draw on alternative sources of sensemaking frameworks

To contribute to investigations into patterns of coupling patterns in university contexts, the thesis provides nuanced details to demonstrate how administrators and academics draw on subtle sensemaking frames and select subtle sensemaking cues during their sensemaking processes. The thesis demonstrates that subtle sensemaking frames are derived from two main sources. These are made up of sources pertaining to degrees of flexibility in predominantly rigid type administrative work and sources pertaining to degrees of connectedness in predominantly flexible type academic

work. Degrees of flexibility and degrees of connectedness therefore constitute subtle sensemaking triggers for administrators and academics.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part provides nuanced details of patterns of flexibility in administrative strategic work and details of patterns of connectedness in academic strategic work. The second part further advances the investigations by shifting the focus from coupling patterns in administrators and academics strategic work to examine levels of interrelationships between administrators, academics and other organizational elements. The thesis interest in patterns of interdependency is supported by the findings which indicate that the study of relational patterns in loosely coupled systems is strongly linked to middle managers sensemaking processes.

Discussions in this chapter emerged during the research process, particularly during the data collection and analysis period. The discussions essentially demonstrate that the thesis surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process is mostly enhanced in loosely coupled contexts. The subject matter is however not represented in the Universities strategic documents. Therefore the chapter draws mainly on interviews and observations to effectively discuss the emerged issues.

In the sections below, part one thus begins with discussions on patterns of flexibility in administrative strategic work, which is followed by part two on patterns of connectedness in academic strategic work, and then end with patterns of interdependency.

PART ONE

5.3 PATTERNS OF FLEXIBILITY IN ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIC WORK

Generally, administrative work is driven by patterns of rigidity or patterns associated with bureaucracy, management philosophies, control and procedural requirements (Tyler 1987; Bartell 2003). The use of administrative executive authority in particular is a fundamental requirement for managing universities. The nuances of executive authority, higher patterns of rigidity and how they influence administrators' selection process of dominant sensemaking frames and cues has already been examined in much depth in the preceding chapter.

The remaining part of this chapter is however positioned in support of growing arguments that posit that the existence of increased levels of executive authority and bureaucracies in core strategy creation processes in universities does not however mean that strategy creation and administrative work in universities lack forms and patterns of flexibility. The thesis evidence supports the idea that predominant bureaucratic strategy creation processes are complimented with other supportive strategies laden with high levels of adaptation and flexibility.

Westland University's SRS strategy process is generally a highly adaptive strategy. It is less coordinated and controlled. It is essentially highly responsive and it can function almost independently of other elements and strategies in the University system. Weick and Orton (1990) posit that the rate of responsiveness of a strategy depends on the level of relationship between the strategy being adopted and the overall organizational values. Levels of relationship in this context refer to the necessary adjustments required to be made by other organizational elements in order to accommodate the introduction of new strategies. For instance, there is a low demand for other elements and strategies to make fundamental shifts and adjustments in respect to introducing the SRS strategy. The strategy has primarily been established and maintained without fundamental structural changes or impacts on already existing university policies and strategies. In essence, as a highly responsive strategic process, generally, the SRS strategy does not impose itself on other organizational elements, processes and strategies for effective functioning and survival. It has higher levels of independence and lower levels of interdependencies. This does not however mean that the SRS strategy is totally independent on its own.

Fundamental to the strategy's high levels of responsiveness and independency is that it creates opportunities for flexible engagements with the strategic process. For example, administrators describe the strategy as a fundamentally 'top-down' strategy. This is because the tenets of the SRS strategy were set by senior strategist and high ranking university committees, it was endorsed as a statute by the University Court and then handed down to administrators and other staff to operationalize. However, a careful scrutiny of the SRS strategy itself indicates that at best, the core tenet provides the framework for the University's sustainability engagement but does not indicate how the strategic framework and strategic objectives must be operationalized. The

operationalization process consequently adopts a ‘bottom-up’ approach. The bottom-up strategic approach complements the SRS strategy’s adaptive and flexible nature in that it allows the strategy process to be operationalized from the grass root level in which organizational members (instead of strategist), become ‘owners’ of the strategy. It provides opportunities for administrators to engage with the strategy in less bureaucratic ways and instead engage through high levels of flexibility.

For example, the SRS department strongly maintain that the success of the strategic process depends on relevant stakeholders (especially administrators), who employ flexible bottom-up strategic approaches to achieve strategic goals. The first person to illustrate this point was a coordinator of the SRS department. He explained that:

“The SRS strategy is a top-down approach. However our (the SRS department) approach has always been a bottom-up approach...”

“The big aims of the strategy are top-down. But we need the bottom-up approach to make it work”

“How to make both approaches work is what is important”

The coordinator’s view was further supported by a manager of a sustainability initiative when asked if the strategy was to be adhered to through specific rules of engagement:

“We have not set out specifics as to how to engage with sustainability”.

A look at any of the SRS strategic documents especially annual SRS implementation plans (2010 – 2014), clearly spells out names of administrators who represent lead contact persons responsible for numerous SRS task grouped under the five main themes of the University’s (2010-2020) Strategic plan (Studying, Research, Engagement and communication programme, Climate action plan and Support best practices, innovation and leadership). Interviews with most of the lead contacts clearly indicated that their roles were not mandatorily allocated to them. Instead they took

on lead positions based on their personal interest and engagement or because they simply volunteered to do so.

A clear example of operating nonspecific goals is exemplified in the University's carbon reduction plan. For example, although university-wide targets have been set for carbon reduction, departmental targets are however not clearly defined. Departments engage with the process based on personal discretion instead of motivations from the strategic process on carbon reduction. Departmental motivations for carbon reduction thus differ depending on managers internal and external motives.

From their onsets, SRS strategic documents noticeably point to existing high levels of flexibility in the roles of SRS lead persons. This includes statements such as:

The 2010 actions are to be taken forward under the aegis of the named colleagues responsible for their achievement. (SRS Implementation Plan 2010:5)

This point is confirmed respectively by the Transport and Waste and Management managers, as well as a manager of a sustainability initiative:

“Primarily, the travel and transport policy and target comes from me based on my own interpretation of what can be achieved and also based on the contracts the department has”

“My decisions are based on anything that can be and cannot be done or what is achievable. My influence comes from peers (outside the university) and articles but not influenced from within. What I do does not arise from the strategic plan necessarily...”

“The motivation came from me and it is much a bigger enterprise than the University's sustainability agenda”

The existing high levels of adaptation and flexibility in the operationalization process thus empowers administrative managers to set personal objectives based on lower levels of control, coordination and interdependency with other organizational elements. As an oversight authority of the strategy, the SRS department also employs high levels of flexibility in coordinating the University-wide sustainability activities. This role is described by the Waste and Management manager:

“The SRS centre does not try to coordinate all (sustainability) group activities. It engages with the different activities and groups to make their area more sustainable”.

These views are supported by statements in various SRS strategic documents such as the 2010 SRS Implementation Plan in particular:

“... to assist with coordination and oversight, progress in delivering the 2010 actions will be monitored and reported by the Sustainability and Environment Advisory Group, (SEAG) and SEAG Operations Group. (SRS Implementation Plan 2010:5)

The aim of adopting low levels of control is to encourage ownership of sustainability initiatives as well as to promote a communal and inclusive SRS agenda. This key objective of the department as reiterated by a member of the SRS department:

“To have a communal agenda, we encourage individual understanding and personal ownership”.

“... We want our staff and student to take ownership (of their initiatives)”.

It is further explained that taking ownership transcend beyond simply establishing sustainability policies and initiatives, to managing initiatives overtime in a way that ensures relevance to the overall SRS strategic process. Taking ownership means that administrators are responsible totally for the success or failure of sustainability initiatives and activities their department and teams engage in.

So far, the examples above represent good illustrations of levels of flexibility associated with administrative work. It supports the idea that patterns of rigidity and control in loosely coupled systems is complimented with patterns of adaptation and flexibility. With particular reference to this thesis, the examples above demonstrate that administrative work which is typically laden in bureaucracies, control and procedural requirements and standards, is also laden with high patterns of flexibility and autonomy.

Subtle sensemaking frame selection

Having established the existence of patterns of flexibility and autonomy in administrators work, the thesis further establishes links between patterns of flexibility in administrative work and administrators' sensemaking process. Basically, the thesis establishes that patterns of flexibility in administrative work directly influence the types of sensemaking frames and cues administrators select to enhance their understanding of the strategic process. Triggers emanating from patterns of flexibility in administrators strategic work therefore form the main source of subtle sensemaking frames out of which administrators draw their understanding of the SRS strategy. In relation to this assertion, the information presented demonstrates that the sensemaking frames administrators select are not only drawn from dominant bureaucratic and procedural requirement sources as presented in the previous chapter. On the contrary, their interview supports the existence of subtle sensemaking triggers. These subtle sensemaking frames arise out of administrative work and practices which are less bureaucratic and more autonomous in nature. For example, as illustrated above, the level of flexibility exercised by administrative heads of department to employ flexible bottom-up strategic approaches, as well as their ability to take ownership for strategic initiatives provide subtle sensemaking cues which administrators draw on to make sense of the SRS strategy. Existing patterns of autonomy and flexibility thus allow administrators to draw less on dominant sensemaking cues, and instead select more subtle sensemaking frames sourced from patterns of flexibility. Overall, triggers emanating from patterns of flexibility in administrators strategic work consequently enables administrators to deselect dominant sensemaking cues in favour of the less subtle sensemaking frames described above.

The discussions on patterns of flexibility in administrative work supports growing research interest to illustrate that inasmuch as core administrative work in loosely coupled systems is generally

rigid, the presence of bureaucracy does not however imply the absence of high levels of flexibility, adaptation and autonomy. Higher levels of flexibility in administrative work provide additional sensemaking triggers in the form of subtle sensemaking frames which enhances the process of sensemaking. Drawing on combinations of subtle and dominant sensemaking frames is imperative to any sensemaking process. The thesis thus contributes to the knowledge that autonomy in administrative work and its effect on administrators' choice in selecting subtle sensemaking frames significantly heightens the importance and dynamic of sensemaking processes in loosely coupled systems.

Summary

The aim of engaging in increased patterns of flexibility and autonomy in administrative work is not simply to reclassify the nature of administrative work in loosely coupled systems. Increases patterns of flexibility are not significant enough to change the nature of core bureaucratic administrative work. However, the observations are essential in providing further knowledge into the importance and dynamics of levels of autonomy in administrative work on two main levels. On a first level, it is important in explaining how patterns of flexibility can coexist with high levels of bureaucracy and procedural requirements without destroying the essence and bureaucracy in universities. By and large, the exercise of executive authority, bureaucracy, procedural requirements etc., will remain fundamental to core administrative work in loosely coupled systems. They will provide sources for selecting dominant sensemaking frames in understanding strategic processes. Yet on a second level, patterns of flexibility in administrative work also play a significant role in providing subtle sensemaking triggers for their sensemaking process. As sources of subtle sensemaking frames, patterns of flexibility are equally essential in administrators' sensemaking process and fundamental to the success of adoption and implementation of strategies in loosely coupled organizations.

5.3.1 Patterns of connectedness in academics strategic work

Generally, academic work is underpinned by patterns associated with uncoordinated elements, academics autonomy, collegial process and multiplicity of units and standards (Bartell 2003). Academic activities are driven by high levels of autonomy (Weick 1976; Bartell 2003), which is often described as academic freedom. The existence of academic freedom is at the heart of university operations and survival. It is the freedom that enables academics to engage in academic work and connect with organizational elements and strategies while employing usual increased levels of autonomy. The nuances of academic freedom, increased levels of autonomy, and how these affect academics sensemaking of strategy have already been examined in much depth in the previous chapter.

This part of the chapter further extends the argument above and presents facts in support of an extended argument which establishes that exercising academic freedom and high autonomy however does not imply that academic work lacks control or connectedness (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980; Weick and Orton 1990). In essence, exercising academic freedom does not mean that academics are mostly disconnected from other elements, task, people or subsystems in the organization. In fact, organizational theorists argue that research has erred on the side of overemphasizing the presence of disconnectedness in organizations (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980). In loosely coupled systems in particular, the existence of disconnectedness is typically observed in academic work. Academic freedom is often associated with lack of coordination and control.

In recent times however, a lot more demands have been placed on university departments, units and schools especially related to setting targets that fit into overall organizational objectives. Additionally, financial cuts from governments and stakeholders, as well as other environmental pressures and demands have forced universities to operate like other traditional forms of business (Tyler 1987). There is therefore growing recognition to increase collaborations among units, departments and schools to ensure efficient capacity building, cost sharing mechanisms and achieving objectives. For example a closer look at the role of academics in the SRS strategy process supports the idea that academics are engaged in what is referred to as, thoughts about ‘structural connections, rather than structural disconnections’ (Weick and Orton 1990). The argument promotes increasing awareness of the fact that academics are engaged in more structured or organized activities than has been assumed. For instance, academics are working less

independently and engaged in more collaborative efforts with other university elements to meet the SRS carbon emission targets in particular. The role of academics in the process of connectedness and coordination is increasingly being emphasized as essential to university success.

There are constant references in speech and text of the need to achieve an ‘institutional approach’ for SRS success. This objective is stated explicitly in the first SRS implementation plan:

We aim to develop – and make explicit as an exemplar for the University community and others globally and locally – a whole-institution approach to social responsibility and sustainability. (SRS Implementation plan 2010:2)

“... to draw widely on the University’s whole-institution approach to social responsibility and sustainability as a resource for learning and teaching”. (SRS Implementation plan 2010:3)

Academics are therefore increasingly assuming administrative-like roles in units, department and schools. For example, in spite of its characteristically administrative nature, academics also hold key administrative positions on the SEAG committee which has oversight responsibility over the day to day implementation of the SRS strategy. Hence academics keenly engage with the SRS strategic process and are at the forefront of meeting its objectives, especially as it pertains to the Climate Action Plan.

The thesis thus demonstrates that academics spearhead issues regarding energy and climate change in particular. A project list endorsed by Climate Action Plan Working Group indicates that as much as £600,000 had been spent on several major infrastructure projects and staff engagement activities for electricity reduction alone (SRS Implementation plan 2013).

The Waste Management manager explains the reason behind such active engagement:

“A lot of the SRS strategy is about energy and managing it in a more efficient manner. Climate change is very crucial here”

“Climate change has helped galvanize the strategy in a broader way. Rising fuel cost and media attention means more people are on board and engaging.”

The use of the phrase ‘*more people*’ was in particular reference to increased participation by academics.

Academics ability to connect with strategic processes is also heightened especially when adopting new strategic processes do not hinder their core strategic activities or impose themselves on other organizational policies. For example, because the sustainability strategic process is strongly aligned with other existing policies such as the environmental, ethical, transport, waste and climate change policies, academics find it relatively easier to engage with the SRS strategic process. This assertion is confirmed by an academic:

“The sustainability agenda does not necessarily change some of the University’s policies. It does not sit over other policies. It is easier for academics to connect as a result – no big change being required”.

Increased participation clearly indicates that academics are engaged in more collaborative efforts with regards to the strategic process. They generally accede that even though academic freedom is fundamental to their nature of work, there is however the need for levels of coordination and control needed to govern their engagement. The idea is supported by the following views of two academics:

“Academics like to find their own ways and do not like being told what to do. But we also need to have some policy directions”.

“If change must happen, there must be clarity and control about what is needed to happen”.

This confirms the thesis assertion that although exercising academic freedom is paramount to academics strategic activities, academics are however more structurally connected and controlled by the SRS strategic process, especially in areas related to climate action. The data from the Implementation Plans and interviews in particular supports growing discourse which advocates that in loosely coupled systems, the nature of academic work is increasingly more coordinated and controlled than has been previously assumed. It contributes to growing knowledge to promote the idea that exercising academic freedom does not mean lack of control, coordination or structural connections in academic work. Furthermore it provides additional knowledge and reveals that academics are not averse to structure and procedural requirements as has been perceived. Instead, the evidence provides proof that academics will keenly engage in structural connection if the strategic process is of significance to them. The focus on control and coordination in academic work however raises the need to find acceptable balance between exercising academic freedom, and coordination and structural connection.

Overall, the discussions above establish the existence of patterns of coordination and control in academic work in loosely coupled systems. Additional critical observation further establishes links between patterns of coordination and control and academics sensemaking process. There are clear indications that structure and control in academic work influences academics selection of sensemaking frames and cues. Academics ability to acquiesce to structure and procedural requirements within the strategic process indicates that they select alternative or subtle sensemaking cues to accomplish such goals.

Subtle sensemaking frame selection

Earlier demonstrations in the previous chapter indicates that academics select three dominant sensemaking frames in relation to academic freedom, newness in sustainability and research work, to aid their sensemaking of the SRS strategic process. The discussions above however provides additional findings which indicates that academics also select subtle less dominant sensemaking frames based on patterns of coordination and control in their strategic work. The less dominant frames are a source of subtle sensemaking triggers. The sensemaking frames academics select are influenced by levels of coordination and control in the strategic process.

Their understanding of the SRS strategy is enhanced by selecting subtle sensemaking cues directly related to their interest in energy and climate change activities. Additionally, academics select subtle sensemaking frames similar to frames previously selected in respect to already existing organizational policies and strategies. Unlike dominant sensemaking frames which are derived out of the autonomy and independence laden in academic work, subtle sensemaking frames are often derived from triggers stemming from levels of coordination and interdependency in academic activities. Triggers emanating from patterns of connectedness in academics strategic work therefore form the main source of subtle sensemaking frames out of which academics draw their understanding of the SRS strategy.

It is the thesis view that investigating patterns of structure and connectedness in universities is imperative to understanding the nuances, characteristics and nature of present-day academic work. The findings confirm that such investigations provide more understanding into the role of academic freedom in the current landscape of universities and schools. On the whole, such findings might however not necessarily lead to a reclassification of universities in terms of the extent of universities loosely coupledness, especially as employing patterns of connectedness is not as dramatic as to change or reduce the significance of academic freedom in academic work. The evidence suggests that increasing control in academic work can coexist with academic freedom without destroying the essence and autonomy in universities. The findings are however important as they provide additional knowledge into how degrees of patterns related to independency, flexibility, responsiveness, structure and connectedness in loosely coupled systems, can be better scrutinized and understood.

Summary of part one

In sum, the discussions above support the idea that academic work involves increased patterns of structure and connectedness with other organizational elements, policies and people than has been researched into. Increased levels of connectedness in academic work can be partly attributed to on-going changes in the way universities are currently being managed as business entities. It is clear that patterns of connectedness in academic work directly influence academics sensemaking process. Patterns of structure, coordination and control provide subtle sensemaking triggers for academics understanding and interest with the SRS strategic process. The more academics

conform to controls and procedural requirements, the more these represent subtle sensemaking sources from which they draw appropriate sensemaking frames and cues.

In general, exercising academic freedom and its associated higher levels of autonomy still remain fundamental to academic work and thus patterns of autonomy represents dominant sensemaking frames, however, patterns of connectedness also plays a significant role by providing subtle sensemaking frames to enhance academics engagement with the strategy. Dominant and subtle sensemaking frames are equally essential in academics sensemaking process and fundamental to the success of adoption and implementation of strategies in loosely coupled organizations.

PART TWO

5.4 PATTERNS OF COUPLING IN INTERDEPENDENCY

So far, the focus of the chapter has established patterns of coupling in loosely coupled systems which have received less attention in literature. In particular it has demonstrated the existence of patterns of tight coupling and loose coupling in middle managers strategic work. Specifically, it reveals patterns of bureaucracy and flexibility in administrative work as well as patterns of connectedness and control in academic work. The study of these patterns has further been linked directly to middle managers sensemaking process in loosely coupled systems. It has been established that the sensemaking frameworks which midlevel administrators and academics select are influenced by the type of coupling patterns they engage with.

