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**Leverage Leadership:  
Lessons from further education**

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- Innovating constantly to meet the needs of learners, communities and employers
- Preparing for the long term as well as delivering in the short term
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We are creating a body of knowledge to transform both leadership learning and learners' lives

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*The purpose of this article is to review the models of leverage leadership which are currently available in the compulsory sector to establish whether the models are appropriate for post-compulsory education, and in particular for general further education colleges. In addition the article explores how a further education institution has gone about implementing leverage leadership. The article does this through a series of semi-structured interviews with senior and middle leaders and teachers on the aspects that they have implemented. Due to the complexities of the environment in which further education colleges operate, models of leverage leadership have not yet been extensively applied to this sector. What was derived was the emphasis of leverage leadership has been placed on a shift in approach to seeking assurances around the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Moreso, then the use of data, which the institution in this article recognises that they are still some way of achieving, within the spirit of the proposed model.*

**Keywords:** *Leverage leadership, leadership, management, further education, post-compulsory education.*

## Background to Leverage Leadership

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Further education (FE) (equivalent to Community Colleges) has an awkward place in the UK education system. Unlike schools, which are defined by law and universities that are protected by Royal Charter (or, for newer universities, by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or by Privy Council approval), the same clarity of definition is not afforded to the further education sector. As a result, there remains considerable variation in the accepted understanding of further education, both in terms of its place in the topology of education and its purpose.

The FE sector continues to face a turbulent time as a result of successive cuts in government funding (Burke, 2018) and institutional restructuring which has seen the number of FE colleges reduce from 492 colleges at the point in which FE colleges became independent of local government (REF). By the time Payne (2008) published their report into the size and classification of the FE sector, the number had reduced to 377. Between 2008 and 2018 the number of colleges reduced further to 269 (AoC, 2018) representing a 28% reduction of the number of further education colleges. KPMG (2009) note that much of this reduction was due to mergers rather than closure without replacement. A trend which continues, with the colleges merging to form groups of colleges, made up of in some cases six or eight former institutions.

The creation of 'super-college' groups brings about its own challenges. Back in 2005, Colinson and Colinson highlighted the challenges facing the post-16 sector, in recruiting future leaders (Colinson and Colinson, 2005). The challenges of finding college principals has been borne out recently, with eight principals of some of the UKs largest colleges resigning due to poor performance or financial difficulties between September 2018 and December 2018. Between the eight colleges they had, a combined income of nearly half a billion pounds (Burke, 2018).

In order for colleges to carry out their responsibilities to both their students and staff, it is vital that robust financial and succession plans are in place. In addition to this, colleges continue to improve their performance in terms of student achievements.

While leadership models such as sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink 2006; Lambert, 2013), will support colleges in ensuring that they develop the staffing capacity to enable succession planning, they provide little in terms of supporting colleges to improve their academic performance.

This article will therefore consider whether current notions of leverage leadership are appropriate for the general further education college sector looking to improve their student performance. In order to do this, a critique of current literature<sub>3</sub>

will be carried out which will both define and look at the elements which make up the varying concepts of leverage leadership. The second part of this article will consider whether the elements of leverage leadership are appropriate for general further education colleges.

In order to achieve this, leverage leadership will be explored and definitions will be compared and contrasted from a range of commentators to determine similarities in thinking. A point to note is that the concept of leverage leadership is in its infancy, and much of the existing published work is in healthcare and focuses on the need to use leadership in order to make incremental improvements (Anthony and Huckshorn, 2008; McAlearney, 2008). Within education, all of the currently available literature focuses solely on the compulsory sector and has not been applied to the further education sector. This paper seeks to provide an initial insight into how leverage leadership might be used in a further education setting.

Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) is the earliest writer on leverage leadership in education, acknowledging that there is a significant amount of literature that conceptualises notions of leadership,

such as distributed leadership (Parker, 2015) or sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006), but little in terms of actions of leadership. Instead, Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) argues that leverage leadership proposes specific tasks that leaders need to do in order to achieve high levels of student performance.

Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model that has been applied to US elementary schools (equivalent to English primary schools) and high schools (equivalent to UK secondary schools) offer a seven-principle model for leverage leadership. Underpinning Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) and Mongon and Chapman's (2012) model of leverage leadership is the analogy of (multiple) small incremental change having a big impact on student outcomes. Both sets of authors suggest that student performance is not governed by the use of technology, buildings or levels of funding, but simply through the presence or absence of high quality teaching; a view that is shared by Rivkin et al (2005). Table 1 summarises the key ideas behind each of these component elements.

There are a number of themes which come out of this model.

**Table 1: Component parts of Brambrick-Santoyo's seven-principle model (adapted from Brambrick-Santoyo, 2012, pg 10).**

Principle	Name	Summary
		<i>Instructional levers</i>
1	data-driven instruction;	Teachers proactively using data about their students' performance to inform individual student level planning
2	observation and feedback;	
3	instructional planning;	
4	professional development	
		<i>Cultural levers</i>
5	student culture;	
6	staff culture;	
7	managing leadership teams.	

The first thing to note is that leverage leadership is focused on a forensic attention to detail for achievement and suggests that there needs to be a greater level of management insight into planning and delivery of education. This approach advocates a micro-level approach underpinned by an ethos of data being used to inform teaching and learning. Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model proposes that there are two categories, *instructional* and *cultural* levers.

**Instructional levers:** In many organisations data is the preserve of a group of senior staff who pour over the data without the involvement of teachers. Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) argues that teachers need to have access to data about their students' performance and that they should be proactive in their use of it to have honest conversations around student level performance. This analysis then needs to inform future curriculum planning ensuring that lessons meet the needs of all learners. By using student level data, teachers with their head of department would identify which questions presented a particular challenge to students, and what it was about the question which was problematic. For example, was it the language or phrasing of the question or a deficiency in the level of knowledge needed to successfully answer the question, leading immediately onto how the teacher could have better framed the identified issue. Coupled with this, is an increase in observation of teaching and learning. Rather than the traditional one or two observations per year, which cover a raft of different areas of teacher practice, from planning, classroom management, student engagement, and assessment, Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) advocated regular short intensive observations. The proposal is that observation frequency needs to be increased, to fortnightly, with the duration reducing to 15 minutes and focusing on one key area. Feedback is subsequently provided with clear specific actions that are followed up in two week's time. The rationale behind this is that teaching and learning are the core focus of the organisation, yet leaders spend insignificant amounts of time observing classroom practice. A typical, full-time English school teacher will have approximately 0.12% of their teaching observed (NUT, 2012) while a further education college lecturer will have 0.11% of their timetabled teaching observed (AoC, 2016) under existing systems. By adopting Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model of increased frequency, with a shorter duration of observation the same teacher would have 0.5% of their teaching observed. While the numbers may seem insignificant, it does represent a 350% increase in observation. However, Coe et al (2014) note that lesson observations have potential value, but also have their problems, such as being biased or inaccurate; therefore, caution is needed regarding what inferences can and cannot be made. The challenge for education leaders in Brambrick-Santoyo's model is how to schedule these observations into their working week as he advocates that the principal of the organisation conduct these.

**Cultural Lever:** Culture can typically be categorised as hard or soft culture (Seel, 2000), the former focusing on systems, power and organisational structures whereas the latter, and the focus of Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model, is of rituals and routines, stories and myths and symbols. Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) suggests that if leaders want to build a culture of excellence, then it should be developed through repeated practice performed by both children and staff. To support the development of a culture of excellence, there is a need for the consistent reinforcement of school values and the vision statement along with regular motivational talks to staff and children. It is important to note that having a vision statement does not mean that institutions will perform any better and the challenge is in transforming the vision into consistent practice across the organisation. Compounding this is the notion that teaching and learning operates in an independent vacuum of classrooms, connected only by proximity. It is therefore unsurprising that the culture within these varies considerably. Such are the inconsistencies in a school or college culture that students can easily identify the variations between teaching staff. In order to address this inconsistency, leaders should give thought to ensuring identical routines, expectations, and consequences in every classroom.

Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) states that there is no question that time spent developing staff culture pays dividends, furthermore that creating a top-performing institution does not have to mean sacrificing staff happiness. Creating a positive culture does not mean it is not possible to hold staff to account. He goes on to argue that staff are willing to be held accountable because they feel more trusted, and more willing to do the hard work to make their school succeed. Yet to achieve this, staff need more than the solitary motivational speech at the start of the academic year, as an organisation's culture needs to be developed and reinforced on an ongoing basis. Staff culture also needs to be based on mutual respect and value. Within both the US and English schooling systems these ideas of culture, value and respect are easier to achieve given the range of subjects taught to students. In further education, the curriculum is often limited to a single subject area, such as business or computing and as a result, far fewer staff will routinely engage with individual students. This means that in FE, culture has the potential to be departmentally based and vary significantly across the organisation. Furthermore, even within a single department there is the potential for variation if the college operates across multiple campuses. This further highlights the challenge of leverage leadership within a further education college context.

This idea of respecting and valuing staff is not unique to leverage leadership and appears in many other forms of leadership theory,

but what is unique is the link between staff and culture. For example, when recruiting staff Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) suggests that leaders should not only recruit staff who are technically skilled but also subscribe to the culture and values of the organisation. The final element of Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model focuses on leadership teams and the idea that an instructional leader should not have more than 15 teachers reporting to them. The argument put forward is that principals cannot and should not serve as the only instructional leaders. Instead, involve reliable and receptive vice-principals, deans, and other members of the administrative team to ensure that no one serves as an instructional leader for more than 15 teachers. Clearly, Brambrick-Santoyo's model focuses on schools in America and the next section of this paper discusses the translation of this model between the US and English education systems. However, there is a suggestion that strong teachers can serve as additional leaders by coaching one or two teachers. Earley and Jones (2010) note that there is often an assumption in education that individual staff will simply 'know' how to lead. Instead, individuals need to be trained and developed in order to take on leadership roles; however, when instructional leaders are involved in shifting leadership and performance then clarification around the role and expectation of the instructional leaders is required. Furthermore, Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) suggests that most leadership teams have meetings, but these often do not go far enough to improve the quality of instructional leadership. Instead, these meetings traditionally focus on announcements, while they should also focus on the levers of leverage leadership.

Mongon and Chapman (2012) has also developed a model for leverage leadership, and has defined it as follows:

*individuals whose work in schools contributes to an impressive effect on a range of outcomes for children and young people. They propose that the term 'leverage' is used as it represents the multiplication effects of a force.*

Like Brambrick-Santoyo (2012), Mongon and Chapman (2012) also views leverage leadership in the context of the compulsory education sector, albeit the UK education system. Table 2 outlines the components of the model, and as in the previous case, it is not the intention to go through each principle individually, but to identify the themes which are prevalent as well as compare the similarities between Mongon and Chapman's (2012) model and that of Brambrick-Santoyo (2012).

Unlike Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model, Mongon and Chapman (2012) view leverage leadership as a conceptual leadership model as opposed to a set of actions which is that Brambrick-Santoyo advocates. This immediately provides a fundamental difference between the two models and how this is

perceived by staff and possibly the extent to which Mongon and Chapman's (2012) model is subsequently translated into practical actions.

Mongon and Chapman (2012) has identified the need to secure the vision and set the organisational direction, with leaders constantly anticipating the priorities which the organisation needs to address by scanning the political horizon in order not to be surprised by initiatives and policy shifts. This article has already acknowledged the challenges which leadership teams face regarding the balancing external factors such as reductions in funding or increased external accountability with the operational challenges of continuously improving student performance. Yet the idea of horizon-scanning or political astuteness is not unique to leverage leadership. It appears in models of sustainable leadership such as those developed by Hargreaves (2009) and Davies (2009), both of whom argue that there is a need to set institutional priorities as well as scanning the environment to check for deterioration in the conditions in which the institution operates. Woolley, Caza and Levy (2011) also highlight the role of political awareness or being 'savvy' in authentic leadership. Part of Mongon and Chapman's (2012) navigation element is the need to understand that current practices may be barriers to improvement and that these must be changed if organisations are going to improve. Unlike Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model, they do not articulate how these barriers are identified and what actions need to be taken; only that staff should be responsible for the outcomes of their work.

