**Type: Full Paper**

**Title: The manifestation of the Psychological Contract within the academic role.**

**Background / Rationale**

The psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990) remains a prominent topic amongst the academic literature. Subsequently, there here has been a growth in focus on individuals within an academic role over recent years with several papers presented at the 2015 UFHRD conference pertinent to the subject area. The ‘Janus-faced’ role (Bathmaker, 1999) of the academic (research, teaching, administration) makes for a complex and little understood career. This split role focus provides differing drivers for different individuals and provides insight into choices made by individuals.

**Focus of the Paper**

This paper considers the manifestation of the psychological contract (Kelley-Patterson and George, 2001) of academics at different institutions and the impact it has on their approach to and fulfilment of the role including their relationship with employers and colleagues, academic citizenship and discretionary effort. Of particular importance is their understanding of what the role is and where they place importance. As such what do academics see as within the role and what may be considered extra-role and the grey areas that fill lives.

**Methods**

The research undertaken involved the combined use of phenomenology and interpretivism (Saunders et al, 2009) as a route to investigating individual self-perception amongst 18 Business School academics across 9 UK Universities, identified as pre 1992, and post 1992 former Polytechnic or former College of HE. Data was collected via interviews and questionnaire to find meaning from within the construct. Key themes from within the data were then identified and analysed to assist in the understanding and search for relationships.

**Findings**

Findings suggest that academics have a relational psychological contract and that discretionary effort is internalised and intrinsic, suggesting a high work ethic amongst academics. However, the research raises the question as to whether this internalisation is a result of managerial processes or whether is the result of free choice. The concept of Academic citizenship is also highly evident but is skewed dependent on the perception of the task being academic or not. The findings of the paper should be of concern to academics interested in the psychological contract but will also be of interest to line managers and human resource departments within higher education institutions who seek to understand influencing factors on behaviour.

**Key Words**

Psychological Contract; Academics; Discretionary Effort; Academic Citizenship

**References**

Bathmaker, S. (1999): “So, what's the deal?” the state of the psychological contract in a

‘new’ university. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 51 (2) 265-282

Kelley-Patterso, D. and George, C. (2001) Securing graduate commitment: an

exploration of te comparative expectations of placement students, graduate

recruits and human resource managers. *International Journal of Hospitality*

*Management.*  20 (4) 311-323

Rousseau, D. M. (1990) New hire perceptions of their own and their employer’s

obligations: a study of psychological contracts. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour.* 11

(5) 389-400

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business*

*students*. 5th Ed. Harlow. Prentice Hall.