In light of this, the thesis takes the stand that establishing links between patterns of coupling and middle managers sensemaking process can be further enhanced by additionally exploring patterns of coupling in their relationships, especially as it relates to their strategic work. This means exploring levels of interrelationships in relation to administrators, academics and other organizational elements.

In loosely coupled systems interrelationship is often described in terms of levels of interdependency among people, task, goals, structures and subsystems among others (Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990; Dubois and Gadde 2002). The stronger the level of interdependency is

between elements, the tighter the coupling patterns in the system are said to be, and the weaker the level of interdependency is between elements, the more the coupling patterns in the system are described as loosely coupled. The thesis idea to specifically explore interrelationships among administrators and academics is important because it believes that coupling patterns in middle managers relationships also directly impacts their overall strategic sensemaking process.

5.4.1 The concept of interdependency

Compared to other forms of organizations, relationships between people and elements in loosely coupled organizations are generally described as interdependent, weaker, more unpredictable and more intermittent (Weick 1982). Essentially, relations in loosely coupled systems are described as either predominantly interdependent or exhibiting high levels of interdependency. However, just as the thesis argues that it is not enough to describe systems by the extent to which they are simply tightly or loose coupled (Orton and Weick 1990), the thesis also argues that it is not sufficient to describe relationships in loosely coupled systems (especially between administrators and academics), simply based on the extent of interdependency. The argument is grounded in the fact that the thesis findings indicate that relationships among administrators and academics and other elements are not either predominantly interdependent or independent. In essence, administrative and academic interrelationships cannot be described as either predominantly loosely coupled or tightly coupled in their nature. Neither can relationships be described as predominantly weak nor strong, nor predictable and unpredictable. The discussions demonstrate that in loosely coupled systems, some aspects of administrative relationships for example are increasingly independent, strong, predictable and regular than research portrays. Likewise, some aspects of academic relationships are more interdependent, more predictable and more regular in nature. In effect, it demonstrates that some aspects of loosely coupled relationships which are traditionally viewed as predominantly interdependent actually involve high independent coupled patterns of interrelationship, while traditionally viewed independent patterns also involve high interdependent relational patterns. This demonstrates that relational patterns in loosely coupled systems are a dynamic combination of loose coupling relational patterns and tight coupling relational patterns.

The thesis therefore contributes to the literature on loosely coupled systems by providing in-depth insight into nuanced patterns of interdependent and independent relational patterns among midlevel university administrators and academics. The thesis explores patterns of interdependency from two specific angles. It explores patterns of relationships (or relational patterns) between administrators and other elements, and relational patterns between academics and other elements.

Relational patterns between administrators and other elements

In terms of relational patterns among administrators, the thesis argues that administrator's relationship with each other and with other elements is not as predominantly interdependent as generally perceived. The data sets from interviews and strategic documents in particular indicate that some aspects of administrators' interrelationships are more independent, stronger, more predictable and more regular in nature. This type of interrelationship generally resembles independent relationship in tightly coupled systems in which elements depend less on each other to function. This section of the thesis is therefore focused on unearthing the existence of increased levels of independency in administrators' interrelationships which hitherto has received little attention in literature. The aim is to demonstrate that in loosely coupled university systems, administrators interrelationships are a combination of levels of independency as they are of levels of interdependencies.

Relational patterns between academics and other elements

In terms of relational patterns among academics, it is typically acknowledged that academic work is directly associated with academic freedom which is also associated with high levels of independence in academics interrelationships. However, the thesis argues that academics relationships with each other and with other elements are not as primarily independent as typically professed. As earlier illustrated, data from interviews and SRS Implementation Plans in particular, indicate that academic work involves more coordination and connectedness than previously perceived. The increased level of coordination and connectedness is also directly linked with academics interrelationships. The findings clearly indicate that academics relational patterns are

less independent, more predictable, more regular, and generally more interdependent in nature. This type of relationship is akin to high levels of interdependency in relationships popularly described in loosely coupled systems, especially as is typical among administrators. The focus of this section is therefore to demonstrate that relationships among academics and other elements involve higher levels of interdependencies than generally purported. The aim is to demonstrate that in loosely coupled university systems, academics interrelationships are a combination of higher levels of interdependency as they are of levels of independencies.

The rest of the chapter is thus structured to first demonstrate higher levels of independency in administrative relationships, and higher levels of interdependency in academic relationships. Each of these relationships is described in a bit more depth below.

5.4.2 Increased levels of independency in administrative work

As previously indicated, administrative work is characterized by patterns associated with bureaucracy, procedural requirements and control (Bartell 2003). Administrative relations are thus generally characterized by increased levels of interdependency. Thus administrators depend on each other and other elements to perform every day organizational functions and achieve organizational goals. This supports the argument which describes relational patterns in loosely coupled systems as predominantly interdependent (Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990; Dubois and Gadde 2002).

In Westland University, increased level of interdependency exists among administrators and other organizational elements. With specific regards to the SRS strategic process, administrators are largely responsible for administrating and managing the strategic process. The strategy's objectives cannot be achieved without dynamic collaboration and coordination from administrators. Administrators therefore operate a more centralized and highly responsive system in such a manner that the success or failure of a department or individual sustainability activity is closely linked to other organizational elements and consequential to the overall strategic process. In spite of the existence of such high levels of interdependencies, the thesis demonstrates that relational patterns in administrative work is not predominantly interdependent in the sense that it involves increased levels of independent patterns than has often been demonstrated. The evidence

therefore supports the thesis argument which tempers the idea of establishing relationships in loosely and tightly coupled systems simply based on the extent of interdependency. The evidence indicates that in reference to the SRS strategic process in particular, administrators engage in higher levels of independence in their strategic work by succumbing less to the traditional rigidity, formality and bureaucracy associated with loosely coupled systems.

Generally, the thesis data point to the fact that senior managers did not have oversight responsibilities of their sustainability engagements. In effect, administrators were not held accountable for their strategic activities. A general impression is created by administrators which indicate that they exercise high levels of flexibility and freedom in their strategic work. They indicate that although core administrative work may be monitored, in highly adaptive strategy context as they are engaged in, there are actually lower forms of monitoring and increased levels of independence in administrative work.

This is confirmed by the Waste management and Transport managers:

"I know what I have to do in terms of what targets to meet. I set my own targets and decide how I want the job done. It is not as if I am being monitored in terms of what I do."

"The society does not hold me accountable for anything..."

To illustrate the point of independency more clearly, it is pointed out that in typical university contexts; there are lower levels of interaction with other people, departments and elements. This engenders independent work based especially on personal interests. This assertion is supported by a staff of the IAD department and another manager:

"...People follow their own ways in universities"

"Nobody has ever come to me to say 'what are you doing'?"

The thesis also argues that due to increased level of independency, relational patterns in administrative work are less predictable in universities than perceived. Generally, relational patterns revolve around administrative tasks and specific goal rather than they do around managing entire departments or the strategic process. This allows individuals to function independently in such manner that the effects of their strategic activities are less predictable on the overall strategic process. This supports the observation that the SRS objectives and outcomes occur in a less rigid manner than is expected.

Although the concept of independency is increasingly relevant to administrative work, the accommodation manager however raises concerns based on her own experience. She argues that lower monitoring creates wider relational gaps between administrators and senior management especially, as well as other organizational elements. She expresses the opinion that she finds that:

“There is too much of a void between myself and senior management. I would appreciate a more direct feedback and engagement from them”

In spite of the above concern, most administrators maintain that increase in levels of flexibility and independence in administrative work is essential for organizational survival. These views contribute to on-going debates focused on establishing the extent to which increased levels of independency in loosely coupled systems should be acceptable and maintained in such a way that loosely coupled systems do not lose their essence.

Overall, the thesis establishes that in spite of typical tight coupling patterns in administrative work, administrators’ strategic activities involve more loose coupling patterns yet to be explored.

5.4.3 Increased levels of interdependency among academics

Although universities and schools are described as being predominantly loosely coupled, aspect of it, especially academic work is however predominantly tightly coupled in nature. Generally, academic work involves increased levels of autonomy and independency mainly due to the concept of academic freedom. Nonetheless, the idea that academics retain high power and autonomy is juxtaposed against increased suggestions that academic work also involves increased levels of

connectedness and coordination (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980; Weick and Orton 1990). Aspects of academic work involve increased levels of coordination, consensus and control (Meyer and Scott 1983; Ingersoll 1991; Pajak and Green 2003). In essence, aspects of academic work are interdependent in nature although hitherto understudied.

With respect to the SRS strategy, like other staff, academics are equally concerned about incorporating sustainability into their everyday strategic activities. Academics have a strong sense of awareness about the potential effect that changes in the SRS strategic process have on their research activities in particular. Their interest and participation in the strategic process can therefore be directly attributed to specific issues of interest which affect their research work or personal interest. Their involvement in the strategic process is thus fundamentally based on pursuing personal interests. This is clearly pointed out by a member of the SRS department;

“Academics easily involve themselves with strategies aligned with their personal research and interest”.

For example, the SRS strategy attracts increased academic participation as a result of the prevalent issues it seeks to address such as relating to climate, environmental and social challenges. This point is reiterated by the coordinator of the SRS department;

“Academics are interested in their environment and issues involving climate change. They are interested because their efforts are measured (brings change)”.

Such issues are however best addressed collectively and in a socialized manner. Therefore to achieve set objectives academics must increase collaborations and coordination with other relevant organizational elements. From its inception, one of the main aims of the SRS department has been to win active support from academics in particular. A Review document indicates that an:

Initial conversations with academic colleagues indicated considerable interest in finding more ways in which academic expertise could help inform processes of change in the University, and how the efforts of the University (and other organisations in the city region)

on Social Responsibility and Sustainability could provide opportunities for teaching, learning and research. (SRS Review June 2014).

Overtime, it has become clear that academics participation in SRS activities have increased. Examples such as this are presented in SRS strategic documents:

The Fair Trade Coordinator is developing the (Fair Trade) network and has completed scoping exercise identifying academic interests of members and potential members – with thirteen academic staff joining the network. (SRS Implementation plan October 2013).

This point to the fact that the more socialized the SRS strategy is, the higher the levels of interdependency academics employ to achieve its objectives. Additionally, increased levels of interdependency between academics and other organizational elements have contributed to positive changes in the role academics play in the strategic process. Increasingly, academics are frequently engaging in administrative roles. They have become more actively involved in the SRS strategic process at the highest decision-making level. For example academics are well represented in top positions on the SEAG committee which is the highest strategic decision-making body for the SRS strategic process. They are also actively involved in leadership positions at School and Department levels. These strategic positions have further increased their involvement in actively harnessing the SRS strategic goals and objectives.

The success in academic participation and levels of interdependency is also generally attributed to the adaptive and encompassing nature of the strategic process especially as it relates to academic work. The comments of a manager of the Transport department below supports the points made above:

“The university sustainability strategy is an all-encompassing plan which includes activities to be undertaken across university operations, teaching, research and work with local communities”.

The argument is that the more adaptive the strategic process is, the easier it is to engage and interrelate with other organizational elements.

The increase interdependency levels are also directly attributed to increased communication levels in the strategic process. The attribution is believed to be based on regular interactions between organizational elements. This comment by the coordinator of the Student's Association supports the point:

“We talk and we evaluate so that in the end, the left knows what the right is doing – in an attempt to make sense of all the different things happening”

In essence, the more verbal interactions exist between elements, the high the levels of interdependency that is established.

Furthermore, increased levels of interdependency between academic and other elements have also contributed to the overall achievement of strategic objectives and outcomes. For example, successful collaborations between academics and administrators in particular have resulted in achieving significant strategy outcomes such as the recycling and Switch and Save initiatives. Additionally, collaborative efforts between academics and other staff, has evidently produced a number of unexpected sustainability outcomes which are touted to have had far-reaching effects on the strategy and the University as a whole. Examples of these include the ‘Our changing world lecture series and the activities of the ‘Centre for carbon innovation’.

It is evident that academic work in relation to other aspect of University work is not as disconnected or uncoordinated as previously perceived. In light of the changing phase of the nature of universities, academics need to connect more with other organizational elements if they will remain relevant to their organizations.

Summary of part two

Unlike part one of the chapter this part of the chapter focuses less on the process of sensemaking and more on the context and relational patterns within the context which engender the process of sensemaking. The evidence clearly suggests that the dynamic characteristics of loosely coupled

organizational context engender middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes especially in terms of influencing their selection of peculiar dominant and subtle sensemaking cues. Overall, although academic work in universities will fundamentally be established on the foundation of independent academic research work, it is evident that there is a sturdy rise in levels of interdependency between academics and other organization elements. The thesis thus supports the increasing change in the nature of universities from traditional organizations to current descriptions as newer forms of organizations (Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991), especially as it relates to academic work.

Although academic work is typically viewed as predominantly independent and tightly coupled in nature, the thesis has demonstrated that academics are actually involved in increased levels of interdependency and loosely coupled activities especially as interdependencies enhance their personal interest and research work. Thus the thesis supports the notion that universities combine loosely coupled and tightly coupled activities and structure in academic strategic work.

Chapter summary on loosely coupled systems

The process of sensemaking involves selecting both dominant and subtle sensemaking cues to make sense of occurring events and situations. In particular, this chapter provides an understanding of how midlevel administrators and academics select subtle sensemaking frames and cues while making sense of their University's SRS strategic process.

As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, sources of dominant sensemaking mainly stem from patterns of rigidity in administrators strategic work and patterns of flexibility in academic strategic work. This chapter has however demonstrated that administrative work involves increased levels of flexibility and independency, while academic work also involves increased levels of connectedness and control. Partners of flexibility in administrative work and patterns of connectedness in academic work therefore represents alternative sources from which administrators and academics respectively draw subtle sensemaking frames to enhance their sensemaking of the strategic process. The chapter has demonstrated the idea that loosely coupled university context combine patterns of loosely coupled and tightly coupled styles in strategy creation processes. The findings establish links between patterns of coupling in loosely coupled

systems and sensemaking. Patterns of flexibility and connectedness in administrative and academic work respectively, directly influences their sensemaking process, especially in terms of the sensemaking frames they select.

Overall, examining links between patterns of coupling in university contexts is essential to the overarching aim of the thesis in that it contributes to understanding sources and selection process of sensemaking frames and their links with the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process. As long as loosely coupled systems engender nurturing patterns of coupling and subtle sensemaking frames, the existence and study of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process in loosely coupled university context cannot be ignored.

Closely associated with the discovery of simultaneous sensemaking is the succeeding discovery which revealed that simultaneous sensemaking leads to unexpected strategic outcomes. This is of paramount importance to the thesis' discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process in that it establishes that academics autonomous sensemaking process in particular, results in unexpected SRS outcomes previously unknown to the strategic process and the University. The discovery of unexpected SRS outcomes contributes to the literature on emergent strategy and its impact on strategy creation in loosely coupled systems. The concept of unexpected strategy outcomes is discussed in depth in the chapter six.

Chapter 6 STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

6.1 AIM

The aim of this chapter is firstly to examine the nature of sensemaking outcomes which arise as a result of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes and secondly to demonstrate links between sensemaking or strategy outcomes and the process of strategy creation.

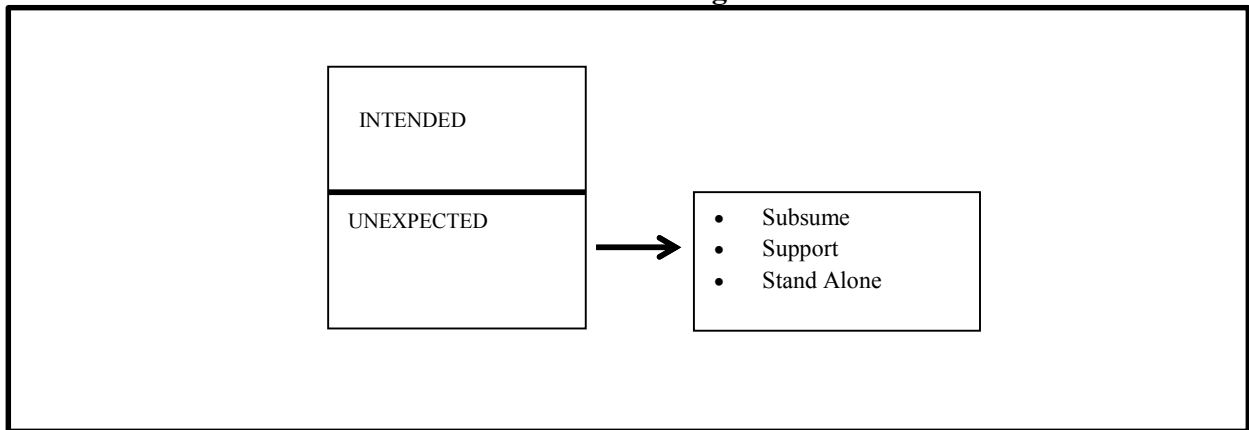
6.2 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the third and final chapter on the thesis findings. Hitherto, the first two chapters have presented rich data in support of the thesis discovering of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes among administrators and academics. The chapters provided evidence in support of the thesis discovery which indicates that simultaneously, administrators predominantly engage in dependent sensemaking process while academics engage in an autonomous sensemaking process in respect of their University's SRS strategy. Dependent and autonomous sensemaking processes consequently result in sensemaking outcomes. Since the sensemaking process occurs in the context of the SRS strategy, administrators and academics sensemaking outcomes occur in the form of strategy outcomes. Strategy outcomes can be intended or unexpected in nature.

The thesis use of the term intended outcomes refers to sustainability outcomes or initiatives which are met exactly or similar to what was outlined in the SRS strategy. It is apparent that in relation to the thesis' discovery of simultaneous sensemaking processes, intended outcomes are achieved predominantly as a result of administrator dependent sensemaking process. On the other hand, the terms unintended outcomes, unexpected outcomes and emerged outcomes are used interchangeably to refer to sustainability outcomes and initiatives which materialize or emerge as a result of academics autonomous sensemaking process.

Figure 6.1 below represents another cross-section of the main thesis framework as presented in **Figure 3.1** in chapter three. It tells the latter part of the thesis story by exploring sensemaking outcomes. Both types of outcomes are described in much depth below under sections **6.3.1, 6.3.2 and 6.3.3** below.

FIGURE 6.1 Intended and unintended sensemaking outcomes



Intended sensemaking outcomes are generally outcomes which occur as dictated by the strategic process. These are mainly outcomes achieved by the efforts of administrators.

The thesis is less interested in intended outcomes as it is of unintended or emerged outcomes. Although the chapter is mainly dedicated to discussions on unintended outcomes, it first highlights a few outstanding intended outcomes as presented in **table 6.1** below. A more exhaustive list of intended outcomes can be found in SRS strategic documents (especially the SRS implementation plans) which are well referenced in the thesis.

