



DOCTOR OF BUSINESS (DBA)

Exploring followership in higher education: a comparative case study of two Irish higher education institutions

Leane, Tadhg

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**Exploring followership in higher education: a
comparative case study of two Irish higher
education institutions**

Mr Tadhg Leane

**A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Business Administration
(Higher Education Management)**

**University of Bath
School of Management**

May 2020

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I am the author of this thesis, and the work described therein was carried out by myself personally.

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ABSTRACT

There is an extensive body of research relating to leadership and many different theories or perspectives exist to try to understand the nature and practice of leadership. For many years, leadership research studied the traits, skills or approaches of the people who lead. The literature is characterised by a leader-centred approach or viewpoint in which the nature and outcomes of leadership are attributed, almost exclusively, to the leaders' characteristics and behaviours. Latterly, studies have begun to focus on the role of followers and how their beliefs, characteristics and behaviours contribute to the process of leadership and leadership outcomes. Despite the shift in focus to examine the role of followers, most studies continue to be leader-centric in that they examine leaders' perceptions of followers or the impact of the followers on leader behaviour. To fully examine the process of leadership and its outcomes, it is necessary to 'reverse the lens' and view the leadership process from follower-centric and followership-centric perspectives which recognise the significance of the role of followers in the leadership process.

It has been argued that higher education institutions represent a unique, complex and possibly hostile organisational context in which to practise leadership. This comes about due to a combination of the particular organisational culture of higher education institutions, the manner in which influence flows in such institutions, and unique aspects of the academic profession such as tenure and individual autonomy. Consequently, it is claimed that those in leadership roles in higher education institutions, and other similar organisations, experience significant difficulties and struggle to lead effectively. It is proposed that different approaches to leadership should be employed in this context or even that leadership should be eschewed entirely in favour of shared, distributed and collaborative approaches. Follower-centric approaches define leadership as a co-created process in which followers have an equal role and impact to that of leaders in contributing to leadership outcomes. From this perspective, the problems identified with leadership in higher education are as much caused by ineffective followership as by ineffective leadership and therefore the solutions may lie,

at least in part, with how followership is viewed and practised in higher education institutions.

This research study sought to look at the process of leadership in higher education via follower-centric and followership-centric viewpoints. The goal was to determine what those working in higher education believe about followership, how these beliefs impact upon their behaviour, and the resultant implications for the leadership process and leadership outcomes. The study consisted of a comparative case study of two Irish higher education institutions.

The study of followership is in its infancy, in general, and there have been very few studies, to date, which explore followership in higher education. The focus and nature of this study will contribute significantly to the knowledge in the nascent research fields of followership and followership in higher education. In addition, the study will identify novel implications for the practice of both leadership and followership in the context of higher education institutions.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There is an extensive body of research relating to leadership and many different theories or perspectives exist to try to understand the nature and practice of leadership. For many years, leadership research studied the traits, skills or approaches of the people who lead (Northouse 2015). The literature is characterised by a leader-centred approach or viewpoint in which the nature and outcomes of leadership are attributed, almost exclusively, to the leaders' characteristics and behaviours (Shamir, 2007). Latterly, studies have begun to focus on the role of followers and how their beliefs, characteristics and behaviours contribute to the process of leadership and leadership outcomes (Meindl et al., 1985; Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Despite the shift in focus to examine the role of followers, most studies continue to be leader-centric in that they examine leaders' perception of followers or the impact of the followers on leader behaviour. To fully examine the process of leadership and its outcomes it is necessary to 'reverse the lens' and view the leadership process from a follower-centric perspective which recognises the significance of the role of followers in the leadership process (Shamir 2007; Uhl-Bien et al 2014).

It can be argued that higher education institutions represent a unique, complex and possibly hostile organisational context in which to practise leadership (Lumby, 2012; Braun et al., 2016; Lumby, 2019). It is claimed that those in leadership roles in higher education institutions, and other similar organisations, experience significant difficulties and struggle to lead effectively (Bryman, 2007; Lumby, 2012). It is proposed that a possible solution is to employ different approaches to leadership or eschew leadership entirely in favour of shared, distributed and collaborative approaches. Follower-centric approaches define leadership as a co-created process in which followers have an equal role and impact to that of leaders in contributing to leadership outcomes. From this perspective, the problems identified with leadership in higher education are as much caused by ineffective followership as by ineffective leadership

and therefore the solutions may lie, at least in part, with how followership is viewed and practised in higher education institutions.

The proposed study will seek to explore followership, and leadership, in higher education via a follower-centric viewpoint. The goal is to determine what those working in higher education believe about followership, how this impacts on their behaviour, and how this in turn affects the leadership process and leadership outcomes.

1.1 Scope and Aims of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the leadership process in higher education. Specifically, I wish to examine some of the factors that impact upon whether the leadership process is successful (i.e. produces desirable outcomes) or not.

In outlining the proposed study, it is important to begin by defining what is understood by leadership. Within the literature there are as many definitions as there are approaches to the topic of leadership. Ronald (2014), in reviewing the leadership literature, analysed seventeen different definitions of leadership and found that, in essence, they contain four fundamental elements. He found that in general the literature agrees that leadership is a process, the process involves an asymmetrical flow of influence (i.e. from the leader to the follower), there needs to be a relational or group context, and the process aims at reaching a defined goal (Ronald, 2014). The relationship at the core of the leadership process is that between the leader (or those engaged in leading behaviour) and the follower (or those engaged in following behaviour). As Shamir (2007) states, “for a phenomenon to be called leadership, we have to be able to identify certain actors who, at least at a certain situation and during a specified period of time, exert more influence than others on the group or the process”. The field of leadership research has to date been almost entirely leader-centric. Leaders and leadership have been privileged such that, in the literature, and indeed in broader society, there is a belief that leadership and its outcomes are solely the result of the actions of leaders. From this perspective, followers are merely passive recipients of the influence exerted by the leader through her or his actions. Where followers are assigned a more active role, it is as mediators or moderators of the leader’s actions (e.g.

contingency theories of leadership). A more balanced approach to leadership research, proposed by Shamir and others, assigns followership a much more important role in the leadership process. In fact, it is claimed that without followers or followership leadership cannot exist (Shamir, 2007; Ronald, 2014; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The outcome of the leadership process, whether that be positive or negative, relies as much on the behaviour of followers and on the nature of the relationship between leaders and followers, as it does on the traits, behaviours, or style of the leaders. I would argue that the privileging of leaders and leading, and the almost complete neglect of followership, in the research and literature has resulted in a key element of the leadership process going unexplored during more than a century of leadership research.

Followership theory has emerged as a new field of study within the broader field of leadership research. Follower research reverses the lens by taking a follower-centric view of the leadership process. This follower-centric view starts from the position that the follower is engaged in an asymmetric relationship with an individual or individuals whom the follower recognises as the leader or leaders. The relationship is asymmetrical because the leader has a different status to the follower. So, while the leader is attempting to influence the follower to act towards the achievement of a certain goal, the follower must defer to the leader by accepting that influence. If the follower does not defer (i.e. does not engage in the relationship), then she or he exhibits non-followership, and, in that instance, there can be no leadership. The requirements to defer to a leader, as well as the negative associations with followers as being passive or compliant, brings about a degree of cognitive dissonance, in the mind of the follower, which, in turn, may challenge, or impede, that individual's willingness, or ability, to engage in followership. Yet we can all think of examples of positive followership which suggests that, in certain circumstances, these challenges can be overcome. It is only by examining the leadership process from a follower-centric viewpoint that we can hope to understand how these challenges are experienced and overcome, and from that understanding, develop processes and structures to promote successful followership, and by extension successful leadership.

The context for this study is higher education generally and higher education in Ireland in particular. As outlined above, leadership has been identified as problematic in the context of higher education institutions. I posit that, in line with followership theory, these problems and complexities, at least in part, stem from the identities, beliefs, expectations and actions of the staff, and in particular academic staff, who (nominally) occupy follower roles in these institutions. Their identities and behaviours are shaped, in part, by the unique organisational culture found in higher education institutions and as a result they eschew standard approaches to management and leadership (Lumby, 2012). These individuals play a vital role in the leadership process of their institutions. Therefore, it is important that we understand how they perceive that role and how they behave in fulfilling that role, such that we can get a holistic view of the leadership process in higher education institutions. It is only by achieving this balanced view of the process that we can accurately assess the leadership process, its outcomes (be they positive or negative), and the reasons for those outcomes.

In order to fully understand the context for this study one must first understand the nature of academic work and the academic profession. Above, I indicate that academic staff nominally occupy follower roles within their institution. However, this is only true from the macro perspective of institutional hierarchy. Such is the nature of academic work, academic staff and higher education institutions that the organisational hierarchy does not determine or dictate the location of power or the flow of influence within the institution quite so readily as it would in other types of organisations (Bleiklie et al., 2015; Maassen and Stensaker, 2019). In the course of their work day, an individual member of the academic staff of a higher education institution will encounter a variety of scenarios which involve leadership and followership. For example, an individual may find that they occupy a followership role in a departmental meeting but may occupy a leadership role in relation to more junior staff members in a meeting of a course team or a research group. In addition, members of academic staff can have leadership roles as chairs of assessment boards or university committees. Therefore, each member of academic staff must, by necessity, engage in both leadership and followership in order to fulfil her or his role and must be able to easily and seamlessly move between both identities (Evans, 2017; Kenny, 2018; Kligyte and Barrie, 2014).

In considering the context for this study it is helpful to differentiate between academic leadership and institutional leadership. Institutional leadership is concerned with institution-wide processes or initiatives related to broad priorities or strategies. These initiatives may relate to the academic activities of the institution (e.g. implementation of a modularised curriculum) or they may relate to corporate matters (e.g. implementation of a new management information system) and they are characterised by two factors. Firstly, they have an institution-wide scope in that they impact upon a range of different units or departments across the institution and, secondly, they are initiated and led by the institution's senior management team. Conversely, academic leadership, as the name suggests, is focused on the quality and standing of the teaching, learning and research activities of a particular department, school or faculty, within the institution and within the broader academic community (Cobbinah and Agyemang, 2020). Academic leadership is a multifaceted and challenging process which shares many aspects, associated with achieving specific outcomes, with institutional leadership but is uniquely characterised by its focus on discipline-specific intellectual leadership (Billot et al., 2013; Montgomery, 2020).

The aim of this study is to explore, in a general sense, how those working in higher education perceive followership and the implications of these perceptions or beliefs for the outcomes of the leadership process. Therefore, for the purpose of this study it is proposed to focus on the broader institutional leadership processes which are implemented across the whole institution and involve a broad range of individuals from a range of disciplines. This approach, I believe, provides the greatest scope to examine and explore, in a like for like manner, the common elements of followers' beliefs, experiences, perceptions and behaviours in respect to the leadership processes in higher education. In addition, this focus on followership in the context of institutional leadership processes better facilitates an investigation of the social processes and constructs that pertain in higher education institutions generally, rather than those factors associated with the micro-culture or micro-context of a specific academic department or discipline. Furthermore, it is expected that the findings from this study will have significance and relevance for academic leadership because, as discussed above, there are many aspects that it shares with institutional leadership.

In summary, the focus of the study is the experience and behaviour of academic staff who, in this specific context, occupy followership roles within higher education institutions. This study will take a follower-centric perspective with the goal of determining the features of followership in higher education and the possible implications of these for the leadership process and its outcomes.

1.2 Research Questions

The study will seek to determine the nature of followership in higher education by answering the following research question:

How is followership practised by academic staff in higher education institutions and what are the possible implications for leadership outcomes?

In seeking to answer this overarching question the following subordinate questions will be addressed:

What are the beliefs, experiences, perceptions and expectations of academic staff, working in higher education institutions, of their role in the leadership process?

How do academic staff working in higher education institutions enact followership?

What do academic staff believe constitutes effective or ineffective followership and how may leaders help or hinder followers?

To what extent are the followers' beliefs and behaviours formed by the organisational context and cultures of the higher education institution?

What possible implications does the manner of followership have for the higher education institutions' achievement of leadership outcomes?

1.3 Contribution and Theoretical Framework

This study is located within the framework of followership which sits within the broader field of leadership theory. The development of followership theory is in a nascent stage and there are relatively few followership studies in the literature. This is especially true in respect of follower-centric studies (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Uhl-Bien and Carsten, 2018). With respect to followership in higher education, there are almost no published studies and there are none that take an approach as proposed herein.

Given the early stage of the development of followership theory in general, it is possible that this study will be able to make a contribution to the further development of that theory. Specifically, this study will contribute to the understanding of followership in the context of higher education institutions and will, for the first time, explore some elements of existing followership theory in that context. This may provide insights which allow for the promotion or development of better followership in higher education and generally (Bligh et al., 2018). Furthermore, the study will also provide a better understanding of the process of leadership in higher education and will lead to insights which may be utilised in the practice of followership and leadership in order to promote better leadership outcomes.

1.4 Thesis Overview

In Chapter 2 I provide pertinent background and context for the proposed study and in Chapter 3 the relevant literature is reviewed. In Chapter 4 I outline the methodological considerations and describe the design and implementation of the research study. Chapter 5 describes the analysis of the data and presents the findings from that analysis, along with a discussion of those findings. A general discussion of the outcomes of the study and overall conclusions are provided in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In providing context for this research study I firstly examine relevant aspects of higher education institutions and, by extension, higher education systems. Secondly, I give an overview of the Irish higher education system by looking at its institutional structure. Finally, I describe the external environment in which the institutions have had to operate, including significant crises and restructuring and reform programmes.

2.1 Higher Education Institutions

The literature shows that higher education constitutes a unique context when compared with other sectors or institutions. It is further argued that the unique features of higher education institutions require alternative approaches to leadership and management. While the modern international higher education sector is made up of a wide variety of institutions, many higher education institutions subscribe to an overarching notion of their purpose and mission and those who work in higher education, particularly academics, have a strong commitment to this mission and have internalised the associated beliefs, values and behaviours. It is especially true that many higher education institutions align themselves with the 'traditional' model of a university and research shows that, despite the many changes to mission, role and structures that have occurred in higher education in recent decades, the traditional model is still remarkably resilient and many academics still see this as the foundation upon which the institution is built (Henkel, 2005; Kligyte and Barrie, 2014; Silver, 2003).

When it comes to the study of leadership and followership, certain characteristics of higher education institutions are especially relevant. As outlined in the introduction, higher education institutions represent a unique organisational context. They have been variously described as organised anarchy (Cohen et al., 1972), loosely coupled (Weick,

1976), and professional bureaucracies (Mintzberg, 1980). The status and power of professional academics within such institutions is a significant and persistent theme in discussions of such institutions and the challenges associated with organisational processes such as governance, leadership and strategising (Lumby, 2012; Maassen and Stensaker, 2019; Lockwood and Davies, 1985).

Part of the broader context for the study is the process through which change management is achieved in higher education institutions. The leadership process is part of this but there are a number of other factors which must be considered. One key factor is the degree to which the proposed change aligns with the accepted institutional values. If this alignment is not present it is likely that the change management process will meet resistance and may even fail completely (Branson, 2008; Sullivan et al., 2001). While it is to be expected that there would be an alignment between institutional values and strategic objectives, it is often found that there are implicit or unwritten values that have high salience among the members of the organisation, even though they are not part of the formal strategy. In such cases, it is possible for institutional leadership to engage in a programme of change management which many, or all, of the members consider contradictory to the values of the organisation. Another reason for misalignment between the proposed change and institutional values is when change is actually, or effectively, dictated by an outside authority. In recent decades, in higher education systems worldwide this has been particularly prevalent as many governments implement new public management approaches and assert direct control or stringent oversight of higher education institutions (Deem and Brehony, 2005). Under these circumstances, institutional leaders are compelled to implement change management programmes which many feel run contrary to the values of the institution. Another form of change which is initiated from outside is incentivisation, whereby the government (or related agencies) develop processes to incentivise certain institutional behaviours in order to utilise higher education institutions in the implementation of government strategy and policy (Gornitzka, 1999). Therefore, it is important to understand that factors such as, institutional values strategic vision, and external policy can contribute significantly to the challenges associated with the leadership process involved.

2.2 The Irish Higher Education Sector – Institutional Configuration

The Irish higher education system sits within the broader higher education tradition of the western ‘developed’ world and shares the broad beliefs and principles that underpin that tradition. For historical and geographical reasons, the Irish higher education system has tended to closely resemble that of the United Kingdom, and the traditional universities in Ireland were very similar to their United Kingdom counterparts in terms of mission, governance and structure. For example, Trinity College Dublin, the first university to be established in Ireland in 1592, was initially conceived and created, following the model of Oxford and Cambridge, as a college of a proposed, but never realised, Dublin University.

Including Trinity College, Ireland has seven universities, and these are often referred to as the traditional universities in the literature and other commentary. There are four constituent universities of the National University of Ireland, namely, University College Dublin, University College Cork, NUI Galway and NUI Maynooth. Each of these institutions was created in the 19th century and subsequently each became a constituent university of the National University of Ireland. The National University of Ireland (NUI) is ostensibly a federal university but its role is mainly focused on advocacy and networking on behalf of the member institutions. In reality, it is a very loose federation and the four constituent universities are, in practical terms, completely autonomous. There are two further universities (i.e. the University of Limerick and Dublin City University) which were established in 1989 through the redesignation of the former National Institutes for Higher Education. These seven institutions are governed by the Universities Act which gives a statutory basis for their governance, structures and autonomy. These institutions adhere to the model of the research-intensive university as found in the UK and beyond. While the creation of new Technological Universities is underway, these new universities will not be governed by the Universities Act and will not enjoy the same level of autonomy.

The other major sub-sector within the Irish higher education system is the Institute of Technology sector. The Irish government engaged in a programme of modernisation and economic development from the late 1950s. Education, and in particular technical and vocational education, was identified as being critical to this programme. The traditional universities were clear that they did not see technical and vocational education as part of their remit. Consequently, the government moved to establish higher education institutions (HEIs) with a specific focus on preparing individuals for the workplace as well as meeting the needs of industry locally or regionally. In effect, this established a binary structure which exists in Irish higher education to this day. Once again looking to the UK for inspiration, the Irish government established the National Council for Educational Awards (similar to the UK Council for National Academic Awards) and established a number of Regional Technical Colleges (similar to the polytechnic colleges in the UK). The Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), originally conceived as post-primary institutions, were established in the mid-1970s as higher education institutions offering sub-degree qualifications which were awarded by the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA).

In the 40 or more years since they were established, the RTCs have evolved in terms of the range of academic disciplines, levels of awards offered, and the types of activities engaged in, including basic research. This evolution was referred to by some as mission drift, but others claimed it was necessary development in response to the needs of society and the economy. The colleges were retitled Institutes of Technology (IoTs) and also became self-governing, albeit with continued and significant government control, in the 1990s. Until recently, there were fourteen Institutes of Technology located throughout the country which, despite the developments in their range and level of activities, maintained a strong technical and vocational focus as well as strong engagement with local and regional communities and enterprises. They remain quite different from the traditional universities in many aspects, including their statutory basis, autonomy, governance and management, funding and perceived status. These institutions, while engaged in research, remain largely teaching-focused and this is clearly reflected in aspects such as management structures and academic staff contracts.

As well as the two main sectors (i.e. the traditional universities and the Institutes of Technology) there are also a number of specialist institutions such as teacher training colleges, physical education colleges and the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (RCSI).

Of particular interest, in the context of this study, are the profile and conditions of academic staff working in higher education institutions on either side of the binary divide described above.

Generally speaking, despite considerable inward migration in recent decades, Irish society is still relatively homogeneous with respect to factors such as ethnicity and religious affiliation. This is reflected in the profile of academic staff and is further impacted by the fact that many individuals working in the sector achieve tenure at a relatively young age and remain within the sector (and often the same institution) for up to forty years. Discussions relating to the diversity of academic staff in Irish higher education, in both the academic and policy-related literature, has focused primarily on gender issues. It is fair to say that, in relative terms, Irish higher education institutions have yet to encounter or address the broader diversity issues which are commonplace in other countries.

Within the Institute of Technology sector, the members of academic staff are public servants and while they are paid by their institutions, their conditions of employment, levels of remuneration and pension entitlements are mandated by the national government. In the university sector, the academic staff are quasi-public servants in that while they are employed by their university, many factors, such as their conditions of employment, are agreed and overseen at a national level. Furthermore, they have tended to enjoy many of the benefits of public servants such as pension entitlements and relative job security. While recent decades have seen a growing level of casual or part-time employment within the higher education sector, largely precipitated by the economic challenges discussed below, job security is high with 80% of academic staff holding permanent tenured positions (Fahie, 2019; O'Keefe and Courtois, 2019). In addition, relative to the experiences in other countries, academic staff in Irish higher

education institutions tend to achieve full-time, tenured status earlier in their career (O’Keefe and Courtois, 2019).

The primary difference between the contracts of employment for academic staff on either side of the binary divide relates to the quantum of time that is required to be devoted to teaching and research. In the Institute of Technology sector, the contract is effectively a teaching contract and there is no requirement for any research to be carried out in order to fulfil the terms of the contract. This does not preclude the staff from engaging in research activity, but it is not part of their official duties. This reflects the historical vocational focus of these institutions where activity was exclusively focused on the delivery of education and training courses. While the missions of the institutions have developed over time to encompass research activity, the contracts of employment have not changed accordingly. Academic staff in the traditional university sector have contracts which are much more recognisable in the context of higher education internationally, with a strong focus on research as an essential element of the contractual requirements.

The binary divide is also evident in terms of the attitudes of academic staff towards trade union representation and membership. In the traditional university sector there is no trade union which represents the interests of academic staff. Instead this role is filled by the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) which could be described as a quasi-union. It is fair to say that, among the academic staff in this sector, there isn’t a strong tradition of trade union representation or membership. This is evident by the fact that IFUT has a relatively small membership (probably less than a third of the total number of academic staff in the sector) which is in stark contrast to the Institute of Technology sector where well over 90% of academic staff are represented by a single trade union, the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) which also represents the majority of further education teachers and a significant proportion of secondary school teachers.

2.3 The Irish Higher Education Sector – External Environment

While I have outlined the institutional structure of the Irish higher education system above, it is important to note that the system is currently undergoing significant change. In fact, the system has experienced almost two decades of change and reform brought about by a combination of external economic and social factors, general government policy and specific education policy.

As mentioned above, the Irish government has had a long-standing commitment to educational development which dates back to the 1950s. During this time, participation in higher education went from less than 10% of school leavers to over 60% in the mid-2000s. From the 1990s onwards, the Irish government pursued a policy of economic development based on a knowledge economy perspective which viewed education generally, and higher education in particular, as a key enabler of economic growth and development. This policy was, on the face of it, extremely successful as Ireland became one of the fastest-growing economies in the world during the period from 1995 to 2008. The so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ fuelled growth in GDP and GNP, population growth and immigration, and almost full employment. Public finances were in a very favourable state and there was scope for investment in services and infrastructure. Higher education was a major beneficiary of this investment, with significant funding provided for strategic projects and capital infrastructure. For the first time, a national research strategy was developed and the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL) provided significant tranches of competitive research funding. The criteria for the award of this funding allowed the government to favour certain discipline areas and inter-institution collaboration. The focus was on increasing the capacity and capability of the system through investment to meet the needs of the growing economy (Hazelkorn, 2014). Some cautioned that during this period higher education was in danger of losing its soul and becoming merely an instrument of the voracious and unruly ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy.

As well as the significant investment, there were also policy and structural reforms attempted during this period, most notably via the 1997 Universities Act, to give government more control over the higher education system. The 1997 Universities Act was the most comprehensive piece of legislation addressing higher education since the foundation of the State and it sought a series of reforms which mirrored the new public management (NPM) agenda that had been implemented in both the higher education and public sectors in the UK and elsewhere. That this attempted reform failed was due in the first instance to the efforts of the traditional universities who saw the proposed legislation as a blatant attack on their autonomy and even their academic freedom. They mounted a successful campaign to have the most contentious elements of the proposed legislation diluted or removed before it was enacted. In the broader higher education sector, and the public sector in general, the government policy of social partnership was credited with shielding the Irish public sector from the more fundamental reforms required by NPM. It is argued that Ireland got NPM-light largely due to adherence to social partnership and the series of national agreements, between government, employers and trade unions, that were developed under that policy (Walsh and Loxley, 2015).