Mongon and Chapman (2012), suggest that leaders should focus on problem-solving, creating order and providing consistency. The issue that they do not address is whether by providing consistency it has the potential to stifle innovation. Greany and Waterhouse (2016) suggest that it does and that the potential for innovation is limited by the imposition of a degree of standardisation. It is in this context that Mongon and Chapman introduce management, as opposed to leadership, which has been their focus up to this point. There appears to be a shift in emphasis from leadership and the changes that leadership might bring about to one of management and notions of maintenance and working within a defined system. Given that Mongon and Chapman's ideas of leverage leadership are predicated on a head teacher implementing the elements proposed, there is seemingly little to substantiate this move to a managerial focus. However, Mongon and Chapman propose an expectation that data are used to create a high-definition picture of how issues manifest themselves locally. Whereas Brambrick-Santoyo suggest that data be used at a micro-level focusing on individual student performance. What Mongon and Chapman (2012) suggests is



what Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2015) call local logic, which provides a particular understanding of the context of an institution from which decisions are derived. That said, leaders need to prevent an over-reliance on quantitative data at the expense of contextual qualitative data. One should inform the other. Reinforcing this, Ofsted (2008) argues that there is no single kind of data that can tell the whole story about a school; instead, a range of different types of data must be considered. The second element in the management domain is the focus on change and, in particular, the emphasis on ensuring that there is only a limited number of priorities for change. However, Mongon and Chapman (2012) advocate Drucker's (2007) idea of systematic abandonment in which he states that there needs to be a deliberate and regular decision to end some activities, which is slightly different to Davies's (2009) notion of strategic abandonment which considers whether initiatives should commence. It is important to note that abandonment of activities is not necessarily because they were flawed but simply because are less important than others.

Mongon and Chapman (2012) conclude by arguing that leverage leadership is more than simply distributed leadership (Harris and Spillane, 2008) which recognises that there are multiple leaders within an organisation. The assumption Mongon and Chapman (2012) make is that distributed leadership focuses on interactions in the same way that transactional leadership does, rather than on action, as in transformational leadership. It may be the case that, as Harris (2007) and Parker (2015) highlight, there is some confusion into conceptual leadership models, which calls into question whether the model proposed by Mongon and Chapman (2012) is different from existing approaches to leadership. It could be argued that this is yet another conceptual framework and that leaders should be doing these things anyway. What is evidence is that Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model focuses inward on what happens in school, whereas Mongon and Chapman's (2012) model is externally focused. It could be argued that both models are equally valid depending leaders are looking to use to leverage leadership as a tool for improvement of specific departments or as an institutional approach to leadership in order to maintain organisational performance.

**Table 2. Component parts of Mongon and Chapman's (2012) leverage leadership model.**

Principle	Name
1	Navigation;
2	Management;
3	Partnership;

Finally, Mongon and Chapman's (2012) require individuals to treat partners with respect, acknowledging that leaders influence the way that people feel. They argue that the terms 'partnership' and 'community' have become so commonly used that they have lost their meaning. Instead, they propose that leaders should consider their partnerships and communities through a lens of friendship or companionship whereby leaders use their 'social intelligence' (Mongon and Chapman, 2012, p. 20), meaning that they are sensitive to those around them. This notion of friendship and companionship may be possible for school leaders whose institutions operate within a limited geographical area and are largely based on a single site. However, the complexities of the policy and organisational landscape in which further education colleges operate, with multiple sites and large geographical areas covering multiple local authorities [districts], make the ideas of partnerships and friendships challenging. While a level of professionalism and courtesy can be expected, the level of engagement college principals will have with partners on the periphery of the organisation's activities is likely to be minimal.

What have been examined so far are models from two of the leading thinkers in leverage leadership: Brambrick-Santoyo (2012), and Mongon and Chapman (2012). All the models are underpinned by that ideas that leverage leadership should be about developing the organisation. Despite the shared understanding of what leverage leadership is, the models explored in this paper have a very different focus. For example, Mongon and Chapman's (2012) model focuses on leverage leadership but through an external lens, looking outward to the environment in which an organisation operates. Whereas, Brambrick-Santoyo (2012) uses leverage leadership to look inward on the organisation.