Table 6.1 Examples of intended sensemaking outcomes

Related SRS Theme	SRS outcome	Document
Climate and Action Plan – energy	Savings are monitored on a regular basis for the sustainability engagement across targeted buildings. Figures for 2012/13 represent a saving of £86,716.	SRS Implementation plan 2013
Recycling	In terms of recycling outcomes, a 93% of recycling of refurbishment waste has been achieved.	Report from SEAG Operations Group, June 2013:?
Engagement	The establishment of the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability. The department continues the university’s growing commitment to engage and support staff and students towards making a more socially responsible and sustainable university.	SRS Implementation Plan February 2013-14:2
Learning	The academic sustainability outcomes included the establishment of the Learning for Sustainability Scotland Centre and the scoping exercise of courses available to undergraduates with social responsibility and sustainability themes – highlighting 505 courses available to students.	SRS Implementation Plan February 2013-14:2.
Studying	Six new Global Academies MSc programmes were developed with SRS issues at the fore.	SRS Implementation Plan October 2013:3

Unintended sensemaking outcomes emerge from autonomous sensemaking behavior by academics in particular. In reference to the third thesis objectives on strategy outcomes, the thesis is particularly interested in unexpected strategy outcomes for two reasons. Firstly it identifies and describes the nature of unexpected sustainability outcomes in terms of how sustainability initiatives emerge out of academics autonomous sensemaking process. Resultantly, four different autonomous sustainability initiatives are identified and discussed in depth. The discussions starts with a brief description of the sustainability initiative, followed by discussion on the sensemaking process of the initiator, and concluded with discussion on levels of interdependency between the initiative and other organizational elements, especially the SRS department. Its second interest which examines how organizations react to autonomous strategy outcomes is explored in much depth under **section 6.5** and beyond.

Similar to the previous discussions in chapter five, discussions in this chapter emerged during the research process, particularly during the data collection and analysis period. The discussions essentially demonstrate the thesis interest in unexpected strategy outcomes as well as how such outcomes become integrated into existing strategic processes. Akin to chapter five, this chapter predominantly relied on interviews to demonstrate the thesis interests.

The first part of this chapter subsequently examines four identified autonomous sustainability initiatives.

6.3 EMERGED OUTCOMES

The evidence indicates that academics autonomous sensemaking in particular, generally led to unexpected strategic outcomes. The idea of unexpected outcomes is acknowledged by senior managers and mentioned in the some strategic documents through statements such as:

Discovering, and understanding the features of success of, progress and developments since 2010, including those that have occurred organically outside of the social responsibility and sustainability implementation plans. (SRS Strategy Review Update 2014:1)

The thesis thus presents some academics initiated sustainability initiatives which were not direct outcomes of the SRS strategic objectives. Altogether, four case studies are identified and described below to provide insights into how autonomous sustainability initiatives emerged from academics autonomous sensemaking process. The list comprises of: The Sustainability Business Initiative (SBI), Learning for Change, Our changing world, and The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI) initiatives. Each initiative is discussed from two main angles. The first part of the discussion is focused on outlining the initiators autonomous sensemaking process especially in terms of identifying predominant sensemaking frames and cues which shape the sensemaking process. Secondly, the discussions examines levels of interdependency or interrelationships between the initiative and other organizational elements especially the SRS department. The thesis explores and describes the four unexpected strategy outcomes frames identified and mentioned in **Figure 6.1** above.

6.3.1 The Sustainability Business Initiative (SBI)

The Sustainability Business Initiative (SBI) is an initiative that supports businesses to address their sustainability challenges. The initiative was set up by an academic from the Westland University Business School. The initiative is engaged in organizational and community level support in relation to growing sustainability challenges surrounding corporate responsibility, governance and sustainability.

The sensemaking process

The SBI was started in 2011 by an academic who had joined the University's Business School the year before. One of his main areas of research interest was in Corporate Social Responsibility. On arrival from a former institution that engaged in corporate social responsibility research and practices, he recognized the need to start an initiative in line with his area of research. His personal research aims and ambitions therefore formed the predominant sensemaking lens through which he selected dominant sensemaking cues to enable him engage with the sustainable development practices in the University. This is clearly explained in his comments below:

“I wanted to connect with the University's sustainability agenda. I saw the need to start an initiative in line with my area of research especially because of my research area in my former institution”.

The need to connect and bridge the gap therefore provided new knowledge, information and cues which then formed the main sources of his sensemaking process. The academics selection process of the appropriate sensemaking cues eventually led to the launch of a network called the Corporate Responsibility and Governance Network (CRGN). The starting point of the academic's sensemaking of sustainability practice in the University therefore did not start from the point of view of the existing SRS strategy. Instead he selected sensemaking cues from personal and business sensemaking frames. From the personal frame level, the selection process was primarily

based on the desire to introduce an academic research concept from his former workplace, as well as a broader need to connect with the practice of sustainability in the University. The sensemaking cues were thus selected from personal interest and academic research frames.

Although the network started as a personal initiative, it was later supported with an initial three (3) year grant by the business school. It therefore added a Business School focus to it which became known as The Sustainable Business Initiative (SBI). From the business frame level, the sensemaking process of becoming the SBI was arrived at by drawing on sensemaking frames based on business concepts and societal frameworks. The objective was to clearly differentiate the Business School as a pioneer in embedding sustainability into business school curricula as well as supporting the business community in areas of corporate responsibility, governance and sustainability. These became the dominant sensemaking frames from which the initiative drew its sensemaking cues. To achieve this, the sensemaking process involved deselecting previous cues based on carbon change frames in favour of cues based on business concept sensemaking frames. The process is briefly explained by the academic:

“The School tapped into my motivation. They were thinking of how to do something beyond carbon change. It was my idea to relate it with corporate responsibility, governance and sustainability”.

It is evident that the sensemaking process is a complex process that draws on multiple sensemaking frames and cues. What is however more obvious is that the CRG and SBI initiatives were established autonomously of the University’s strategic sensemaking process. The initiator had a low awareness of the SRS strategy at the start of the initiatives and therefore his sensemaking process and outcome were achieved autonomous of the strategic process.

Level of interdependency

The preceding chapter focused on exploring interrelationships between elements in loosely coupled systems. Interrelationship is described in terms of existing levels of interdependency among elements such as people, task, goals, structures and subsystems among others (Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990; Dubois and Gadde 2002). Interdependency identifies the extent to which

elements can be described as closely (tightly coupled) dependent on each other or autonomous (loosely coupled) of each other. In other words interdependency describes the degree to which an element can or cannot function on its own within a system. In relation to unexpected SRS outcomes, the thesis examines the degree to which academics autonomous initiatives can function on their own with minimum support from the SRS department especially. The thesis establishes that the closer the level of interdependence is between the initiative and the SRS department, the less autonomous the initiative is. On the other hand, the more independent the level of interdependence is between the initiative and the department, the more autonomous the initiative is.

The in-depth conversation with the initiator indicates lower levels of interdependency between the SBI initiative and the SRS department. In the process of setting up and launching the CRG Network, an initial connection was made between the academic and the SRS advisor. This subsequently led to a cordial relationship between the two parties. The academic however clearly indicates that the SRS department was not involved in the SBI setup. He describes the existing relationship as based primarily on exchange of information and signposting. This is supported by the comments below:

“They (the SRS department) know I exist but in terms of what I actually do, they are not involved. I don’t report to them and they don’t monitor me. Although we share information when need be”.

“... I have become a sign post to others interested in sustainability”.

What is meant by a sign post is that the initiative serves as a successful example that the SRS department makes reference to especially when they come into contact with other academics who wish to establish autonomous sustainability initiatives. Overall, the level of interdependency is such that the SBI initiative can fully function independently of the SRS department. Additionally, it is evident that should the initiative fail or be discontinued, its demise will have very little impact on the SRS department, other elements or the entire strategic process. The SBI initiative is therefore highly autonomous of the SRS strategy.

6.3.2 Learning for change initiative

This initiative is concerned with auditing the content levels of sustainability in the University's course curricular. The 'Learning for Change' initiative is based on a scoping exercise employed to audit undergraduate courses that support the University's commitment to social responsibility and sustainability practices. The objective was to identify the level at which sustainability is embedded in teaching courses. The initiative was birthed by an academic from the Institute of Academic development (IAD). Primarily the exercise examines course descriptors which help identify where and how sustainability is embedded in the undergraduate course curricula in the Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) and Science and Engineering (CSE).⁵

The sensemaking process

The initiative was undertaken by an academic who recognised the need to have a coherent sustainability message throughout the University's course contents. She identified the University's Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Group (SEAG) group as a platform and network group through which she could engineer her passion. Her aim was to map out teaching courses across the University which address social responsibility and sustainability. The desire to audit, harness and augment a coherent sustainability message in teaching courses therefore formed the predominant sensemaking frames for engaging with sustainability practices in the University. She selected sensemaking cues that enabled her to undertake an exercise in mapping out sustainability themes which address well defined issues on social, economic, environmental and other crosscutting sustainability concerns. Her sensemaking process was therefore first and foremost drawn from personal frames in terms of her personal desire to map out sustainability courses and amalgamate a clear message. It is clear that this initiative was an autonomous initiative as explains:

“No one asked me. An internship scheme came my way so I employed an intern and used the funds within the remit of the project”.

Since the initiative was focused on providing solutions to existing wider university challenges, the sensemaking process also included drawing on relevant frames from the SRS strategy.

⁵ www.edinburghcentre.org/

Sensemaking frames from the strategy served as an important source of information in identifying existing sustainability embedded courses as well as identifying courses which needed to be embedded. To enable her achieve the objectives of the initiative she thus needed to draw from both personal and organizational sensemaking frames, although she drew more on personal frames. It is noticeable that in situations where personal sensemaking frames alone are not enough to establish an initiative of an organization-wide scope, individuals draw on organizational or other external cues to engage in a strategic process.

Levels on interdependency

The level of collaboration between the academic initiator and members of the SRS department indicates a higher level of interdependency between the Learning for Change initiative and the SRS department. This is especially so a member of the department had a similar idea in mind as explained by the academic:

“A member of the department had a similar thing in mind and wanted me to report on it. He helped shape the plane”.

This paved way for a higher level of information sharing and engagement between the initiative and the department. Additionally, due to the fact that the initiative is situated somewhere within the overall strategic process, this brought about the need for continued collaboration with the department. It must however be noted that the fact that the initiative complimented the overall strategic process does not make it is any less autonomous, neither does it make it highly interdependent on the SRS department. The initiative is able to function on its own, with support from the IAD department. Withdrawal of support from the SRS department will not result in the demise of the Learning for Change initiative. The academic clearly indicates that the existing level of interdependence between the initiative and the SRS department:

“I gave them support instead. I gave them papers. I don’t look to them for any support. They’re looking for people like me as a network to pull this all together”.

The Learning for Change initiative is quite unique in the sense that although it feeds directly into the SRS agenda in its capacity to embed sustainability into undergraduate courses, yet it is predominantly an individual autonomous initiative which finds expression in the overall strategic process.

6.3.3 Our changing world

‘Our Changing World’ is a broad organizational and community agenda. It is established as a series of lectures and public engagement which provides understanding of growing global challenges of which sustainability forms a significant part. The initiative was conceived by a neurosurgeon in the School of Biosciences and supported by his department.

The sensemaking process

The academic explains that his primary motives for undertaking the initiative stems from his passion teach and encourage critical and rational thinking among students as well as his interest in public engagements. These motives therefore formed the main sensemaking frames in relation to his understanding and engaging with sustainability practices in the University.

“As an academic I am interested in critical thinking and public engagement. I want to influence a behavioural change in undergraduate students”.

Basically, he explains that he felt the need to contribute to sustainable development practices in the University. However instead of selecting cues from the SRS strategic process, he deselected those in favor of cues that provide a wide platform for applying critical thinking to global issues and not simply on social responsibility and sustainability related issues. The sensemaking frames far-reaching beyond the SRS strategy as they encompass broader global issues. This simply means that the sensemaking process draws on more sophisticated frames. This is succinctly explained below:

“What motivates me is that it is a bigger global concept – bigger than just sustainability”.

“The focus is not necessarily to address specific global challenges as such. The intent is to encourage students to apply critical thinking to global issues”.

In essence, the SRS strategic process provides insufficient frameworks for achieving the aims of this initiative. This supports the claim that in contexts where existing frames are inappropriate or in this case insufficient, individuals draw on external cues to make sense of the phenomenon at hand (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Weick 1995; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Maitlis, 2005).

Additionally, unlike sensemaking SRS frames which predominantly offers frames that provide direct solutions and engagement with SRS issues, the initiative’s sensemaking process is not focused on selecting cues that provide solutions to global issues as it is about selecting cues that enable the application of critical thinking to the issues. Appropriate cues were selected to equip students with skills to engage in critical and rational thinking of global issues across subject boundaries (including sustainability) as well as endow students with the ability to appreciate and analyze the relevance of their individual disciplines in the light of broad global challenges. The idea is confirmed in his comment:

“The focus is not necessarily to address specific global challenges as such. The intent is to encourage students to apply critical thinking to global issues”.

Levels on interdependency

The Our Changing World initiative is principally an autonomous initiative which emerged out of the academic’s sensemaking of how to engage with sustainability and broader global issues. Although it has been incorporated into the University’s strategic process, the initiative was not birthed out of the strategic process. This is explained through the academic’s comment:

“It does not arise from the University’s strategic plan necessarily. It is not as if the University already had it in mind”.

However, to operate as an institutional and community wide initiative, a fair amount of collaborations exists between the initiative, the SRS department and other primary stakeholders.

The level of interdependency between the initiative and the SRS department in particular can be described more in terms of peripheral or ancillary support instead of core or structural level interdependencies. The initiator's comments below reflect the existing lower level of interdependency referred to:

"I receive support from SEAG in that members have encouraged me, for example the vice principle of the University".

"When we have lectures on renewable energy for example, SEAG has in the past organized trips for students to windmill farms".

"I get a lot of support from my school. I dropped previous responsibilities to take on this initiative".

Unlike the SBI and the Learning for Change initiatives, Our Changing World has overtime become a more visibly and popularly associated with the University sustainability achievements. Although its remit far outreaches sustainable development practices, the initiative is closely related to the University's strategic process. It is likely that the initiative might not be able to function on its own as independently without undergoing some changes. As an institution and community wide initiative, the existing higher levels of interdependencies means that a change in any supporting organizational element would likely affect the operations and outcomes of the initiative. Our Changing World would have to undergo some structural changes over time to enable it function independently.

6.3.4 The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon and Innovation

The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon and Innovation (ECCI) initiative is a research centre for innovation and knowledge share. The Centre provides a platform to engage in world class interdisciplinary research and teaching that is focused on climate change challenges. Primarily the centre provides a forum to support and deliver workable solutions for a low carbon future.

Although the ECCI is originally a spin-out initiative from Westland University's sustainability activities, there was a subsequent collaboration between the University and two other Scottish Universities. The ECCI later assumed a national level status as a partnership was formed with the Scottish government, business and the local community. The initiative thus receives financial backing from the Scottish Government and the European Regional Development Fund.

The sensemaking process

The idea was conceived by a group of academics from the school of Geosciences. The primary aim is to tackle climate change at the science-society interface by linking academics with policy makers and private sector. This is done through providing the place and space for 'low carbon leaders' and networks from business, finance and the public sector to work together to deliver a low carbon future. The aim of tackling climate change served as the main sensemaking framework for engaging with the practice of sustainable development. They selected sensemaking cues which fed first into meeting the University's carbon emission reduction targets and then into contributing to the national targets as well. Unlike some of the earlier mentioned initiatives, the SRS strategy and Scottish national targets also provided fundamental sensemaking information and cues for the academics sensemaking processes. To enable them contribute to organizational and national targets, the initiators relied on data from these two sources to some extent to aid their decision making process. Indications suggest that in situations where organizational and national targets overlap, organizational actors will draw on common sensemaking frames which will meet both targets. Even though the main sensemaking frame was anchored on meeting energy and environmental needs, the initiators additionally drew on academic and social frameworks which enabled them achieve their vision to create a world class interdisciplinary research and teaching facility focused on key climate related challenges facing society. Their selection of cues therefore involved drawing on multiple frames and selecting from a wide range of cues. The thesis finding suggests that in cases where initiatives span organizational and national boundaries, the sensemaking process draws on cues across organizational, natural, environmental and social frameworks.

Levels on interdependency

The objectives of the ECCI initiative are achieved through collaborations businesses, national and local government, and community. This indicates higher levels of interdependencies between the various elements. Some level of interdependencies also exists between ECCI and the SEAG group, SRS department and other schools and departments.

Summary

The first part of this chapter has identified and described four different examples of autonomous sustainability initiatives. The initiatives emerged as a result of academics autonomous sensemaking of the SRS strategic process. Fundamentally, academics autonomous sensemaking process involves exploring and establishing new knowledge structures and sensemaking frames outside the existing strategy process. Overall, the three examples indicate that academics relied predominantly on personal sensemaking frameworks. Personal sensemaking frames originated especially from personal research aims, personal ambitions and desires toward establishing a particular initiative. They also drew from other frames including business, community and broad global frameworks. These frames influenced their sensemaking process which led to selecting appropriate sensemaking cues which further led to establishing the various autonomous initiatives.

On another level, the thesis also examined the relationship between the autonomous initiatives and other organizational elements, especially the SRS department. Generally, the first three autonomous initiatives can be described as having lower levels of interdependencies with the SRS department. This means that they rely less on the SRS department to function. In most cases the initiatives rather learnt support to the department instead of the department lending support to the initiatives. The demise of the department is therefore unlikely to affect the three initiatives adversely.

PART TWO

6.4 INTRODUCTION

The second part of this chapter focuses on discussions regarding strategic responses. The thesis employs the phrase ‘strategic responses’ to refer to organizational responses to autonomous sustainability initiatives. Contextually, this part of the thesis is instrumental in linking the two main theories - sensemaking and strategy creation - of the thesis. It enables an understanding of the relationship between the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking and the overall thesis context of strategy creation. The thesis interest in exploring strategic response is therefore to examine how loosely coupled organizations respond to unexpected strategic outcomes. Particularly in terms of how they integrate unexpected outcomes into the overall strategic process thereby creating ‘new’ strategic processes and therefore allowing strategic processes to emerge. The idea of integration is fundamental to understanding how strategy is created in organizations. Thus the thesis aims to explore how the University integrates autonomous sustainability initiatives such as the SBI, Learning for Change and Our Changing World initiatives into the SRS strategic process and how the integration process consequently reshapes the strategic process.

This will be enabled by firstly exploring three strategy integration strategies employed by the University in terms of integrating autonomous sustainability initiatives into the overall SRS strategic process. Secondly, it will also enable an understanding into organizational motives and reasons for employing such strategies. The idea of exploring motives and reasons is the underlying principle for positioning the thesis as an abductive research strategy. It is argued that abductive studies are best suited for exploring ‘why’ questions (Morgan 2007; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009; Blaikie 2007, 2010).

6.5 INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

This part of the chapter discusses integration strategies employed by the University in respect to unexpected sustainability initiatives that emerged particularly as a result of academics autonomous sensemaking process. It is clear that autonomous sustainability initiatives can be grouped into three main categories. In the first category, autonomous initiatives are very similar in nature to initiatives intended or pursued by the existing strategy. In some cases, these types of initiatives are offshoots

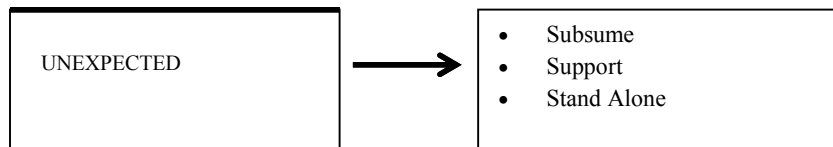
of already existing sustainability initiatives. Based on their similarity to existing initiatives, it is easier to engraft or subsume them directly into the SRS strategic process. The second category is made up of autonomous initiatives which are not as similar to intended initiatives and yet not entirely dissimilar as well. Characteristically, they usually take on a wider scope beyond the strategic process. Generally, these initiatives are supported alongside the strategic process. Initiatives in the third category generally have a much wider scope than the strategic process. They tend to be ‘bigger’ or far outreach the strategic process as they usually take on a community, nation or international nature. Due to their size and scope, this category of initiatives is usually allowed to stand alone. By and large, they are left to function almost independently of the strategic process.