In 2004 the OECD conducted a review of higher education in Ireland and made a number of recommendations for restructuring and reforming the higher education system. They strongly advocated for the retention of the binary structure but indicated that the institutions on either side of the binary divide should have parity of esteem. (Quinn, 2018).

In 2008, there was a world-wide financial crisis. The effects of the crisis were amplified in Ireland due to the economy's over reliance on the indigenous property market. The economy went into an immediate and deep recession and as a result the State was required to enter a bail-out programme overseen by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF. Economic policy changed to one of austerity and investment in higher education was stopped and, where possible, reversed. One indicator of the level of de-investment in higher education during this period was the

fact that, for the first time, the quantum of exchequer funding per student was lower for a higher education student than for a post-primary student.

At the height of the crisis, the long promised development of a new national higher education strategy was commenced. Initially conceived to address some of the issues raised by the 2004 OECD report, by the time the process began the focus was largely on how the higher education system fared in terms of efficiency and value for money. The strategy group, chaired by Dr Colin Hunt, developed the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, which was published in January 2011 and is commonly referred to as the Hunt Report.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 contained recommendations under six main headings: teaching and learning, research, engagement with the wider society, internationalising higher education, system governance and a coherent framework, and suitable and equitable funding models (Hunt and Higher Education Strategy Group, 2011). While the recommendations under these headings were varied, the general tone of the strategy was that higher education was to have a dividend or utility for society and the economy. There was also a strong emphasis on rationalisation and removal of duplication at the programme and institutional level. Regional higher education clusters were intended to facilitate rationalisation of programme offerings among the higher education institutions within specific geographical regions. Institutional consolidation and mergers were proposed as a means to create a coherent fit-for-purpose system. This institutional consolidation included the (quasi-mandatory) incorporation of smaller higher education institutions such as teacher training colleges into existing universities and (voluntary) mergers of Institutes of Technology to create Technological Universities. In keeping with previous government policy, the Hunt Report did not recommend measures which reflected an extreme NPM agenda and it was noteworthy that the report was at pains to emphasise the necessity for, and benefits of, institutional autonomy (Hazelkorn, 2014; Walsh and Loxley, 2015).

Following its publication, the Hunt Report was heavily criticised for being overly focused on practical and utilitarian issues and not addressing more of the major

challenges facing higher education (e.g. funding) in forward-looking and innovative ways. For example, the proposal to establish Technological Universities was criticised as being less a case of developing a fit-for-purpose institutional structure and more a case of political expediency. Any such debate is now moot because as of January 2019 the first Technological University has been established in Dublin and others are expected to follow over the coming years.

In the years since the publication of the Hunt Report, Ireland's economy has recovered and is now growing again. While many of the indicators of economic wellbeing are positive the country, its government and its citizens continue to deal with legacy issues including national and personal debt, negative equity and service and infrastructural shortcomings caused by lack of investment during the difficult years of the crisis. The funding of higher education has not recovered to anywhere near the highs of the 'Celtic Tiger' era and most of the institutions are only just returning to a break-even situation. As a result, higher education institutions continue to deal with issues such as staff shortages and casualisation, and outdated or inadequate infrastructure, and as well as less tangible, but no less impactful, issues such as poor staff morale. The situation is further exacerbated by significant growth in student numbers which is projected to continue for years to come and will severely challenge the capacity of the individual institutions, and the system as a whole. There are positive signs, with new buildings programmes receiving exchequer funding, but as we enter a new decade, the system still struggles with a number of major challenges including funding and student accommodation.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

In the context of this study, there are a number of aspects of the Irish higher education sector, as described above, which are of particular significance. Firstly, the Irish system, despite recent and ongoing reforms, retains a clear binary structure consisting of two different types of institutions. The traditional universities are established under a different act of parliament and have unique arrangements in terms of governance, mission, funding and autonomy. It follows that the organisational environment and

culture within these traditional universities will vary significantly from those in the Institutes of Technology and, latterly, Technological Universities. As this study explores how followership is constructed and practised within these institutions, it is reasonable to expect that the significant differences on either side of this binary divide may be apparent in the study's findings. Secondly, the Irish higher education sector has not experienced the forces of NPM and marketisation in the same manner, or with the same impact, as has been very evident in higher education globally (Hyndman and McGeough, 2008; Quinn, 2018; Walsh and Loxley, 2015). As explained above, Ireland has attempted to achieve a number of the same goals as NPM (e.g. increased efficiency and productivity) via a series of national agreements involving trade unions, employers and government. In addition, Ireland ostensibly provides higher education free of tuition fees. It should be noted that each student is required to pay a registration fee, but the level of this fee is set by central government and is the same across all institutions. Consequently, marketisation, or at least its sharper aspects, is not a significant force in Irish higher education policy to date (Quinn, 2018). Thirdly, all Irish higher education institutions have experienced a period of crisis within the past decade, some more than others. Crises present significant challenges for institutional leadership, and different models of leadership, and by extension followership, develop, by necessity, during such periods. In interpreting the findings from this study, it will be important to take account of this contextual factor. Finally, the sector is under increasing pressure to contribute and make an impact on areas such as entrepreneurship, innovation, development of human capital and national competitiveness. As a result, individual institutions, and the institutional leadership, are required to implement significant institution-wide strategic projects, in order to align institutional performance with government priorities. When coupled with the challenges discussed above, this suggests that the leadership processes in the various institutions are required to be strategic, dynamic and ultimately successful. This provides an interesting context for the study of followership as a key factor in the success of any leadership process.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the relevant literature is discussed in order to locate the current study within the correct research and theoretical context. Initially, the position, or treatment, of followers and followership within leadership theory and research is reviewed to provide necessary context. This review also provides an overview of the leadership process which provides necessary context for the current study by mapping out the broader landscape within which followership theory and the study of followership sits. The literature in relation to followership is reviewed in detail. Higher education, including institutions, systems and academic staff, are a critical contextual factor in this study. For this reason, the higher education literature, as it relates to followership, leadership, change management and institutional culture and values, is reviewed.

3.1 Followers in Leadership Research and Theory

Because followership and leadership are inextricably linked, it follows that the study of followership and leadership must be closely aligned with significant overlap. To successfully study the phenomenon of followership, and to meaningfully interpret the results from such a study, requires an understanding of the knowledge and theory in relation to leadership and how followership is accommodated, and perceived, therein.

At the outset, it is useful to address a basic question, namely, what do we mean when we refer to leadership? Context is of critical importance. The term leadership is used in a wide range of situations and contexts. While there may be a high-level, broad understanding of what is meant by leadership, the specifics of political leadership, religious leadership, leadership in a sporting context, etc, are very different and there is little by way of transferable knowledge between the different contexts. For this study, the context is leadership in organisations, specifically higher education institutions. Leadership and leadership research articulate with issues such as organisational effectiveness, organisational change and organisational structures as well as the

behaviours and motivations of individuals, groups and teams within organisations (Parry et al., 2014).

To illustrate the nature of leadership, it is useful to distinguish it from management. Management is the process of getting tasks done by others through planning, ordering and controlling (Blom and Alvesson, 2015) while leadership involves the non-coercive motivation of individuals and groups to get them to work towards desired outcomes. The manager is free to use various command and control mechanisms as well as relying on the power and authority relationships defined in organisational management structures. Because of these external processes and structures, it is argued that the manager does not need to be overly concerned with what is going on inside the minds of the workers. Conversely, leadership requires that people are willing to follow the leader.

Followers and followership are central to the definition of leadership discussed above. One would expect therefore, that followers and followership would also be central to the study of leadership. In the remainder of this sub-section, I look at the development of leadership research over time and I describe the main schools of thought and how each accommodates, or not, the phenomenon of followership.

Trait and skills-based approaches

In seeking to understand and explain the phenomenon of leadership, research initially focused on the traits and skills of individual leaders. Initially, 'Great Man' approaches looked at those recognised as exemplars of effective leadership in order to identify the individual traits and skills which contributed to their success as leaders. As scholarship of leadership progressed, the focus moved away from the traits or skills of specific individuals and towards generic characteristics that could be assessed and cultivated in individuals to make them more successful as leaders (Antonakis et al., 2004). In time, this approach was perceived as being too limited to study leadership effectively and comprehensively, and more broad-based approaches to leadership research and theory development were adopted (Murphy, 1941). More recently, there has been a re-emergence of trait or skills based studies of leadership (Antonakis et al., 2004). These

trait-based approaches gave little consideration to followers beyond seeing them as the recipients of leadership which motivated them to perform and achieve (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Behavioural approaches

After the end of the Second World War, a number of leadership studies lay the groundwork for what became the behavioural school of leadership. In addressing the perceived limitations of the earlier approaches, the behavioural school focused on how the leader acted or behaved and how this impacted upon effective outcomes. Two studies, at Ohio State University and at the University of Michigan, were particularly influential in establishing the behavioural approach to leadership research (Antonakis et al., 2004; Ronald, 2014). Both studies looked at the leader's behaviour as it related both to the tasks or goals that needed to be achieved, and to the treatment of those being led (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969; Likert, 1961). The main difference between the two studies was that the Michigan study considered task-focused and person-focused to be opposite ends of the same continuum of leadership behaviour while the Ohio State approach viewed task-focused and people-focused as separate scales and leadership behaviour was scored against both scales. Therefore, under the Michigan model a leader who was highly task focused was in turn lowly people-focused while under the Ohio model a leader could score highly on both scales. Despite these differences, both studies found that a leader who was assessed as being highly people-focused was more effective.

The work on the continuum of leadership behaviour by Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) is interesting from a number of perspectives. Firstly, it is clearly in the behavioural school in that it focuses on a range of leadership behaviours and how these impact upon effectiveness or 'efficiency'. In positioning their study, Tannenbaum and Schmidt emphasise that it is important to focus on all the members of the group rather than solely on the leader. They highlight the shortcomings of highly directive leadership at the expense of paying adequate attention to issues of motivation and human relations (Tannenbaum and Schimdt, 1958). This highlights the importance of followers and is also an early instance of leadership being viewed, at least in part, as a relational process. Their continuum of leadership behaviours (Figure 1) ranges from authoritarian or

directive leadership at one extreme to democratic or devolved leadership at the other. They propose that the effective leader will choose the correct behaviour from the continuum in order to be successful. This choice will depend on a number of factors or 'forces', including issues specific to the leader, issues specific to the followers, and issues specific to the situation. In highlighting the importance of situational issues, they are presaging the emergence of contingency and situational theories of leadership.

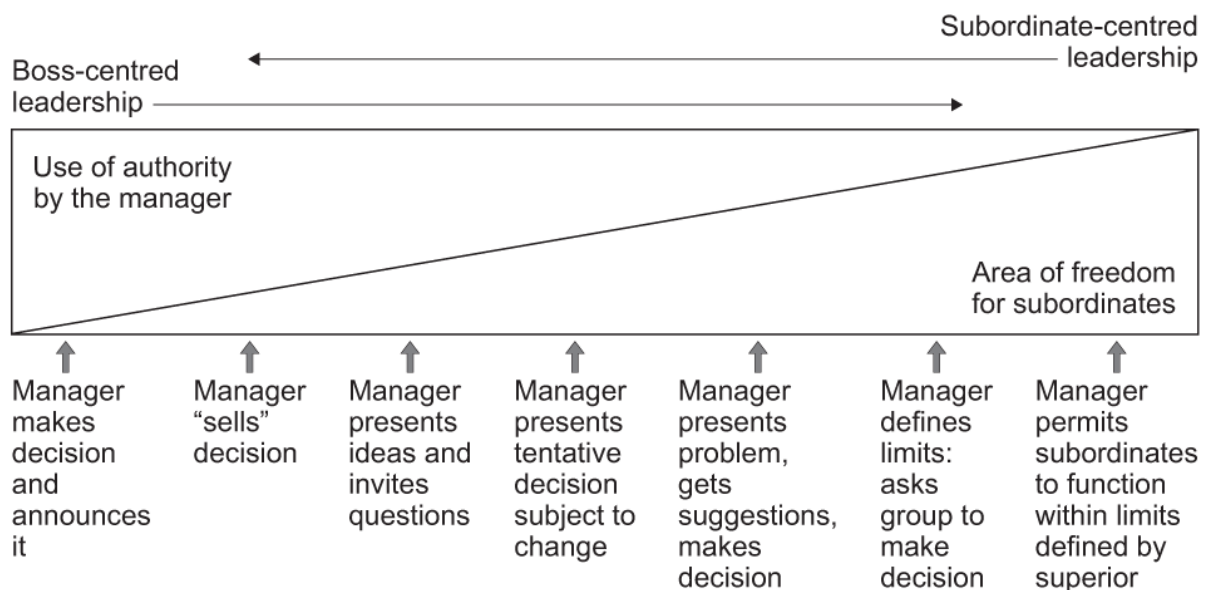


Figure 1: Continuum of Leadership Behaviour (Tannenbaum & Schmidt 1958)

While the behavioural approach has fallen out of favour in recent years, it is important to note that it has contributed both implicitly and explicitly to many of the modern approaches to the study of leadership. In particular, the schools of transformational and charismatic leadership effectively emerged from the behavioural school (Antonakis et al., 2004). The behavioural approach also resulted in leadership being viewed as less about the individual leader and more as a multi-faceted process. This view of leadership as a process facilitated the emergence of various perspectives on leadership and followership and underpins most modern leadership theories. Behavioural approaches also brought followers into focus within leadership theory and research. While still completely leader-centric, with leaders' behaviours causing followers to act (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), the value assigned to people-centred behaviours indicated that there was an acceptance that the leader needed to attend to her or his followers in a more holistic

manner. The findings of the behavioural studies suggested that it was not enough to merely view followers as a means of getting tasks completed and goals achieved. Instead it was important to engage the followers on a personal or inter-personal level. This was developed further in contingency theories of followership.

Contingency and situational approaches

Over time research findings in trait-based or behavioural leadership studies showed a high degree of variability. By this is meant that certain traits or behaviours could be associated with effective leadership and successful outcomes in some studies and those same traits or behaviours were correlated with ineffective leadership and poor outcomes in other studies. Contingency or situational perspectives on the leadership process were proposed as a means of explaining this variability. In essence, these approaches proposed that there were no leadership traits or behaviours that were effective in all circumstances and instead the effectiveness, of traits or behaviours, was mediated or impacted by the characteristics of the situation, taking the broadest meaning of the word, in which the leadership was taking place.

The pioneer in the area of contingency theories of leadership was F. E. Fielder, who proposed a contingency model that considered three factors: leader-member relations, task structure and position power (on the part of the leader) (Fiedler, 1978). Other notable contributions in the contingency/situational school of leadership include path-goal theory as introduced by House, which framed effective leadership in terms of the leader's ability to create or clarify a path for followers which would allow them to achieve individual goals which were aligned with the broader organisational goals (Antonakis et al., 2004; Ronald, 2014). Blanchard and Hersey proposed their situational leadership theory which considered the 'maturity' of followers (i.e. how ready, willing and able they were to undertake tasks) as a critical factor in mediating leadership effectiveness (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). One particular contribution in the area of contingency or situational leadership, in the context of this current research study, is the work by Kerr and Jermier on substitutes of leadership where they propose that in certain circumstances the mediating effect of the situational factors can be such that

leadership is rendered unnecessary or impossible (Kerr and Jermier, 1978). This work is discussed in more detail below within the broader category of alternatives to leadership.

While contingency approaches often recognise the importance of followers they tend to adopt a utilitarian view of followers by framing them as one of the factors which the leader must address and control in order to be effective (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Transformational and charismatic approaches

In recent decades, the most dominant approaches which have been adopted for the practice and scholarship of leadership are the related areas of transformational and charismatic leadership (Jones, 2019). While proponents of each argue for their distinctness, many scholars identify large elements of overlap between both approaches and some even claim that the charismatic approach is essentially a subset of the transformational approach which is a broader framework (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Judge et al., 2006). In essence, both approaches focus on leader behaviours that inspire and motivate followers to go beyond their own self-interest for the benefit of the organisation and its goals.

The full range leadership model listed a continuum of leadership styles that ranged along two different axes i.e. from passive to active and from ineffective to effective. The first four styles or dimensions of leadership were referred to collectively as transactional leadership, they are focused on managing or controlling followers to achieve tasks and they are towards the passive/ineffective end of the continuum. Transactional leadership involves the leader using reward (or punishment) to motivate the followers' performance. The styles associated with transformational leadership are towards the active/effective end of the continuum and were labelled as idealised influence (also referred to as charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. Each refers to how the leader (through her or his traits and behaviours) transforms the motivations and actions of the followers to achieve organisational objectives (Anderson and Sun, 2017).

Transformational and charismatic approaches build on earlier leadership scholarship including trait-based, behavioural and contingency approaches (Antonakis et al., 2004).

While followers are very prominent in discussions of transformational leadership, they are viewed as the element which needs to be manipulated in order to achieve effective leadership. This echoes the view of followers in contingency/situational approaches and Bass even claims that “Transformational leadership... elevates the follower’s level of maturity...”, echoing Blanchard and Hersey’s situational theory (Bass, 1999). This perspective on followers and followership is one of the main criticisms of transformational and charismatic approaches. While it can be argued that transformational and charismatic approaches are positively aspirational and seek to improve followers through the transformation, it must also be realised that there can be a significant downside to this approach (Judge et al., 2006). We are all too aware of cases of leaders who were able to motivate followers to pursue foolhardy, unethical and, in some cases, inhumane objectives. Despite its eponymous centrality to the theory, the implications and modalities of personal transformation (of followers) receive very little attention in the study of transformational and charismatic leadership. Instead the focus is largely on the traits and behaviours of the leaders (Kark and Van Dijk, 2007). That the most dominant approach to the scholarship of leadership for the past three decades views and studies followers in such a limited manner is particularly relevant to the study described herein.

Related to this issue of focus is a critique of the dominant methodological approach in the study of transformational approaches and in leadership research more generally. There is a heavy reliance on quantitative survey-based approaches in leadership studies. Somewhat paradoxically, the findings from these studies rely largely on followers’ ratings of leaders while the resultant theories fail to appreciate those same followers’ role in the phenomenon being studied. This shortcoming represents, in the words of Hansbrough et al (2015), “a critical issue for the leadership field”. It is argued that the dominant methodologies in leadership research ignore the fact that followers’ ratings will reflect, in all likelihood, their individual beliefs, feelings, memories, relationships, motivations and flaws. The resultant ratings will be as much a representation of the followers’ characteristics as they are an accurate rating of the leaders’ traits, behaviours or style (Hansbrough et al., 2015; Lord et al., 2017). Others suggest that these research methodologies are insufficient or inappropriate for effective research of leadership. The

broad categories of ratings lack the nuance required to understand the complexities of leadership and individual perceptions do not provide accurate, un-biased perspectives on leadership behaviours (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). There is an argument for methodological approaches which recognise and seek to explore the individual and social processes which are inherent to followers' and leaders' experience of leadership.

Cognitive, relational and identity-based approaches

When you consider the dominant approaches to the study of leadership as outlined above, a valid criticism is that they are each, in their own way, limited or uni-dimensional. There is a tendency to focus on limited, or even single, elements of leaders or leadership and to attribute leadership outcomes or effectiveness to those particular elements. Even where additional factors are considered, such as in contingency approaches, this is still quite limited and does not address the real complexity of the individuals, the contexts and the mediating factors that are present. Consider charismatic leadership, which has dominated much of the research work and literature over the past three decades. While the underlying philosophy of charismatic leadership envisages a leadership process which is complex and multidimensional, in practice charismatic leadership research has tended to focus on the approaches and behaviours of the charismatic leader, as well as the outcomes of the charismatic leadership process. Using the metaphor of fire, Klein and House (1995) state that effective charismatic leadership is impossible without the relationship between a charismatic leader ('a spark'), motivated followers ('flammable material') and a conducive environment ('oxygen'). A number of authors have highlighted the almost complete absence within the charismatic leadership literature of any adequate treatment of those who are influenced or motivated by charismatic leadership (i.e. the followers) or of the processes that motivate those individuals to exert themselves such that the desired leadership outcomes are achieved (Judge et al., 2006; Kark and Van Dijk, 2007; Klein and House, 1995; Shamir et al., 1993). To address these and other shortcomings in the existing leadership research, approaches have developed which focus on the agency, motivations and impact of individuals within the leadership process.

Leadership is grounded in people. Effective successful leadership requires people to act collectively towards the achievement of a specific goal. It follows that, in looking for ways to obtain a more holistic perspective on the leadership process, some leadership scholars have begun to look more deeply at the processes within and between people which are fundamental to leadership. Leadership research has begun to look at cognitive, relational, identity and social processes within individuals and groups as a means of extending and complementing existing theories as well as initiating new leadership theories. Drawing on existing work in disciplines such as social and cognitive psychology, these approaches have introduced a broad range of concepts and terminology to the leadership field, with a significant degree of redundancy and overlap. However, at the core of all of these approaches lies the individual who has agency or impact on other individuals, on leadership tasks and ultimately on the success or otherwise of the leadership process. The individual can be thought of as existing on three separate levels: the personal level, the relational level and the collective level. These are often referred to as the levels of self (Epitropaki et al., 2017). Approaches to the scholarship of leadership have emerged which focus on the individuals involved and engaged in the leadership process and those approaches can be differentiated by the specific level of self they address.

Before discussing the different approaches, it is useful to consider the terminology which is applied in the context of cognitive, relational and identity-based approaches. A fundamental concept is that of the self. The notion of self-concept describes how a person conceives of herself. A self-concept is formed from schema which are cognitive constructs, consisting of elements such as beliefs, ideals and perceptions, which determine how the individual will perceive, interpret and react to a particular input or stimulus. In the literature, the terms *identity* and *self-identity* are frequently used interchangeably with self-concept. A person does not have a single identity or self-concept. There are also multiple selves in respect of the different contexts and roles one inhabits. Therefore, one's identity in the role of parent may differ from their identity as daughter, or co-worker, or manager. The terms *working self-concept* and *active identity* are used, interchangeably, to describe which of the multiple self-concepts or identities are selected or salient in a particular role or context. The working self-concept will

promote or utilise certain cognitive schema and these in turn will impact upon the individual's feelings and behaviours in the particular role or context. Identity work describes the conscious creation of an identity. A key process in identity work is that of sensemaking, whereby individuals develop or construct beliefs and concepts in order to make sense of their environment and existence. Sensemaking uses elements of the self and the environment, such as social relationships, identity, retrospect and enactment, to construct beliefs and to use those beliefs to guide action (Weick, 2007). Identity work happens at three levels which mirror the levels of self (Epitropaki et al., 2017). At the intrapersonal level, the identity work happens within the person or the self. The interpersonal level describes between-person identity work, and the group level describes identity work that happens within a social group. These different levels do not represent discrete processes, and instead identity work at one level may contribute to or influence identity work at another level.

An early example of an approach to leadership which focuses on the self at the personal level is Shamir's conceptual paper which proposes a role for self-concept in the motivational process required for effective charismatic leadership (Shamir et al., 1993). The paper proposes that when an individual is able to behave or act in a manner that is consistent with her or his self-concept, she or he will experience positive or affirming feelings. Conversely, if the individual is required to act in a manner which is not in accordance with her or his self-concept then she or he will experience feelings of discord or dissonance. Assuming that an individual prefers positive and affirming feelings over dissonance, it follows that people are motivated to act in accordance with their self-concept. Shamir proposes that acting in accordance with one's identity, and the positive feelings that engenders, fosters self-esteem, self-worth and meaningfulness on the part of the follower and these in turn lead the follower to be motivated to exert her or himself on behalf of the leader and the collective.

Another example of an approach which is based on the self at the personal level is the approach referred to as implicit leadership theories. Implicit leadership theories (ILTs) describe the range of views, conceptions and expectations of leadership that an individual has internalised. These ILTs refer to internalised cognitive categories which

are used to recognise leaders or to differentiate leaders from non-leaders (Offermann et al., 1994). As such, ILTs are an extension of cognitive categorisation theory which proposes that in order to efficiently perceive the real world we create internalised cognitive templates (Shondrick and Lord, 2010). When we perceive something which matches this template or *schema*, we assign the appropriate label. ILTs propose that individuals have an internal cognitive schema for leadership. These leadership schemas are constructed from the viewpoint of those perceiving the leader and they consequently consist of what is important or useful to the perceiver. This means that leadership schemas or ILTs are not uniform and instead vary from individual to individual. Among the issues that have been examined are the impact of ILTs on assessments or evaluations of leadership effectiveness, the impact of ILTs (of the leaders themselves and their followers) on leader behaviour and the impact of culture on the formation or content of ILTs.