There are similarities between the models in terms of the definitions which have been explored, possibly as a result of the idea of leverage leadership being in its infancy. Primarily the idea that there is no one action which will improve organisational performance. Instead both, authors agree that improvement is as a result of multiple small actions which cumulatively bring about organisational improvements.

Many of the ideas presented by commentators are general to education – for example, scanning the political horizon, which, regardless of the phase of education, is going to be important in developing the vision of the organisation and the strategic planning of the institution. There are some items which are possibly more applicable to the head of the organisation, such as

working closely with external partners, such as local authority (district) administrative officers or senior leaders from neighbouring institutions.

The components in Mongon and Champan's (2012) model provide little opportunity for staff, other than those in senior leadership posts to engage in the conceptual model. Therefore, it could be perceived that Mongon and Chapman's (2012) model is yet another conceptual model that is applied by senior leaders in a top-down approach, rather than engaging staff at all levels of the organisation to take ownership of their own professional performance.

## Distributed Leverage Leadership

The complexity of FE sector and notably the variation in the size of institutions suggests that it is not possible to implement one of the existing models of leverage leadership. In order for leverage leadership to be realised in the further education sector, an alternative model is required. Therefore, this paper proposes **Distributed Leverage Leadership** (DLL) which takes some of the principles of existing models of leverage leadership but contextualises it for the further education sector. There is, however, a difficulty with the term distributed, in a leadership

context, in that the literature associates a range of terms from 'collaborative leadership', to 'shared leadership', to 'devolved leadership'. This presents a real danger that notions of distributed will simply be used as a catch-all term (Harris and Spillane, 2008). One central concept is task distribution (Robinson, 2008) and the move away from the 'great man' focus of early leadership models which seems to be the basis of Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model, to a network of interacting individuals (Youngs, 2013). This is where the notion of DLL differs from existing models, with middle leaders being critical to both the implementation and success of the approach. However, there is still a key role for senior leaders within the DLL model as implementation will be divided and performed by many team members simultaneously. Therefore, a senior leader in a college needs to be challenging middle leaders on the implantation of DLL.

To fully implement the proposed distributed leverage leadership model, there needs to be a division between the elements that are bound to senior leaders and those that require implementation by middle leaders (see Table 3).

Only by having the commitment of both senior and middle leadership will leverage leadership yield the dividends highlighted in the aforementioned literature.

**Table 3: Proposed model of Distributed Leverage Leadership**

Senior leaders	Middle leaders
Setting the organisational vision	Enacting (living) the organisation's vision
Political/Organisational horizon scanning	Observation, Feedback, Improvement Cycle: <i>Conducting regular observations of teaching and learning with each one having a specific focus</i>
Creating and embedding a culture of excellence	Implementing a culture of excellence
Holding middle leaders to account	Regular, relentless focus on using data to drive improvements
Providing regular access to pupil and course level data	Intervention strategies linked to data
Raising standards leader identified and leading middle leaders to improve performance	Checking of post-intervention impact



## Implications for further education

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Having discussed notions of leverage leadership and proposed that existing models are not appropriate for the further education sector, the paper suggested that distributed leverage leadership be a possible way forward. In order to expedite the discourse around DLL, the following section of this paper explores the experiences of a further education institution in east London, UK. Unlike many further education institutions that offer a broad range of curricular the institution, which is the focus of this study, specialises in arts and media and has a history of individuals gaining employment in their chosen occupational area.

In order to explore the application of DLL in more detail a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching staff. This was accompanied by documentary analysis of the policies and systems that the institution had adopted to implement DLL.

## Leaders' perspective

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This section explores how both senior and middle leaders have implemented the ideas from distributed leverage leadership.

Key to the success of implementing the model is organisation. Leaders state that they have to be organised and ensure that the activities that they undertake such as the learning walks including subject related activities become part of their normal day-to-day practice. By doing this, leaders felt that this approach to quality improvement was no more onerous than more traditional, annual observations. Senior leaders believed that it was this little and often approach which makes the system something that can be implemented alongside all the other duties expected of college leaders.