The synopsis above clearly indicates that when faced with unexpected strategic outcomes, the University employs three main integration strategies. To integrate unexpected sustainability initiatives into the overall SRS strategic process, senior managers can choose to either subsume, or support or allow unexpected initiatives to stand alone. The nuances involved in adopting each integration strategy are discussed in detail.

Figure 6.2 below represents the final cross section of the main thesis framework as presented in **Figure 3.1** in chapter three. It tells the final part of the thesis story by linking middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process with the process of strategy creation. It starts by establishing that autonomous sensemaking usually results in unexpected outcomes, this part of the story explores how organizations react to unexpected outcomes. It identifies and describes three main integration strategies employed by the University to integrate unexpected outcomes into the SRS strategy. The three integration strategies are described in much depth below under sections **6.5.1**, **6.5.2** and **6.5.3**.

Figure 6.2 Unexpected sensemaking outcomes





6.5.1 Subsume integration strategy

The findings suggest that autonomous sustainability initiatives similarly related to the objectives of the strategic process are subsumed into the strategic process. Such initiatives are usually small in size and fit the scope of the strategic process. They are normally project type initiatives in that they are targeted at meeting specific short-term needs. These initiatives are usually established in response to opportunities, gaps or challenges in the strategic process. They are therefore likely to involve some level of collaboration between the initiators and senior management. At some point, the initiatives may be co-managed by senior managers. In some cases such initiatives are likely to be completely taken over by management. This is especially possible when an autonomous ad hoc project develops overtime into an organization-wide project. For example the survival and sustainability of the Learning for Change initiative currently involves active participation from senior management. Overtime, the function and survival of the initiative may not involve the initiator. These conditions engender such initiatives to be totally subsumed into the strategic process. In time, subsumed initiatives take on the nature and status of intended strategic outcomes. This means that they soon metamorphose to become part of the organization's planned targets and strategic objective. For examples, the Learning for change and Our Changing World initiatives are currently reported in SRS progress logs and implementation plans as part of many initiatives that the University is actively involved in. Subsequently, it has evolved and taken on the status of a realised SRS objective. As a result, subsumed initiatives enjoy full support of the SRS department and the SEAG group. In time, senior managers act as the leaders and direct the functions of emerged outcomes. To some extent, initiators consequently become accountable to senior managers for their strategic actions.

The thesis proposes that certain conditions must exist to enable the choice of the most appropriate integration process. Such conditions will be described briefly at the end of the description of each integration strategy.

Conditions for subsumed integration

From the description of the case studies in section 6.3 above, it is evident that certain peculiar conditions must exist to enable autonomous sustainability outcomes to be subsumed into the overall strategic process. Firstly, the initiative must be closely aligned with the overall strategic process. For example, a close look into the SRS strategic plan indicates that the auditing University wide course to ascertain levels social responsibility and sustainability embedding fits squarely into the Strategic Plan for achieving SRS outcomes in teaching and research. Likewise, our changing world public lectures fits into the University's objectives of community engagement to showcase the University's commitment to global issues. Autonomous initiatives closely aligned with overall strategic objectives therefore more likely to be subsumed into the strategic process. Secondly, the scope of initiatives must be broad. It must be broad enough to assume a University-wide scope. University-wide initiatives usually have far-reaching tenets as well as greater benefits. For example the broad scope and benefits of Our Changing World is more likely to be subsumed into the overall strategy. Thirdly, the subsume integration strategy is appropriate under conditions where high knowledge and input of senior management is paramount for the establishment and success of the autonomous initiative. This is especially so when there is the need to commit more organizational resource to run the initiative. The one year long Learning for Change initiative for example was conducted from the Institute of Academic development (IAD). It provided the necessary resources the intern needed to work with including an office space for the period of time. Additionally, the Institute and the SEAG group provided support for the application of the research grant needed for the project. Initiators must therefore actively engage in sensegiving processes to influence and gain buy-in from senior management.

6.5.2 Support integration strategy

The thesis data suggest that autonomous sustainability initiatives whose scope extends beyond the strategic process are likely to be supported alongside the strategic process. The support integration

strategy is appropriate when initiatives are large in size and reach. Senior managers adopt this strategy usually when initiatives are spin-offs from national sustainability agendas or have evolved from University level initiatives to national level initiatives. For example, the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon and Innovation (ECCI) evolved from a University based initiative to take on a national scope. Such strategies function best when they are supported side-by-side the overall strategic process.

Like subsumed initiatives, the objectives of supported initiatives are quite similar to objectives of the strategic process. However, their objectives tend to extend beyond the objectives of the strategic process. For instance, even though the objectives of ECCI fits directly into the KPI of the University, however, ECCI's target on climate change and carbon emission reduction extends beyond the University's targets. As a result, it is impossible to subsume such initiatives into the overall strategic process regardless of their close similarities. The most appropriate strategy is therefore to support the strategy alongside the strategic process.

It is apparent from the discussions that the support integration strategy is also suitable for initiatives that demand high levels of institutional support. It is especially suitable for initiatives which have increased levels of interdependencies. For such strategies to survive, they require strong relationships with other organizational elements. The ECCI for example, is a collaborative effort of three Scottish universities and supported by other stakeholders. Fundamentally, the Scottish government provides financial and other resources while Westland University assumes the active leading and supportive role. The initiative benefits from tremendous managerial support provided by the SEAG group, SRS department and other supporting schools such as the School of Geosciences and the Business School. Outcomes of supported initiatives tend to be significant due to their widespread size and scope. The achievements of ECCI and similar initiatives therefore positively impact the University SRS strategy.

Conditions for support integration

Three main conditions must exist to engender the choice of support integration. Firstly, the scope of the initiative must be far-reaching beyond the University's strategic process. Sustainability initiatives which have broader objectives than the organization's objectives are likely to be supported alongside the strategic process. Secondly, the scope of the initiatives must not simply be broad but broad along national, regional or international lines. National and regional targets are less likely to be 'owned' by a particular organization and therefore more likely to be supported by the organization's strategic process. Thirdly, the initiatives must be characterized by collaborative efforts. Although the ECCI was birthed by a group of academics from the University's school of Geosciences, there were later active collaborations between the academics and two other Scottish Universities. Later on the ECCI gained a national status which started a process of active collaborations with the Scottish government, European Regional Development Fund, other business and the local community. National and regional initiatives require broad stakeholder support and therefore more suitable to adopting the support integration strategy.

6.5.3 Standalone integration strategy

Unlike the foregoing types of initiatives that have been described, some sustainability initiatives may emerge which are extremely autonomous. Unlike the previous types that take on organizational and national outlooks, smaller scale initiatives also emerge at departmental and school levels. Although they may be closely aligned to parts of the strategic process yet they may not be targeted to meet any particular objectives of the SRS strategy. Highly autonomous initiatives normally emerge as a result of heavy reliance of personal sensemaking frameworks. Initiators select sensemaking predominantly based on their personal interest and backgrounds to enable them understand and engage with the strategic process. For example, it is established that the SBI initiative emerged purely out of personal interest aligned with the initiator's research background. Such initiatives are therefore highly independent. Consequently, extremely autonomous initiatives do not require active support from management or the strategic process. The most appropriate integration strategy for highly autonomous initiatives is therefore the standalone integration process. Highly autonomous initiatives are best left to standalone and function on their own. In essence, the degree of autonomy is fundamental to the choice of integration strategy.

Highly autonomous initiatives can only be integrated into the strategy process to the extent permitted by initiators. The degree to which initiators are willing to collaborate with senior management or willing for their initiatives to be recognized as part of the SEAG or SRS department strategy process determines the level of integration. Generally, initiators of highly autonomous initiatives maintain higher levels of control over the establishment and function of their initiatives. Initiators like to take ownership of their initiatives. Senior managers recognize the need for their independence and therefore resist interfering. For example, commenting on whether or not the SBI's success can be attributed to SRS strategy achievements, a manager from the SRS department responds:

“The answer is no but the SRS framework assists in the coherence for such initiatives to take place. For example, the initiator will not be sold the SRS strategy idea necessarily. He will have to identify it himself and want to engage with it. It will be his idea and not one that is being thrown at him”.

The choice of a standalone integration strategy does not preclude any links or collaborations between the initiative and the strategic process. On the contrary, it confirms the thesis contribution to Mintzberg and Waters (1985) argument about the fact that managers sometimes cannot stop or ignore emerged strategies and hence they must rather adjust to such strategies. The standalone integration strategy shifts the focus slightly from managerial influence or control of the strategic process to organizational actors' active role in strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations. The integration strategy recognizes and accepts individual and group initiatives as an integral part of the strategic process. Standalone initiatives are therefore not orphaned or illegitimate initiatives but they are legitimately linked to the strategic process albeit that they attract lower levels of interdependency. Although the SBI initiative is not mentioned in SRS progress logs, SRS highlights, implementation plans or the University's Strategic Plan, its existence, functions and outcomes are unequivocally acknowledged by senior managers. Its presence is however actively featured on the Business school's website as part of the School's main sustainable development engagement. The SBI initiative is undoubtedly embraced as part of the University's social responsibility and sustainability engagement. When asked at what point a sustainability initiative becomes part of the SRS strategy agenda if at all, the SRS coordinator responded:

“At the point when it is coherent with the overall framework of the SRS strategy”.

The above discussions confirm the thesis interest which supports the argument that strategy creation is a nonlinear, dynamic process that evolves through the integration of highly autonomous initiatives (Mintzberg 1978; Giddens, 1979; Burgelman and Grove 2007).

Conditions for standalone integration

Four main conditions engender the choice the standalone integration strategy. Firstly, the initiative must be extremely autonomous. The degree of autonomy must be unequivocal. The initiative must be established, and managed mainly by the initiator or managed outside the strategic process. Institutional support is likely to be sourced remotely from outside the strategic process such as from departments, schools or through entrepreneurial means. Secondly, the initiative must have lower levels of interdependencies in the sense that it should depend very little on other elements in order to function. The SBI is fundamentally a Business School level initiative. It rarely engages with other departments or colleges for day-to-day functioning. It also enjoys less interference from the SEAG group and the SRS department and neither is their activities monitored by them. The relationship between the SBI initiator and the two management group can only be described as collegiate. Thirdly, the initiative must be relatively small in size in terms of its scope and finance. For example, unlike the Learning for Change, Our Changing World and other initiatives which are heavily funded, the CRG Network was established with very little funds and the SBI also only attracted a three year grant to the tune of \$10000. Standalone initiatives are likely to become self-sustaining overtime. Fourthly, irrespective of its scope and size, the initiative must be visible and well known to senior management and the strategic process. The extent of awareness and familiarity to the strategic process is essential to the strategy creation process.

Summary

The discussions above link the three main thesis themes together seamlessly. While the first two themes respectively focus on the concept of sensemaking and contexts which engender sensemaking, this third theme discussed above links the sensemaking concept and context to

strategy creation. It provides insights where other studies have failed to establish a strong correlation between middle managers sensemaking of the strategic processes and strategic outcomes and their impact on overall strategic processes. This thesis therefore provides data evidence in support of its discovery that middle managers autonomous sensemaking of strategy lead to unexpected strategic outcomes which must subsequently be integrated into the overall strategic process, thereby influencing strategy creation in organizations. By this, the thesis themes on sensemaking of strategy, strategy outcome and strategy creation are extensively explored.

Having discussed types of autonomous initiatives which occurred from academics autonomous sensemaking process as well as integration strategies employed by the University to integrate autonomous sustainability initiatives, the thesis is further interested in exploring the motives and reasons that underpin the integration choices. In essence, the interest examines how senior managers perceive the SRS strategy with the intent of establishing the belief that senior managers' perception of strategy is directly linked with the integration strategies they adopt.

6.6 SENIOR MANAGERS' PERCEPTION OF STRATEGY

After exploring how senior managers respond to autonomous sustainability initiatives, particularly in terms of the integration strategies they employ, the thesis adopts the position that there is the need to understand how senior managers perceive the SRS strategy as their understanding of the strategy is believed to inform the integration choices they make.

The SRS strategy has been described as assuming a polymath approach. The polymath approach essentially describes the strategy as a broad and inclusive. Broad and inclusive strategies are not uncommon in loosely coupled systems. As has been thoroughly discussed, loosely coupled systems foster autonomous sensemaking processes, higher levels of independencies and behaviour in strategic work. For example, as indicated by the SRS advisor, the strategy embraces autonomous sustainability initiatives as long as they are coherent with the overall framework of the SRS strategy. It is inclusive enough to incorporate sustainability initiatives and outcomes which are closely related or relatively linked to the strategic process. In his comments below, the SRS advisor explained the extent to which the strategy is inclusive in the comment below:

“It (the strategy) is about helping to connect the different strands to achieve a coherence of right living and right working environment as an institution. It is not about one aspect. The boundary is the whole institution. It is all engaging”.

Continuous comments about the extent of inclusion led to the researcher to ask the question:

“What is included and what is excluded from the University’s sustainability parameters?”

Some of the answers provided were as follows:

“We do not know that yet. What is priority depends on where the individual is at and what they are doing”

“It is not coherent as to what the specific approach is or should be. It is a contracting and contrasting view of what is happening”.

“We have a collegiate concept about what social responsibility means and how individuals can contribute to it”.

In terms of describing the boundaries of the strategy, it is conspicuous that the scope and boundaries of SRS practices could not be described by any one person or group of people. Although the University records a myriad of sustainability initiative and activities, senior managers agree that there are still many more types of activities which are yet to be engaged in. They also believe in the possibility that organizational actors may be engaged in different types of sustainability activities that have not yet come to the attention of the SRS department.

Attempts to further unpack the boundary and inclusive nature of the strategy as a polymath strategy revealed the use of a number of peculiar phrases. Specifically the strategy has been described using three different analogies: ‘broad journey’, ‘super tanker’ and ‘whole moon’. The analogies provide some understanding into the amorphous nature of the strategy as well as the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled systems. The section below describes each analogy in some depth.

Each analogy presents pictures that contribute to understanding senior managers' perception of the SRS strategy which informs the motives for employing the three integration strategies.

6.6.1 Broad journey

Most interviewees used of the word 'broad' as a suffix in their attempt to explain what sustainability means to them. The phrase '*sustainability is broad*', was perhaps the most repeated phrase as individuals tried to make sense of what sustainability means to them. The word 'journey' is also used to describe the practice of sustainability as a constant on-going daily process. The analogy 'broad journey' is therefore particularly refers to an all-encompassing and constantly on-going process. The analogy portrays the fact that organizations are constantly engage in the process of becoming sustainable or maintaining their levels of sustainability. The broad journey analogy is reflected in how the strategy is crafted. The strategy is crafted as a document of aspirations instead of a prescriptive document with clearly articulated set of objectives. It is embodied by guidelines rather than definite rules which must be adhered to. The comment of a senior manager confirms this:

"The SRS agenda is an indicative road map. It is a broad ten year programme".

Basically, the document simply provides broad outlines of the University's sustainability intents over a ten year period, but does not provide specifics of engagement. This type of strategy creation process is characteristic of loosely coupled university systems in which strategy creation adopts a collegiate and collaborative approach. This is confirmed by a senior manager:

"It is easy for companies to have a one man vision whereas as a learning institution, we create a broad space for extensive engagement. A space where people normally do and share what they do".

During the interview with the SRS advisor, the description of the strategy as a broad journey raised the question:

'So how do you know when you get to the end of the journey'?

His emphatic answer was:

"We don't".

Some further explanations were also provided:

"At the moment we do not have a measure or fleet of measures to identify our progress or achievement. It is unscientific, unsatisfactory and amorphous.

"If we say for example that travelling is the measure, we will create fear for people not to travel".

The analogy of the practice of sustainability as a broad journey, confirms the on-going and amorphous nature of strategy creation in loosely coupled systems. Sustainability strategy creation is a constantly engaged in practice of becoming and remaining sustainable throughout the existence of an organization.

6.6.2 Super tanker

The second analogy employed in describing the SRS strategic process is a 'super tanker'. It describes particular function of the in the strategic process. It describes the collective function of the SRS department in particular as well as the overall strategic process. The idea of a super tanker suggests a function through which sustainability initiatives are purposefully identified and collected to form part of the strategic process. Identified initiatives can constitute both intended and autonomous sustainability initiatives. The super tanker approach supports the idea of total inclusion. No 'sustainability-like' activity is spared. This point is supported by a senior manager's comment:

“The super tanker collects everything in its path. Nothing is left behind”.

This function of collecting outcomes is typical of learning institutions where organizational actors work in silos. In a silos context, administrators and academics are individually engaged in sustainability practices that may be unknown to the SRS department. The collection process is done by a special sustainability task force group which constantly engages with schools and departments to identify administrators and academics engaged in sustainability initiatives. The department and initiators subsequently negotiate how to link emerging initiatives with the strategic process.

The department’s role in respect to the super tanker analogy is mainly to steer the function of identifying and collecting emerging sustainability initiatives. Their role is to provide leadership and support for emerging initiatives in such a way that sustains the survival of the strategic process. The following comments by a senior manager confirm this role:

“We are moving from the practical stuff to providing support. We try and nurture support and succour for initiative outcomes”.

“We are not an icebreaker. We exist to provide support in terms of education, training and unpacking the SRS strategy”.

The description of the super tanker analogy raised the question:

“So where is the super tanker going”?

The simple answer was:

“We do not know where the super tanker is going. It is going to the new world or to Africa – we do not know. Our role is to reduce the tanker from crushing on the rocks”.

Essentially, the idea of the super tanker analogy emphasises the process of identifying and collecting emerging strategy outcomes. The focus is on the coordinating role of senior managers, especially in terms of how the integrate emerged initiatives into the strategic process.

6.6.3 Whole moon

The ‘whole moon’ analogy was coined by an administrator. In the sentence:

“We do the whole moon’,

What she means it that the University practices all forms of sustainability practices irrespective of its significance. At the heart of the whole moon concept is the freedom to engage in different sensemaking process based on different interests and backgrounds. Additionally, individuals have the freedom to choice how much or how little they prefer to be involved in the strategic process. Senior managers admit that freedom to engage and the extent of engagement are pivotal to mobilising practice and support for the SRS strategy.

The term ‘volunteering engagement’ is introduced in the context of doing the whole moon. This not only endorses the idea of academic but also places great emphasis on the idea that the strategic process is fundamentally driven by personal interest. Senior managers believe that the survival of the strategic process mainly depends on volunteering engagement.

Yet in spite of this belief, senior managers also concede that:

“Sustainability is not for everyone”.

Unlike other strategy processes especially in traditional organizations, in loosely coupled university organizations, strategic processes are not for all organizational actors. For example, senior managers clearly declare and accept the fact that in spite of its significance in the survival of the University, not every individual is interested or would be interested in sustainability practices. There is a general understanding and acceptance that certain individuals may never connect with the concept and practice of sustainability. Senior managers therefore advocate that the strategy should not be advanced in such a way that might be offensive to such individuals.

Although increased non-engagement poses dire challenges to the survival of the strategic process, senior managers believe that the success of the strategy lies in the degree of individual commitment and not in the volume participants.