Relational self-concept, or relational identity, is based on relationships with specific significant individuals. Of critical importance is the nature of the one-to-one relationship, or dyad, with key people such as spouse, parents or manager (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). In the literature, these dyads are sometimes referred to as role-related relationships, or just role-relationships. It is proposed that individuals are motivated to build effective dyads by playing their part or meeting their obligations in the relationship, which in turn builds meaningfulness and self-worth (Sluss and Ashforth, 2007). Relational aspects of leadership have been considered by other approaches. For example, behavioural and transformational approaches define leadership styles according to how the leader relates to subordinates or followers. Relational approaches, as one might infer, place relationships and relational dynamics at the centre of the theory. This is a relatively new approach to leadership research and as such has yet to develop a clear definition. To date, the most prominent approach in this category is leader-member exchange theory (LMX), which focuses on the one-to-one relationship, or dyad, between the leader and each follower. The nature of this relationship determines whether the follower is a member of the leader's 'in-group' (i.e. close relationship based on trust, respect and mutual benefit) or 'out-group' (i.e. more distant and formal relationship). Effective leadership is defined by the leader's ability to

develop high-quality dyads with the appropriate individuals in order to achieve the desired organisational outcomes. Other approaches emerging in this category adopt a 'relational' perspective which focuses more on the social construction of knowledge and other phenomena in a specific organisational context (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Here, leadership is socially constructed (or co-produced) by leaders and followers. In this context, relationships are essential mechanisms of social construction. The emerging relational approaches are important in the context of the current study because they address the issue of parity of esteem between followers and leaders as co-producers of leadership (Endres and Weibler, 2017).

A person's social identity is the part of their self-concept which derives from their membership of a particular group. Through the identity work that takes place within a specific social or group context, the individual will acquire the group identity (i.e. adopt certain key group traits or beliefs for the self) as well as equating the group's interests with their own (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). Because leaders and followers are members of the same social group, leadership scholars have explored what implications the social identity, constructed within the group, has for the process and outcome of leadership. The social identity theory of leadership is the most dominant approach in the literature (Epitropaki et al., 2017). According to this theory, the leader's authority, or influence, is related to her or his ability to embody the group identity. The concept of prototypicality describes the ideal group member, and the closer a group member is to the prototype, the more accepted they will be as a group member. A prototypical leader (i.e. a group member who closely resembles the ideal and who occupies a leadership role or position) is viewed as 'one of us' and, it is found, is more likely to be accepted and followed by the other group members. The influence, motivation, charisma and effectiveness of the leader are all strongly correlated with adherence to the group prototype (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). A further finding is that a leader who is not prototypical can still achieve a degree of acceptance and influence if they can demonstrate that they have the group's interest at heart. As Van Knippenberg and Hogg (2003) state, "endorsement may not only derive from being one of us but also from doing it for us". In striving to be effective, the prototypical leader can go further than simply exemplifying the group identity. The leader can use her or his acceptance

and influence to develop, or at least guide the development of, the group identity. Group members will look to the prototypical leader to define the group identity, especially as that identity changes in response to new circumstances, via processes such as sensemaking and visioning (Epitropaki et al., 2017).

Cognitive, relational and identity approaches to leadership, and followership, are relevant in the context of the current study because they signal a shift in perspective from seeing leadership as a top-down process structured according to organisational hierarchies and formal roles, to conceptualising leadership as a comprehensive process distributed among, and vested in, the members of a social system, and involving reciprocal influence (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). From these perspectives, leadership and followership are constructed within and between the group members and they are indissolubly linked (i.e. there can be no leadership without followership and vice versa). Consequently, the study of leadership is incomplete without appropriate consideration of followership. These approaches, in highlighting the need to adopt a holistic, multi-perspective approach, provide a framework for aligning and integrating followership, and follower-centric, research with existing approaches to leadership research.

Alternatives to leadership

Sometimes leadership is found to be ineffective in delivering the desired organisational outcomes. For the most part, the leadership literature contains the fundamental assumption that leadership is useful and effective in all situations and that ineffective leadership is the result of the wrong style or individual errors (Blom and Alvesson, 2015; Kerr and Jermier, 1978). However, some scholars have taken the view that it is not always a case of bad leadership resulting in bad outcomes (Pearce et al., 2018). Instead, it is proposed that leadership, and in particular formal, top-down, hierarchical leadership, is the problem and that in certain contexts it can have a neutral or even negative impact on organisational outcomes (Alvesson and Blom, 2018; Pearce et al., 2018). While there are other processes which facilitate collaborative effort leading to positive institutional outcomes, these should not be construed as alternative forms of leadership. Instead these are alternatives to leadership, or non-leadership. Alvesson and Blom (2018) present six modes of organising which they argue can be utilised and combined,

depending on circumstances and context, to achieve organisational effectiveness. They outline three vertical modes, including leadership, which represent formal top-down approaches and put forward three horizontal modes which represent the informal alternatives. The three horizontal modes are autonomy, teamwork (or group-work) and peer influencing. These horizontal modes echo constructs for describing alternatives to leadership that are found elsewhere in the literature.

Kerr and Jermier (1978), in their substitutes for leadership theory, presented a detailed study of one such alternative to leadership. This theory proposed that there were features of the individual (i.e. follower), task or organisation that substituted for, or neutralised, the effectiveness of leaders and leadership. Substitutes for leadership provide a process that takes the place of the formal leadership process such that the formal process is neither necessary nor effective. Neutralisers, on the other hand, render formal leadership impossible but they do not provide a replacement process (Kerr and Jermier, 1978). The original model identified fourteen 'substitutes' (actually a mixture of substitutes and neutralisers) for leadership and this was subsequently refined to differentiate between substitutes and neutralisers. One of the features identified is the professional orientation of the individual and this has been identified in a number of studies as being a significant substitute for leadership (Podsakoff et al., 1993; Wu, 2010). The substitutes for leadership theory does not claim to replace leadership completely but instead indicates that certain leadership activities are unnecessary (because they are provided via the substitute characteristics) but other activities will still be necessary. The leader's task is to identify and provide the leadership that is required, while avoiding the pitfall of viewing the reliance on substitutes for leadership as a failing in her or his leadership abilities (Kerr and Jermier, 1978).

The term shared leadership is used in the literature to describe a range of approaches and processes which are not coherent or consistent (Avolio et al., 2009; Zhu et al., 2018). Some describe shared leadership as a leadership approach while others categorise it as an alternative to leadership (Alvesson and Blom, 2018). Despite this lack of consistency, scholars broadly agree that shared leadership describes a process whereby traditional top-down leadership is replaced with a team or group-based process which achieves

motivation, influence, collaboration and performance through the collective (Zhu et al., 2018). Shared leadership is a dynamic and emergent process where leadership roles and leading behaviour can be adopted by individual(s) within the group depending on context and the nature of the task at hand. There is evidence to show that shared leadership can be effective in contexts where other leadership approaches are less than effective. In addition, shared leadership has been shown to have positive effects on team performance and individual job satisfaction. However, it is also noted that there are limitations to shared leadership and that it cannot replace leadership in all situations or contexts (Pearce et al., 2018).

The case can be made that these alternatives to leadership are superior to leadership and this is especially the case in certain organisational contexts where autonomy and professionalism are the norm, or valued highly (Wu, 2010). However, there are a number of critiques put forward in the literature which call into question some of the claims made for alternatives to leadership. Chief among these is the failure to verify the theoretical claims via empirical study (Avolio et al., 2009; Podsakoff et al., 1993). While the difficulty of confirming the theory is accepted and methodological shortcomings are highlighted, it is still a concern that the theories have not been confirmed via empirical studies. This contrasts with the significant body of empirical studies which confirm the effectiveness of leadership processes. It is also significant that alternatives to leadership are, in practice, partial alternatives to leadership. Each of the theories recognises that there is still a need for more traditional formal leadership to complement the alternative approaches (Alvesson and Blom, 2018; Pearce et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2018). A significant concern was identified by Kerr and Jermier (1978) with respect to leadership neutralisers which render leadership impossible and do not provide any substitute process. They describe the resultant *influence vacuum* as a significant issue which can precipitate a “variety of disfunctions”. Essentially, if leadership is negated and is not replaced (in its entirety) by another process, or processes, organisational performance may be significantly affected. The concern is that, by negating or undermining the leader’s influence in relation to unnecessary leadership activities (via neutralising characteristics), the leader’s influence will also be undermined in relation to other necessary leadership activities.

Alternatives to leadership are of particular relevance to the current study as they have been identified as being well aligned with the specific organisational context found in higher education institutions (Pearce et al., 2018; Wu, 2010).

Relevance of leadership research and theory to the current study

In summarising this discussion of the place of followership within leadership theory, as it pertains to the current study, I would like to emphasise three factors.

Firstly, the literature shows how the perspective on leadership has shifted. Initially, leadership was vested in individuals who were viewed as having elevated status over others. In addition, there was a significant focus on top-down, formal, organisational structures. Over time, the definition of leadership has changed in a number of ways. Increasingly, leadership is viewed as a process which is multifaceted, complex and nuanced. At the centre of that process lies the flow of influence, from the leaders to the followers, which motivates individuals to act. However, there is a growing parity of esteem between leaders and followers. The privilege of leaders is being replaced by a recognition that leadership, leadership outcomes and leadership effectiveness are co-produced by leaders and followers. This co-production is achieved via interactions, actions and relationships which happen in a social group context. Ultimately, the leadership process aims to achieve specific goals or outcomes. This definition of leadership as a socially constructed, goal-oriented process highlights the shortcomings of earlier approaches to leadership which had a disproportionate focus on what the leader was or did.

Secondly, the position of followers and followership in the knowledge and theory relating to leadership to date has been limited. Where approaches to leadership recognised followers, the focus often remained leader-centric. What were proposed as follower-centric approaches continued to privilege leaders and leadership. Truly follower-centric studies (i.e. studies which include followers' perspectives on followership) are almost completely absent from the literature. Considering the evolving definition of the leadership process, which recognises the parity of esteem between leaders and followers within that process, a thorough understanding of

followership is critical to effective studies of leadership. In latter years, there has been a greater focus on the broader leadership process and the position of followers and followership in that process, but there are still significant gaps in our knowledge.

Finally, a sizeable majority of leadership studies in the literature utilise quantitative methodologies based on leadership assessment questionnaires. Over time, the reliance on these quantitative approaches has been identified as problematic. Firstly, there has been a greater realisation that the results from these studies are as much indicative of the followers' cognitive process as they are a true reflection of the leader and the leadership process. Secondly, it has been identified that these quantitative approaches are ill-suited to investigating the important aspects of the complex, nuanced leadership process as defined above. There are increasing calls for qualitative and mixed methods approaches which are better matched with the phenomena being investigated.

3.2 Followership

Increasingly, followership and followers are becoming the focus of leadership studies and there is a growing focus on followership in its own right. Many authors argue that the role of followers in the leadership process is at least equal to that of leaders (Meindl, 1995; Meindl et al., 1985; Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014) and it is even suggested that followership is more important because leadership is impossible without followership (Blom and Alvesson, 2015; Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

The study of followership was pioneered by Robert Kelley, James Meindl and their colleagues. Kelley wrote 'In Praise of Followers' in 1988 and this is arguably the first publication in the nascent field of followership. It is important to note however that the scholarship of leadership had from time to time recognised the role and importance of followers (Bligh, 2011). Kelley's paper clearly identified the need to incorporate conceptualisations of followership into leadership theory but did not seek to question the underlying leadership theories (Bligh, 2011).

Conversely, Meindl (1995, 1993, 1990) proposed what he termed the "romance of leadership" approach as a direct challenge to the received wisdom regarding leadership

and followership, using romance ironically to convey the over-reliance of leadership research on who the leader is and what the leader does. The romance of leadership notion takes a social constructionist viewpoint of the leadership process and as such looks at the way in which organisations, and the individuals (followers) within them, construct ideas such as leaders and leadership. The romance of leadership approach is proposed as an entirely follower-centric approach which attributes the construction of leadership and leaders to the conceptualisations, observations and actions of followers. Meindl does not deny or demonise leaders or leadership but is radical when arguing that it is necessary to address the strong tendency to over-attribute organisational success and leadership outcomes to leaders alone (Shamir et al., 1993; Weick, 2007). To Meindl, the romance of leadership approach highlights the inadequacy and poverty at the core of the existing approaches to the scholarship of leadership. It points to a complex process in which followers are more important than leaders, and consequently this process cannot be studied effectively or understood properly unless followers and followership are studied effectively and understood properly.

While Meindl highlighted the problems associated with romanticising leadership, others have focused on the “subordination of followership” (Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007). This refers to the negative connotations associated with followers and followership. As well as resulting in followers being viewed by leaders as passive, submissive, lazy or dangerous, this subordination can also cause followers to deny or abandon their agency or responsibility. Modern, post-industrialist workplaces rely less on hierarchical structures based on power and instead require flatter structures based on knowledge and professionalism (Collinson, 2005). In such organisations, effectiveness and success requires pro-active workers who collaborate to achieve desired outcomes. If followers have constructed passive identities which lead them to adopt a passive role with limited responsibility or accountability, then the organisation will not be able to succeed, irrespective of the leadership approach taken. Furthermore, active or positive approaches to followership have been identified as possible solutions to the downsides of leadership such as corruption, bullying, etc (Collinson, 2005). Therefore, it can be argued that, followership can be studied and practised for its own sake and not simply as a component of a broader leadership process.

The study of followership is still in its infancy (Crossman and Crossman, 2011; Ford and Harding, 2018; Kelley, 2008). There has been a significant body of work mainly aimed at defining followership and establishing its importance. Furthermore, work has begun towards developing followership as a concept through the formulation of theories and methodologies (Bligh, 2011). As the importance of followership has been accepted, there has been a move from follower-centric approaches to the study of leadership (i.e. followers' perceptions of leaders or leadership) to studies of followers' perceptions of followers or followership. In seeking to provide a foundation for the development of followership theory, Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) propose that there are two overarching paradigms of followership, namely, a role-based view and a constructionist view.

Role-based approaches

The role-based view examines followers and followership within the context of hierarchical organisational structures. It includes aspects such as how followers perceive their role, how they perceive the leader, how they behave towards the leader and how they shape the leader's actions.

This view mirrors many of the approaches to leadership research but 'reverses the lens' such that the various phenomena are studied from a follower-centric perspective. Some of the early research into followership studied follower traits as well as the styles of followership that are practised. One of the most cited examples of this type of research into followership is the work of Robert E. Kelley. Kelley presented a typology of follower traits/styles (Figure 2) and described what he considered to be the traits that comprised effective followership, namely, self-management, commitment, competence, focus and courage (Kelley, 1988). Similar models are presented by Zaleznik (Bligh, 2011), Miller (2004), Chaleff (2009) and Kellerman (2007). While these can all be described as role-based, those described by Zaleznik and Miller are very much leader-centric and view followers as issues to be addressed. The models presented by Chaleff and Kellerman are more similar in structure and focus to Kelley's model.

Another example of reversing the lens from leadership research is the move from implicit leadership theories (ILTs) to implicit followership theories (IFTs). ILTs explore

the internalised beliefs and archetypes, on the part of followers (and also leaders), as to what constitutes a good leader or good leadership. Similarly, IFTs are defined as “cognitive structures and schemas about the traits and behaviours that characterise followers” (Epitropaki et al., 2013). Research focusing on IFTs and similar approaches seeks to explore the typical (and ideal) prototypes of followers and tries to determine the impact of these prototypes (or the act/process of categorisation) on leadership outcomes (Epitropaki et al., 2013; Junker and van Dick, 2014; Sy, 2010). Initially, these approaches looked at leaders’ views of subordinates’ traits and behaviours (i.e. leaders’ IFTs) but latterly there has been consideration of followers’ IFTs and this is identified as an important area for future research.

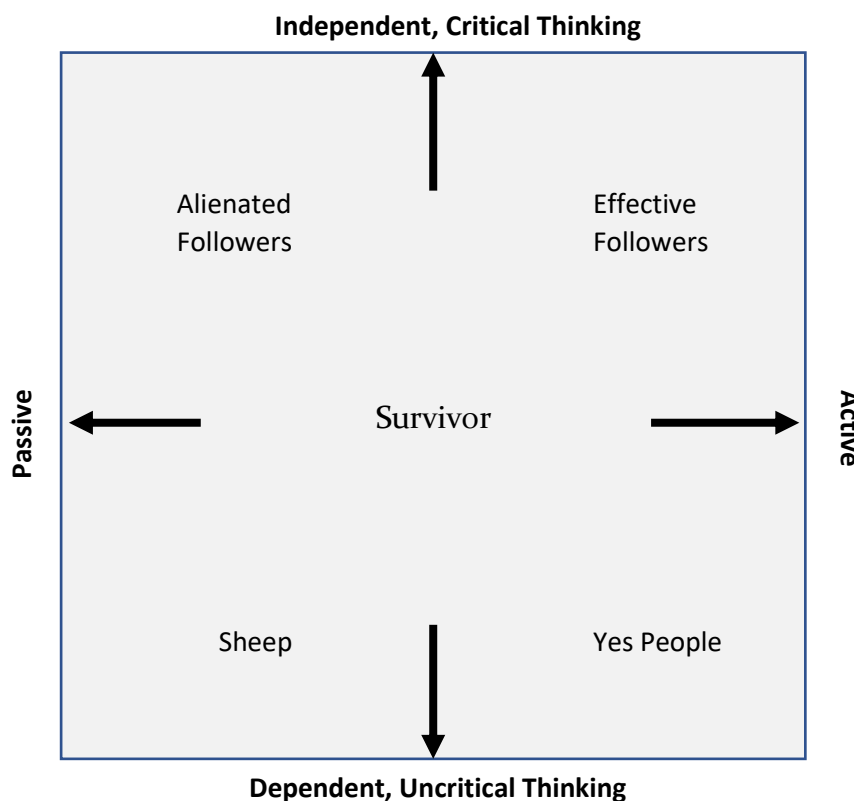


Figure 2: Kelley's Follower Typology (Kelley 1988)

A significant body of research from this role-based viewpoint focuses on the related issues of followership role orientation and followership behaviour styles (Carsten, 2017;

Carsten et al., 2018). Building on general role theory and extending the work commenced by Kelley, followership role orientations describe how the individual follower perceives her or his role and how that perception impacts on how the follower relates to, and behaves towards, the leader. Two main role orientations are prevalent in the literature, namely, passive orientations and active (or co-production) orientations. Followers exhibiting passive role orientations will defer to the leader and see their role as doing what the leader wants without challenge. Meanwhile, those followers with active or co-production orientations will perceive themselves as partners with their leaders in the creation of leadership outcomes and will see it as their role to contribute to and challenge the leadership process, without being prompted to do so. Role orientations are internalised and therefore cannot be observed. Frequently, followership behaviour styles are used as proxies for role orientations. For example, behaviours such as dependence, compliance, and uncritical thinking are associated with passive role orientations while initiative-taking, taking ownership and critical thinking reflect an active role orientation (Carsten, 2017).

Role-based approaches tend to suffer from an association with the roles assigned to individuals as part of the organisation's formal management structure. Therefore, those in subordinate roles are expected to be followers and those in management roles are expected to be leaders. These approaches run the risk of perpetuating existing roles and existing constructions of leader and follower which may in turn limit the motivation, agency and fulfilment of individual followers, as well as the success of the organisation (Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007).

Constructionist approaches

Constructionist views see leadership, followership and their outcomes as co-constructed by leaders and followers. This approach does not view the leadership process in terms of roles (i.e. leaders and followers). From this perspective, leadership is created via the interactions and behaviours of individuals in a shared social context (Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012). This perspective has at its core the leadership process and the outcomes of that process. In order to effectively investigate and theorise about the process of leadership, a balanced approach is required which gives equal weighting

to both followers and leaders as the co-producers of leadership (Shamir, 2007). This approach views the leadership process as being created by the followers, the leaders, and the relationships between them, and emphasises the need to accommodate each of these domains if one is to understand the leadership process (Figure 3).

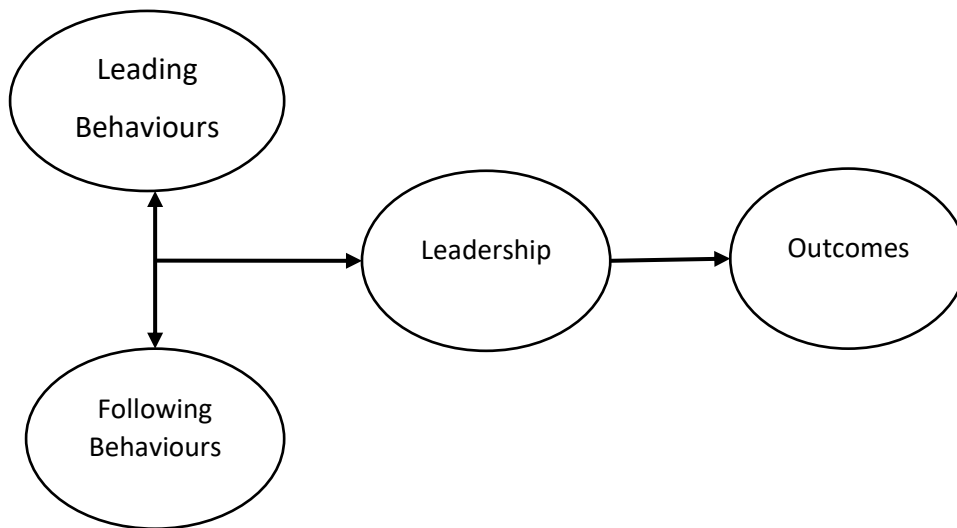


Figure 3: The Leadership Process (Uhl-Bien et al. 2014)

This approach to the study of followership mirrors similar approaches to the study of leadership as discussed above. Identity-based approaches align well with the constructionist perspective on followership. In fact, the identity-based approaches to followership and leadership are essentially the same because these approaches study the leadership process in a holistic manner and allow for the investigation of leaders, followers and their relationships as well as the organisational context. The process of identity work at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and group levels is also identical, as it must be when you consider, as discussed previously, that an individual may use these processes to construct both follower and leader identities.

At the interpersonal level, relational approaches to followership and leadership have developed. The viewpoint that leaders or followers do not exist or act independently, but instead must interact with individuals or groups within the context of the organisation, is at the core of the relational leadership perspective (Endres and Weibler,

2017). This approach views leadership as “a relational process co-created by leaders and followers in context” and therefore views followers as equal partners with leaders in the achievement of leadership outcomes (Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012).

DeRue and Ashford (2010), while building on social identity theories of leadership and followership, focus on how the identity of a leader (or a follower) is constructed via social processes in a specific situation or context. They describe a process (Figure 4) whereby an individual becomes a leader (or constructs a leader identity) through a social process of claiming (i.e. the leader claims the leadership identity) and granting (i.e. the follower grants the leadership identity to the leader). This model also addresses the follower identity because in proactively granting a leader’s claim the follower is also proactively claiming a follower identity or role (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). The central and equal role of the follower is highlighted in this model, as leadership is only possible if the leader’s claim is accompanied by a grant on the part of the follower. Leadership and followership are viewed as elements of a dynamic and changeable process which is constructed through the social interaction and mutual influence between those that claim the leader identity (and grant follower identity to others) and those that grant the leader identity (and thereby claim the follower identity).