As identified in the DLL model, middle leaders are key to the success of the proposed approach to leadership. Because of the role that middle leaders play, it was important that they undertook some joint work with senior leaders. This helped to strengthen the working relationship between middle and senior leader, which often is based on power and authority. But importantly heads of department had to undertake some joint observations with a member of the senior leaders team in order that their findings could be moderated. This was for senior leaders to seek assurances that heads of department had the appropriate level of skills to implement the college's quality system. In addition, heads of department had to be able to, jointly with the teacher, produce actions that the observed teacher could realistically achieve within the agreed 2-week

timeframe. Senior leaders made a decision not to assume that individuals, by virtue of them being middle leaders that they had the requisite skills in observing teaching and learning and supporting staff to improve.

Like teachers with their managers, heads of departments had the opportunity to regularly reflect with members of the senior leadership team. This provided a forum whereby they could reflect on departmental strengths and areas for improvement. This enabled senior leaders to identify common themes, which may need to be considered as part of a college-wide continuing professional development, CPD, programme. It also identified areas of good practice across departments that can be used either to support teachers in other departments or to help staff develop in order to lead whole college CPD events.

Senior leaders were not complacent with the implementation of distributed leverage leadership and sought the views of staff throughout the academic year. Overwhelmingly, staff, at this institution, preferred the system that the college had adopted compared to the annual system which it was felt increased staff workload, anxiety, due to judgements being made on a narrow range of evidence.

The area where leaders did feel that there was the most noticeable change compared to existing practices was in the use of data to support improvements. A key element of the distributed leverage leadership model, is the idea that teachers and managers jointly use data critically in order to support organisational improvements. Senior leaders felt that leaders had improved their use of data with staff there was still more to do to fully embrace it in the spirit of DLL.

## Teachers' perspective

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Teachers have had to adjust to new approach to leadership within the setting. The most significant change being the shift from termly observations of teaching and learning to more frequent shorter observations. What is notable, and possibly supported leaders in their shift towards a more distributed leverage leadership model was by already having termly observations of teaching and learning. These termly observations are still more frequent than many colleges, who maintain an annual observation system, which provides an unrealistic overview of the quality of teaching. Staff state that they want their students to achieve and as teachers, they want to do a 'good job'. This supports McGreogor's (1960) Y-theory that states that a majority of Y-theory staff are keen to do a 'good job'.

This may be as a result of teachers feeling that leaders are interested in the quality of the learning experience that students gain. What is important is that measures of quality of not solely

related to a single observation or indeed series of observation. Instead, leaders have adopted a more holistic approach, which recognises the wide range of mechanisms that are needed to ensure an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. These measures include:

- **Learning walks** – now common practice within education, these are conducted by members of the senior leadership team (SLT). These learning walks are focus on themes which arise from previous learning walks as well as external accountability mechanisms, such as inspection reports. These learning walks happen on a fortnightly basis, and last for only 15 minutes. An important feature is that they are not designed to make an assessment on the subject matter. This recognises that senior leaders cannot be subject specialists in all subjects. However, there is an expectation that senior leaders (as well as all staff) should know what make a good lesson.
- **Subject walks** – these are undertaken by heads of department, who have sufficient subject knowledge to be able to made an assessment on the quality of the subject knowledge being taught. Importantly, whether the topics being taught are appropriate for the level of the course and the stage the students are based on when they started the course. This will provide some assurances, in part, as to whether students are making progress.
- **Peer observations** – these are undertaken on an ad hoc basis where it has been identified that a member of staff needs some support and guidance on a particular aspect of their pedagogic practice. It might be that a teacher needs support on the effective use of questions to check students' understanding of a topic. Another teacher who has been identified as particularly 'good' at questioning will undertake an observation after which guidance and mentoring will be provided. Brambrick-Santoyo's (2012) model states that observations should be conducted by the head of the institution. However, for the UK further education sector this is unrealistic due to the number of staff involved. Instead, distributed leverage leadership advocates that staff at all levels of the organisation take responsibility for improving teaching and learning.
- In addition to the variety of observations observers will take a more interactive role in a lesson, looking at students' work, asking them questions, either informally during lessons or afterwards. Also scrutiny of teachers planning, quality and appropriateness of resources and the quality of the teachers marking.