Summary

Fundamental to exploring senior managers' strategic integration choices is the ability to understand how they perceive the strategy. Senior managers' perception of the SRS strategy is that the strategy adopts a polymath approach in the sense that strategy is broad and inclusive. Three distinct analogies (broad journey, super tanker and whole moon) are employed to describe the strategy's boundaries in depth. Senior managers' perceive the strategy as a strategy on a broad journey specifically in terms of its all-encompassing and on-going nature. Not only can the strategic process embrace all manner of social responsibility and sustainability initiatives and engagements, but also the longevity of the strategy is tied to the longevity of the organization. The super tanker analogy refers directly to a peculiar function of the SRS department in respect of its role in identifying and bringing together all SRS activities occurring all across the University. In light of the fact that academics in particular work in silos, it is possible for initiatives to occur outside the view of senior managers. Thus as a super tanker the strategy is perceived as a hub for bringing all SRS related activities together. Doing the whole moon means freedom to engage freely with the strategic process based on individual preferences and interests. This is directly related to the concept of academic freedom and volunteering engagement. It is believed that freedom to engage actually increase mobilisation for active and committed engagement.

Overall, the analogies present a picture which indicates that senior managers' perception of the SRS strategy is one that is open to higher levels of autonomous strategic behaviour and activities. These strategic outcomes are wholeheartedly embraced and therefore subsequently become the responsibility of senior managers to adopt appropriate strategies enables them to integrate such strategic outcomes into the existing strategic process. Their perception of the strategic process therefore informs the integration choices the employ. In a sense, the three analogies form the predominant sensemaking frameworks from which senior managers' draw their understanding of the strategy and well as develop appropriate interpretation skills as to how to respond to autonomous strategic outcomes.

Chapter summary on strategy outcomes

The chapter links the thesis surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking with the process of strategy creation. Specifically, it provides details of the nature of four autonomous sustainability initiatives by describing the initiatives, the sensemaking processes involved in their birth as well as exploring existing levels of interrelationships which exists between the initiatives and other organizational elements. The description follows this nature particular as it is the aim to link the main thesis themes to together. At this stage therefore, the thesis links sensemaking, loosely coupled context interrelationships and autonomous outcomes together.

The chapter subsequently provides another level of understanding which finally links all the thesis' themes together. The chapter provides deeper first hand insights into the strategy creation process. It extensively describes how senior managers integrate autonomous initiatives into the strategic process. What senior managers do with autonomous sustainability initiatives vis-a-vis the SRS strategy is fundamental to the overall thesis objectives. It is argued that emerged outcomes only gain impetus in light of the overall strategy process (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman and Grove 2007). In essence, autonomous initiatives are most valuable if they can reshape the strategy creation process. This is enabled when organizations integrate autonomous strategic outcomes into overall strategic processes. The chapter indicates that senior managers employ three integration strategies in respect of autonomous initiatives. The initiatives may be subsumed totally into the existing strategy, or supported by the strategic process, or left to standalone to function on their own. Integration of autonomous outcomes into the strategic process reshapes the SRS strategy. Primarily, the existing strategy undergoes surprise changes because autonomous initiatives were hitherto unexpected. The strategic process is thus reshaped by autonomous sustainability initiatives. Senior managers are therefore constantly engaged in innovative processes of negotiating, legitimizing and integrating emerged SRS initiatives into the overall strategy creation process. The process of negotiating, legitimating and integrating emerged strategy into the strategic process is a key to the survival of the strategic process.

This confirms that assertion that strategy creation in organizations is not always achieved as planned (Eisenberg 1984; Mintzberg and Waters 1985). Strategy creation is non-linear, unpredictable and context-dependent (Mintzberg 1978; Balogun et.al 2003; Rouleau et.al 2011).

In short, strategy creation emerges particularly through autonomous outcomes (Regner 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Burgelman and Grove 2007) as confirmed by this thesis.

The thesis surprise discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking is directly linked with the concept of emergent strategy creation in loosely coupled systems. Simultaneous sensemaking produces surprise autonomous outcomes which are subsequently integrated into the SRS strategic process thereby altering the existing strategic process. This all-important linkage is a major contribution to sensemaking and strategy creation research studies.

CHAPTER 7 FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The overarching concern of the thesis is broadly situated in organizational and strategic management research studies which explore middle managers cognitive and sensemaking processes of strategies during the process of strategy creation (Gioia and Thomas 1996; Balogun and Johnson 2004, 2005; Rouleau 2005; Weick et.al 2005; Balogun 2006, 2012; Rouleau and Balogun 2011; 2005). Generally, the study of sensemaking associated with the process of strategy creation in organizations has revolved mainly around strategic performance and organizational change (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Maillis 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007 Reginee and

Rouleau 2013; Balogun and Rouleau 2012). Essentially, these change studies have focused on complete transformations and alterations of organizational processes, levels of modifications in processes, and discarding or introducing change processes. Change studies have often also researched drastic or moderate change, or sudden or long-term change. For example, the adoption of a new SRS strategy by Westland University is a typical example of organizational change which middle managers in particular must grapple with to understand. The general identification and description of middle managers as a single group of people has however created a gap in the sensemaking literature. The classification of university middle managers into administrators and academics is however imperative to this thesis study. Evidently, sensemaking studies have failed to recognize the distinctions between administrative and academic nature of work in loosely coupled organizations and its influence on how they draw different sensemaking frames to understand and interpret change strategic processes. The apparent neglect of these two distinct sensemaking processes has been identified by the thesis. The thesis describes this process as middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. It demonstrated that while administrators engage in a dependent sensemaking process, academics are engaged in an autonomous sensemaking process. The evidence revealed three dominant sensemaking frameworks each which administrators and academics select to aid their understanding and interpretation of the introduction of their University's SRS strategy.

The thesis exploration process was guided by an overarching aim to establish links between middle managers sensemaking processes (during the adoption and practice of new sustainability strategy), and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizational context. The aims of thesis consist of three main parts.

7.2 RECOUNTING THESIS AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Firstly, the thesis aimed to explore middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes. This began by identifying and describing specific processes administrators and academic engage in when scanning, selecting and interpreting appropriate sensemaking frames and cues to aid their understanding and engagement of their university's new Social Responsibility and Sustainability

(SRS) strategy. Overall, it identified and described six dominant sensemaking frames which administrators and academics drew on in their sensemaking attempts.

The first thesis aim corresponds with the first set of research questions which revolve around investigating middle managers sensemaking processes in relation to how they identify and select dominant sensemaking cues which enable them to understand, interpret and engage with their university's SRS strategy.

Secondly, the thesis aimed to explore the context of loosely coupled organizations in which middle managers simultaneous process particularly occurs. The interest was to examine the effect of the dynamics of loosely coupled context on middle managers sensemaking processes. Overall, the aim identified and described patterns of coupling and patterns on interdependency in administrative and academic work. Particularly the patterns of coupling provided a means of examining sources of subtle sensemaking frames which administrators and academics drew on to enhance their sensemaking processes.

The second thesis aim also corresponds to the second set of thesis questions which investigate issues pertaining to the context in which middle managers sensemaking occurs and its influence on their sensemaking processes.

Thirdly, the aim investigated the nature of strategy outcomes as a result of middle managers sensemaking process. On one hand, it demonstrated how unexpected strategy outcomes in particular occur while on the other hand demonstrating how organizations react and respond to unexpected strategy outcomes. Overall, three integration strategies employed by organizations to integrate unexpected outcomes into the SRS strategy were identified and described. By integrating unexpected outcomes into existing strategies a new strategies emerged.

The three aims correspond with the three sets of research questions which investigate issues on sensemaking and strategy outcomes as well as examine the process by which strategy emerges. Altogether, the aims and questions demonstrated links between middle managers sensemaking processes, loosely coupled contexts, sensemaking outcomes and the process of integrating

unexpected strategy outcomes into on-going strategic processes in ways that create new strategic processes.

7.3 REVIEW RESEARCH FINDINGS

A review of the thesis findings is discussed in three main parts to correspond with the three research aims. The first part presents findings on middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. The second set of finding represents issues on loosely coupled organizational context. The last set of findings consists of discussions on strategy outcomes and the process of strategy creation.

7.3.1 Administrators dependent sensemaking process

This first part of the chapter corresponds with the first thesis aim regarding sensemaking. The discussions focus on the thesis surprise discovery of simultaneous sensemaking processes. As discussed in chapter four, sensemaking frames based on legislation, accounting and reporting and organizational image constituted the three dominant sensemaking triggers which influenced and shaped administrators sensemaking process. A look at thesis framework in **Figure 3.1** under **(section 3.8)** clearly shows that the three sensemaking frames provide capabilities for the starting point of administrators' sensemaking process. Sensemaking frames particularly describe individuals scanning process so in terms of the information individuals seek, how they interpret and negotiate the information, as well as how they ascribe meaning and consequently take actions about occurrences in light of the understanding that the triggers provide (Weick 1995; Weick et.al 2005; Gioia et.al 1993; Thomas et.al 1993).

Legislation and conventions

The adoption of sustainable development into the Scottish public sector organizations such as universities is essentially driven from a government legislative perspective. The Scottish government's national drive to adopt, practice and embed sustainable development in Scotland provides legislative frameworks by which sustainable development concept is to be engaged with nationwide. This reveals associated links between institutionalization in terms of the influence of legislative pressures on organizational sensemaking (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Weick 2003).

The government's national drive is the starting point for constructing what sustainability means in the University. It provides institutionalized sensemaking triggers or what some (Weick et.al 2003) refer to as distributed sensemaking or shared understanding. The way sustainability is understood and engages with is first and foremost constructed by the national drive.

On one hand, the existence of institutional pressures suggests that institutions construct the way things are done in organizations to extents that almost exclude the principle of active agency (Weick et.al 2003). Embedded in coercive and mimetic pressures for example are qualities which suggest that organizational actors have little control of organizational events and activities (DiMaggio and Powel 1983; North 1990). Organizational actors are mandated to accept and engage with organizational directives as handed down to them (Child 2003).

The role and intervention of government in driving national sustainable development agenda is not uncommon (Figue 2001; Banerjee 2003; Fergus and Rowney 2005 Porter and Kramer 2006). Government intervention and legislation therefore provide mental maps and triggers from which administrators selected and deselected sensemaking cues which were appropriate to their sustainability sensemaking process.

Further suggestions indicate that one of the main factors that seemingly legitimise the need for government intervention in organizations is the challenge of definitional difference in the meaning of sustainable development.

Debates on definitional differences

Like most social strategies, sustainable development is easy to subscribe to but difficult to practice as an organizational strategy (Carroll 1991; Lele, 1991; Banerjee, 2003; Porter and Kramer 2006; Fergus and Rowney, 2005) and politically fuzzy (Lele, 1991). The challenge mainly lies in high levels of ambiguity inherent in the concept, high definitional differences and multiple interpretations of its meaning (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003; Wallace and Hoyle, 2006). There are widespread debates regarding the breath, application, ambiguity and meaning of sustainable development especially in respect of the Brundtland definition which is often described as broad and subject to interpretation.

A significant number of administrators argued that challenges with definitional difference made it difficult for them to agree on which sustainability meaning(s) were to be adopted and applied in organizations. Others also pointed out what they viewed as the irrelevance in adopting social concepts into organizations as well as the conflicts between aims of social concepts and core organizational strategies. It was evident that to address these challenges, the government expended much effort in adjusting the sustainability message to the particular groups of people to engage in the strategic process. It developed actions, adopted and adjusted sustainability messages and instruments aimed at reducing the inherent ambiguities as well as creating awareness and support for the strategic process. For example, they developed national policies, documents and papers such as *Choosing our Future* (2005), the *Climate Change Act* (2009), and *Waste, Energy and Travel* (2002), as primary sources of data which can be employed as sensemaking frames to reduce definitional differences and enhance understanding of sustainable development. The evidence illustrates that when faced with ambiguities in sensemaking, organizations rely on frames of reference which they draw from policies, plans, institutional constraints and the like to enable them make sense of events such introduction of new strategies (Weick 1993).

To this extent, some administrators argued that legislative drives should supersede university drives if the adoption and embedding process to be successful. Others argued that the absence of legislations will result in low levels of engagements or failure to engage altogether. Yet, other perceptions were that legislative drivers is the only way to promote and embed sustainable development practices in universities and as such the most efficient way to achieve sustainability practices in universities is if the concept is driven by legislation. The multiplicity of views regarding what should constitute the key drivers or dominant source of sensemaking frames is in itself indicative of the nature of sensemaking processes in organizations.

The evidence thus demonstrates that during times of change or introduction of new strategies individuals sensemaking processes can be conflicting (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003; Davenport and Leitch 2005) and politically fuzzy (Lele, 1991), both of which have tendencies to enhance or hinder the strategic process entirely.

Organizational image

Administrators argue that the University should be given a free hand to adopt and implement sustainability related practices in line with its core business. They argue that adopting social concept in organizations should be at the discretion of organizations and not governments. This argument is underpinned by earlier debates surrounding the need for organizations to operate in free enterprises which allows them the freehand to operate their businesses with little or no government restrictions (Friedman 1970; Freeman, 1984).

The idea of free enterprise especially as it projects organizational image therefore provides another source of sensemaking framework in administrators' sensemaking process. Based on this, administrators select alternative dominant sensemaking frames based on organizational image in particular. A closer look at the SRS strategy indicates high levels of organizational ambitions and objectives especially as they relate to energy reduction, teaching, research and external engagement targets. Clearly the University's aim to be a market leader in embedding sustainability practices is driven by personal organizational ambitions and not entirely through legislative pressures. The aim of projecting organizational image is to increase its organizational competitive advantage and to stay relevant to environment (Porter and Kramer 2006; Ghosal et al. 1999). The illustration supports the notion that in times when individuals' sensemaking processes conflicts, individuals start new sensemaking processes by deselecting and disregarding current sensemaking frames and instead select new cues to help restore the equilibrium created (Weick 1993, 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et.al 1993; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Maitlis 2005). By selecting the organizational identity framework administrators willingly identify themselves with the way in which the University chooses to be perceived by its external constituents.

Following a critical look at the SRS implementation plans and interviews in particular, future projections by administrators indicate the general belief that in future selecting organizational sensemaking frames will achieve a faster sustainability embedding effect than legislative sensemaking frames. The change in schemata suggests that administrators sometimes align their organizational image and norms and values above legislative pressures in ways that enhance their selection of alternative sensemaking cues as well as promote their construction of organizational identity. The idea of the future is important to the sensemaking process as the future is inseparably

linked with current processes (Gioia & Mehra 1996; Nijhof et al. 2006). Although individuals generally rely on past and present knowledge and experiences to make sense of current situations, sensemaking also occurs in anticipation of possible future occurrences especially as human actions are meaningfully oriented towards the future (Craig-Lees 2001; Weick et.al 2005; Nijhof et al. 2006). Resultantly, with time, administrator will likely select more of organizational image sensemaking cues and less of legislative and accounting and reporting cues for example. The shift is fundamental to understanding administrators current and future sensemaking process.

The above section has focused on discussions on administrators' selection of dominant sensemaking frameworks as related to legislation, accounting and reporting and organizational image. The following set of discussion focuses on academic sensemaking processes.

7.3.2 Discussions on academics sensemaking process

Academics are a group of professional knowledge workers who are distinct from other group of University staff workers. Their distinctive characteristic lies in the concept and power of academic freedom. The concept is symbolic to the higher levels of flexibility (Meyer and Scott 1983; Ingersoll 1991; Pajak and Green 2003), and power in academic work (Mintzberg 1979; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Balogun and Johnson 2004). The role of power and how it is expressed in organizations is essential to the sensemaking theory (Weick 1995; Weick et.al 2005). Organizational members sensemaking processes is such that some members have unequal access to roles and positions that give them the unequal power to influence the construction and meaning of organizational events (Mills 2003:153).

The concept of autonomous sensemaking produces sensemaking triggers which form the most dominant sensemaking framework for academics autonomous sensemaking to occur. The thesis has also clearly established that the autonomous sensemaking frames enable academics to select sensemaking cues which are external or autonomous to existing strategic process. The manner in which academics engaged with their understanding of what sustainability meant to them was clearly shaped by their personality, functional position, circles of influence and other tacit knowledge of sustainability. The thesis framework in **Figure 3.1** indicates that academics deselect the dominant sensemaking frames which administrators select, in favour of other personal or non-

organizational sensemaking triggers. The types of sensemaking frames they selected suggests that academics deselect organizational frames in favour of academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work sensemaking frames, in order to promote their construction of the autonomous sensemaking process.

It is clear that the nature of the strategic process being engaged in influences the kind of sensemaking frames which individuals and groups select. The SRS strategy generally enables autonomous sensemaking essentially due to the nature of the strategic process in operation. The nature of the SRS strategy is such that it encourages flexible engagement as a way of mobilizing middle managers adoption and buy-in of the strategy. The SRS strategy is not a core strategy but rather one of five enablers which drive core strategies. It is therefore not directly related to University core values such as those related to teaching, research and the general act of doing business in universities. This simply means universities can function and achieve core university business without necessarily incorporating SRS issues. As a result, academics selection of autonomous sensemaking frames does not necessarily impede the strategic process. This findings establishes the fact that in cases where existing strategic processes are not rigid in nature or not founded on core organizational values, selecting non-legislative sensemaking framework is likely to increase compared to core or unbending strategic processes. The finding thus demonstrates that academics engagements with organizational strategic blueprints are functions of the nature of the strategy at hand, which is equally a function of the level of autonomous sensemaking cues they select.

This also implies that depending on the nature of change or strategic process, individuals' sensemaking frames can shift from one schema to another (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Mehra; 1996; Snell, 2002; Rouleau, 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). In this case, shifts in frames occurred when academics selected more or less of autonomous cues to make sense of particular processes. The thesis demonstrates that the shift in sensemaking frames selection is crucial to the types of strategy outcomes that are achieved. The thesis has illustrated through the four mini cases that the more academics select autonomous cues the more unexpected sustainability outcomes they produced.

Wider context of autonomous sensemaking

Academics autonomous sensemaking process must however be analysed in the wider context of academics nature of work and its fit in existing strategic contexts. Academic freedom for example can only be exercised to the extent that it does not upset or unduly interfere with strategic processes or organizational strategic activities. In other words, an academics right to exercise their freedom and autonomy in their work must be juxtaposed against the University's rights to establish and achieve its strategic goals. This brings to sharp focus associated links between institutionalization and sensemaking. It brings to the fall, extents to which exaggerations in active agency occurs in sensemaking processes (Weick et.al 2003). In essence, the principle of agency as demonstrated in the existence of high levels of academic freedom does not connote that academics are a group of mutinies, and neither does the term 'working in silos' mean that they are fully autonomous. SRS strategic documents are dotted with examples of collaborations between academics and administrators and other elements. As a matter of fact, many of the academics interviewed were not only engaged in academic work, but they also dabbled in administrative positions.

The research findings support the idea that the nature of universities is undergoing change which resembles traditional organizations in which authority or control is centralized (Tyler 1987; Bartell 2003). Due to declining enrolments, reduced funding, and external competition (Gioia et.al 1994) on one hand, and increasing industry performance measurements such as the REF and sustainability reporting, academic work is undergoing higher levels of conformity, synchronization and connectedness with other components of university work in order for universities to obtain optimum ratings. Optimum ratings influence university rankings which are imperative to universities survival especially in terms of attracting funding and future students. Decreases in levels of conformity have caused increased shifts in academics sensemaking processes in light of on-going changes in the way universities are currently being reorganized and operated (Balogun and Johnson 2004). University members, especially academics, reselect different or alternative sensemaking cues to bridge the gap between their former nature of work and current organizational expectations. The changing nature of academic work is such that academic work is now less independent and more interdependent in nature (Orton and Weick 1990). This is evident by the fact that none of the unexpected sustainability initiatives examined in this thesis is a single individual's effort. It is clear that the nature of academic work has changed as has the levels of

power and autonomy of academic freedom. The findings suggests that overtime, the importance of the academic freedom and newness of sustainability in particular, although might remain significantly operatively, they will however lose some of their essence in the autonomous sensemaking process.