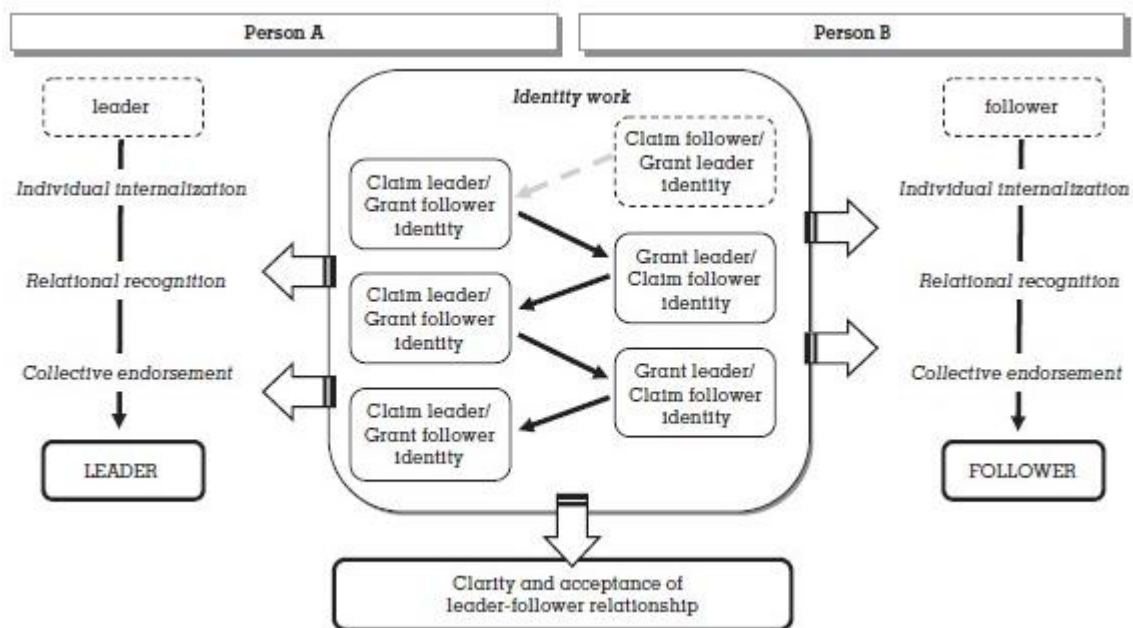


Figure 4: Leadership Identity Construction Process (DeRue & Ashford 2010)

Social construction of followership and leadership, as a means to encompass all aspects (i.e. individual leaders and followers, interactions between individuals, dynamics within social groups and organisational context) of the leadership process within a single framework, is considered by a number of authors (Endres and Weibler, 2017; Fairhurst and Grant, 2010; Meindl, 1995; Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007). Carsten et al (2010) investigated the social constructions of followership by individuals in different organisational settings. They explored the followers' constructs of followership (i.e. what they perceived followership to be and how they enacted followership) and how this reflected the social and organisational context. They classified these social constructions of followership as passive, active or pro-active, and individual followers were allocated to a particular classification according to their beliefs about followership. In addition, the nature of the workplace was explored as a mediating or moderating factor on individuals' followership beliefs. The approach in this study highlighted the value in utilising a theoretical framework (and appropriate methodology) which accommodates all elements of the leadership process, thereby allowing the interactions and impacts between the various elements to be explored and understood.

Problems with followership

A complicating factor in the study of followership is the fact that the term follower is in itself problematic, as is the requirement to willingly accept the motivations and goals of the leader (Blom and Alvesson, 2015).

While it is said that there can be no leadership without followership, it is equally true that there can be no followership unless individuals voluntarily accept the role of follower. This requires them to defer to the leader and effectively give up their autonomy (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019). Given the seeming status and privilege of being the leader, what would motivate an individual to choose to be a follower? There may be contexts or circumstances which lead an individual to choose to be a follower. It is claimed that crisis or emergency situations elicit a desire for guidance and leadership, which can motivate an individual to engage in followership (Shamir and Howell, 1999; Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). In broader terms, exceptional circumstances, which may include lack of resources, goal ambiguity, organisation-wide

change and existential threats to the organisation, are identified as factors which lead individuals to favour followership (Blom and Alvesson, 2015; Shamir et al., 1993). Personal circumstances may also play a role (e.g. an individual who is inexperienced or less knowledgeable may be more likely to choose to be a follower), but it would be repeating the mistakes of the past (e.g. Great Man theories) to conclude that there are born followers. Instead, individuals are able to choose when and how they will be followers and the same individual may, at different times and influenced by context, choose to be a follower or a leader (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019).

Among the conditions under which followership will emerge, a key feature is that coordination or cooperation is beneficial (i.e. group members recognise that they will derive more benefit or increase chances of success if they cooperate). In such scenarios a group may be motivated to choose or accept a leader, with the remaining group members adopting follower roles. While it is expected that many group members will want to lead, some individuals may not (i.e. due to personal or situational factors which mean that the 'cost' of leadership is too high for that individual) and therefore will adopt the role of follower. Furthermore, an individual who aspires to be a leader may not be able to gain or attract followers, perhaps due to the lack of key knowledge or social capital within the group, and will instead become a follower (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019).

While followership is not without its problems, it appears that individuals can and will choose to be followers, provided that the conditions are right. Perhaps more problematic is the need to accept the identity or label of follower and the negative connotations that go along with it (Hopton et al., 2015). The words, symbols and labels associated with followership are predominantly negative, and even when there is no intent to portray followers negatively, such as in leadership theory, they are portrayed as passive and ineffectual. Schedlitzki et al. (2018) refer to this symbolism as follows:

“the silent image of the follower... resembles the silent image of the woman tied to her place as bearer of meaning where the man/leader is the maker of meaning”.

Openly negative perceptions of followers have persisted in the literature, from McGregor's Theory X followers who were inherently lazy, to the portrayal of followers as cognitively rigid, guilty of short-term thinking and lacking imagination in the literature on change and change management (Ford and Harding, 2018). Within the literature, and within the broader society, followers are portrayed as, at best, weak, deferent and ineffective individuals who must be made whole by the heroic leader, and, at worst, as lazy, deviant and dangerous (Ford and Harding, 2018).

The conclusion is that individuals will not accept the follower label if they are given a choice, or, if assigned the role of follower, will not be motivated or able to work to be a good follower because positive images or role models of followership do not exist (Hopton et al., 2015; Schedlitzki et al., 2018). One proposed solution is to remove the terms follower and followership and replace them with terms which do not carry negative connotations (Alvesson and Blom, 2018). Among the terms suggested are participants, contributors, members, associates and collaborators (Bligh, 2011). However, others have argued that to remove the term follower is to remove the possibility of leadership (Alvesson and Blom, 2018; Shamir, 2007). The argument is that the leadership process is defined by a relationship in which an individual has the ability to motivate or influence the other members of the group towards the achievement of specific outcomes, and therefore that individual occupies a different role (i.e. leader) to the other group members (i.e. the followers). Without the two distinct roles, the relationship cannot exist and therefore the leadership process does not exist. If the word follower is abandoned and replaced, then the word leadership must likewise be abandoned and replaced (Shamir, 2007). Other forms of collaboration and organising may exist which are effective, and which do not rely on the flow of influence from the leader to the follower. However, if leadership is to exist as a concept, or as a practice, then followership, however problematic, must also exist (Uhl-Bien and Carsten, 2018). While this argument has validity in the context of academic scholarship it may not be compatible with the prevailing cultural realities undermining followership. It can be argued, however, that studies, and subsequent discussions, about the true nature of followership can help to counteract the negative perceptions of followers and followership (Hopton et al., 2015).

Followership research and theory in context

The study of followership is critical to the study of leadership. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) propose two paradigms for the study of followership. They posit that followership research should broadly focus on the follower role as a causal agent in the leadership process or, alternatively, on the leadership process and how this is constructed through the relationships between followers, leaders and contexts, resulting in leadership outcomes (Figure 3). The latter looks at followers' identities, beliefs and behaviours and how these combine or interact with leaders' identities, beliefs and behaviours to construct leadership and achieve leadership outcomes. Leadership is only possible through the agency of both followers and leaders and as such this approach is, by definition, balanced, and gives due regard to the role of followers and followership in successful leadership. It follows that this approach also facilitates the study of unsuccessful or ineffective leadership and the role that followership (or non-followership) plays in the success of the leadership process and organisations generally (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

In choosing between these paradigms, it is important to note that taking one approach does not entirely exclude the other. For example, in conducting followership research from a constructionist viewpoint one is not precluded from considering roles. In fact, roles are an important aspect of the process of institutionalisation (which is central to the social construction of reality) as described by Berger and Luckmann (1991).

Followers are generally viewed negatively as passive, subservient, weak, lazy, etc. By contrast, leaders are romanticised (unless they are characterised as bad leaders and do not live up to the romantic ideal). These negative connotations associated with followership present a real challenge to the practice of effective followership (and by extension effective leadership) because an individual is less likely to voluntarily choose to be a follower under these circumstances.

3.3 Followership and Leadership in Higher Education

In this section I review the issues pertaining to leadership and followership in the specific context of higher education. Many of the approaches and issues in relation to leadership and followership discussed above have relevance to leadership and followership in higher education. There are, however, issues and circumstances that are unique to higher education and these have implications for effective leadership and followership. These range from funding crises caused by various economic and political events, pressures from government, policy makers and other external stakeholders, the impact of globalisation and the challenges wrought by the forces of marketisation. Arguably, the organisational context of higher education institutions is the most fundamental and impactful of these issues (Pearce et al., 2018).

Higher education institutions fall into the category of what Mintzberg referred to as the 'professional bureaucracy' (Lumby, 2012; Mintzberg, 1980). The workforce of this type of organisation is usually dominated by professional or knowledge workers (Adler et al., 2008; Wu, 2010). Other examples of such organisations include hospitals and medical centres, architectural and design practices and professional services organisations, such as legal and accountancy partnerships. There is evidence in the literature that such organisations share certain cultural elements. Firstly, there is a strong preference among professionals and knowledge workers for independence and autonomy. They believe that they need the freedom to choose how their expertise should be applied in order to be effective in their role (Empson and Langley, 2015). For this reason, they tend to reject attempts to implement traditional command and control structures (Mu0, 2013). Instead, they value the oversight and input of the community of their peers as a means to validate and evaluate their work. This preference for community extends to the management, leadership and governance of the organisation and consequently the authority to lead in such organisations is contingent on the continued support of the community of professionals and/or peers (Empson and Langley, 2015; Mu0, 2013).

While higher education institutions share many elements of organisational culture with other professional bureaucracies, it can be argued that the expectation or demand for

complete autonomy on the part of the academic worker is a key differentiating factor (Lumby, 2012). In addition, higher education institutions often have a complexity brought about by the competing internal cultures and structures and the variety of external stakeholders that exert a pull on the institution's resources and attention.

While the approaches to leadership outlined above are broadly applicable, it is generally viewed that higher education institutions and other professional or knowledge worker organisations require different approaches to leadership. Some even argue that leadership is not necessary and that, instead, the community of professionals can generate substitutes for leadership. It is proposed that in professional bureaucracies the professionalism of the employees and the oversight of the community of peers removes the need for overt co-ordination (i.e. command and control) implemented via management hierarchies or structures (Adler et al., 2008; Empson and Langley, 2015; Lumby, 2012; Muo, 2013; Wu, 2010). This proposed alternative to leadership is popular in higher education as it suggests that the commitment and professionalism of the members removes the need for leadership entirely (Bryman, 2007; Lumby, 2012). However, as highlighted above, there is little support in the literature for alternatives to leadership nor are there case studies which illustrate its successful implementation.

The support for alternatives to leadership among academic staff points to elements of the organisational culture of higher education institutions which make leadership challenging and less effective. Some even go as far as to suggest that leadership in higher education is entirely unnecessary or even counterproductive. For example, Bryman states that "leadership may be significant for its adverse effects" and again "the issue...is not so much what leaders do but more to do with what they should avoid doing" (Bryman, 2007). Whether you accept that leadership in higher education is ineffective, impossible or unnecessary, it seems clear from the literature that leadership in higher education is a contested and problematic concept (Bryman, 2007; Calma, 2015; Juntrasook, 2014; Lumby, 2019; Lumby, 2012).

Perhaps the root of the difficulties with leadership in higher education is to be found in the determination of who is considered a leader. There are individuals who occupy

certain positions within the organisational hierarchy and who ought to be considered leaders but who in reality are not accepted as leaders by the academic community. Commonly, academics do not see institutional management (still pejoratively referred to by some academics as administrators) as being capable of leading them. They may be capable of managing the operational aspects of the institution but they are not able to provide the kind of academic leadership which would be of value to an academic (Bryman and Lilley, 2009). This failing is certainly attributed to the career managers who occupy certain positions, but it is, also, often attributed to members of academic management, such as Heads of School or Heads of Department, as well. While these individuals are generally recruited from within the ranks of academics, they undergo a metamorphosis (whether real or perceived) once they take up a management position and become viewed as *company* men or women (Kligyte and Barrie, 2014). At the most fundamental level, it is argued that many academics will not accept leadership from anyone outside their, self-determined, group of peers. This final point goes to a fundamental question as to whether the followers view the leader as a role or as a role model and, by extension, if they cannot accept the leader as a role model, whether they will be led by them.

From the preceding discussions, it is probably necessary to determine if there are any organisational or individual approaches to leadership which can be effective in a higher education context. As outlined below, there are certain elements of higher education culture, some of which are shared with other professional organisations, which mean that approaches to leadership which work in other contexts are ineffective in the context of higher education (Bryman and Lilley, 2009). Instead, the literature suggests that approaches are needed which recognise and respect the nature of academic work and which seek to foster and harness the contribution of academics rather than try to manage and control them (Bryman, 2007; Hemsall, 2014; Wu, 2010). Two factors are identified in the literature which it is suggested will result in more effective leadership in higher education. The first is the need to trust the academics and their professionalism because it is only through this trust that the academic will be able to perform to the best of her/his ability and make the fullest contribution to the success of the HEI (Bryman, 2007; Calma, 2015; Lumby, 2012). The second is to understand the

importance of the community of peers in the context of higher education and the related need to share or distribute the process of leadership throughout the institution (Hempsall, 2014). It is suggested that if higher education institutions encourage approaches to leadership which are more respectful of individual autonomy, and which ensure that leadership is vested in the community rather than the hierarchy, they will find that the process of leadership is capable of contributing to organisational effectiveness and success (Hempsall, 2014).

The discussion above regarding the challenges to leadership in higher education, and potential routes to success, echoes the social identity theories of leadership whereby the acceptance of the leader is contingent upon the degree to which she or he is acting in accordance with the group identity. Leadership outcomes often involve change and any change can be a threat to the values or identity of the group. The effective leader must be able to demonstrate that, through the achievement of the leadership outcomes, she or he wishes to preserve or strengthen the core values of the shared identity (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). This group identity is socially constructed by the members of the group, leaders and followers, and will reflect the beliefs, values and behaviours that constitute the organisational culture of higher education institutions. It follows that effective leadership and followership in higher education is heavily dependent upon a thorough understanding of the culture and values of higher education institutions.

Research into followership in higher education is conspicuous by its absence. Billot et al. (2013) carried out a study which had a number of similarities with the current study, including a follower-centric approach, a social constructionist epistemology and a qualitative methodology. However, this study largely focused on followers' experiences with formal leaders in the context of academic work, i.e. teaching and learning. The findings from this study emphasised the relational spaces that were co-constructed by followers and leaders, and the implications of the relational spaces for the experiences of leadership. Among the specific findings which are of interest in the context of this study were those relating to general perceptions of followership. The study found that there was a reluctance, or reticence, to adopt the label, or role, of follower and this was

linked to both, negative associations with followership and aspects of the organisational culture among academic staff in higher education. However, the study also found a desire to be positive in follower roles and a willingness to commit to a vision. A follow-up study, by many of the same authors, also adopted a follower-centric approach, but was almost exclusively focused on followers' perceptions of academic leadership (Skorobohacz et al., 2016).

3.4 Organisational Culture and Environment in Higher Education Institutions

Building on the long-standing study within the social sciences of culture and cultures, particularly focused on national, ethnic and tribal cultures, the study of organisational culture seeks to understand the social elements within an organisation and how these can impact on the effectiveness of the organisation. Some scholarly work was carried out in relation to organisational culture as early as the 1950s but it was not until the 1980s that the study of organisational culture began to feature prominently in the literature (Schein, 2010).

While cultures can be examined from a variety of perspectives including biological, psychological and anthropological, when it comes to the study of organisational cultures the social or sociological perspective predominates. From this social perspective, culture is viewed as a socially-constructed characteristic of an organisation (Cameron and Quinn, 2011) and as such is made up of the beliefs, values, expectations and behaviours of the individuals and groups within the organisation. It follows that, for the most part, definitions of organisational culture in the literature reflect this sociological perspective. Pettigrew refers to culture as the *social tissue* which is comprised of a system of publicly and collectively accepted meanings (Pettigrew, 1979). Cameron and Quinn state that organisational culture represents “how things are around here” and “reflects the prevailing ideology people carry inside their heads” (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Schein provides a comprehensive and formal definition of organisational culture as a “pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration” and furthermore

states that, as such, the culture “has worked well enough to be considered valid and... to be taught to new members” (Schein, 2010).

The organisational culture has been identified as having a significant impact on organisational performance. The components of the organisational culture, such as values, can represent strong and consistent forces with implications for the behaviours and effectiveness of individual followers and leaders and, by extension, for the leadership process (Kleijnen et al., 2009). The leadership process within any organisation will not be effective if the approach taken is significantly at odds with the culture and values of the organisation (Branson, 2008).

Higher education culture

Universities and other higher education institutions come in a large variety of shapes and sizes, ranging from ancient and traditional institutions such as the University of Bologna, which was founded in 1088, to the University of Phoenix, which is a young institution delivering all of its programmes through online and distance learning. It would seem unlikely therefore that there is a single organisational culture, that is to say, a macroculture, which is shared by all or most higher education institutions. However, many HEIs do subscribe to an overarching notion of their purpose and mission and those who work in higher education, particularly the academics, have a strong commitment to this mission and have internalised the associated beliefs, values and behaviours. It is especially true that many HEIs in the developed world, and in the English-speaking developed world in particular, align themselves with the *traditional* model of a university as expressed by Wilhelm Von Humboldt and John Henry Cardinal Newman in the late eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries respectively. Research shows that, despite the many changes to mission, role and structures that have occurred in higher education in recent decades, the traditional model is still remarkably resilient and many academics still see this as the foundation upon which the institution is built (Henkel, 2005; Kligyte and Barrie, 2014; Silver, 2003). Dill refers to the need to “socialise faculty members to the values essential to academic work” and also refers to the importance of belief in academic life (Dill, 2012). This overarching set of beliefs harks back to a golden age, which may or may not have existed, when universities (as all HEIs

were universities at that time) occupied a special place in society. Fundamental to this macroculture is the belief that the university is a community of scholars that contributes to society by shaping the “cultivated man”, advancing knowledge and being an agent for public good (O’Byrne and Bond, 2014). Furthermore, in order to fulfil this role, the scholars must be free and unimpeded in their creation or pursuit of knowledge. Academic staff must have a high degree of autonomy in the choice and performance of their academic work and this work should be the subject of informal and implicit evaluation carried out by their academic peers (Dill, 2012; Sporn, 1996; Tierney, 1988). It is interesting to note that the elements of higher education culture outlined in the literature tend to refer to the culture of academic work and focus less on the overall organisation. Many modern day higher education institutions, and those who work in them, still believe in some version of a higher education culture which is based loosely on these fundamental ideals (Henkel, 2005; Kligyte and Barrie, 2014).

These beliefs, while widely held, are also contested. Some ask whether the “golden age” ever really existed and suggest that it and the beliefs it has inspired are merely a myth or a “subliminal fantasy” (Kligyte and Barrie, 2014; Tight, 2010). It is suggested that the resilience of, and devotion to, these beliefs may actually derive from the very fact that they are being attacked or threatened in modern higher education systems (Kligyte and Barrie, 2014; Silver, 2003). There are many analogues of this in the broader study of cultures, where isolated, oppressed or persecuted cultures doggedly retain and practically reify certain elements of their culture. Since the early 1970s, higher education systems have been subjected to a series of external forces of change which have directly threatened the fundamental ideals outlined above (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Henkel, 2005). At the root of much of the change in higher education has been a utilitarian turn in how education in general, and higher education in particular, is viewed. The development of post-industrial economies which were driven by knowledge and technology had the result that the delivery of an economic dividend became a primary role of higher education. As a consequence, public spending on higher education increased, as did the requirement on HEIs to demonstrate the value delivered to the economy, in return for that funding. Governments sought to exert greater control over the activities of HEIs and established agencies and systems to promote external

audit/review, transparency and performance evaluation. These external forces have precipitated an existential crisis within HEIs, resulting in substantial change to the structure, management and governance of the institutions in an effort to ensure continued success or survival (Henkel, 2005; O’Byrne and Bond, 2014; Winter, 2009). While managerialism was a culture or ideology which came from outside higher education, it was adopted and implemented by the HEIs themselves in an attempt to address or cope with the new demands they were facing (Deem and Brehony, 2005). It is argued that it was the introduction of managerial culture that created the major cultural fault line in higher education (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Henkel, 2005; Silver, 2003).

While there were external economic and societal factors that precipitated many of the changes that have undermined the perceived culture of higher education in recent decades, it is also important to recognise the existence of internal forces, some of which pre-dated the external changes, that also serve to undermine the notion of a dominant macroculture in higher education. Principal among these is the fact that HEIs are frequently comprised of multiple academic disciplines and these disciplines have their own cultures. Academic staff in different academic disciplines can have beliefs and standards in relation to the various aspects of academic work such as teaching, assessment and research (Becher and Trowler, 1989; Braxton and Bayer, 1999; Dill, 2012; Silver, 2003) which vary significantly from those of colleagues in other discipline areas. In addition, the academic staff may identify with the elements of professional culture associated with their discipline (Becher and Trowler, 1989). For example, it has been observed that academic staff in engineering disciplines often view themselves as the peers of practising engineers and frequently value this association more highly than the association with their academic peers in other disciplines. This means that within most HEIs there are as many subcultures as there are academic disciplines. Dill, in referencing Clark, indicates that there are three tiers of culture within higher education, culture of the enterprise (i.e. organisational culture), culture of the discipline and culture of the academic profession (Dill, 2012). The existence of these different overlapping subcultures points to the complexity of HEIs. This is because there is no clear hierarchy defined such that an individual who is a member of two or more subcultures is clear as

to which demands her, or his, loyalty in the first instance. While it is often claimed that academic staff are firstly loyal to their scholarly discipline, followed by their academic unit and lastly to their institution, it has been shown that in different scenarios or contexts academic staff will prioritise different cultures (Silver, 2003).

The idea of a single higher education culture has been further undermined by the emergence of other professions within HEIs. While, in the past, managers and administrators were viewed by the academic staff as subordinate roles that existed to service or support the real work of the university, recent years have seen this change and now non-academic roles which are important in their own right are commonplace in HEIs (Whitchurch, 2008). This is not to say that members of academic staff do not continue to disregard or even disdain these roles and the individuals that occupy them (Deem, 2010; Kligyte and Barrie, 2014). However, the growing specialisation and professionalisation of these roles, as well as the power or authority that is increasingly vested in them, mean that the culture of academic work is less able to exert dominance across the institution as a whole.

An additional challenge to the notion of a dominant organisational culture in higher education comes from the great diversity of institution types and sizes that make up modern day higher education systems. Many modern HEIs were not established as traditional universities and consequently are quite different in terms of mission, focus, structure and operation. This means that the culture of these organisations, and particularly the culture of academic work, does not consist of the same elements as the traditional higher education culture (Lea and Simmons, 2012).

As mentioned previously, the traditional higher education culture originated in the developed world, specifically in the United Kingdom, western Europe and, latterly, in the United States. While many countries around the world have adopted some of the structures and traditions of western universities into their higher education systems, there is evidence that local political, societal and cultural norms have had the effect of modifying the culture of higher education institutions in these other jurisdictions (Marginson, 2011; Ramachandran et al., 2011). For example, research shows that in some

Asian cultures which value power distance, individual autonomy is not as valued as an element of academic culture (Marginson, 2011).

Higher education is not a monoculture and therefore a unitary perspective on the culture of higher education is not appropriate (McNay, 1995; Silver, 2003). Even in higher education institutions and systems where there is a strong adherence to the traditional culture of academic work, the reality on the ground is that there are multiple, often overlapping, cultures and that there is no single dominant macroculture. HEIs are characterised by complexity and goal ambiguity and are subject to a variety of external forces including political, financial, market/economic as well as significant challenges from within as different discipline areas and professional groups seek to promote their objectives with only passing regard for the interests of the institution (Dill, 2012; Silver, 2003).