These measures are not simply a series of mechanisms to assess the quality of a particular teacher. Instead of being a quality control or assurance system, the focus is on quality improvement. As such, and not uncommonly, there are no numerical grades associated with observations. Observers have to offer balanced feedback as a result of learning walks. They must provide one area for improvement and one strength from the observed session. This ensures that there is a clear focus on the learning walk rather than the plethora of expectations placed on teachers through a single annual observation. The areas for improvement and identified strengths are logged on an individual teachers 'Development Record'. This enables teachers to identify how they have developed and improved over the duration of the academic year. It provides a record of a teacher's engagement in quality improvement. It also provides a framework to support individuals to improve, through a set of college derived 'teachers' standards'. The aim of the standards was to provide a set of expectations for what teachers should aspire.

It is important that teachers are not only observed and monitored, but actions arising from the range of observations and work scrutinises are used in a way that will support improvements. There is an argument that says that if a teacher's area for improvement is identified and they recognise that it is an area that needs to be worked on then a teacher is part the way to improving. However, simply telling a teacher they need to improve does not mean they will, unless support is provided. The college therefore ensure that all staff attend a mandatory weekly continuing professional development (CPD) session. These CPD sessions are sacrosanct and there is an expectation that staff do not arrange meetings during this allocated time.

As part of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning staff, on a termly basis formally meet with their head of department and one of the assistant principals to review the teachers 'Development Record'. Teachers' comment that this provides a process for them to reflect on their contribution to the organisation over the previous term and what needs to be achieved during the coming term. This acts, in same way, like a mini-performance review.

Teachers comment on the benefits of the approach taken with a vast majority commenting positively about the process, particularly how it is supportive and offering a more realistic reflection of an individual's teaching. They did cite that at first the approach feels daunting system and intrusive due to the volume of observations. However, leaders have been consistent in their approach to implementation. This has ensured that staff

do not feel in any way unfairly targeted by the approach taken. In addition, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning had been implemented sensitively with teachers taking an active part in the system, rather than feeling that it is an approach that is done 'to them'.

One of the challenges staff felt about the approach taken by the college was less about the process and more about their own career progression. As the college does not grade any sessions, staff are unable to quantify the quality of their teaching to prospective employers. Teachers are unable to categorically say that they are a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' teacher. Although teachers mentioned that, there was a noticeable rate of improvement in the quality of the teaching, because of the forensic approach to quality improvement.

## Summary

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What was evident in the discussions with staff at all levels of the institution was the focus on excellence. Everything that leaders and teachers were doing had to have an impact on the students. There was no mention that they were doing a particular task because of external accountability measures, such as Ofsted (national education inspectorate), or Department for Education performance measures. The culture set and modelled by senior and middle leaders, was one of we want all our students to excel. This chimes with Davises (2009) idea that leaders need to model the behaviours that they wish to see in others. It was evident that senior and middle leaders bought into this idea of modelling as a way of setting expectations. This was evident in the classroom, where students on a vocational music course were also studying advanced level (A-level) mathematics courses. When students were asked why they were studying maths to this level when they wanted to enter the creative arts, they articulated the importance in music of understanding the maths and physics that underpin sound. One student stated that how can music be understood if you don't understand the maths of sounds and music. This highlights the expectations that staff place on students and the culture of the organisation. Not only are these expectations in place for students but also for staff too. Staff are expected to deliver learning that supports students to achieve and they in turn will be supported to do this in a way that ensures that students and staff perform to the best of their ability.

While some individuals will be sceptical about the approach to leverage leadership and the way in which this particular further education institution has implemented it, particular in relation to the pressures around accountability. What is worth noting is that this particular institution achieved the highest grade possible at its previous inspection. Did DLL lead to this? It is not possible using one case study to make that claim. However, is there a cause and affect, with one contributing to another? Only further research into DLL will be able to answer this?

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