So far, the discussion above have provided better insights into issues related to administrators and academics selection of distinct dominant sensemaking frameworks and cues. These discussions form the basis for the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking process.

7.4 SIMULTANEOUS SENSEMAKING AND THE SENSEMAKING LITERATURE

The thesis discovery postulates that based on the nature of their work, middle managers sensemaking processes in loosely coupled universities cannot be misconstrued to be a singular or collective process as administrators and academics separately evoke their own filters to interpret and understand the strategy. The findings clearly indicate that administrators and academics were already engaged in sustainability practices before the SRS strategy was introduced. This means individuals had personal views of sustainability which was shaped by the kind of sensemaking cues which had been selected from previous context in which they operated. Their interpretation of the SRS strategy was therefore primarily based on personal interpretations of sustainability. The beginning of their engagement with the strategic process was not based on a prescribed order or determined logic or shared belief. This supports the idea that people or organizations do not make sense of events in splendid isolation (Craig-Lees 2001), nor does sensemaking occur in a vacuum.

Origins of sensemaking frames

Sensemaking processes begin when individuals first draw on their past experiences and old frames to make sense of and aid their understanding of current events (Craig-Lees 2001). Thus although sensemaking processes occur in the moment of time that an event is happening, yet the attention itself is based on what has already occurred in the past. Simply put, to make sense of any new experience or change process, there must be past experiences to be considered first.

In light of this, the thesis findings indicates that the dominant sensemaking frames that administrators and academics respectively draw on, were not their original or primary set of sensemaking frames in relation to what sustainability means to them. In the process of explaining what their general understanding of sustainability is, administrators and academics clearly indicated that their first frame of reference and filters were related to their individual worldview of sustainability and personal experiences. These were predominantly influenced by personal orientations, hobbies, likes, recreation, health, family lifestyle and keeping a healthy environment. There were no suggestions that sensemaking frames such as legislation or academic freedom influenced their first time sensemaking of the sustainability concept. By and large, the evidence supports the fact that there were great similarities in the answers provided by both groups. The differences between administrators and academics perception of sustainability as a general concept was almost negligible. A general observation demonstrates that administrators and academics understanding of sustainability was based on broad and general notions rather than specific meanings of the strategic process.

A further probe into the first set of research questions which sort to ascertain what sustainability means to middle managers, however changed from the general perception described above. There were noticeable differences between their sensemaking of the concept of sustainability when juxtaposed against their sensemaking of SRS strategy. In the process of explaining their understanding of sustainability in the context of the SRS strategy in particular, marked shifts were identified between administrators and academics understanding of the strategy. A closer look that the dominant sensemaking frames of administrators and academics clearly reveals shifts in terms of the sensemaking frames they focused on to aid their understanding of the general perception and strategy respectfully. This evidence is essentially what set the stage for the concept of simultaneous sensemaking. Their understanding of sustainability in the organizational context shifted from drawing on personal frames, to the six dominant frames described in-depth in the findings chapters. This finding supports the assertion that individuals sensemaking processes are likely to result in shifts in frames and schemata (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Mehra; 1996; Snell, 2002; Rouleau, 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). On one hand, on its own as a concept, sustainability means something different to administrators and academics based on the filters the draw on. On the other hand, when the concept is contextualised within a specific strategic

process, it results in marked shifts in frames of reference and sensemaking schemata which usually result in change in meaning of sustainability.

Shifts in sensemaking schemata

As clearly demonstrated, in times of change, individual's sensemaking are likely to result in shifts in frames and schemata as a result of negotiations and influencing that occur among organizational members (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Mehra; 1996; Rouleau, 2005). Throughout the research, administrators and academics sensemaking shifted between dominant and subtle sensemaking frames. For example, administrators selected dominant sensemaking frames if the activities they were engaged in had accounting and reporting or organizational image undertones. Yet concerning issues on travel and recycling for instance, some individuals experience shifts to more subtle and even personal frameworks. The shifts in sensemaking frames lead to new and unexpected behaviours as demonstrated through increases unexpected sustainability initiatives. Based on which sensemaking cues administrators focused on for example, their engagement process with the strategy could be described as more dependent or less dependent sensemaking process.

Senior managers have clearly engaged in influencing administrators and academics sensemaking process in strategic meetings like the annual away day meetings, but more especially through the face-to-face engagements team. They even encouraged middle managers to view the strategy as an encompassing strategy. They used the term 'whole moon' in reference to the strategic process which generally means the strategy is to be viewed as an encompassing strategy. Some administrators and academics however, resisted the idea of describing the strategy as an encompassing strategy. They argued that it made the strategic process too broad and ineffective. The bases for this argument was that to them, the breath of the strategic process meant that it had incorporated in it parts of similar already existing strategies. Nonetheless, it was clear that with the introduction of phrases like encompassing strategy, umbrella strategy, whole moon strategy and super tanker, overtime, some of these influenced middle managers cognition and behaviour in favour of the SRS strategic process. Some middle managers however viewed the word sustainability itself as a word whose meaning and function simply replaced already existing words like ethics and wellbeing. They argued that the University's effort to prefix or suffix the word

sustainability on old organizational strategies and activities was an attempt to relabel and update existing strategies and increase sustainability vocabulary and jargons. The University deliberately and explicitly used new messages, words and jargons to influence middle managers sensemaking and to foster required change in the strategic process. In spite of relabeling and increasing sustainability vocabulary and jargons, the meaning of sustainability itself was however relatively unchanged. This goes to show that words are carriers of meaning although word themselves do not necessarily symbolise meaning itself.

Change in sensemaking schemata is typical during sensemaking processes especially in respect of the argument that there is no right or wrong way to make sense or interpret an occurring event (Weick et.al 2005; Weick 1995). Thus the sensemaking process is structured around the idea of plausibility which means it is about meaning making and interpretation that best explains an event rather than about interpretations that are most accurate or 'the truth' (Weick 1995). Illustrations show that depending on specific contexts, application and practice, administrators and academics selected different sensemaking frames for understanding and interpreting sustainable development and sustainability concepts. They shifted from personal orientation frames to organizationally-based sensemaking frames. The shift in sensemaking frames led to new understanding and unexpected behaviours which influenced and caused change to occur in the way they engaged with sustainability in their work place.

It is based on the explanations above that the thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking is anchored.

Summary

The discussions above tell the main thesis story as represented in the first part of the thesis framework in **Figure 3.1**. That part of the framework is essentially a narrative of how middle managers sensemaking processes occurs. The discussion above was enabled by data acquired through the examination of the first set of thesis questions, documentary evidence and personal observations. In particular the questions sought to ascertain how middle managers understood the concept of sustainability and what the SRS strategy means to them.

The discussions have demonstrated that as a concept, sustainability means different things to different people. No two responses in the data set were the same. It demonstrates that, at any point in time, administrators and academics engaged in distinct, multiple sensemaking processes. This idea of multiple sensemaking was no different in relation to middle managers understanding of the SRS strategy. The findings have demonstrated the existence of shifts in frames and sensemaking schemata, relabeling of sensemaking, sensegiving and negotiations in organizational sensemaking processes.

PART TWO

7.5 LOOSELY COUPLED ORGANIZATIONS

This second part of the chapter corresponds with the second thesis aim regarding loosely coupled systems. It provides answers to the second research question which is essentially concerned about exploring the context in which middle managers sensemaking occurs and its influence on their sensemaking processes.

It is clear that existing studies have failed to examine specific patterns in loosely coupled university contexts for example, in terms of the extent to which these patterns can be described as loosely or tightly coupled (Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990; Dubois and Gadde 2002). In reference to administrators' nature of work for example, existing research has failed to examine their nature of work with respect to increased levels of flexibility and independence in administrative work and how these influence administrators' selection of subtle sensemaking frameworks. Similarly, there has been neglect in examining increased levels of connectedness, control and coordination (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980; Weick and Orton 1990; Ingersoll 1991; Pajak and Green 2003) in academics nature of work and how these influence the types of subtle sensemaking cues that academics select. The apparent neglect of the dynamic context of loosely coupled organizations is of concern to this study.

7.5.1 Loosely coupled contexts are dynamic

There are issues of complexities of coupledness embedded in loosely coupled organizations.

Although earlier studies have focused on measuring and classifying extents to which loosely coupled systems and organization can be classified and described as predominantly loosely coupled in nature, the degree and extent of their coupledness is still relatively unknown (Weick 1976; Orton and Weick 1990). This challenge can perhaps be attributed to the realisation that loosely coupled organizational context, are dynamic context which foster both loosely coupled and tightly coupled activities at the same time. For example in loosely coupled university organizations, middle managers are engaged in both loosely coupled activities as they are in tightly coupled activities. As a matter of fact, the evidence illustrates that as two distinct set of middle managers, administrators are engaged in different sets of loosely coupled and tightly coupled activities which are distinct from loosely coupled activities that academics are engaged in. This presents a dynamic context in which levels of coupledness occur at multiple micro levels than is perceived. The findings suggests that a more nuanced study of these various levels of coupledness from administrators and academics perspective will provide a better understanding of extents and degrees of coupledness in university organizations.

The dynamics of the current operational styles has caused shifts in the way administrators and academics engage with strategy for example. In their engagement with organizational strategy, administrators employ increased levels of flexibility (Weick 1976; Bartell 2003), in implementing organizational strategic blueprints, while academics engage in increased levels of coordination and connectedness (Rubin 1979; Meyer 1980; Weick and Orton 1990). Evidently, overtime administrators have become more responsive in their approach to strategic processes. For example, they have taken more ownership of SRS activities such as in recycling and sustainable accommodation. This allows them to engage more freely in the strategic process based on personal understanding, interpretation and engagement preferences. Similarly academics are engaged in more collaborative work with other university elements than before. Although their nature of work still involves higher levels of independence and flexibility, the change in university operations has also led to increased levels of coordination in academic work. The ECCI and Our Changing World sustainability initiatives are typical examples of successful partnerships and coordination work among academics from different fields of study who are actively engaged in the strategic process. The thesis argues that the nature of change processes that can occur in organizations is dependent on the nature of the organization. The evidence supports the idea that loosely coupled organizations

engender the adoption of sustainable development primarily because both the strategy and the organizational context are adaptive or flexible in nature.

The thesis further demonstrates that changes in university operations have caused corresponding changes in sensemaking processes in universities. The process of adopting and implementing social concept like sustainability in dynamic university contexts provides a myriad of sensemaking schemata to aid middle managers sensemaking processes. The evidence of change in relation to increased levels of flexibility in administrative work and increased levels of connectedness in academic works suggests that the middle managers select distinct sensemaking cues arising out of changes in the way universities are currently managed. Dynamics and changes in university management styles therefore produce extra sensemaking triggers which influence middle managers sensemaking of sustainability during change processes. In essence, additional cues selection and shifts in sensemaking schemata occur both at strategic process levels and organizational levels.

Apart from establishing links between middle managers sensemaking process and their sensemaking activities, the findings also unravel links between middle managers sensemaking process and its effect on middle managers relationships.

7.5.2 Interdependency and interrelationship

The study of interrelationships in loosely coupled systems is described in terms of levels of interdependency among people and other elements (Tyler 1987; Orton and Weick 1990; Dubois and Gadde 2002). Middle managers have demonstrated that the sensemaking cues they selected also impacted the way they related with other organizational elements.

For example, administrators' ability to engage in predominantly interdependent behaviours was dependent on high levels of interdependency in their relationships with other elements such as academics and the SRS department. To function in strategic processes administrators' interdependency levels consisted of lower levels of independence and power as well as lower levels of predictability in their relationships.

On the other hand, a closer look at the change in administrators sensemaking cues selection process also signifies a corresponding change in some aspects of their relationships with each other. For example, by selecting sensemaking frames based on increased patterns of flexibility and independence in their work, aspects of administrators' interrelationship can clearly be described as more independent, stronger, more predictable and more regular in nature. For example, by taking more ownership in their sustainability activities, administrators depended less heavily on other elements in areas such as recycling activities which have been set up to function more independently in departments, schools and colleges. It is evident that the more sensemaking cues on patterns of flexibility and independence administrators select, the more independent aspects of their relationships are likely to be.

Academics also demonstrated that their interrelationships with others are predominantly independent (Tyler 1987; Weick 1982). By depending less on other people and elements in performing their work, academic relationships is demonstrated as easily predictable, involving lower levels of interdependencies and higher levels of power.

A more in-depth investigation however reveals that some aspects of academic relationships are more interdependent, more predictable and more regular in nature than perceived. For instance, through increased coordination in research in particular, academics increasingly depended on other elements including non-academics to enable them function effectively. Clearly, academics selection of sensemaking cues based on patterns of connectedness and coordination had direct implications on their relationships. It showed that the more academics selected sensemaking cues on patterns of coordination and connectedness the more interdependent aspects of academic their strategic function was revealed.

Evidently, relational patterns in loosely coupled universities are a dynamic combination of levels of interdependencies which exist in administrators and academics dependencies on organizational elements. Although dominant triggers such as based on legislation, academic freedom, organizational image and research work provide predominant sensemaking frames; other triggers emanating from patterns of flexibility, connectedness and relational patterns also provided subtle sensemaking frameworks for middle managers sensemaking processes.

Summary

The discussions on this section are slightly different from the previous one and the next section. This section is particularly focused on the sensemaking context and not on sensemaking per se. As a contextual element, it was the thesis choice not to feature it in the overall thesis framework. However, it was imperative to the research to be able to demonstrate the dynamics of the context in which the thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking occurs.

The discussions were enabled by data extracted from the second set of questions. The questions probed middle managers understanding of the extent to which the nature of their work as loosely or tightly coupled and the types of patterns of coupling they identified. The thesis has demonstrated that administrative work is not as controlled or bureaucratic as perceived and neither is academic work autonomous nor uncoordinated as also generally perceived. The illustrations show that administrative work has increased levels of flexibility embedded in it while academic work also has increased levels of coordination and control. The thesis further demonstrated how these patterns of coupling provide subtle cues for administrators and academics sensemaking process.

PART THREE

7.6 STRATEGY OUTCOMES AND STRATEGY CREATION

This third part of the chapter corresponds with the third aim of thesis. The discussions are primarily focused on establishing links between sensemaking and strategy creation. Firstly, it provides nuanced evidence in support of the literature on intended and unintended strategy outcomes (Mintzberg 1978; Giddens, 1979; Eisenberg 1984; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman and Groove 2007). Generally, the findings supports extant research which proves that organizational strategy results in both intended and unintended outcomes. The thesis however discovered a gap in the strategy literature. Scant research exists which focuses on exploring organizational response to unintended or unexpected outcomes. The thesis findings support the assertion that organizations cannot simply ignore unexpected outcomes (Burgelman 1985b; Burgelman and Groove 2007). Secondly, the evidence demonstrates that organizations can incorporate unexpected strategy outcomes into existing strategic process by employing three types of integration strategies. By

integrating unexpected outcomes into existing strategic processes, unexpected outcomes reshape existing strategic processes. This part of the thesis therefore clearly illustrates that middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes produces unexpected strategy outcomes which are pivotal to the success of strategic processes in organizations as their integration into existing strategic processes reshape and recreate organizational strategies.

In the process of the SRS sensemaking, administrators and academics selected appropriate internal and external sensemaking frames especially as influenced by their nature of work, they internalized and interpreted the dominant frames which they later externalised in the form of intended and unexpected sustainability strategy outcomes.

7.6.1 Intended strategy outcomes

The SRS strategic process has clearly outlined targets and outcomes which are intended to be achieved at specific times. Generally, organizations measure the success of their sustainable success through their carbon emission footprints. In Westland University, this measurement is done through set KPI targets which mainly revolve around the University's primary aim to achieve high levels of energy reduction. For example, the SRS implementation plan 2013 outlines fifty-seven (57) different sustainability activities which the University engaged in. The activities are grouped under six strategic themes. A closer look at the activities helps identify and describe the University's intended strategy outcomes. Twenty (20) of the sustainability activities were operated under the theme of climate action plan alone. However, in spite of increased sustainability efforts related to energy reduction in particular, it is evident that in the course of the research period, the University's energy reduction records indicated increases in consumption levels instead of decreases as intended.

Failure to achieve set intended strategy outcomes is generally attributed to increases in energy consumption for high energy-based research activities and expansion of University sites. The more the University engages in such activities, the more energy is needed to accomplish such tasks. Failure to meet organizational targets is not uncommon to strategic processes. It has been clearly

established that strategy outcomes do not always materialise as intended (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman and Grove 2007). It supports the evidence that sometimes, the best organizational intentions backed by best effort, still fail. The idea that strategy creation is a non-linear, irrational process is therefore supported by the thesis findings. Administrators and academics sensemaking process indicates that middle managers and organizations engaged in an iterative process of constructing meanings and actions which lead to unexpected strategy outcomes which then changed the nature and course of the existing SRS and caused a new strategic process to emerge.

7.6.2 Unexpected outcomes

In a later research, Mintzberg (1990) redefined strategy as that which occurs mainly as result of emergent actions and less as a result of intended actions. This redefinition places less emphasis on intended strategy outcomes and more on unintended or unexpected strategy outcomes. It lays greater emphasis on the idea that strategy is created in the course of strategic processes and not at its end.

From the thesis perspective, outcomes of academics autonomous sensemaking process are typical examples of unexpected strategy outcomes. A look at the 2013 SRS implementation plan in particular indicates an overall increase in sustainability initiatives. Some of these activities emerged autonomously from unexpected sustainability behaviours. Insights into academics sensemaking processes especially in terms of how they select dominant and subtle cues provides enhanced understanding of what triggers the formation processes of unexpected outcomes in loosely coupled organizations. The evidence positions academics in particular as change agents through whom the University's SRS strategic process can emerge.

It has been argued that organizationally intended or desired strategic change processes can be undermined by unexpected outcomes (Harris and Ogbonna 2002). Essentially the belief is that, unexpected outcomes can either slow down intended processes or destroy the process entirely. The thesis findings however demonstrate that contrary to existing high levels of sustainability initiatives, the SRS strategic change process is enhanced rather than undermined or destroyed. In particular, the three integration strategies adopted by the organization enables a coexisting of

intended and unexpected outcomes in such ways that creates an acceptable fusion between intended and unexpected outcomes into strategic creation process. Middle managers sensemaking process is therefore closely linked to unexpected sustainability outcomes which are fundamental to the success of strategy creation in organizations.

As part of the interest in exploring links between sensemaking and unexpected outcomes, the thesis presents regarding how unexpected outcomes are financed.

7.6.3 Organizational resources

Strategy creation and strategy outcomes are a struggle between strategic choices, institutional capabilities (O'Leary et.al 2008) and other environmental factors such as available organizational resources (Regnee 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Balogun, Jarzabkowski and Vaara 2011). The evidence of higher levels of unexpected sustainability outcomes especially relating to carbon emission reductions, like the ECCI sustainability outcome, confirms links between strategy outcomes and organizational resources. On one hand, the more resources allocated to a particular part of a strategic project, the more organizational members are likely to focus their strategic engagement from such levels. Generally, administrators and academics naturally selected sensemaking cues from triggers which actively promoted sustainability participations in areas related to carbon emission where organizational resources were obviously available. For example, it was easier to secure funding to engage in environmentally related sustainability projects such as the 'Switch and Save' campaign which is a university-wide initiative. Organisational resource was also available for the Learning for Sustainability (Lfs) unexpected initiative. As an offshoot of the UN Decade long Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project, it attracted enough resources both from organizational sources and through national support. This supports the idea that to facilitate unexpected or autonomous projects, managers are generally attracted to available resources not yet absorbed by the strategic process (Burgelman and Grove 2007).