The complexity of HEIs points to the need to use a pluralist perspective, which can accommodate the existence of interacting subcultures when investigating phenomena such as followership and leadership, which are constructed within, and are therefore heavily influenced by, those organisational cultures and subcultures.

Organisational environment in higher education institutions

It is important to remember that higher education institutions are not merely environments which contain and foster certain cultures and values. These institutions have a vital educational, economic and social role and in fulfilling that role they are required to successfully perform a variety of functions and activities such as delivering education programmes, conducting research and engaging with enterprise. In order to fulfil their mission, higher education institutions must be effective organisations capable of developing and implementing complex policies and strategies.

In looking at the nature of higher education institutions from an organisational effectiveness perspective, a number of studies have sought to describe and explain the features of these institutions. Cohen et al. (1972), described higher education institutions as organised anarchies and highlighted factors such as unclear or conflicting organisational goals and “fluid participation” by key members of the organisation as

defining characteristics of these anarchic organisations. Weick (1976) characterised higher education institutions as organisations which were loosely coupled. Loosely coupled organisations are made up of a number of distinct and independent units, each with their own priorities and goals which may or may not align with the goals of the organisation as a whole. As loosely coupled organisations, higher education institutions are less inclined or able to be rational or purposeful in pursuit of organisational goals and in the implementation of the organisational process required to achieve such goals (Lockwood and Davies, 1985). At the core of these descriptions are the perceived tensions between the interests of the institution as a whole and the interests of the (mainly academic) units and members of staff. Frequently, in the literature, these tensions are characterised as existing between the institutional leadership and the professionals, which generally refers to the members of academic staff (McNay, 1995; Lockwood and Davies, 1985; Bleiklie et al., 2015; Maassen and Stensaker, 2019). The tensions become apparent in where, and how, power and influence are exerted, and to what end, across the institution. For example, McNay (1995) highlights two organisational processes, namely, policy definition and control of implementation, and describes how these processes can be loose (i.e. influence and power lie mostly with the individual units and the members) or tight (i.e. influence and control lie mainly with the institutional leadership). Using these two processes, and the degree to which they are loose or tight, he describes four organisational models as follows: Collegium (i.e. loose policy definition and loose control of implementation), Bureaucracy (i.e. loose policy definition and tight control of implementation), Corporation (i.e. tight policy definition and tight control of implementation) and Enterprise (i.e. tight policy definition and loose control of implementation). Bleiklie et al. (2015) describe a similar model in which two organisational characteristics, namely, the degree to which power is centralised within the organisation, and whether social relationships are formalised or not, are used to define four “configurations of control”. These configurations of control effectively describe where or how power is exerted within the institution and are defined as follows: personalised informal power (i.e. high degree of centralised power combined with informal social relationships), soft bureaucracy (i.e. high degree of centralised power and formalisation of social relationships), shared governance (i.e.

power is decentralised and relationships are formalised), and loosely coupled (i.e. power is decentralised and social relationships are more informal). The model proposed by Bleikle et al. differs from that of McNay in that it does not seek to describe the institution but rather describes a landscape of different configurations. It is possible that one or more of these configurations may be present in a single institution. In fact, it is this co-existence of different configurations within a single institution that leads Maassen and Stensaker (2019) to describe some modern higher education institutions as de-coupled bureaucracies. In such institutions a rational, purposeful approach to leadership and management is evident and effective within the administrative units, while “professional norms and disciplinary dynamics” persist as controlling factors within, and among, academic units, a phenomenon described as horizontal de-coupling (Maassen and Stensaker, 2019).

This review of the literature suggests that the tensions between managerial approaches and academic values persist in modern higher education institutions. The implication of this is that it can be difficult to achieve institutional goals through the use of certain corporate or bureaucratic methods and consequently there is a “fragility of leadership power” in such settings (Bleiklie et al., 2015). It follows that approaches which are specifically suited to the setting of higher education institutions must be utilised in order to successfully achieve organisational objectives. These approaches must be mindful of the competing goals and interests as well as the micro-politics that exists within these organisations. Davies (1985) describes such an approach which consists of four phases and is characterised by a gradual development of the decisions and solutions through the various phases with particular emphasis on consensus building throughout.

The leadership process is key to the achievement of organisational goals and the success of the leadership process is dependent on active participation by followers in the process. The issues discussed above have a relevance and resonance for follower participation in the leadership process and the achievement of successful outcomes from that process, and for this reason are relevant in the context of this study.

3.5 Concluding Remarks on Literature Review

For most of its history, the scholarship of leadership has neglected followers and followership. While there have been attempts in recent years to address this shortcoming, many of the studies are merely follower-centric. Follower-centric studies continue to focus on the leader and leadership by examining how leaders view followers or how followers view leaders. To fully address the neglect of followership, it is necessary to focus on followers and followership. This requires the exploration of what followers believe about being a follower and how they enact followership as a consequence. The understanding gained from such followership studies has profound implications for the leadership process and organisational outcomes.

Critical leadership studies are approaches to the study of leadership which address or focus on “that which is underexplored or missing in the mainstream orthodoxy” (Collinson, 2011). Broadly speaking critical leadership studies view leadership as a phenomenon which is constructed via social and discursive processes in a specific context. Leadership studies have long relied on structured frameworks to represent leader traits, behavioural patterns, leader categorisations, etc. These prescriptive approaches have been combined with quantitative methodologies and together they promote an inflexible, reductive and positivist perspective on the leadership process. Critical leadership studies highlight the inadequacy of such approaches to explore the nuance and complexity of the leadership process. Furthermore due to their limitations, these approaches have the potential to generate misleading results or findings (Collinson, 2005; Ford and Harding, 2018). Qualitative and interpretivist approaches, which allow for the effective study of a leadership process which is multi-faceted, dynamic and heterogeneous, are favoured by critical leadership studies.

Leadership is problematised in the higher education literature and a dominant theme is that those in non-leadership positions believe that the approaches to leadership are not right. In light of the above discussion, one could counter that the approaches to followership are not right. As ever, the truth almost certainly lies in the space between these two extremes and any attempt to understand higher education leadership must

utilise an approach which considers the leadership process in a rounded and inclusive manner, allowing all aspects of the process, as well as the interactions between those aspects, to be considered. Investigating one element of the process in isolation or utilising a predefined framework or instrument will not yield the required insights. Instead, an approach is required which can examine aspects of the leadership process in higher education, such as non-leadership, non-followership and impact of organisational context, within a single framework. Therefore, a constructionist, and specifically a social constructionist, approach is favoured as it integrates all the levels of the self (i.e. individual, relational and group) and the organisational context within a single construct, and also provides a scheme for studying and understanding the exchange or interaction between the different levels (Burr, 2003).

This review of the literature highlights the importance of studying followership in the context of higher education institutions. Furthermore, the complexity and challenges identified in the higher education leadership process recommend the use of an approach which allows for a thorough investigation of followership and the leadership process. In the next chapter, I describe in detail the study and research methodology adopted to facilitate such a thorough investigation.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 Research Problem

This study investigated followership and the leadership process in higher education institutions. From the preceding discussion of the literature, it is appropriate to view leadership as a social process which involves individuals, each with separate identities, relating and interacting to achieve an agreed goal or outcome (i.e. the leadership outcome). Furthermore, it is argued that in order for a process to be truly considered to be leadership, there must be leaders (i.e. those trying to influence or motivate) and followers (i.e. those who are motivated or influenced). Shamir argues that any process which involves a group interacting to achieve a certain goal or outcome cannot be considered leadership unless this asymmetrical relationship between the influencer and the influenced exists (Shamir, 2007). Irrespective of whether a process allows for effective group work and results in the successful achievement of a goal, without the existence of leaders and followers it cannot be termed leadership, instead, it is, by definition, non-leadership (Shamir, 2007).

As outlined above, studies of the leadership process have, to date, privileged the role of the leader and focused almost exclusively on the traits, actions and perceptions of leaders. Consideration of the role of followers has been scant, and when it has been considered it is generally from the perspective of the leader. For example, contingency theory viewed followers as one of a number of contingencies which the leader needed to accommodate in order to be successful. Latterly, there has been a move to consider the role of followers more thoroughly and to afford them parity of esteem in the leadership process. This parity of esteem does not change the asymmetrical nature of the leader-follower relationship, rather it recognises that followers play a different, but no less important, role in the leadership process and in the achievement of successful leadership outcomes.

The issue of perspective in leadership research is significant. The literature contains significant numbers of studies which look at leadership from the perspective of leaders. Studies have asked leaders about leaders, they have asked followers about leaders, they have even asked leaders about followers. In each case these studies are leader-centric. There are almost no studies which study the leadership process from a follower-centric, and followership-centric, perspective, what Shamir calls “reversing the lens”. Effectively, this approach advocates asking followers how they perceive their role in the leadership process.

In the context of higher education institutions, the leadership process has been problematised by those working in the sector, and in the literature. In accepting that followers are essential to the leadership process, it follows that any issues or challenges that have been perceived with the leadership process in higher education may have as much to do with followers and followership as they do with leaders and leadership. To fully understand the nature of the leadership process in higher education, it is essential to understand how followers perceive their role within that process and how their perceptions impact upon their behaviours and actions as followers. Therefore, in this study I have examined followership and, by extension, leadership in higher education from the perspective of followers.

The study sought to determine the nature of followership in higher education by answering the following research question:

How is followership practised by academic staff in higher education institutions and what are the possible implications for leadership outcomes?

In seeking to answer this overarching question the following subordinate questions were addressed:

What are the beliefs, experiences, perceptions and expectations of academic staff, working in higher education institutions, of their role in the leadership process?

How do academic staff working in higher education institutions enact followership?

What do academic staff believe constitutes effective or ineffective followership and how may leaders help or hinder followers?

To what extent are the followers' beliefs and behaviours formed by the organisational context and cultures of the higher education institution?

What possible implications does the manner of followership have for the higher education institutions' achievement of leadership outcomes?

Institutional context, and the leadership process within that context, is an essential element in this study. Therefore, it was important that the study explored the leadership process in context and that differences in institutional context could be appropriately incorporated into the study findings.

At the core of the study is the investigation of the formation of follower beliefs and expectations within a specific organisational or social context. Constructivism or constructivist theory hypothesises that individuals construct their reality and this reality is formed through cognitive processes based on their experiences, perceptions, beliefs and actions. Constructivist research seeks to explore the constructs (i.e. beliefs, perceptions, actions and experiences) which the individual uses to form their reality and thus understand how the individual views or experiences a particular phenomenon.

One of the critiques of constructivist approaches is that they fail to adequately address the issue of the identity and agency of the self, versus the forces of society and socialisation. They fail to provide a clear explanation as to which of these forces is dominant and how they interact or influence each other (Burr, 2003). Berger and Luckmann (1991) describe the social creation of reality which accommodates both processes and avoids a self versus society dichotomy. They propose a cycle where the individual is introduced into society and experiences the socially constructed reality and forms his or her individual identity in that context. Later, the individual's identity and

their interactions with others within the social context help to preserve and reinforce the socially constructed reality, and as individual identities develop they can influence and change the group identity. Of particular relevance to this study is what Berger and Luckman refer to as the “reciprocal typification of habitualised actions”, a process they call institutionalisation (or the creation of institutions). According to Berger and Luckman, institutionalisation results in a determination of the types of actions and the types of people who are accepted or valued within the group. This process is inherently social and will occur naturally once there are two or more people involved, through the social interactions between individuals and groups. Weick describes sensemaking as the process through which individuals (and by extension, groups) understand, categorise and internalise experiences (Weick, 1995). The process of sensemaking is retrospective, social and ongoing, and reflective of the specific environment in which it takes place. Weick argues that the socially created world, that begins with the identity the individual has constructed and is further developed through social interaction with group members, gives rise to the real constraints on actions, ideas and traits as defined by the institution.

Social constructionism is a theoretical framework which allows for the exploration of the formation of personal beliefs, perceptions and experiences in a specific social or institutional context (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985). Consequently, it aligns well with the goals of the current study and this theoretical framework has successfully been applied to the study of leadership and followership in previous studies (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Ontological position

From the constructionist viewpoint, leadership and followership are defined by how they are perceived or experienced in a specific context by individuals and groups. This approach recognises that there are real individuals engaged in leadership and followership through their behaviours and actions and there are tangible outcomes from the leadership process. However, it is difficult or impossible to directly observe or study aspects of this objective reality. While it may be possible to observe a leader’s action towards a follower it is not possible to directly observe how the follower interprets this action. Instead, it is necessary to investigate the subject through the lens

of the lived experience of the individuals, groups and organisations involved. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to constructed realities to describe the subjective meanings, beliefs and values that are derived from tangible phenomena. Therefore, in adopting the constructionist view of followership, this study does not favour a relativist or realist ontology and instead recognises that both are valid, and it is not necessary to choose one over the other. The ontological position is closer to critical realism or what Hammersley (1992) refers to as subtle realism which recognises that research investigates objective and knowable phenomena but also recognises that we do not have the means to access or directly observe these phenomena.

This philosophical approach helps to guard against the over-confidence inherent in the realist position. By recognising that we are only ever capable of observing through the lenses of constructed realities, we know not to ascribe too much authority or validity to these observations. At the same time, we can avoid the extreme relativist view which determines that all observations are equally valid because there is no objective reality. From this ontological position, the researcher must recognise that her or his study will not result in a reproduction of the objective reality but rather will yield a representation (from the perspective of the researcher) of that reality. In effect, the best that can be hoped for, from any study, is a subjective representation (on the part of the researcher) of a subjective representation (on the part of the study participants) of the objective reality. It follows that the researcher must have the self-knowledge and humility to accept the inherent limitations of the study and of themselves as a researcher. This in turn highlights the need to give careful consideration to factors such as quality, ethics and reflexivity in the design and conduct of the research study.

Epistemological approach

In choosing a constructionist or social constructionist paradigm, it follows that the epistemological position is social constructionist. This viewpoint tends towards the subjective end of the spectrum in believing that knowledge or concepts are constructed rather than directly observed or discovered. However, it does not go as far as naïve subjectivism because it accepts that the constructed knowledge corresponds to, or represents, an objective reality (Andrews, 2012). Furthermore, constructionist

approaches aim to understand a person's beliefs, values and actions from their own perspective and for this reason are closer to interpretivism than to positivism (Denicolo et al., 2016).

Leadership research has generally had a strong reliance on quantitative data and methodologies largely based on survey techniques focusing on individual perspectives and relying on broad labels and concepts (Bryman, 2004; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Specific individual perspectives and reductionist labels such as leader and follower, are not compatible with the leadership process approach and a social constructionist viewpoint (Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The focus needs to be on leading and following behaviours, and therefore methodologies are required which allow these behaviours to be studied (Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012). To study the complexity of the leadership process and, in particular, factors such as behaviours which constitute following or non-following, appropriate methodologies should be utilised (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). This study falls into the category of studies which Lincoln and Guba refer to as 'human-as-instrument' studies, and therefore qualitative methods are preferable because the methodologies are "extensions of normal human activities" such as reading, listening and speaking (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In adopting a social constructionist paradigm to study followership and the leadership process from a follower-centric viewpoint one requires a methodology, and resultant data, which allows elements of beliefs, expectations and behaviours, as well as important contexts, to be observed and explored. Qualitative approaches are found to be suitable for studies such as this (Buchanan and Bryman, 2007; Burr, 2003; Carsten et al., 2010).

The preceding discussion indicates that in developing a research study to answer the research question outlined above, it is critical that an approach is chosen which is:

- capable of exploring complex social phenomena;
- tailored to investigating those phenomena within specific organisational and/or social contexts;
- compatible with a social constructionist epistemology;
- appropriate for working with qualitative data.

In the following section, I describe the research study which was designed to address these requirements.

4.2 Research Study Design

The current study investigates the leadership process in higher education institutions from a follower perspective by asking the question:

How is followership practised by academic staff in higher education institutions and what are the possible implications for leadership outcomes?

In the previous section, I outlined four conditions which must be met by the approach and design chosen for this research study. In considering the research question and related conditions, I concluded that a case study was a suitable approach. Yin (1995), in discussing the reasons for choosing the case study approach for a research project, says that this approach would be chosen if the researcher wanted to explore in depth a real-life phenomenon, where an understanding of that phenomenon required the consideration of important elements of the context. Stake (1995) suggests that case study, by definition, concentrates on experiential knowledge as well as the influence of its social, and other, contexts. The suitability of the case study approach to the current research study is probably best encapsulated by Harrison et al (2017) as follows:

“Case study research has grown in sophistication and is viewed as a valid form of enquiry to explore a broad scope of complex issues, particularly when human behaviour and social interactions are central to understanding topics of interest.”

In practice, the term *case study research* encompasses a wide variety of methods and approaches. This broad scope is considered to be both a strength because it facilitates a wide variety of study types and study subjects, and a weakness, for example, some have criticised case studies for lacking rigour or precision (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2009). This flexibility does mean that case study research is compatible with a variety of epistemologies and data types. While Yin (2009) proposes that case studies can utilise

qualitative data, quantitative data or combinations of both data types, most authors consider the case study as primarily an approach that utilises qualitative data (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017; Stake, 1995). Brown discusses the three prominent case study frameworks as presented by Merriam, Stake and Yin from an epistemological viewpoint and categorises Yin's framework as positivist while Merriam's and Stake's are aligned with a constructivist or constructionist stance (Brown, 2008). Therefore, the case study approach is well suited to utilising qualitative data to investigate complex phenomena while also encompassing the particular context in which the phenomenon occurs. In addition, this approach is in accordance with a social constructionist epistemology.

There is no single case study method. In fact, some have argued that the case study approach more correctly describes a methodology (i.e. a particular position or stance on the part of the researcher which governs how the researcher conducts and views the study) rather than a method (i.e. the specific research tools and techniques utilised in the study) (Harrison et al., 2017). In fact, this lack of a detailed and rigorous framework has been cited as a particular shortcoming of the case study approach (Yin, 2009). As discussed above, a number of authors have proposed frameworks for conducting a case study, and while these differ quite significantly from each other, there is sufficient commonality with respect to the necessary components of a successful case study (Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). These common elements can be summarised as follows:

- The Case;
- The Context;
- Type of Case Study;
- Selection of Cases;
- Identifying Data Sources;
- Data Collection;
- Data Analysis;
- Quality and Ethics.

As discussed below, these elements were addressed in the design of a case study approach suitable for exploring the leadership process in higher education institutions from the perspective of followers.

The case

In designing a case study, perhaps the most fundamental step is to define what will constitute a case in the context of that study. The case is defined as the unit of study and as such it is either the phenomenon which we wish to research, or it is a bounded system which encompasses that phenomenon (Yin, 2009). There are pitfalls which must be avoided when choosing the case for a study and principal among these is a failure to identify the boundaries of the case and therefore attempt a study which is too broad to the point of being impractical (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). Given the aims of this study and the research questions it was seeking to answer, I concluded that the case for this study should be the leadership process in higher education institutions. To avoid the pitfalls of attempting to study a case without clear boundaries, I chose not to study the leadership process in its entirety or generality across the institution, but rather, in each institution, I chose to study a specific leadership process which had clear boundaries in terms of scope and timeframe. In choosing this single leadership process, I took care to ensure that the process had as its scope the institution as a whole. This was to avoid the danger of studying a process that was too restrictive and not representative of the leadership process in the institution generally.

The context

This case study was carried out within the context of higher education institutions (HEIs). This context can be viewed as having a number of layers (Figure 5) starting with the individual social and organisational context of the particular institutions in which the study was carried out. The next layer in this hierarchy relates to the ongoing binary divide in Irish higher education as discussed in Chapter 2, the groups of institutions on either side of this binary divide may encompass distinct contextual features. Then there is the shared context of the complete group of institutions within the Irish higher education system and finally there are the aspects of context that are common to HEIs generally. It is important to appreciate these aspects of the study context in order that

they can be taken into consideration when selecting the specific cases to study and, perhaps more importantly, when analysing and interpreting the results of the study.

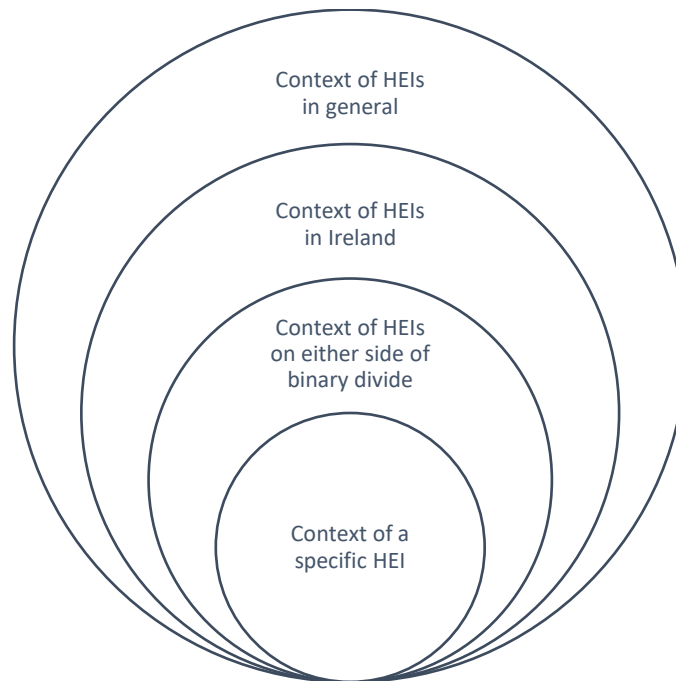


Figure 5: Context for research study

The type of case study

Another important element of the case study design is the determination of what type of case study it will be. Different authors provide different taxonomies of the types of case studies that may be pursued. These taxonomies generally categorise case studies according to two criteria, the aim or focus of the study, and the number, and structure, of the cases studied. For example, Yin (2009) describes the aim or focus of a case study as either descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, illustrative or evaluative, and also categorises studies as either single-case or multi-case in nature. In designing a case study, the type or structure has a significant impact on how the phenomenon is studied, on the cases chosen, the nature of the study's findings and even the cost of the study in terms of time and effort. The focus of this case study is to explore and understand followership and the leadership process from the perspective of followers and as such it most closely aligns with Yin's exploratory category or Stake's (1995) instrumental

category. The choice of case study structure, i.e. single-case or multi-case, was very much influenced by the issue of context. Considering the multi-layered context described above, it follows that a single-case study could, in effect, only explore in-depth, the leadership of HEIs on one side of the binary divide of the Irish higher education system and this would limit the generalisability of the study. This therefore pointed to a multi-case design.

Selection of cases

Having chosen a multi-case design, the next issue that needed to be addressed was the choice of the specific cases that would make up the case study. This choice involved a trade-off between the practicality or tractability of the study and the generalisability of the study's findings. In choosing the number of cases to study and selecting the specific institutions, a number of factors were considered. Firstly, the cases chosen had to result in a study that was practical, i.e. that it was logistically possible to carry out the study. For this reason, the choice of cases was confined to HEIs within Ireland. The second factor was suitability. Not all institutions were suitable candidates for the study. I discuss below the complications of conducting the research within my own institution which precluded its use as a case. In addition, given that the focus of the study was not the institution but a leadership process within the institution, it was necessary to choose as cases institutions which had relatively recently completed such a leadership process. Finally, the nature of the proposed study, i.e. exploring followership and the leadership process from the perspective of followers, using a social constructionist lens, necessitated an in-depth study of each case involving high levels of interaction and immersion with the subject (Stake, 2005). In order for such a study to be tractable, in terms of available time and resources, it was necessary to choose a small number of cases which could be studied in depth. Having considered all the relevant factors, I chose a case study consisting of two cases, one from either side of the binary divide in the Irish higher education system.

In order to respect the requests for confidentiality and anonymity from individuals and institutions, the real names of the institutions are not used. For the purpose of this study they are referred to as the Ceres Institute and the Minerva University. The Ceres

Institute, within the Institute of Technology sector, has a broad provision in a range of disciplines and at all levels up to and including PhD. The Minerva University, within the traditional university sector, is a research-intensive university with in excess of twenty thousand enrolled students. These institutions were chosen primarily because each had recently completed an institution-wide intensive leadership process to develop a strategy. It was these leadership processes that were the focus of the study.

Identification of data sources

In considering the sources of data for this study, it is useful, in the first instance, to clarify what is meant by a data source. Frequently, the term data source is used to describe the combination of a particular data collection method applied to a particular cohort of participants. For example, a questionnaire administered to a particular set of participants would be considered one data source and a set of interviews conducted with the same set of participants would be considered a separate data source. It can be argued however that it is the participants that are the source of the data and that the method is merely a tool for extracting or gathering that data. This is the convention, i.e. considering the discrete source of the data as opposed to the combination of source and method, that I have adopted when discussing data sources below. The related data collection methods are discussed in detail in the next section.

Generally, case studies are characterised by multiple data sources in order to allow a variety of viewpoints on the subject of the study (Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2009). However, multiple data sources are not essential and may not be possible if the phenomenon being studied is not viewable from multiple perspectives. As discussed above, this study falls into the category of studies which Lincoln and Guba refer to as ‘human-as-instrument’ studies, which call for in-depth interactive data collection methods which are “extensions of normal human activities” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The primary aim of this study is to explore followership and the leadership process from the perspective of followers. In service of this primary aim, the study must also seek to describe the leadership process as objectively as is possible. Also, the data sources and/or approach to data collection, and the subsequent data analysis process, must, to

a significant degree, focus on accessing and illustrating the followers' perspectives. Given the nature of the study as described above, the most important sources of data are the individuals in both institutions who were active participants in the leadership processes under study. The primary, and perhaps only, source of followers' perspectives are the followers who have been active participants in the processes. Appropriate methods, which are discussed in Section 4.3, were utilised to elicit and explore those perspectives. Individuals who occupied leadership roles in the leadership processes being studied are also an important source of data for this study. Firstly, these individuals can provide facts and opinions about the leadership process which is important to addressing the secondary aim of the study, i.e. to gain an understanding of the leadership process and the outcomes of the process. Secondly, although the leaders cannot provide any significant insight into the followers' perspective of the leadership process, they can give their perspective of the followers and their actions in the context of the process. Relevant process documentation may also be a useful data source as it may provide information about the structure and operation of the leadership processes, for example it may identify the different stages in the process. Section 4.3 below describes the methods used for data collection in detail and also discusses the approach taken to selecting an appropriate sample of participants.

Research design concluding remarks

In this section, I have explained the overall design of the research study as well as the rationale for the decisions taken in respect of various elements of the design. The resultant research design is shown in Figure 6. The remaining elements of the research study are discussed in the following sections. Section 4.3 describes the methods used for data collection in detail. Section 4.4 discusses the data analysis framework. In Section 4.5, I present the approach to ensuring the quality of the research, and Section 4.6 outlines the steps taken to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner.

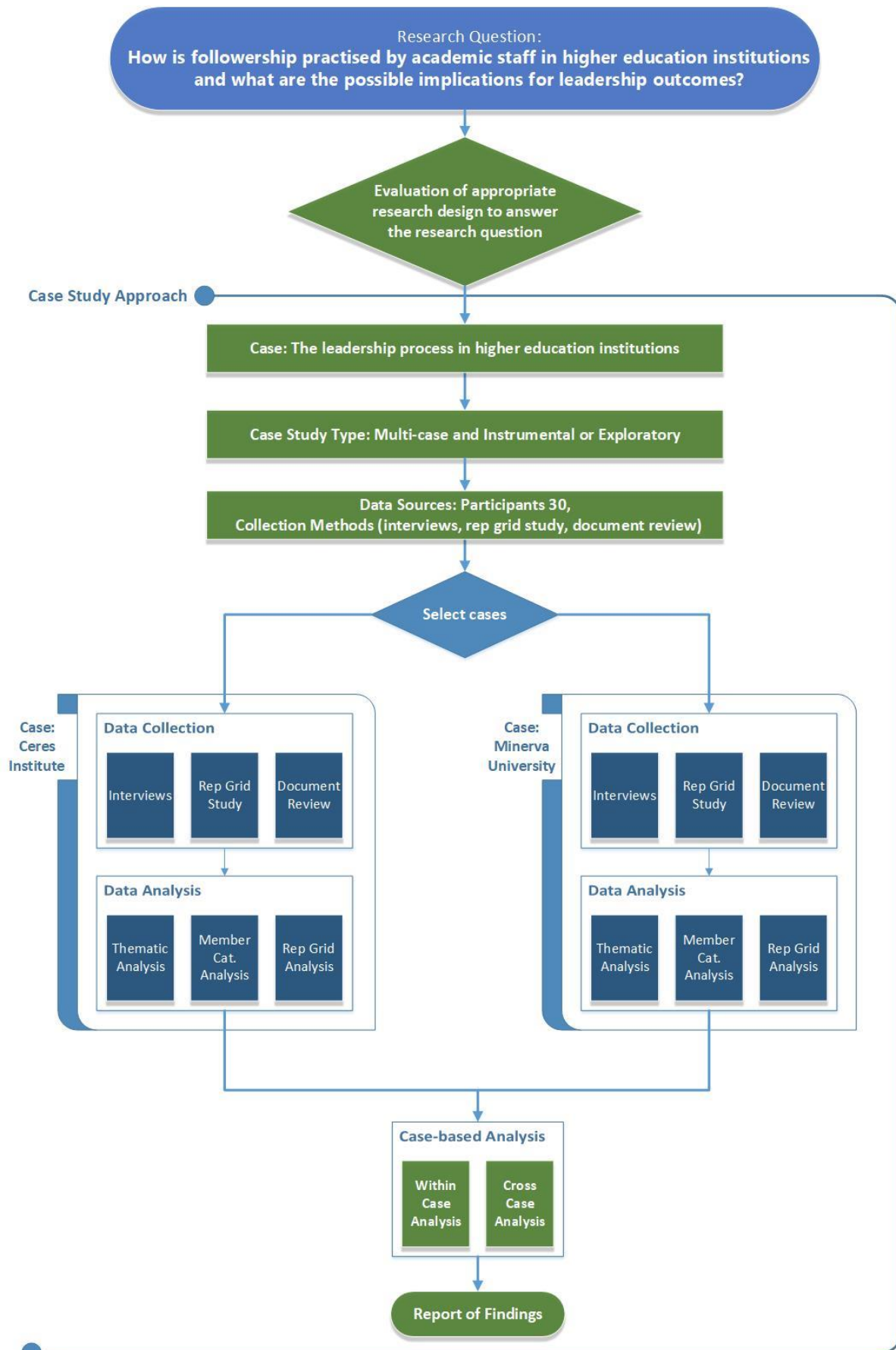


Figure 6: Research Study Design

4.3 Data collection

In this section, I describe in detail the data collection methods used for this study. I discuss the approach to selection of participants before addressing each of the data collection methods used. I explain the rationale for choosing each method with a particular focus on its suitability for this study and present a detailed description of the steps undertaken to implement each method.

Selection of study participants

Research samples in qualitative studies are selected using different criteria to those used in selecting research samples for quantitative studies. Firstly, qualitative studies are not seeking to produce statistically significant findings. Furthermore, far from ensuring objectivity, many qualitative approaches embrace the inevitability, and even the value, of researcher subjectivity. The researcher's interpretive lens is essential to many studies as is the need for in-depth interaction with the study participants. Those who do not fully understand, or trust, the qualitative approach can question both the size and nature of samples in such studies and may seek comfort in applying quasi-quantitative criteria in choosing samples for qualitative studies. In particular, this is seen with respect to sample size, which is a prevalent issue among scholars and researchers alike (Mason, 2010).

Generally, it is accepted that sample sizes in qualitative research are smaller than those in quantitative research. However, the question of what constitutes an acceptable sample size in a qualitative study is a vexed one (Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010). The main criterion used in quantitative studies to determine sample size, i.e. choosing a sufficiently large sample size to represent the population being studied and thereby ensure that the findings are valid for the population as a whole, does not have a direct analogue in qualitative studies. Patton (2002) proposed the concept of a purposeful sample, which simply says that a sample is selected in accordance with the aims of the study. Allied to this is the notion of a good informant. Patton emphasises that it is not just the number of participants in a study but also the nature of those participants that is an important determinant of the quality of the study. From this perspective, it would

be better to have a smaller sample made up of different participant profiles than have a larger sample with very similar participant types.

In choosing a purposeful sample for this study the following factors were considered:

- The nature of the participants (i.e. were they good informants)
- The profile of the participants (i.e. seniority, gender, discipline area)
- The number of participants

A good informant is one who has the necessary experience and knowledge to provide the researcher with the data required to successfully conduct the study. In seeking to satisfy this criterion in respect of this study, the individual participants chosen were members of the staff of the two higher education institutions who were participants in the leadership processes being studied. The participants were drawn from two broad categories of staff, namely, members of staff who had non-leadership roles in the leadership process (i.e. followers), and institutional leaders. In choosing individual participants who had non-leadership roles, the focus was on academic staff members, because it is among academic staff that the unique aspects of the culture of higher education institutions, e.g. autonomy, academic freedom and collegiality, are highly valued, with the resultant implications for approaches to management and leadership. While there are other professionals working in higher education, they tend to adhere more closely to standard management structures and approaches (Whitchurch, 2008). The institutional leaders chosen as participants not only had formal leadership positions within the institution, but also had a meaningful leadership role in the specific process being studied.

In adopting a purposeful sampling strategy, the goal was to avoid the shortcomings or pitfalls of what is referred to as convenience sampling whereby convenience factors such as access and cost determine the choice of participants (Patton, 2002). Convenience sampling may lead to an appropriate sample in circumstances where the population to be studied is entirely homogeneous, but it is more likely to result in a sample which does not adequately represent the population. The random nature of convenience sampling can also lead to the inadvertent inclusion of significant outliers with the

potential that the findings may be impacted (Etikan et al., 2016). In respect of the study of leadership and followership, it has been shown that certain elements, which may characterise a particular religious, ethnic or national cohort, can result in different approaches to leadership and followership. For example, cultural factors such as power distance have been shown to have an impact on an individual's approach to followership (Blair and Bligh, 2018). Therefore, in choosing the sample for this study it was essential that a purposeful, rather than convenience, sampling strategy was utilised. The goal of this study was to explore followership in broad terms and to establish baseline or core elements that were evident across the population. In keeping with this goal, I adopted typical case sampling which is aimed at "illustrating or highlighting what is typical, normal or average" (Gaus, 2017; Patton, 2002). Key to this approach is an understanding of the profile of the population which is established by a demographic analysis. In carrying out this analysis it was determined that the population of academic staff in both institutions was, as discussed in Chapter 2 above, broadly homogenous with respect to religious affiliation, ethnic background or nationality. This analysis also highlighted elements or factors which pointed to significant or interesting variations within the population. These included gender, seniority and academic discipline. I concluded that it would be illustrative if the findings could be explored in the context of these variations and for this reason I included these factors as selection criteria in my sampling strategy, effectively utilising stratified purposeful sampling (Suri, 2011; Patton, 2002).

In choosing the profile of participants, I actively sought to achieve a balance in terms of gender, role and discipline area. For the purposes of this study, I identified two broad discipline areas, i.e. Business-Humanities and Science-Engineering, with the aim that there would be an equal number of participants from each discipline among the participants in the individual institutions and by extension across the study as a whole. In addition, I sought to achieve a gender balance within each discipline area, in each institution and across the entire study. In choosing members of academic staff, those in formal management/leadership roles within the institution, e.g. academic Heads of Schools, were not precluded as long as they had predominantly participated in the leadership process in the role of follower. However, for the most part the participants

in this category were members of academic staff who carry the normal academic workload and duties common to their institution. I ensured that these participants included different academic profiles e.g. professor, subject head, senior lecturer, junior lecturer, etc. As indicated above in Chapter 2, the profile of academic staff working in Irish higher education institutions is quite homogeneous in terms of other demographic factors such as ethnicity, nationality or religious affiliation. For this reason, these factors were not taken into account when selecting study participants. The issue of union membership was not considered significant in the choice of study participants because in the Institute of Technology sector union membership is very high (i.e. close to 100%) while in the traditional universities, as outlined in Chapter 2, there is a federation rather than a union and membership of this federation is quite low. This means that within institutions (and therefore within the individual cases studied), union or federation membership is not a significant factor because all participants within that institution are likely to orient towards trade union representation and membership in a similar manner.

Finally, with respect to the number of individual participants, the goal was to choose a sample size which would allow the study to achieve its aims. Various authors and studies have sought to propose a guide to sample sizes for qualitative studies. For example, Creswell (2007) suggests a norm of twenty to thirty and other studies have suggested sample sizes as low as six and as high as sixty (Guest et al., 2006). In a broad study, Mason (2010) established that the average sample size for qualitative studies in PhD theses was 31 participants.

It is proposed that the achievement of saturation ensures that a sample size is appropriate. Saturation reflects the situation where the researcher is sure that the data contain all the information necessary to answer the research question (Lowe et al., 2018). However, the concept and application of saturation are contested, and it has been argued that it is not a panacea for the issue of sample size (Mason, 2010). For example, the skill and experience of the researcher can significantly influence the point at which saturation is detected and an experienced researcher may glean more information from

a small sample size than an inexperienced researcher may get from a much larger sample (Mason, 2010; Patton, 2002).

One further factor that must be accommodated when considering sample size and its impact on the achievement of saturation is that the sample size required to achieve saturation can vary significantly depending on the nature of the study (e.g. saturation happens sooner with in-depth studies of a single subject), the nature of the environment or context (e.g. saturation will require more data if the study involves participants from a number of diverse organisations than if all participants came from the same organisation), the number of data collection methodologies used and the experience of the researcher as discussed above (Guest et al., 2006). The current study is an in-depth study of a single phenomenon and all of the participants come from two fairly homogeneous higher education institutions. In addition, multiple data collection methods are used. This would point to the achievement of saturation with a smaller than average sample size.

Bearing in mind the norms in terms of sample size for qualitative studies, discussed earlier, and considering two studies in the same area which both involved a heterogeneous group of participants and achieved saturation, according to the study authors, with twenty-one and twenty-five interviews respectively (Bradley-Cole, 2014; Carsten et al., 2010), I chose a sample size of thirty participants for this study. Table 1 shows an overview of the study participants in terms of category, gender, academic discipline and institution. The aim was, as far as practicable, to have equal numbers and profiles of participants in each institution. One of the participants, a member of academic staff at Minerva University, subsequently withdrew from the study due to pressure of work. Due to the relative sizes of the leadership teams directly engaged with the specific leadership processes being studied in each institution, six of the participants in the institutional leader category were from the Minerva University and four were from the Ceres Institute.

Suitable participants were identified via consultation with personal contacts in both institutions. Once participants were identified, they were invited via email to participate

in the study and received a detailed briefing document. This briefing document, which is described in further detail in Section 4.6, provided all the necessary information that a potential participant would require in order to agree to participate and give informed consent. A version of the briefing document was developed for each of the two categories of participant, i.e. members of academic staff (see Appendix A1) and institutional leaders (see Appendix A2). Subsequently, the participants completed the informed consent process as described in Section 4.6 below. Once the participants had been identified and recruited, the next stage was to conduct the research interviews.

| | Pseudonym | Category | Gender | Discipline | Inst |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------------|--------|------------|------|
| Academic Staff | | | | | |
| 1 | Carmel | Academic Staff | F | BH | MU |
| 2 | Deborah | Academic Staff | F | BH | CI |
| 3 | Grace | Academic Staff | F | BH | CI |
| 4 | Hannah | Academic Staff | F | BH | CI |
| 5 | Jane | Academic Staff | F | BH | MU |
| 6 | Anna | Academic Staff | F | ES | CI |
| 7 | Eve | Academic Staff | F | ES | CI |
| 8 | Helen | Academic Staff | F | ES | MU |
| 9 | Julia | Academic Staff | F | ES | CI |
| 10 | Sheila | Academic Staff | F | ES | MU |
| 11 | James | Academic Staff | M | BH | MU |
| 12 | Martin | Academic Staff | M | BH | MU |
| 13 | Patrick | Academic Staff | M | BH | MU |
| 14 | Simon | Academic Staff | M | BH | CI |
| 15 | Joseph | Academic Staff | M | ES | CI |
| 16 | Kevin | Academic Staff | M | ES | MU |
| 17 | Peter | Academic Staff | M | ES | CI |
| 18 | Philip | Academic Staff | M | ES | MU |
| 19 | Thomas | Academic Staff | M | ES | CI |
| 20 | Withdrew | Academic Staff | M | BH | MU |
| Institutional Leaders | | | | | |
| 1 | Joan | Leader | F | | MU |
| 2 | Sharon | Leader | F | | MU |
| 3 | Brian | Leader | M | | MU |
| 4 | Daniel | Leader | M | | MU |
| 5 | Luke | Leader | M | | CI |
| 6 | Mark | Leader | M | | CI |
| 7 | Matthew | Leader | M | | CI |
| 8 | Maurice | Leader | M | | MU |
| 9 | Paul | Leader | M | | CI |
| 10 | Robin | Leader | M | | MU |

Table 1: Overview of study participants

Interviews with participants

In the context of qualitative research, interviews represent an effective and flexible method for data collection. Interviews support the collection of a broad variety of data types, from objective factual information through to deeply subjective personal experiences and emotions. Therefore, interviews are compatible with a range of research approaches and designs. Stake, as referenced by Harrison et al. (2017), indicates that case studies frequently necessitate a level of interaction and interpretation that only direct observations and interviews will facilitate and hence these should be the dominant approaches to data collection. In-depth participant interviews were chosen as the main data collection method for this study because they allowed for the collection of information about the respective leadership processes as well as data relating to the participants' beliefs and experiences.

The study was carried out via largely standardised, semi-structured, interviews. The goal of the interviews was to explore the participants' experiences and perceptions of followership and the leadership process in their institution. The interview protocol that was used was based on the protocol used by Carsten et al (2010) but was adapted to meet the specific goals of this study.

At the beginning of each interview, the purpose and nature of the study and the interview were explained. The participants were told that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. At this stage, the informed consent process was completed and the interview commenced. Permission was sought to make an audio recording of the interview. During the interviews I kept a written record of any relevant observations and/or clarifications, and these were subsequently recorded, in the NVivo software, as integrated annotations to the interview transcripts (see Appendix D7).

The interviews were recorded and imported into the NVivo software where a full text transcript of each interview was created such that the audio recording and the transcript were synchronised. This facilitated the simultaneous analysis of the text and the audio of the interview, thus ensuring that features such as pauses, tone of voice, etc were

included in the analysis. The analysis of the interview data is described in detail in the next section.

A standardised interview schema was used in the conduct of these interviews to ensure that data relating to each research question was gathered from each participant. Therefore, for the most part, the interviews were standardised, meaning that similar questions were put to each participant, but there were individual variations driven by participant answers and follow-up questions. As there were two broad categories of participants, i.e. institutional leaders and followers, and different data was required from participants in each of the categories, two data collection schemas were used. In particular, the interview schema used for members of academic staff (see Appendix C1) had to facilitate the inclusion of the Repertory Grid study as well as focusing on the participants' perceptions and experiences of followership. The interview schema for institutional leaders (see Appendix C2) was more focused on the leadership process and its outcomes.

The interviews with followers were designed to collect two main categories of data. Firstly, data on the leadership process in which they had participated, in particular, their perceptions of the process and its outcomes as well as their role in, and experiences of, the process. Secondly, the interviews were designed to collect data relating to their perceptions of the role of follower in the context of the leadership process, and more generally. When interviewing followers, to avoid the biases which are associated with the term follower, the interview protocol avoided the use of the term follower and instead discussed the role of the non-leader in the leadership process. Towards the end of the interview, the term follower is introduced and the subject's feelings in relation to this term are discussed. The repertory grid study was incorporated as part of the interviews with followers and this is described in detail below.

The interviews with institutional leaders were designed to gather three types of information. Firstly, they elicited practical and operational details about the leadership process and its implementation. Secondly, data was collected regarding the leaders' perceptions of the leadership process and their perception of the followers' engagement

with the process. Finally, the interviews collected data relating to the leaders' perceptions of followers and followership in general.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the participants were sent a copy and they were given the opportunity to make observations or provide clarifications.

An important element of this type of study is that it incorporates a high level of interaction with participants, preferably within the actual context of the phenomenon being studied. In total, twenty-nine participants were interviewed (one participant in the follower category decided to withdraw from the study due to work pressures) and the interviews lasted between approximately forty-five minutes and one hour and fifteen minutes, with an average duration across all interviews of just over one hour. All the interviews were conducted on-site in the respective higher education institutions, often in the participants' offices or departments. In total, there were over thirty hours of interviews, which required visiting the institutions involved on numerous occasions.

Repertory Grid study with members of academic staff

The repertory grid technique was developed by George Kelly, one of the fathers of constructivist and social constructionist approaches (Denicolo et al., 2016; Klapper, 2011). The technique was specifically developed to facilitate the investigation, from a constructivist or constructionist stance, of personal meaning and constructs in respect of a specific subject or topic. This technique was chosen for this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, in keeping with the broad guidelines for case study research, it provided an additional data set. Furthermore, the repertory grid technique, while it is a conversational approach, is designed to elicit a very different type of data, in a very different way, from standard qualitative interview techniques. The approach is structured such that it guides the participant to explore, in a rigorous and in-depth manner, their particular constructs of the topic of interest. In addition, the technique in general, and specifically the manner of its use in this study, encourages the participants to use episodic rather than semantic memory. It has been suggested that episodic memory is better able, than semantic memory, to access our specific cognitive schema, beliefs and constructs (Shondrick and Lord, 2010). Standard interviews tend to

draw more on semantic memory which means that the information provided is filtered through a participant's semantic lens. By combining standard interviews and a repertory grid study, I aimed to get a richer and broader data set. As the study was focused on the followers' perceptions, the repertory grid study was confined to the participants in the follower category.

A repertory grid study is designed to explore a single subject, referred to in the relevant literature as the topic of the grid. The topic for this repertory grid study was the members of academic staff and their participation in, and impact on, the strategy process. The repertory grid consists of elements, which are people or events that represent the scope of the topic, and constructs which are labels that are used to describe the elements. The constructs can be characteristics, behaviours or any other words or concepts that can be used to describe the elements. For this study, the elements were specific instances of different types of follower e.g. followers who made a positive contribution, followers who made a negative contribution, or those who made a neutral contribution. The repertory grid technique is quite flexible and allows elements to be supplied by the researcher, by the participant or a mixture of both. For this study, a mixed approach was adopted. Descriptive labels were provided of different groups or types of followers as follows:

- Group G – staff who through their contribution progressed or improved the strategy process
- Group N – staff who through their contribution had a neutral impact on the strategy process
- Group P – staff who through their contribution hindered or weakened the strategy process

In advance of the interview, the relevant participants were sent a worksheet (see Appendix B₁ for a sample of this worksheet) and asked to provide two specific instances of each type of follower. In addition to these six elements which represented real people known to the participants, the grid also contained two further elements representing the hypothetical ideal and worst followers, as perceived by the participant.

At the core of the technique is the elicitation of the participant's constructs. Therefore, it follows that constructs are generally provided by the participant. It is possible to include some researcher-supplied constructs in the grid. This allows for more meaningful analysis between and across the grids from groups of participants. In this study, two constructs were included in the grid which represented the two dimensions of Robert Kelley's (Kelley, 1988) model of followership behaviours i.e. independent-dependent thinker and active-passive orientation. A sample of the repertory grid used for this study is included in Appendix B2.

A structured, conversation-based approach was used to develop or elicit a repertory grid for each participant in the follower category. Firstly, the preparation exercise was reviewed to ensure that they had identified specific, real, people to represent each of the elements in their grid. Then, using what is called the triadic method, participants were asked to consider the elements in groups of three and were asked to think of those specific individuals, in the context of the study, and, if possible, to provide a label or description that described two of the individuals but not the third. To help the participants focus on the study context, a prompt card was provided and kept visible at all times during the elicitation. The prompt card contained the following text:

*Explore behaviours or traits exhibited by members of academic staff that
contributed to the strategy process*

Once the participant had identified an appropriate label or description, they were invited to write it into the grid as a construct. This construct is referred to as the similarity pole and these are written in the far left-hand column of the grid. Participants were then asked to provide a label or description which represented the opposite of the construct they had just provided. For example, if the original construct provided was helpful, then the participant might suggest unhelpful as the opposite description. This opposite description represents the difference pole and it is written in the far right-hand column of the grid. The difference pole description must be whatever the participant thinks is appropriate and does not need to be the logical or dictionary opposite of the term used at the similarity pole.