In practice however, it is unlikely for organizational resources to pre-allocated to unexpected strategic initiatives at the time of their occurrence. Not especially if strategic initiatives have not been previously conceived of by senior managers and strategists as part of intended outcomes, or have been considered by them as peripheral to the strategic process. This leaves initiators of

unexpected initiatives with the challenge of sourcing appropriate funding and support for unexpected strategy outcomes (Burgelman and Grove 2007; Balogun et.al 2011). For example, funding for the SBI initiative was mainly sourced independently by the initiator. The funding was externally sourced from the University's Business School in which the initiative is situated and not from resources from the main SRS strategic process. Evidently, the success in sourcing the resources externally can be attributed partly to the fact that the initiator's dominant sensemaking frame in relation to the strategic process was drawn mainly from triggers within the Business School. This resulted in collaborative efforts on sustainability engagements between the initiator and the Business School.

In regards to allocation of organizational resource therefore, though intended strategy initiatives receive the most funding and support, the evidence however suggests that, depending on the sensemaking triggers that administrators and academics focus on, unexpected sustainability initiatives have been sourced and funded both internally and externally of the strategic process.

So far, having contributed to debates on unexpected strategy outcomes, the thesis extends the debate further to explore what organizations do with or how they respond to unexpected strategy outcomes. Of particular interest was to present discussions on how unexpected strategies became integrated into the SRS strategic process.

7.6.4 Integration strategies

In line with previous studies which have identified, explained and described strategy outcomes (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Harris and Ogbonna 2002; Burgelman and Grove 2007; Pettigrew 2012), the thesis also identified and described four types of unexpected sustainability outcomes in chapter six. They consist of, The Sustainability Business Initiative (SBI), Learning for Change, Our changing world, and The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI) initiatives.

The findings however do not simply describe the four unexpected initiatives but also advanced a less frequently explore part of the strategic outcomes literature by describing managerial implications in relation to unexpected strategic outcomes (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman, 1983b; Burgelman and Grove 2007).

Senior managers of the SRS strategic process did not simply overlook the unexpected initiatives when they emerged. They responded by adopting three particular responses or integration strategies to incorporate the initiatives into the SRS strategic process. The integration strategies include supporting, subsuming, or allowing the initiatives to stand alone. Based on the nature of the sustainability initiative, the most appropriate integration strategy was applied to incorporate or associate the unexpected sustainability outcomes into the existing SRS strategic process. Senior managers could not however randomly integrate the initiatives. The integration process was duly negotiated between the initiators of the initiatives, senior management and all relevant stakeholders. A closer look at the process clearly draws attention to middle managers ability to influence senior managers' sensemaking processes. The integration process thus brings to light senior managers' sensegiving in the SRS strategic process.

Middle managers influencing of senior managers

Most sensegiving studies have generally focused on senior managers' influence of middle and lower managers' sensemaking, or sensegiving between middle managers in their attempts to perceive and understand what is going on around them (Gioia, and Chittipeddi 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). Less research is focused on middle managers influences on senior managers. This thesis on the other hand has demonstrated that high levels of sensegiving exist from the point of view of middle managers ability to influence senior managers' sensemaking processes. The three integration strategies adopted by the strategic process is clearly senior managers' response to influences by middle managers. Senior managers were forced to make sense of middle managers' unexpected outcomes in terms of their understanding and interpreting of the outcomes. Senior managers' choice to support, subsume or allow unexpected strategies to stand alone indicates that middle managers actions and influences cannot be ignored by senior managers. Although it has been argued that senior managers can squash unexpected outcomes (Burgelman and Groove 2007), the thesis demonstrates that in loosely coupled university contexts where simultaneous sensemaking and high levels of middle managers sensegiving exists, instead of being squashed or destroyed, unexpected strategy outcomes are integrated to existing strategies through appropriate types of integration strategies.

Negotiating positions for unexpected outcomes

Generally sensegiving studies are concerned with investigating sensegiving processes during the formation of change processes. The primary aim is to identify and described negotiations which occur from the start of a change process till an outcome emerges. The thesis however shifts the focus from examining negotiations and influences which occur during the formation of outcomes. Instead, the thesis argues that there is a research gap relating to studying negotiations surrounding the role and place of unexpected strategy outcomes into existing strategic process in terms of how outcomes are integrated into existing strategic processes. The thesis demonstrates that sensegiving does not occur only during the formation to the emergence of strategy outcomes alone, but also continues beyond the formation process. It is evident that in terms of unexpected sustainability outcomes, negotiations between middle managers and senior managers occurred less during the sensemaking and formation process of the initiatives and more after initiatives were formed. For example, while little to moderate negotiations and influencing occurred between the initiator of the SBI initiative and senior managers during the formation process, the role of the SBI in the overall SRS strategic process however involves active discussions and negotiations. In light of the three integrations strategies that senior managers adopt, the decision for the SBI initiative to be supported, subsumed or left to standalone vis-a-vis the SRS strategic process depended on the extent of negotiations between senior managers and initiators of unexpected strategy outcomes. This puts middle managers in a place of power in relation to senior managers and the strategic process. Senior managers' agreement or disagreement to acquiesce to middle managers preferences in terms of particular integration strategies to adopt is imperative to understanding the dynamic role of middle managers in the process of strategy creation. The thesis therefore demonstrates that during the process of strategic change, sensemaking and sensegiving are essential during the formation process of outcomes as they are after strategy outcomes have come into existence. It demonstrates that organizational strategic processes are dynamically and socially constructed through continuous interaction, sensemaking, negotiating and influencing (Weick 1982; Gioia, and Chittipeddi 1991).

Altogether, the identified initiatives and integration strategies provide evidence in support of a broader focus on understanding specific determinants, exploration and managerial response to strategic outcomes (Harris and Ogbonna 2002; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Pettigrew 2012),

especially in regards to the effect sensemaking processes on strategic outcomes. Ultimately, it is clear that unexpected initiatives guided and reshaped the strategic process. The SRS strategy is thus redeveloped as a result of a dynamic mix between unexpected strategy outcomes and existing strategic processes.

The entire discussions in this chapter is aimed at addressing the overall thesis interest which seeks to establish links between middle managers sensemaking processes and the process of strategy creation. So far it has demonstrates that administrators and academics sensemaking processes is directly related to changes and outcomes in strategic processes.

7.7 SITUATING SENSEMAKING AND STRATEGY CREATION IN THEORY

Fundamentally, the thesis discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes transcends beyond a simple cognitive exploration of middle managers sensemaking of strategy in loosely coupled university. The adoption of the sensemaking theory was further extended to examine associated links between sensemaking and the process of strategy creation in organization. The thesis established links between organizational members understating, interpretation and engagement with the SRS strategy and the impact these had on the overall strategic process. The thesis demonstrated its aim which sought to identify and describe changes that occur in strategic processes especially in terms of how changes reshape strategic processes. The evidence demonstrated that strategy creation in organizations is less deterministic but rather emerges through everyday sensemaking activities of organizational actors. The thesis evidence indicates that administrators and academics understanding, interpretation, influencing and negotiations of the SRS strategic process are a confirmation of earlier research positions which prove that organizational managers have the ability and power which enables strategy to emerge during strategic processes (Mintzberg 1978; Eisenberg 1984; Minzberg and Waters 1985; Burgelman and Groove 2007). In particular the emergence of the four unexpected sustainability initiatives for example, clearly indicate that administrators and academics are not simply engaged in implementing the SRS strategy but are actively engaged in reshaping and developing the overall strategic process.

Sensemaking and strategy-as-practice fit

Essentially, sensemaking and change studies are generally situated in the strategy-as-practice (SAP) strand of research as both types of studies are interested in examining actionable or social practices of organizational members in particular (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Weick 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Pettigrew 1992; Thomas et.al 1993; Whittington, 2003; Maitlis 2005; Jarzabkowski 2005 Weick et.al 2005; Rouleau 2005). Simply put, SAP studies are interested in exploring strategy as something that people do in organization (Whittington, 2003; Jarzabkowski 2005; Johnson et al., 2007), or daily practices or individuals in organizations. This thesis clearly fits into SAP studies by examining administrators and academics active selection of distinct dominant and subtle sensemaking frames especially in respect to peculiar practices associated with the process of selecting and deselecting appropriate sensemaking cue which determine the daily sustainability activities they engage in. By examining processes involved in administrators' exploitation of sensemaking triggers internal to the strategic process and academics exploration of external sensemaking triggers, the study unravels distinct practices related to sustainability planning, implementing and engagement practices. It revealed everyday sensemaking and strategy activities which underpin administrators and academics understanding and practice of sustainability.

In view of the fact that the thesis discovery of simultaneous sensemaking is relatively unknown, the choice in adopting the SAP strategy perspective enabled the thesis to appropriately explore the discovery through observable or actionable practices instead of what Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2006), describe as exploring through theorizing about practices. Observations of sustainability practices through formal sources such as strategic documents, minutes from strategic meetings, interviewer's notes during participation in selected meetings, and interviews, revealed clear practices of how administrators and academics applied sustainability in their work. Practices such as middle managers successful application of sustainability to subject courses in Business Studies, and the challenges of applying it to Mathematical Studies were observed. Other observations included sustainability practices related to outdoor learning, renewable energy construction and external engagements with relevant stakeholders were also observed. Of particular importance were observed practices related to achieving legislative requirements on important issues relating to accounting and reporting of the University's sustainability activities, meeting REF standards and Fair Trade activities for example.

Actionable and observable practices which is also referred to as the practice turn (Whittington 2003; Hodgkinson et.al 2006; Jarzabkowski and Seidl 2008), involves the importance and use of concrete activity such as activities which occur in boardrooms, corridors, on phones and in front of computer screens to provide relevant research data. Following in this type of studies, the thesis additionally employed other types of informal observations such as tea break conversations, gossips, storytelling and influencing (Samra-Fredericks 2005; Gioia et.al 1991) to unravel middle managers informal sustainability practices in particular. Gossips and storytelling in particular supported evidence of embedded challenges in engaging in sustainability practices on a daily basis in the University. The conversations were normally among friendly colleagues who among other things discussed senior managers perceived influencing and interfering activities, influencing and negotiating activities among middle managers, challenging sustainability practices, and some success stories.

Although the practice turn concept is popular to social theory and the SAP strand of research, Ezzamel and Willmott (2004) however argues that practice research studies should rely more on close observations of organizational actors' activities than on actors' accounts and interview responses. Evidence from personal observations was gained from engaging in away day meetings and sustainability award events provided a closer observation of administrators and academics sustainability activities and practices. In particular, these revealed differences between administrators and academics sustainability practices from organizational and personal perspectives. For example the evidence suggests that some middle managers were involved in more sustainability activities in their personal lives than in their organizational lives and vice-versa. However regardless of the distinctions, both organizational/formal and personal/informal sustainability practices were somehow intertwined and viewed as part of organizational practices. For example, personal decisions by some people to travel by train instead of flying in a plane, or decisions to travel by bicycles instead of by cars to work or holiday sites were not separated from organizational sustainability practices but instead viewed as a total sustainability lifestyle. The findings suggest that blur distinctions between organizational and personal sustainability practices is enhanced by the nature of the strategy being adopted. Social concepts like sustainable development and Corporate Social Responsibility into organizations are difficult to adopt. The

evidence indicates sustainability is a highly socialized practice and therefore it is difficult for individuals to separate personal practices from organizational practices. This observation is further supported by interview response by administrators and academics who revealed that their understanding of the SRS strategy was partly influenced by their own personal practices such as recycling by reusing stuff as far back as their childhood days.

The thesis methodology was appropriately designed to enable it capture administrators and academics sensemaking processes in flight. It captured primary on-going accounts of administrators and academics understanding of the introduction of the SRS strategy. It observed what managers actually do in terms of the practices involved in adopting and applying the sustainability concept in their daily organizational activities. Of particular importance to the thesis were observations of practices such as introducing and communicating new strategies to middle managers by senior managers, power dynamics and relationships between senior and middle managers, organizational influencing and buy-in, resource allocation to unexpected outcomes in particular, reporting, monitoring, control etc. By linking sensemaking and strategy creation, observations clearly evolved from a simple understanding of issues regarding middle managers, strategies, and change in organizational environments over specific periods of time (Hutzschenreuter et.al 2006; Whittington 2007; Langley 2007), to comprehending middle managers understanding and interpretation of their university's sensemaking processes.

Summary

The discussions above tell the second half of the thesis story as represented in the second part of the thesis framework in **Figure 3.1**. That part of the framework is essentially a narrative linking middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process to strategy outcomes and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations.

The discussions were enabled by the thesis third research questions which sought answers to explore how unexpected strategy outcomes occur, the nature of unexpected strategy outcomes, organizations respond to unexpected outcomes, and integration strategies. The discussions illustrated that autonomous sensemaking generally led to unexpected outcomes. It described four outcomes in particular. It also demonstrated that organizations react to unexpected outcomes by

employing three types of integration strategies used to incorporate new outcomes to the SRS strategy. The connection between sensemaking, unexpected outcomes and the SRS strategy is clearly indicated in the thesis framework in **Figure 3.1**. This part of the framework is imperative as it tells the story of how new or unexpected strategy outcomes reshape the SRS through integration, thereby creating a causing strategy to emerge.

Chapter summary

Overall, the thesis findings support the idea that both intended and unintended strategy outcomes are imperative to strategy creation in organizations. First of all, it introduces the idea of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes. This is demonstrated in terms of identifying and describing three distinct dominant sensemaking frameworks each which administrators and academics independently draw on. It shows that administrators are generally engaged in dependent sensemaking processes while academics are generally engaged in autonomous sensemaking processes. It also introduced the fact that both intended and unexpected strategy outcomes develop from administrators' dependent sensemaking process and academics autonomous sensemaking process.

Secondly, the findings demonstrated that simultaneous sensemaking process is engendered in loosely coupled organizations in particular. It also illustrated that loosely coupled organizations are not as loosely coupled as has been previous perceived. The discussions indicated that specific patterns relating to flexibility in administrators' work and patterns of connectedness in academic work consist of increased levels of tight coupling and loose coupling respectively. Issues relating to interdependency and interrelationships were also discussed especially in terms of how patterns of coupledness and patterns of interdependencies provide subtle sensemaking frames to aid administrators and academics sensemaking processes.

Thirdly, the thesis established the idea of unexpected strategy outcomes as a result of sensemaking. It further demonstrated how organizations respond to unexpected outcomes by introducing three specific types of integration strategies. It subsequently demonstrated how the SRS strategic process was altered through the application of the integration strategies. It laid emphasis on the role of middle managers in strategic processes especially in terms of how they influence senior managers'

sensemaking process and the strategic process as a whole. Lastly, the discussions provided links between the study of sensemaking and the theory on strategy. This was achieved by contextually situating the study of middle managers sensemaking and its associated links with strategy creation appropriately into the strategy-as-practice strand of research.

In terms of the overall research aim therefore, the findings have successfully demonstrated existing links between simultaneous sensemaking, unexpected strategy outcomes, organizational response to unexpected outcomes and the process of strategy creation in organizations.

Senior managers, the SRS department, academics and other stakeholders agree that in order to embed sustainability practices in the University, both administrators' dependent sensemaking process and academics autonomous sensemaking process are needed to embed the SRS strategy. In effect, the introduction of the existence of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes autonomous sensemaking and individual interests must drive the University's sustainability strategy. The thesis therefore demonstrated that middle managers selection of dominant and subtle sensemaking cues as related to their nature of work are paramount to the process of strategy creation in Universities.

7.8 PROPOSED THESIS CONTRIBUTIONS

The thesis makes two main sets of contributions in respect to literature and research, and practice and policy. In respect to literature and research, contributions are made to the thesis main literature on sensemaking, loosely coupled organizations, strategy and institutional theory. With regards to practice and policy, contributions are made in respect to middle managers classifications and simultaneous sensemaking, as well as sensemaking and strategy outcomes.

7.8.1 Contributions to literature and research

The thesis makes contributions to the four different literatures employed.

Contributions to sensemaking literature

In contributing to the sensemaking literature and studies, the thesis provides more evidence in support of scant but growing research which explores the role of middle managers sensemaking during strategic change (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun 2006; Rouleau and Balogun 2011). Principally the contribution extends the knowledge of middle managers sensemaking process from single-level sensemaking process (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleu and Balogun 2011; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Gioia and Thomas 1996), to a simultaneous-level sensemaking process. By adopting a theory elaboration approach the thesis develops an understanding into the discovery of middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process in loosely coupled organizations. The introduction of simultaneous sensemaking is supported by succinct evidence on the existence of dependent and autonomous sensemaking processes. This contribution paves the way for other studies to investigate different types of sensemaking processes which occur concurrently among different types of managers especially in relation to the impact that these have on specific change processes.

Contributions to loosely coupled literature

In reference to loosely coupled organizations, the contribution draws attention to the fact that the discovery of autonomous sensemaking processes is best situated in loosely coupled contexts. Sensemaking studies have generally been conducted in traditional organizations to the exclusion of loosely coupled organizations (Balogun and Johnson 2004, Rouleau 2005; Balogun 2006; 2012). However loosely coupled strategic activities directly impact the sensemaking processes of middle managers especially as it relates to the distinct dominant and subtle sensemaking triggers that exist in loosely coupled contexts. In particular, patterns of interdependency and patterns of coupling which is peculiar to loosely coupled context provide clear subtle and dominant sensemaking triggers for middle managers. The thesis establishes that loosely coupled organizational contexts are good incubators for middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process. It further demonstrates that such nuanced peculiarities cannot be overlooked in middle managers sensemaking studies.

Contributions to strategic management studies

From a strategic management studies perspective, the thesis makes contributions by also demonstrating that strategic intensions results in both intended and unintended strategy outcomes has been well researched (Mintzberg 1978; Giddens 1979; Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Harris and Ogbonna 2002; Regner 2003; Balogun and Johnson 2005; Burgelman and Grove 2007). It specifically demonstrates through the four sustainability mini cases that strategy creation in organizations is an emergent process coupled with surprises and unintentional outcomes.

A further part of the contributions demonstrates how middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes reshape and reform strategic processes in loosely coupled organizations by illustrating three specific strategies which organizations employ in integrating unexpected strategy outcomes into existing strategic process.

Contributions linking sensemaking and institutional theory

Another literature and research contribution demonstrates links between sensemaking and institutional theory through the idea of middle managers selection of dependent and autonomous sensemaking triggers. Through theory elaboration, the thesis increases the knowledge that institutions construct the way sensemaking occurs in organizations. It demonstrates that legislation, organizational image and academic freedom pressures are employed by organizations to influence the choice of dominant sensemaking frames that administrators and academics select. On the other hand however, the thesis provides enough evidence in support of the fact that institutions and organizational realities are also actively constructed, negotiated and reconstructed during sensemaking processes. Administrators and academics did not mechanically pursue the SRS goals without processes of negotiating, sensegiving and re/constructing the realities through which they conceptualised the strategy. In essence, structure and agency are both essential to organizational actors' sensemaking processes. The existence of well-established unexpected strategy outcomes is proof that organizational actors do not simply internalize and adopt the dictates of organizational goals. The thesis suggests that maintenance of an acceptable balance between compliance and flexibility during sensemaking of strategy can be analysed by investigating how middle managers construct and negotiate their understanding of what they think organizations expect of them versus how they think organizational events should be enacted or re/discovered.