As constructs are elicited in the manner described above, they can be explored further using a technique called laddering (Denicolo et al., 2016; Marsden and Littler, 2000). Laddering upwards seeks to associate the construct with a higher order category or belief. For example, a participant could be asked why the construct supplied was significant. The process of laddering downwards is concerned with getting clarity about the meaning of a construct. For example, a participant could be asked for examples of the specific behaviours associated with a construct. Once all possible constructs have been elicited using a group of three elements, a different group is chosen. This process continues until no new constructs are emerging.

When all constructs had been elicited, the participants were then asked to use the following Likert scale to provide a rating for each element, including the hypothetical ideal and worst elements, in respect of each construct:

| Score | Meaning |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | Matches the similarity pole description mostly or perfectly |
| 2 | Generally matches the similarity pole description better than the difference pole description |
| 3 | Is no more like the similarity pole description than the difference pole description |
| 4 | Generally matches the difference pole description better than the similarity pole description |
| 5 | Matches the difference pole description mostly or perfectly |

They were also asked to rate each element in respect of the supplied constructs i.e. independent thinker versus dependent thinker and active versus passive. It is important to note that these ratings are ordinal in nature rather than quantitative. A repertory grid can be developed without such ratings and instead have ticks to indicate whether an element exhibits a construct or not. These ordinal ratings are used to provide more nuance than simple check marks, but their ordinal nature means that you cannot make assumptions about relativities or distances between the ratings e.g. a rating of 4 does not necessarily equate to twice a rating of 2 (Pope and Denicolo, 1993). This means that

they cannot not be utilised for any form of statistical analysis. Finally, participants were asked to indicate, in respect of each construct, which pole represented the positive pole in the context of the study, i.e. which pole would better describe a follower who was contributing positively to the strategy process. A sample of a completed grid, following the elicitation process described above, is shown in Appendix B3.

The repertory grid elicitation process was integrated into the interview process. This was done mainly for logistical reasons and for the convenience of the participants. The data collection schema in Appendix C1 indicates how this was implemented. In total, eighteen repertory grids were elicited as one participant declined to participate in the repertory grid study.

Review of documentation

The relevant process documents from each institution were reviewed in order to gain an understanding of the formal process that was implemented. Important elements such as process structure and stages, timeframes, and process participants were identified. These details were also addressed in the interviews with participants and therefore it was possible to cross reference the results of the review of documentation to clarify or verify items of interest regarding the two processes. Given the aims of the study, a more formal document content analysis was unnecessary.

4.4 Data Analysis

In keeping with the case study approach in general, analysis of case study data is characterised by a wide range of techniques and methods and there is no single approach. However, it is critically important that the case is analysed as a single entity. One must avoid the pitfall of analysing each of the data sets separately without linking these findings back in to the analysis of the findings for the case as a whole (Baxter and Jack, 2008). When a multi-case study is undertaken, as in the current study, analysis can take place at two levels (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Lowe et al., 2018). Firstly, the individual cases can be analysed to generate salient information, case descriptions, or contributions to theory. This is referred to as within-case analysis. The second level of

analysis is referred to as cross-case analysis or cross-case synthesis. Approaches to cross-case analysis are described as being either case-oriented, where one case is analysed, and an explanation or model is developed, which is then tested against other cases in order to validate it, or variable-oriented, where themes and constructs are developed in each case and these are then compared across cases (Mills et al., 2019). The case-oriented approach is more suited to studies where there is a particular interest in each individual case, whereas the variable-oriented approach best suits studies where the individual cases are more or less subordinate to the broader context of the study. For this study, a variable-oriented approach is utilised, which allows the individual cases to be analysed using the analytical or interpretive methods described below in order to develop themes, and constructs for each theme. These can then be compared, collated and further interpreted so as to provide cross-case themes and constructs. Finally, these findings may be analysed, within-case and cross-case, *vis-à-vis* the profile variables such as gender and discipline area.

In choosing an appropriate analysis or interpretive framework, a number of factors were considered. Firstly, a key element of this study is what is referred to as “reversing the lens” (Uhl-Bien and Carsten, 2018), whereby followership and the leadership process are explored from the perspective of followers. In order to be consistent with this approach, it is important that the analysis framework ensures that the viewpoint of the participants is preserved and prioritised over that of the researcher or analyst. Secondly, as outlined above, I have adopted a social-constructionist epistemology for this study and it follows that the methodology, including the analysis scheme, must align with this epistemological position. Thirdly, the study also explores aspects of the operational and organisational culture of the two higher education institutions. This will result in data which is semantic in nature and which will be analysed for explicit information and meanings. Therefore, the analytical lens that is chosen must be flexible enough to allow for the analysis of this type of data. Finally, in seeking to ensure the quality of this research study, the deployment of multiple, complementary, analytical modalities is in accordance with best practice, as it facilitates triangulation between the outcomes of the respective analyses and thereby gives greater confidence in the overall findings of the study. The triangulation of analytical approaches is particularly effective and

important in case studies which adopt a social constructionist approach (Denicolo et al., 2016).

To accommodate the different data collection techniques utilised and to address the factors raised in the previous paragraph, a hybrid analysis framework was chosen. The data collection methodology utilised yields two distinct types of data, interview transcripts/recordings and repertory grids, which require different analysis techniques, thereby necessitating a hybrid approach. The analysis of the interview data was conducted using thematic analysis and utilised the flexibility inherent within this technique to carry out member categorisation analysis. Thematic analysis is an analysis technique which allows relevant themes to be identified in interview data (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Because of its flexibility, thematic analysis can be utilised to identify themes which refer to operational details as well as themes which relate to the social construction of followership and leadership and as such, it addresses one of the key requirements outlined above. Member categorisation analysis is a discourse analysis technique which facilitates the exploration of social constructs within the leadership process via a participant-centric lens. The repertory grid analysis techniques employed included manual analysis, PrinGrid analysis and cluster analysis.

The chosen analytical framework is compatible with a social constructionist epistemology. The thematic analysis framework is a flexible and largely epistemologically agnostic approach to analysing qualitative data and as such has been shown to be compatible with a social constructionist approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Denicolo et al., 2016). Discourse analysis describes a range of methodologies and approaches that focus on how language is used to develop, convey and share constructs such as status, identity and meaning (Gee, 2011). Due to its focus on linguistic and textual data and prioritisation of the participant's perspective, discourse analysis is well suited to, and has been widely adopted in, social constructionist research (Burr, 2003). Furthermore, discourse analysis and organisational discourse analysis have been proposed as effective approaches to researching the leadership process, particularly when exploring the relational, sensemaking and identity aspects of the process (Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012). Therefore, membership categorisation analysis aligns

well with the social constructionist epistemology. The repertory grid technique and the accompanying analysis techniques have their origins in constructivist and social constructionist research as a means of conducting research within this paradigm through the use of structured conversations to elicit the individual's internal constructs in relation to a phenomenon.

As already stated above, the repertory grid technique is specifically designed to capture the participants perspective at the data collection phase. It is also the case that, in keeping with discourse analysis in general, member categorisation analysis is participant focused. Furthermore, the approach taken to thematic analysis in this study, i.e. more inductive than deductive, means that the data and therefore the participant's perspective has primacy in the analysis process.

The hybrid analysis approach adopted implements the requirement for analytical triangulation.

Computer software was used to support the analysis of the data. Specifically, two software packages were used:

- NVivo to facilitate the thematic analysis and member categorisation analysis of the interview data;
- Rep Plus to facilitate the analysis of the repertory grids.

It is important to state that the software was used as an aid to the analysis process, but the actual analysis was, by necessity, carried out via sustained and detailed engagement with the data. This type of study requires a more in-depth, more inductive, approach to analysis beyond the mere counting of occurrences of certain words or phrases that automatic computer analysis can provide (Goetz and LeCompte, 1981). The main benefit of utilising the computer software is in the service of transparency and auditability of the data collection and analysis. In effect, the software is used to document and store the data collection and analysis processes and as such provides a clear audit trail showing how the findings of the study emerged from the data. As discussed below in Section 4.5, this clear evidence trail supports the overall confirmability and

dependability of the study. Secondly, the use of the Rep Plus software tool facilitated a detailed analysis of a large and complex data set. It would have been extremely difficult to conduct a similar exercise entirely by hand. A third benefit of the software for this study was that it facilitated the collation and comparison of the results of the different analyses such that the all-important case-based analysis could be carried out and also that the desired triangulation effect could be realised. Finally, the NVivo feature which allows for the synchronisation of transcripts and audio recordings of interviews was utilised in support of the thematic analysis and member categorisation analysis. For these analyses, especially in the case of membership categorisation analysis, it is important to analyse not just what was said, but how it was said. For example, the meaning or relevance of a phrase can be altered significantly if it is followed by a laugh or said in a certain tone of voice.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis provides a structured and flexible analytical framework which allows a researcher to identify and analyse themes within a data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Its flexibility means that this analysis approach can be used for studies across the range of epistemologies, from realist to interpretivist. In the context of the current study, the flexibility of thematic analysis means that it can be utilised to identify themes regarding the leadership process and organisational culture within the two case studies (referred to by Braun and Clarke as semantic themes) and can also be used to facilitate a social constructionist epistemology by identifying themes relating to the manner in which the participants discuss aspects such as leadership, leaders and followers (referred to by Braun and Clarke as latent themes) (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This latter approach sees thematic analysis used to facilitate a form of discourse analysis which is sometimes referred to as thematic discourse analysis. In keeping with the breadth of approaches supported by thematic analysis, thematic discourse analysis can describe a continuum of approaches ranging from a standard thematic analysis that accommodates the interpretivist, social constructionist perspective to deeper forms of discourse analysis utilising techniques such as conversation analysis, narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The current approach uses the full scope of thematic analysis to facilitate the identification of semantic themes relating to the

leadership process and organisational context, while permitting the exploration of socially constructed latent themes and also facilitating discourse analysis, via membership categorisation analysis, of the data.

Membership categorisation analysis

As discussed above, organisational discourse analysis provides a useful analytical tool for exploring the phenomenon of the leadership process. Membership categorisation analysis is an analysis technique which has been used to investigate the different identities within the leadership process and how these are created, understood and expressed within a specific context (Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012). Membership categorisation analysis is a type of discourse analysis, which is related to conversational analysis, that was proposed as a means of studying how people use categories, developed within a specific social context, to understand and describe the behaviours of themselves and others (Fitzgerald and Housley, 2015).

In addition to its suitability for the study of leadership, membership categorisation is well-matched to this study for two further reasons. Firstly, membership categorisation analysis is extremely well suited to the social constructionist epistemology of this study and provides a means of exploring how constructs of leadership and followership are formed within the context of the organisation. According to Hester and Elgin (1997), membership categorisation analysis allows us to see how individuals use language to construct and share social and cultural knowledge, what they refer to as “culture in action”. Further, they argue that the elements explored via membership categorisation analysis have a “situated, contextually embedded sense” (Hester and Elgin, 1997). Secondly, membership categorisation analysis promotes a participant-centric view of the phenomenon being studied. It avoids the use of analytical categories which are chosen by the researcher and instead identifies and develops the categories used by the participants. This helps to ensure that the study presents a version of the phenomena that the participants recognise and orientate to and as such contributes to the confirmability of the results (Schegloff, 2007).

At its core membership categorisation analysis seeks to determine how individuals speak about categories. A category is a social construct which is understood and utilised by a group of individuals. As such, a category is a cultural short-hand which allows for shared understanding and economy of language when engaged in interactions within a specific context. Examples of categories that might exist within the context of a higher education institution are student, lecturer and administrator. A related concept is that of membership categorisation device which describes a means of grouping categories together within a specific context. For example, 'mother', 'father', 'daughter' and 'son' are categories within the membership categorisation device 'family'. Sometimes in speech, a category is invoked without being explicitly named. This invocation takes the form of a category-resonant description i.e. a word or phrase which is clearly a proxy for a specific category. For example, if the description 'middle-aged' is used by a participant then, despite the fact that the category is not mentioned, one can reasonably conclude that the participant is referring to an individual within the category of 'adult'. Once explicit references to categories, membership categorisation devices, or category-resonant descriptions have been identified, the analysis then focuses on the language used in relation to these elements to explore how the category is perceived and enacted. Within this framework, two concepts are of particular importance, category-bound activities and category-bound predicates. As the name suggests, category-bound activities describe actions or behaviours that are linked to a particular category in the current context. A category-bound predicate describes a characteristic or feature associated with a category. Another concept which is of relevance in the current study is that of standardised relational pairs, which describes the situation where a pair of categories have specific duties and obligations to each other. For example, in the context of this study, leader and follower constitute a standardised relational pair.

Repertory Grid analysis

The data that emerges from the repertory grid elicitation can be analysed in order to identify relationships between the different constructs, between the different elements and between constructs and elements. This analysis can be performed both at the level of individual repertory grids from individual participants and/or using multiple grids from a group of participants. For this study, the analysis can help to identify, for

example, relationships between different constructs (i.e. follower behaviours or attributes) and elements (i.e. specific types of followers). Given that this study is focused on shared constructs of followership within the specific context of higher education, and is less interested in individual constructs and individual cognition, the analysis of individual grids was of less interest than the combined analysis of multiple grids.

There are different approaches that can be applied to the analysis of repertory grid data and these include manual analysis of a grid or grids to look for interesting constructs or construct ratings and in-dept analyses such as cluster analysis or principal components analysis, which are implemented via appropriate software applications. For this study, detailed manual analysis and software-based analyses were combined to develop a comprehensive picture of the data from the Repertory Grid study.

The implementation of the data analysis approach, introduced above, is described in detail in Section 5.1.

4.5 Ensuring and Evaluating the Quality of Research

Quantitative (or positivist) methodologies have verification processes which are tried and tested and allow for complete confidence or trust in the quality of these studies. The issue of the quality of qualitative case studies, and qualitative research studies in general, is more nuanced and challenging. There are some that claim that, given that qualitative methods are not amenable to the type of rigorous verification which can be applied in quantitative studies, the findings of qualitative studies are entirely subjective and provide little value (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Arguments for the value of qualitative studies can be divided into two broad categories, those that try to provide qualitative proxies for the processes used in quantitative research and those that argue that seeking quantitative-style processes shows a lack of understanding of the nature and value of qualitative studies (Hammersley, 1992). A middle way between the two extremes is to recognise the unique nature of qualitative study but to recognise also the requirement to evaluate and ensure the quality of the research and the findings.

| Positivist research | Interpretivist research |
|---|-------------------------|
| Validity (or internal validity) | Credibility |
| Objectivity | Confirmability |
| Reliability | Dependability |
| Generalisability (or external validity) | Transferability |

Table 2: Quality measures in different research paradigms

There are many different approaches or models proposed in the literature for addressing the issue of evaluating and ensuring the quality of qualitative research. Most of these propose proxies for the approaches utilised in positivist research with quantitative data, which can be applied to interpretivist research with qualitative data (Creswell, 2007; Hammersley, 1992). For this study, I chose to use the model for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research as presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

| Measure | Achieved in this study via |
|-----------------|--|
| Credibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous planning of research study. • Assessment of compatibility between research design and subject, epistemology, etc. • Designed with reference to relevant literature. • Designed with reference to similar studies. • Triangulation in terms of data sources. • Involved participants in review of data and findings. |
| Confirmability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent inquiry audit carried out via NVivo. • Eschewed insider researcher approach. • Proactive in selection of participants. • Addressed issues in participation induction and informed consent process. • Consciously practised epistemic reflexivity. • Used methods which prioritised the participants' viewpoint • Involved participants in review of data and findings. |
| Dependability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent inquiry audit carried out via NVivo. • Triangulation in terms of data collection and data analysis. |
| Transferability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings reported in terms of possible generalised theoretical positions and guidance for similar research in other contexts. |

Table 3: Evaluating and ensuring quality in the research study

This model takes the four main concepts utilised in ensuring the trustworthiness or quality of quantitative (or positivist) research, namely, internal validity (or just validity), objectivity, reliability and external validity (or generalisability), and provides

corresponding concepts which are deemed more appropriate to qualitative (or interpretivist) research. Table 2 shows the quantitative (or positivist) concepts and the proposed qualitative (or interpretivist) concepts. Table 3 summarises the approach taken in this research study to ensuring and evaluating the quality of the research and these are discussed in detail below.

Credibility

Internal validity seeks to ensure that the research actually measures or studies what it claims, or intends, to. It seeks to ensure that the results, findings or observations accurately reflect the real-world entity or phenomenon being studied. Internal validity is achieved through experimental designs which involve controls and/or randomisation. When qualitative or interpretivist research approaches are used, it is not possible to validate that there is a one-to-one relationship between the research findings and the state of the phenomenon being studied. Instead, as a proxy for internal validity, the researcher must ensure that his/her research is credible by:

- ensuring that the approaches, techniques and research design used are fit-for-purpose to allow the beliefs, meanings and other constructions to be accessed and represented adequately;
- using multiple sources, methods or investigators to achieve ‘triangulation’;
- having the findings (i.e. the representations of the reality being studied) assessed and approved by those that constructed that reality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The discussion above outlines the reasons for choosing the research approach and methodology used in this study. There is a strong alignment between the theoretical framework and the social constructionist paradigm and a further alignment between this paradigm and the methodology chosen. This is supported by the literature and by similar studies conducted by other researchers (Bradley-Cole, 2014; Carsten et al., 2010; Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012). Using (and extending) other approaches which have already been used and validated for the study of the social construction of followership lends credibility to the research design and, by extension, the findings. Where the methodology is extended, it is to introduce a degree of triangulation, firstly in terms of

the collection of data and secondly in the analysis/interpretation of that data. Once the data had been gathered and the findings developed, each participant was allowed to review and verify the findings via a follow-up process. These combined measures provide confidence that the research approach and findings are credible.

Confirmability

The objectivity criterion describes a scenario where the act or method of study results in findings that accurately reflect the real world. To achieve objectivity, the researcher and the research method must establish a 'safe' distance from the subject such that the act of research affects neither the subject (i.e. the subject presents a true representation of the phenomenon being studied) nor the researcher (i.e. the researcher observes the true nature of the phenomenon). Defined thus, objectivity is neither achievable nor desirable in the context of a social constructionist or interpretivist approach to research. By necessity, the researcher and participants will interact as the phenomena of interest are studied. In fact, prolonged engagement between the researcher and the participants is encouraged as a means of building credibility in the research and its findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In the positivist or quantitative sense, objectivity, or a lack of objectivity (i.e. subjectivity), is a characteristic of the researcher and the proposed remedies involve shielding the participants from the researcher's potential subjectivity (e.g. by using data-gathering techniques designed to ensure objectivity) or compensating for any subjectivity (e.g. by using multiple observers). In the context of a social constructionist or interpretivist approach which proposes to utilise qualitative techniques and data, the engagement of the researcher with the participants is fundamental. Elements such as trust and rapport, which are essential to a successful study, can only be achieved through meaningful interaction between the researcher and participants. Therefore, the characteristics of credible qualitative research are incompatible with the concept of objectivity, and consequently another approach is required. It is proposed that the concept of confirmability can serve as a proxy for objectivity in this context. Confirmability focuses on the nature of the data rather than on the characteristics of the researcher or how he or she collected the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The goal is

to confirm that the data, findings and interpretations are grounded in, or reflect, the real phenomenon. If this can be confirmed, then the researcher's characteristics (objective, subjective or otherwise) have not negatively impacted upon the study and as such can be disregarded.

This naïve definition of confirmability must be modified in the setting of real-world studies, where a more pragmatic approach is required. In this context, a pragmatic approach means that, while the focus remains on confirming the data or interpretations, the characteristics and actions of the researcher are also considered. In particular, the degree to which the researcher is aware of potential biases and/or other factors which might impact upon the participants, the researcher, and the study as a whole, and has taken corrective measures where appropriate, determines the degree of confirmability of the data and findings.

In general, confirmability is assessed by:

- ensuring that the findings are grounded in the data;
- ensuring that the inferences or conclusions are logical and fit the data (i.e. one should examine the techniques used for analysis, coding, categorisation, etc. as well as reviewing the application of these techniques to the study data);
- determining if there is any evidence of researcher bias (i.e. one should review the findings to determine if there is any evidence that they have been biased by the perspective or position of the researcher, over-adherence by the researcher to a single theoretical perspective, etc.)
- reviewing which (if any) accommodations were employed by the researcher to help to mitigate any potential biases.

In the context of the current study, an inquiry audit process, focusing on the criteria above, was carried out to assess the confirmability of the data and findings. Such an audit process was combined with an audit of the research process which served to assess the dependability of the research as discussed below. The audit process was facilitated by the various features of the NVivo software which are illustrated in Appendix D.

The current study presents a number of challenges to confirmability and these for the most part arise from my position as a member of the executive team of Cork Institute of Technology. Due to this role, I have a perceived status within my own institution and (to a lesser degree) within the broader Irish Institute of Technology sector. Operating at a senior level within the institution and the sector I wished to study provided me with knowledge, understanding and access which would not be available to other researchers (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007; Tight, 2012). There are also numerous potential disadvantages including overfamiliarity (i.e. knowledge of the context leading to misinterpretation of the data), role conflicts (i.e. my role and relationships as a manager getting in the way of my role as a researcher – it is difficult to direct or discipline an individual as a manager and also engage them openly as a researcher) and the impact of negative organisational politics (Coghlan, 2001). A significant issue arises from my position as a senior manager and the relativities between this and the position/status of the majority of participants. This phenomenon is described by Johnson and Duberley as “asymmetrical operation of power relations which systematically distort communication” (Johnson and Duberley, 2003). This had implications for my study, including the possibility that participants might modify their responses in a manner that would undermine the overall study (e.g. tell me what they think I would like to hear, avoid being overly frank or critical of me or institutional management in general, use research engagements to communicate grievances or ‘settle scores’, withhold ‘secret’ knowledge from me, etc).

A further challenge arose from the fact that I am a member of social groups similar to those which I was researching and I occupy a specific role (or have a specific perspective) within the leadership process. It is inevitable that I have beliefs, expectations and other cognitive schema which had the potential to cause biases in how I gathered, analysed and interpreted the study data. These potential biases, if not addressed, could call into question the study findings and their confirmability.

Reflexivity in research refers to approaches and techniques which address the issue of the researcher’s impact upon the research process. Methodological reflexivity refers to approaches or techniques which can be implemented as part of the research design or

process to mitigate certain issues. For example, if the issues arise because the researcher is researching her or his own organisation (i.e. insider research), these can be addressed if it is possible to have a research design which does not depend on insider research. Obviously, there will be a trade-off between the benefits and the challenges of insider research (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Epistemic reflexivity describes the process whereby the researcher becomes aware that her or his 'habitus' (i.e. belief, expectations, actions, etc) inputs to, and impacts upon, the research process and its outcomes. Furthermore, epistemic reflexivity describes approaches and provides guidance for how the researcher can attempt to offset any adverse impacts. The awareness that one's habitus can, and more than likely will, have an impact upon the research process is in itself a form of mitigation as it means the researcher can no longer proceed in ignorance. If this awareness is accompanied by a commitment on the part of the researcher to facilitate an ethical and effective research process, then it is very likely that epistemic reflexivity will be achieved. This will be reflected in the research process by a more informed and thoughtful approach to participant recruitment, data collection, analysis of evidence and development of findings.

To avoid the issues outlined above, this study did not involve insider research and involved only external institutions and participants chosen from those institutions. It was still possible that my position as a senior manager may have impacted upon participants from other institutions and I sought to address this as part of the participant recruitment and informed consent processes described below. All participants were informed of my role and were given an opportunity to withdraw from the study if this caused them any concerns. Care was taken in the recruitment of participants to ensure that I did not consciously (or subconsciously) choose individuals who were similar to me or sympathetic to my viewpoint. In recognition of my role and the potential impact this may have had on the study, I practised epistemic reflexivity by actively questioning my actions and my cognition in respect of this study. I deliberately explored alternative interpretations of the data. To strengthen this reflexive research practice, I involved the subjects in reviewing the data and, where possible, the findings.