7.8.2 Contributions to implications for practitioners and policy makers

It is common place that organizations are increasingly considering the impact of their operations in the communities in which they operate. This has led to the adoption of social concepts and principles by organizations in their attempt to demonstrate their apparent commitment to sustainable development, sustainability and corporate social responsibility concepts in particular. As a second set of contributions, the thesis findings unravel three main implications for practitioners and policy makers.

The importance of middle managers classifications

Firstly, in respect of mobilising middle managers in loosely coupled organizations in particular, the thesis advocates that organizations wishing to truly adopt and embed sustainability practices must first consider the role of middle managers classifications in respect of the nature of the work they do. Middle managers classifications as administrators and academics for example, and their associated roles influence their willingness and capability to buy-in and engage with new strategies. Organizations must acknowledge that based on their nature of work, one group of middle managers may be more or less interested in a new strategy than another group and vice versa. Failure to appreciate middle managers classifications might lead to a wrong organizational perception which might indicate that all middle managers are interested in the adoption of a particular strategy when in actual fact only one group of middle managers may be interested. The thesis proposes that a lack of proper distinction between middle managers in relation to their nature of work will negatively impact levels of interest and buy-in by one group of middle managers which will subsequently jeopardize strategy implementation and the survival of strategic process.

The importance of identifying simultaneous sensemaking

The way middle managers understand, interpret and ascribe meaning to sustainability strategies is crucial to the way they engage with the strategy as part of their day-to-day strategic activities. To influence middle managers sensemaking processes, the thesis proposes that it is imperative for organizations to clearly identify sensemaking cues and frameworks which middle manager groups are likely to notice and select or deselect. If organizations can predict the types of dominant sensemaking cues particular groups of middle managers are likely to select, this would enable

senior managers to ensure that organizational messages, language and narratives used in their sustainability communications are visible and strong enough to be selected by middle managers. The thesis demonstrated that the University's sustainability messages were more aligned with dependent sensemaking cues and therefore it provoked greater mobilization from administrators than it did from academics. There is therefore the need for organizations to project sustainability sensemaking triggers and cues which are strongly aligned with the sensemaking choices of the different groups of middle managers. Organizations must therefore find different approaches to mobilizing sustainability support and engagement from middle manager groups in loosely coupled organizations.

The importance of sensemaking and strategy outcomes

Thirdly organizations must be aware that throughout the process of sensemaking, what individuals or groups seek is plausibility in meaning and not accuracy in meaning. This means that middle managers select, interpret and embrace meanings which they primarily understand or which makes sense to them. They will not necessarily select and interpret cues or embrace meanings which are factual or accurate. As such, it is possible that middle managers scanning and selection process will exclude important sensemaking frames and therefore lead to 'inaccurate' interpretation of what is expected by the strategic process. The idea of plausibility can result in unexpected sensemaking processes which can consequently lead to unexpected actions. For example, academics selection of autonomous sensemaking frames which were seemingly incongruent with the strategic intent, subsequently led to the emergence of unexpected sustainability strategies. By deselecting dependent sensemaking frames in favour of plausible autonomous sensemaking frames, academics interpreted the strategic intent through different filters which led to unexpected outcomes such as the SBI and Our changing world sustainability initiatives.

The academics autonomous sensemaking process illustrates that if middle managers are allowed to engage in sustainability strategies by invoking their own sensemaking and meaning to the strategy, this actually leads to increased mobilization. It is evident that if academics were unable to engage in the autonomous sensemaking process, then the likelihood of them engaging in the strategic process would have been abysmal. The freedom to scan, select and interpret sensemaking

cues based on personally selected mental frames was what generally enabled academics to embrace and engage with the strategy.

The importance of sensemaking and institutional theory

The thesis supports burgeoning calls for the need to integrate institutional context into sensemaking theorizing (Weick et.al 2005; Brown et.al 2014). In particular, it supports the growing knowledge that sensemaking enables understanding of micro processes which underlie macro processes in organizing and organizations (Brown et.al 2014). Consequently, the thesis makes a further contribution in regard to establishing links between sensemaking and institutionalization.

The thesis employed sensemaking from the point of view of exploring aspects of organizing which implicate and enable understanding of the micro process of middle managers strategy engagement as a means of better understanding the macro process that underlies strategy creation in organizations. To understand macro processes of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations, the thesis established that principally sensemaking studies are particularly needful to investigate, comprehend and establish micro processes of middle managers strategy sensemaking and engagement. The thesis clearly demonstrated that middle managers sensemaking is influenced by (micro level) internal cognitive frameworks such as legislation, image, accounting and reporting, academic freedom, research work and peculiar organizational contexts. These served as dominant and subtle frames which shaped and biased their sensemaking of (macro level) institutional and functional structures in relation to the practices, behaviors and outcomes of the sustainability strategy achieved.

The thesis thus contributes to the understanding that sensemaking presents a basis for practitioners and policy makers to strategically create and position micro and macro institutional models to guide organizational sensemaking into achieving a process of generalizing and institutionalizing desired organizational meanings, behaviors, practices and outcomes. Overall in terms of establishing links between sensemaking and institutionalization, the thesis contributes to the notion that middle managers sensemaking is not simply embedded in organizing and organizations, but

that their sensemaking can have consequences for organizations (Brown et.al 2014:6) especially in terms of achieving macro institutional outcomes. The thesis therefore recommends the need for increased future research in this regard.

In sum, the thesis has important implications to practitioners and policy makers in that, firstly it points to the need for middle managers classifications in loosely coupled organizations and the impact of such classifications on their sensemaking process. Secondly practitioners and policy makers must realize that at any point in the strategic process, they will be dealing with different groups of middle managers and therefore different types of sensemaking process which occur simultaneously. Their ability to correctly analyse and influence middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process is essential to strategy engagement processes. Thirdly, practitioners and policy makers should consider unexpected sensemaking and strategy outcomes as integral parts of strategic processes. Freedom to select personal sensemaking frames increases mobilization of middle managers and increases strategy outcomes too.

7.9 LIMITATIONS

One of the thesis primary limitations is the use of a single site case study. Although the case study is supported by four mini cases, the challenges of generalizability and replicability of theoretical constructs derived from single case studies still exist (Eisenhardt 1989). The thesis notes that the discovery of simultaneous sensemaking outcomes, particular linkages between sensemaking, unexpected outcomes and strategy creation outlined in the study are specific to the empirical setting. While it may be challenging to generalise empirically from these sensemaking and strategy creation patterns described, the researcher believes that similar patterns and outcomes are likely to occur in other loosely coupled context where there are distinct sets of middle managers who select distinct types of sensemaking frames during periods of strategy creation. Perhaps in future, a more comparative approach with other Scottish universities as was initially intended by the researcher would likely provide a more grounded understanding and deeper insights to verify and extend the thesis arguments regarding autonomous sensemaking processes and the process of strategy creation in Scottish Universities as a whole. The thesis argues that increasing the sample size of organizations, administrators, academics and senior managers, issues regarding dominant

sensemaking triggers such as legislation and convention, and academic freedom in particular would principally increase the thesis level of reliability.

Additionally, the thesis sample size also presents some methodological challenges. For a large and well established University institution the thesis sample size of less than forty (40), organizational actors is a deficit to rich data generation. In future, the number of academics and senior managers in particular can be increased to provide a more representative data set and size.

In terms of the research timeline, the thesis is limited, in that more time could have been afforded to collect further data when needed. This would have been especially useful as the strategy under investigation was relatively new and ‘in flight’ in the sense that its formative nature unfolded with every passing day. It would therefore have been valuable to conduct periodic investigations during different stages of its flight to properly understand the nature of strategy creation in the organization.

In terms of literature review the thesis employed a number of literatures and theories to explore the research aim. It employed four main literatures on sensemaking, strategy, loosely coupled systems and sustainability. These literatures are quite diverse from each other and yet required an almost equal amount of review. This presented a research challenge especially in terms of the thesis inability to draw deeper into each literature partly for lack of relevance into various aspects, and partly due to a lack in research time. For example the broad nature of the sensemaking literature could not be reviewed from cognitive science, philosophy, or social psychology aspects for instance. This was because the thesis aim specifically explored institutional and organizational sensemaking. It was therefore imperative to focus on aspects of sensemaking literature which established links between sensemaking and institutionalization. The sensemaking literature review therefore chiefly relied on organizational sensemaking studies by Weick, (1988; 1995; 1993), Orton and Weick (1990), Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005), Maitlis (2005) and Brown et.al (2014) among others. It is however proposed that future research can draw from literatures on discourse and power in particular to investigate issues of structure and agency in middle managers sensemaking behaviours for example.

7.10 FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the thesis finding, the thesis makes a couple of recommendations to future research. It is the thesis position that the general view in the sensemaking literature regarding how people's occupations and other tacit knowledge influence the way they interpret organizational events, has actually not been rigorously scrutinized and applied to middle managers sensemaking process in loosely coupled organizations. In fact, the thesis position is further enhanced by the view that if the process of scrutiny and application had been explored in depth, then the obvious distinctions between administrators and academics nature of work in particular in relation to their sensemaking process would naturally have led to the discovery, in-depth exploration and incorporation of the simultaneous sensemaking into the sensemaking literature much earlier. More research is therefore needed in order to explore the thesis concept of single-level sensemaking versus multiple or simultaneous level sensemaking among middle manager groups. There is therefore essentially the need to better understand the impact of classifications, nature of work and nature of strategy on middle managers sensemaking processes.

Additionally, further in-depth research investigating the process of unexpected sensemaking outcomes would be relevant in order to confirm the nuanced findings on integration strategies which organizations employ in response to unexpected outcomes. Specifically, more empirical evidence is needed to confirm the existence of the subsume, support and standalone integration strategies to enrich understanding of the concept of emergent strategy.

7.11 THESIS CONCLUSIONS

The thesis interest has been demonstrated on three main levels. On a first level, the thesis illustrated that based on their nature of work in particular; middle managers in loosely coupled universities can be classified as consisting of two distinct groups of administrators and academics. The evidence indicates that their sensemaking of the organization's Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategy (SRS) occurs simultaneously. The thesis presented findings demonstrating that on one hand, administrators engage in a dependent sensemaking process while academics engage in an autonomous sensemaking process. Through the dependent sensemaking process, administrators found meanings for the SRS strategy which were aligned with sensemaking cues which generally arose from triggers in and around the organization and strategy. To make sense and engage with the strategic process, administrators selected three dominant sensemaking frames

based on legislation, accounting and reporting and organizational image. On the other hand, through the autonomous sensemaking process, academics found meanings for the strategy which were aligned with triggers which generally arose outside of the strategic process. To make sense of the strategy, academics selected three dominant sensemaking frames based academic freedom, newness of sustainability and research work. Essentially, through the discovery of the simultaneous sensemaking process, the thesis demonstrated that at any point in time, based on their nature of work, administrators and academics were engaged in different sensemaking process therefore tended to have different meaning and understanding to organizational events. It is the thesis position that hitherto, middle managers classification as consisting of two different groups who find meaning to organizational strategic process by selecting two distinct types of dominant sensemaking frames is understudied in the sensemaking literature.

Secondly, the thesis demonstrated that middle managers simultaneous sensemaking process is peculiar to the context of loosely coupled organizations. The dynamics of universities for example engender dependent and autonomous sensemaking processes in terms of increased levels of control and bureaucracy in administrative work as well as increased levels of flexibility and freedom in academic work. The thesis however also demonstrated that based on the changing nature of universities, administrative work is more flexible than typically perceived while academic work is also more controlled and coordinated too. In essence, patterns of coupling control and coordination exist in both administrative and academic work. The findings illustrated that these patterns of coupling provide alternative sources from which administrators and academics select subtle sensemaking frames to enhance the meaning of the SRS strategy. Generally, loosely coupled systems have been studied in terms of exploring extents to which they are loosely coupled as entire systems. Studies on distinct patterns of coupling are generally nonexistent. Not especially when it comes to creating links between patterns of coupling and middle managers sensemaking process.

Thirdly, the thesis demonstrated that middle managers simultaneous sensemaking processes result in both intended and unintended or unexpected sensemaking outcomes. In terms of the SRS strategy, sensemaking outcomes are described in the form of SRS sustainability initiatives. In particular, unexpected sustainability initiatives generally emanated from academics autonomous sensemaking process. The findings illustrated how senior managers reacted to unexpected

outcomes in terms of how they integrated the outcomes into the existing SRS strategy. It showed that senior managers adopted three particular integration strategies which consists of subsume, support and standalone integration strategies. Of particular importance to the integration process is the illustration that by integrating unexpected outcomes into existing process, middle managers sensemaking outcomes reshaped the strategic process thereby causing a 'new' strategy to emerge. This part of the thesis links middle managers sensemaking to strategy (re)creation in loosely coupled organizational context in a way that is believed to be novel both to the sensemaking and strategic management literatures.

Through the seamless linkage of the three levels of interests, the thesis demonstrated links between middle managers sensemaking process and the process of strategy creation in loosely coupled organizations in terms of how middle managers sensemaking produces unexpected sensemaking outcomes which when integrated into existing strategies, reshaped the strategies thus causing the strategic processes to emerge in nonlinear or deterministic ways.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THESIS QUESTION GUIDE

A question guide was constructed to guide the data collection process. It was employed as a guide and as such the questions were not strictly adhered to. It comprises two main parts as described below.

PART ONE

An initial set of questions was constructed prior to the start of the interviewing process. The questions were constructed around issues on the interviewee's profile, sustainable development, sustainability and the SRS strategy.

Questions on the interviewees profile:

1. What is your name?
2. What position do you hold in the university?
3. How long have you been working for the university?
4. How are you involved with the Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategy in general?
5. Which particular sustainability initiative(s) are you engaged in?
6. How long have you been associated with this initiative?

Questions on sustainable development and sustainability:

6. What is your world view about sustainable development and sustainability?
7. How do you understand the concept of sustainability and sustainable development?
8. How do you engage with sustainable development practices in general?
9. Do you have any expertise or qualification in sustainable development?

10. How has your background or expertise influenced your understanding and practice of sustainable development?

Questions on the SRS strategy:

1. How would you describe the evolution of University's sustainability goals and practices over the years?
2. How do you understand the University's SRS strategy?
3. How has your worldview of sustainability influenced your understanding of the SRS strategy?
4. How has your qualification or expertise influenced your understanding of the SRS strategy?
5. How has your personal background influenced your understanding of sustainability in general?
6. How has your personal background influenced your understanding of the SRS strategy?
7. Are there any similarities and dissimilarities between your understanding of sustainability in general and your understanding of the University's SRS strategy?
8. What role does legislation and conventions play in the SRS strategy as a whole?
9. How does the influence of legislation and conventions impact the way you engage in sustainability practices at work?
10. What are the main institutional challenges faced in operationalizing the SRS strategy?
11. In what ways might your colleagues' sensemaking processes of the SRS strategy be similar or dissimilar to yours?
12. In what ways do the operations of the SRS department influence your day-to-day sustainability activities and practices?
13. Do you think the concept of sustainability is an innovation or new way of thinking?

14. Describe any personal leaning have you experienced through engaging with the SRS strategy?
15. To what extent can the SRS strategy be described as ambiguous in nature?
16. Are there any internal mechanisms in place to help reduce any imminent levels of ambiguity?
17. What role has foreign institutions and conventions played in reducing ambiguity in SRS related issues?
18. How does the University like to be perceived locally and globally in respect of its sustainability agenda?
19. In what ways does organizational perception inform ways in which the SRS strategy is implemented and practiced?
20. What are the main communication cues (oral and written) used to communicate the SRS strategy?
21. How effective are the communication tools in your view?
22. What are the main sustainability issues of major concern and interest to the University over the years?
23. Would you describe the SRS strategy as one formulated from an individual or collective perspective?
24. What is the relationship between the SRS strategy and other closely related strategies and goals?
25. What kinds of sustainability outcomes do you think the University aims to achieve overall?
26. What significant outcomes have the SRS strategy achieved so far?

PART TWO

Additional set of questions emerged during the course of interviewing. These were constructed around issues regarding strategy outcomes and loosely coupled systems in particular.

Questions on strategy outcomes:

1. What is the nature of the sustainability initiative(s) you are engaged in?
2. What necessitated the need to formulate the sustainability initiative(s) you are engaged in?
3. How did your personal interest and background in the sustainability concept influence the sustainability initiative(s) and outcomes you are involved in?
4. What is the nature of the sustainability outcomes your sustainability initiative(s) has produced?
5. How are the outcomes of your sustainability initiative different from the outcomes intended to be achieved by the aims of the SRS strategy?
6. What kind of support does the SRS department lend to your sustainability initiative(s)?
7. How does the SRS department react to unexpected sustainability outcomes?
8. How do unexpected sustainability outcomes become part of the SRS strategy?
9. Why do senior managers and the SRS department adopt the peculiar integration strategies they do?
10. What is the nature of the 'new' or integrated SRS strategy?

Questions on loosely coupled systems:

1. To what extent would you describe the University's activities as tightly coupled with respect to the SRS strategy?
2. To what extent would you describe the University's activities as loosely coupled with respect to the SRS strategy?

3. Which aspects of your work would you describe as bureaucratic (or tightly coupled) in nature?
4. Which aspects of your work would you describe as flexible (or loosely coupled) in nature?
5. As an administrator, how would you describe your working relationship with your fellow administrators in terms of existing levels of flexibility and connectedness?
6. As an administrator, how would you describe your working relationship with academics in terms of existing levels of flexibility and connectedness?
7. As an administrator, how would you describe your working relationship with other organizational elements in terms of existing levels of flexibility/control and connectedness?
8. As an academic, how would you describe your working relationship with your fellow academics in terms of existing levels of flexibility and connectedness?
9. As an academic, how would you describe your working relationship with administrators in terms of existing levels flexibility and connectedness?
10. As an academic, how would you describe your working relationship with other organizational elements in terms of existing levels of flexibility and connectedness?

APPENDIX II

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The research study involved interviews with a number of groups of people. These included interviews with administrators, academics, senior managers, students and a random short conversation with a Scottish Member of Parliament (SMP) for Sustainable Procurement. A more detailed breakdown of their makeup is provided below. The list is no particular order.

ADMINISTRATORS

The environmental coordinator of the University's student association:

The manager of Procurement Department, who is also a member of the SEAG Committee

Three staff members of the Procurement Department

A staff of the Institute of Academic development (IAD), who is also a member of the SEAG Committee

The manager of the Estates Department

Two staff members of the Estates Department

The manager of the Transport and Parking Department

A staff of the Transport and Parking Department

The manager of the Accommodations Department

A staff of the Accommodations Department

Coordinator of Research and Knowledge Exchange

The manager of the Waste Management Department

A staff of the Waste Management Department

A secretary for SEAG

ACADEMICS

Two types of academics were interviewed. The list comprise of 'regular academics' engaged in everyday sustainability activities and four specific academics who were initiators of autonomous sustainability initiatives.

Regular academics

Academics from the School of Biosciences

Academics from the Mathematics department

Academics from the Business school

Academic Centre for Integrative Physiology

Initiators

Project initiator of the Sustainable Business Initiative (SBI), (an academic from the Business School)

Project initiator of the Learning for Change initiative, (an academic from the Institute of Academic Development)

Project initiator of the Our Changing World initiative, (an academic from the school of Biosciences)

Project initiators of The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI) initiative, (a group of academics from the school of Geosciences)

SENIOR MANAGERS

The SRS coordinator

An SRS executive member

The SRS Programme Manager

Senior vice Principal for External Engagement

STUDENTS

A final year undergraduate student

A postgraduate research student

SCOTTISH MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Scottish Member of Parliament for Sustainable Procurement