Dependability

Reliability refers to the degree to which the research approach measures or studies the intended subject correctly. The goal of reliability criteria is to ensure that the results of a study are consistent. If the study were repeated two or more times, then a reliable research methodology (i.e. one that is measuring the subject correctly) should yield the same findings each time. This notion of reliability assumes that there is a subject which is stable and consistent. Reliability is difficult in the context of qualitative research because the subject of the study is often a constructed and ever-changing entity. As such, the aim of consistency through repetition is futile. In seeking a proxy for reliability in the context of qualitative (or interpretivist) approaches, it is necessary to recognise that, in addition to the changeable nature of the subject, the researcher, the participants and the research instruments are also not static or consistent in nature (Denicolo et al., 2016; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is proposed that dependability should be pursued as a proxy for reliability. Dependability is grounded in the methodology and approach employed and the researcher should ensure that these are reliable by delivering them with integrity and transparency (Denicolo et al., 2016). Therefore, the first line of defence in terms of ensuring dependability is the researcher who must seek to develop an approach which guards against issues such as subject/participant error (i.e. any factor which means that a participant does not behave or respond in a normal way to the study), subject/participant bias (i.e. any beliefs or concepts on behalf of a participant which lead to an incorrect response), and observer/researcher error (actions on the part of the observer/researcher which impact upon the response of the subject/participant or lead to an incorrect observation), observer/researcher bias (beliefs or concepts on the part of the observer/researcher which lead to incorrect observation and/or conclusions).

It should be noted that there is a strong relationship between reliability and validity such that, it is claimed, one cannot be developed, or even exist, without the other. By extension, in relation to qualitative research, a similar relationship exists between credibility and dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, any techniques which enhance credibility also enhance dependability. Techniques for establishing dependability include overlap or triangulation of methods and inquiry audits (i.e. a

systematic review of the approach and the products of that approach by an independent reviewer).

As discussed above, an audit process was carried out on the research process and on the products of that process (i.e. data and findings) in order to assess both the dependability and confirmability of the study. Performing a combined audit allowed the individual elements to support or inform each other and resulted in a more thorough assessment and more reliable outcomes than if two separate audits were performed.

Transferability

The term generalisation or generalisability is usually used to describe empirical generalisation where the findings are deemed to be valid for a specific population. Generalisability or external validity refers to the degree to which a particular research finding can be shown to be representative of a broader set of real-world elements or phenomena which were not the subject of the original study. Having established the internal validity of a particular study, external validity can be achieved by showing/proving that the subject of the original study is representative of a broader set of subjects. If this can be established, the findings of the research can be generalised or applied to all relevant subjects even though they were not part of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) question whether empirical generalisation is achievable or valid and argue that there is a need for alternative criteria for determining the generalisability of study findings when the study is focused on investigating the complex constructions of beliefs, meanings and identities in a specific social or organisational context. The notion of transferability is proposed to describe the degree to which the research approach (i.e. methodology, techniques and tools) and the research findings may provide guidance for similar research in a different setting or context (Denicolo et al., 2016).

One alternative perspective on empirical generalisation is what Firestone (1993) termed “analytic generalisation”. This proposes that study findings cannot be generalised to populations but rather allow generalised theoretical positions (Firestone, 1993; Yin, 2009). This approach to transferability is appropriate for the current study where the goal, utilising what Hammersley (1992) termed ‘theoretical inference’, is to place

followership in higher education within the relevant theoretical framework and identify whether that framework needs to be modified or extended in order to adequately encompass the findings of the study as they apply to the specific context being studied.

4.6 Ethics

Care must be taken to ensure that the interests of the research subjects are protected and that they are not harmed in any way by their participation in the research process. Bryman and Bell provide the following principles for ethics in research (Bell and Bryman, 2007):

- Ensure that no harm comes to the participants;
- Respect the dignity of the research participants;
- Ensure the fully-informed consent of participants;
- Protect the privacy of research subjects;
- Ensure the confidentiality of research data;
- Protect the anonymity of individuals;
- Avoid deception about the aims of the research;
- Declare conflicts of interest, funding sources, affiliations;
- Honesty and transparency in communicating about the research;
- Avoid misleading or false reporting of research findings.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) provides a framework for research ethics which identifies the following principles (ESRC 2015):

- Research participants should take part voluntarily, free from any coercion or undue influence, and their rights, dignity and (when possible) autonomy should be respected and appropriately protected;
- Research should be worthwhile and provide value that outweighs any risk or harm. Researchers should aim to maximise the benefit of the research and minimise potential risk of harm to participants and researchers. All potential risk and harm should be mitigated by robust precautions;

- Research staff and participants should be given appropriate information about the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks and benefits, if any, are involved;
- Individual research participant and group preferences regarding anonymity should be respected and participant requirements concerning the confidential nature of information and personal data should be respected;
- Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure recognised standards of integrity are met, and quality and transparency are assured;
- The independence of research should be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality should be explicit.

These principles are assessed in the context of the current study. The participants in the study were adults who did not present with any specific challenges or vulnerabilities that needed to be addressed in the design or conduct of the research. Furthermore, the issues being studied relate to the subjects' beliefs, expectations and behaviours in the context of the workplace and as such did not, for the most part, address issues that are deeply personal or private. It was determined that it was extremely unlikely that the participants' emotional or physical wellbeing would be negatively impacted by their participation in the study. One issue pertaining to the study which could potentially have had a negative impact on participants is that of status and power asymmetry discussed above. While above the issue was addressed in terms of its impact on the research findings, it was also possible that any perceived status or power asymmetry may have had an impact on how the participants felt, having participated in the study. They may have been intimidated by the perceived asymmetry and this in turn may have impacted upon their engagement with the research process, whereby the data they provided did not reflect their true beliefs, expectations and actions. Having participated in this manner, they may have been concerned about the impact this would have on the research findings. To try to avoid this, a participant well-being protocol was utilised when engaging with participants. Firstly, the issue of informed consent was reiterated, and it was made clear to the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any stage (including the withdrawal of their data and/or related findings) prior to publication. The commitment to anonymity, as well as the extent of that anonymity,

was clarified. Each participant was provided with an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification in advance of any data-gathering exercises. Finally, the data-gathering exercise did not commence until the participant indicated that he/she was ready and it was made clear to the participant that he/she could terminate the engagement at any time.

It should be clear from the preceding discussions regarding the criteria for ensuring quality of research that many of the ethics principles outlined above were addressed by a rigorous approach to ensuring the quality of the research. In addition to the quality approaches committed to above, the current study implemented the following measures to ensure that issues of ethics were properly and thoroughly addressed.

Informed consent

The principle of informed consent is fundamental to ethical research practice. In the current study, the following approach was adopted to ensure that participants were suitably informed such that consent could be granted and that formal consent was granted by each participant.

Initially, when the participants were being recruited for the study, each potential participant was provided with a briefing document (Appendix A). This briefing document addressed the following:

- brief outline of the research project and context (i.e. part of DBA);
- brief profile of observer/researcher;
- outline of the methods to be used;
- indication of what the participant's involvement will entail (e.g. time commitments, actions/activities, etc);
- outline of the data gathering/analysis approach;
- assurances around anonymity and data protection;
- assurances around the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Once individuals had agreed to participate in the study, they were asked to formally grant consent by signing the consent form. This consent form contained all the

information contained in the briefing document. Each participant was given time to read the consent form and seek clarification before signing the form to indicate that they understood the conditions for participation in the study and that they were happy to proceed.

Data management and protection

The data related to this study was managed securely and in accordance with the relevant data protection regulations (i.e. General Data Protection Regulation, 2018). In particular:

- interview recordings and notes were stored securely and were not accessed by anyone other than the researcher;
- transcribed interviews and other products of interview data analysis were anonymised to remove any personal identifiers;
- electronic copies of data were encrypted and stored on secure IT systems.

Prior to granting consent, participants were informed of this and were also informed that the data will be destroyed following the DBA examination process and completion of any related publications.

4.7 Concluding Remarks on Research Design

This study uses a case study approach to explore followership and the leadership process in higher education institutions from the followers' perspective. Using a multi-case design and utilising qualitative methods, the study examined how the leadership process was socially constructed within two Irish higher education institutions. By adopting a structured and carefully planned approach which was compatible with the aims of the study and by implementing strong procedures, producing detailed and accurate records, and maintaining a clear auditable chain of evidence, coupled with a rigorous approach to ethics and quality, this research study was designed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings which are presented in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, I explain how the data from this study was analysed and reviewed to uncover the study's findings. In Section 5.1 I describe in detail the analysis process and in Section 5.2 I present the findings that emerge from the analysis and discuss these in the context of the relevant literature.

5.1 Data Analysis

In the previous chapter (in Section 4.4), I outlined the analysis procedure and the rationale for choosing it. The approach is hybrid in nature, consisting of a thematic analysis of interview data and a separate analysis of the data from the Repertory Grid study. In addition, membership categorisation analysis will be incorporated as part of the thematic analysis. Below, I provided a detailed description of the data analysis process that was carried out in accordance with that procedure.

In keeping with the goal of this study to explore the various phenomena from the perspective of the participants, thematic analysis was applied in an inductive (i.e. focusing on the data and identifying themes as they emerged during the analysis) rather than deductive (i.e. looking for themes related to a specific theory or model within the data) manner. In keeping with the stance of subtle realism (as opposed to a purely interpretivist stance) adopted for this study, a partially inductive approach is appropriate. Therefore, a priori themes are not used, and neither are themes allowed to emerge solely from the data as with a grounded theory approach. Instead, the approach is largely inductive but a degree of prior knowledge is utilised in order to allow the analyst to evaluate what constitutes an important or interesting theme (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Braun and Clarke propose a six-stage approach to thematic analysis as follows:

| Phase | Description of the process |
|---|--|
| 1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: | Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. |
| 2. Generating initial codes: | Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. |
| 3. Searching for themes: | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. |
| 4. Reviewing themes: | Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extract (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis. |
| 5. Defining and naming themes: | Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. |
| 6. Producing the report: | The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. |

Table 4: Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006)

This approach was utilised in the current study and NVivo was used to document or capture the different stages. Table 5 below outlines how the thematic analysis was applied in this study, including how it was used to realise the membership categorisation analysis which is described in detail in the following sub-section.

As part of the thematic analysis of the interview data, a membership categorisation analysis (MCA) was carried out in line with the approach described by Stokoe (2012). This approach to membership categorisation analysis relies on five “guiding principles” for carrying out the analysis. It is important to note that the guiding principles described in the Stokoe model should not be viewed as a set of discrete steps that must be applied in a strict sequential manner.

| Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) | Incorporated steps for Membership Categorisation Analysis (Stokoe 2012) | Implementation in current study |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Familiarizing yourself with your data | 1.1 Collect data, as appropriate, from a variety of contexts and sources [this is principle 1 in the Stokoe model]. | <p>The data set for this study consisted of interview transcripts and audio recordings.</p> <p>Using NVivo software the audio recordings and transcript text were fully synchronised meaning that the audio corresponding to each passage of text could be listened to at the time of coding so that context such as pauses, non-words and tone of voice could be understood.</p> |
| 2. Generating initial codes | | The interview transcripts and audio recordings were reviewed, and initial coding took place for interesting features in the data. NVivo was used to facilitate the coding process. |
| 3. Searching for themes | <p>3.1 Build collections of explicit mentions of membership categorisations [this is principle 2 in the Stoke model].</p> <p>3.2 Locate mentions within the surrounding text [this is principle 3 in the Stoke model].</p> | <p>The initial codes were reviewed further to look for the emergence of groups or categories of codes that might suggest possible themes. Relevant membership categorisations emerged as themes at this stage.</p> <p>Again, the facilities within NVivo were used to search for possible themes.</p> |
| 4. Reviewing themes | | The candidate themes were reviewed to check that they were a true reflection of the data. If necessary, the themes were refined up to, and including, revisiting initial coding decisions. At the end of this stage a thematic map for the data set began to emerge. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>5. Defining and naming themes</p> | <p>5.1 Analyse the mentions of membership categorisations categories [this is principle 4 in the Stoke model].</p> <p>5.2 Look for participants orientation towards membership categorisations [this is principle 4 in the Stoke model].</p> | <p>Once a thematic map emerged, the themes identified were given more substance by defining them and their boundaries and labelling them appropriately. In the same way that other themes were defined, the membership categorisations were developed and matured during this stage.</p> <p>The names and definitions of the various themes were developed and stored within NVivo. This means that there is a detailed chain of evidence from the original data, through coding, to the final thematic map which represents that data. This provides the basis for analysis, theorising and report writing.</p> |
| <p>6. Producing the report</p> | | <p>The findings from the data analysis were then analysed within the broader context of the literature, theory and the research study as a whole. This analysis was facilitated by NVivo. This allowed the report of findings detailed in Section 5.2 to be generated.</p> |

Table 5: Implementation of thematic analysis and MCA in the research study

Table 6, below, outlines the Stokoe model and Table 5, above, describes how this analysis was realised, via thematic analysis, in my study.

This analysis provided evidence of how individuals and groups identified, and identified with, the key category of follower within the related contexts of the leadership process and the broader institutional culture. Specifically, category-bound activities and predicates which were related to the category of follower were identified and these helped to develop and enrich the data coded under the theme relating to followers' attributes and behaviours.

| Guiding Principle | Description |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Collect | Collect data, as appropriate, from a variety of contexts and sources. |
| 2. Build | Build collections of explicit mentions, within the data, of relevant categories, membership categorisation devices and category resonant descriptions. |
| 3. Locate | Locate each mention within the surrounding interaction or text. |
| 4. Analyse | Analyse the mentions of categories etc, and the surrounding text to identify important elements such as category-bound activities. |
| 5. Look | Look for participants' orientation towards the category. |

Table 6: Guiding principles for membership categorisation analysis (Stokoe 2012)

There were 230 initial codes (see Appendix D1) and these were developed and refined during the subsequent phases of the analysis (see Appendix D5 for an illustration of the analysis through the different phases) to develop categories and eventually themes and sub-themes which encapsulated the meanings that were contained in the data (see Appendices D1 to D4 for the output of the different phases of analysis). Six overarching themes were identified and each of these contained a number of sub-themes (see Appendix D4). A conceptual map or model also emerged which illustrates how the different themes link together to create the phenomenon of followership. Figure 7 shows the conceptual map and it is discussed in Section 5.2 below. Once the themes and sub-themes had been defined, comprehensive analytical memos were created for each of the themes in order to develop detailed ideas and arguments relating to the findings that emerged from the analysis (see Appendix D6). Finally, these analytical memos were utilised to facilitate the development of the detailed description of the study findings contained in Section 5.2.

The initial phase of the repertory grid analysis involved reviewing each of the participants' grids to ensure that the meaning of the individual constructs was

understood. In some instances, this involved relistening to the discussion with the participant during the repertory grid elicitation process because it was only through listening to the discussion that the constructs could be understood. For example, two different participants used the label *humour* to describe one of the poles of a construct in their grid. By listening to the conversation around the repertory grid elicitation, it was clear that the same label was being used to describe completely different constructs. A thorough understanding of the meaning behind the constructs in the individual grids was essential to the next phase of the analysis, i.e. searching for shared constructs.

When the participants' grids were combined, there were 173 constructs. An analysis of the meaning of each of these constructs was carried out in order to determine if there were common or shared meanings underlying multiple constructs. This analysis grouped the original constructs under common constructs where appropriate, resulting in a smaller set of 27 constructs. These 27 constructs formed the basis of a composite repertory grid which encapsulated the constructs and ratings from each of the individual repertory grids. Composite grids were also developed for each of the case study institutions, based on the same 27 shared constructs and the individual grids of the relevant participants. The underlying statistics for the shared constructs and composite grids were also calculated such that the number of references, and the number of referencing participants, for each shared construct, were available for the full study and the individual cases. Finally, the shared constructs were further categorised under six high-level categories. This further categorisation allowed for a macro analysis of the significance of broad types of constructs as well as facilitating the combined analysis of the findings from the Repertory Grid study with the findings from the thematic analysis/MCA.

Detailed analysis of these composite grids was performed firstly using manual approaches that involved examining the grids to identify any interesting or significant findings relating to how the different constructs were associated with the different elements. This can be done by examining how each construct is rated in respect of each

element. In this study, this can provide a picture of which attributes and behaviours, or groups of attributes and behaviours, are associated with different types of followers.

In addition to the manual analysis of the composite grids, the Rep Plus software application was used to facilitate a computer analysis of the data contained in the composite repertory grids. The analysis performed by the software can be carried out manually, but with large and complex data sets, as is the case with this study, they are time consuming and error-prone. From the range of analysis tools that are offered by the software, two were chosen as being suitable for this study.

PrinGrid analysis was chosen as being particularly suitable for this study. This analysis is based on principal component analysis (Easterby-Smith, 1980) and it creates a plot which illustrates which constructs, and which poles of those constructs, are associated with each element. The plot also provides an illustration of how different elements are associated with each other. For this study, PrinGrid analysis will provide detailed information about the nature and strength of the associations between attributes and behaviours and different types of followers. Also cluster analysis was chosen because, firstly, it is possible to understand how the computer analysis is performed thus aiding in the interpretation of the results and, secondly, the output of the analysis retains or includes a representation of all of the original relationships (i.e. data) (Pope and Denicolo, 1993). Of particular interest are the relationships between specific clusters of constructs and elements because these have the potential to identify attributes and behaviours associated with different types of followers. For example, given that the elements were supplied from specific groups as described above, one would expect that the two elements from each group would cluster together. However, this may not be the case, and this might highlight an important occurrence worthy of further analysis.

The shared constructs, composite grids and the resulting manual and computer aided analyses are discussed in detail in Section 5.2 below.

By combining the analysis of the individual repertory grids and the macro analysis of different groupings of the individual grids, this analysis helps to identify individual and shared constructs of followership and how these correlate with effective or ineffective

follower contributions to the leadership process. In particular, the identification of shared constructs provides an analytical window on the social construction of followership, both within and across the two cases.

5.2 Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This study used multiple case studies to explore the leadership process in higher education from a follower and a followership perspective. A follower perspective indicates that the study focused primarily on those who occupied non-leadership roles. A followership perspective indicates that the study had as its primary focus the perceptions, beliefs and behaviours with respect to their role as a follower in the process being studied. The study was less concerned with other aspects of the followers' life and work within the organisation (Carsten et al., 2010).

The research questions that this study sought to answer are listed in Table 7 below. In seeking to answer these questions, this study combined the Leadership Process conceptual framework as defined by Uhl Bien et al. (2014) and the social constructionist perspective. Figure 7 below illustrates the conceptual map or model which was adopted in this study.

The Leadership Process framework as proposed by Uhl Bien et al. (2014) describes leadership as a process (or relationship) with outcomes (or consequences) and that process is co-produced by leaders and followers as they engage in the leadership process via leading (or non-leading) and following (or non-following) behaviours. Therefore, while the study is followership-centric, the Leadership Process framework ensures that followership is not studied in isolation but as part of the broader context. This facilitates the study of the impact or implication of followership on leadership and its outcomes.

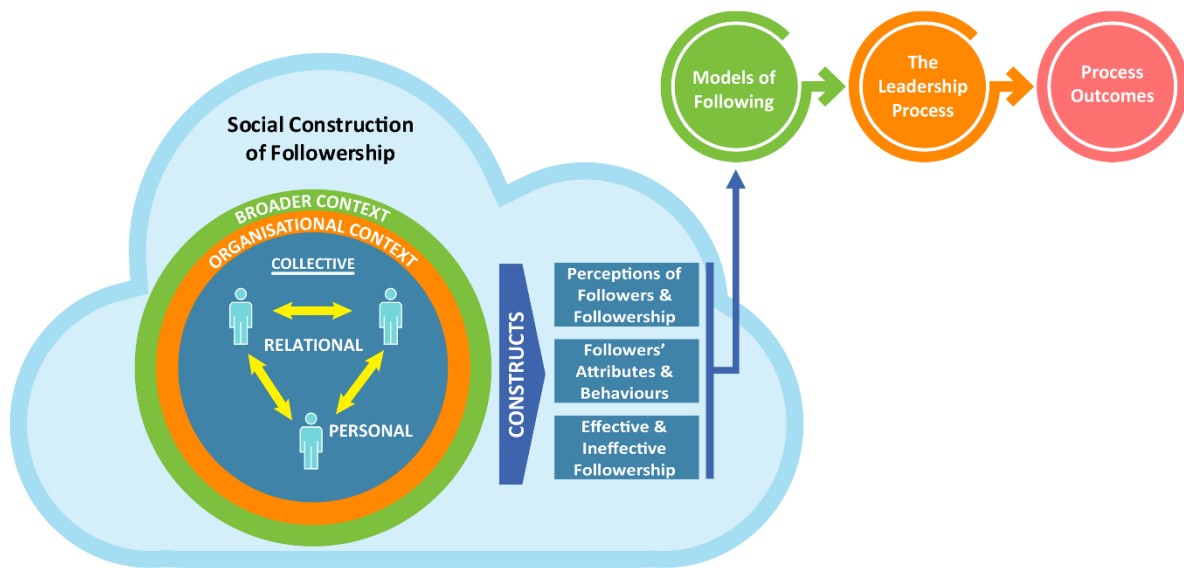


Figure 7: Conceptual model of social construction of followership and following

The social constructionist perspective proposes that the following behaviours that individuals exhibit within the Leadership Process are reflective of the constructs (i.e. perceptions, beliefs, etc) of followership which are formed through a process of social construction. These constructs exist at the personal, relational and collective levels within the organisation, and through a variety of processes, broadly referred to as identity work, individuals and groups within the organisation develop and refine these constructs so that they are able to answer two questions: What does it mean to be a follower in this context and how should followership be enacted in this context (Epitropaki et al., 2017)? Also embedded within these constructs is knowledge about what constitutes effective and ineffective followership.

In summary, the social construction of followership leads to following (or non-following) behaviours which combine with leading (or non-leading behaviours) to produce leadership, which results in outcomes.

Table 7 Shows the research questions and the broad themes under which the findings are discussed, as well as a mapping which identifies which themes contain findings that address the various research questions.

| Research Questions | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Ref | Research Question | | | | |
| RQ | Main Research Question: How is followership practised by academic staff in higher education institutions and what are the possible implications for leadership outcomes? | | | | |
| SQ1 | Subordinate Research Question One: What are the beliefs, experiences, perceptions and expectations of academic staff, working in higher education institutions, of their role in the leadership process? | | | | |
| SQ2 | Subordinate Research Question Two: How do academic staff working in higher education institutions enact followership? | | | | |
| SQ3 | Subordinate Research Question Three: What do academic staff believe constitutes effective or ineffective followership and how may leaders help or hinder followers? | | | | |
| SQ4 | Subordinate Research Question Four: To what extent are the followers' beliefs and behaviours formed by the organisational context and cultures of the higher education institution? | | | | |
| SQ5 | Subordinate Research Question Five: What possible implications does the manner of followership have for the higher education institutions' achievement of leadership outcomes? | | | | |
| Themes for Findings | | | | | |
| Ref | Theme | | | | |
| T1 | Theme One: Perceptions of Followership and Followers | | | | |
| T2 | Theme Two: Followers' Attributes and Behaviours | | | | |
| T3 | Theme Three: Effective and Ineffective Followership | | | | |
| T4 | Theme Four: Models of Following | | | | |
| T5 | Theme Five: The Leadership Process | | | | |
| T6 | Theme Six: Organisational Culture and Context | | | | |
| Mapping Themes to Research Questions | | | | | |
| | RQ | | | | |
| | SQ1 | SQ2 | SQ3 | SQ4 | SQ5 |
| T1 | ✓ | | | | |
| T2 | | ✓ | | | |
| T3 | | | ✓ | | |
| T4 | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| T5 | | | | | ✓ |
| T6 | | | | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 7: Research questions and themes

As described in earlier chapters, a case study approach was adopted with two cases, consisting of a specific leadership process in each of two Irish higher education institutions. The case study approach requires that the analysis of the findings must be case-based (i.e. the findings must be analysed and discussed in the context of each case). These are referred to as in-case findings and, while the case study approach provides for the analysis of general findings which span the whole of the study, referred to as cross-case findings, these cannot be presented to the exclusion of in-case findings. Figure 8 illustrates the approach taken to developing both in-case and cross-case findings.

| | T1 | T2 | T3 | T4 | T5 | T6 | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Case 1: Minerva University | Findings | Findings | In-case Findings | In-case Findings | Findings | Findings | In-case findings for Case 1 |
| Case 2: The Ceres Institute | Findings | Findings | Findings | Findings | Findings | Findings | In-case findings for Case 2 |
| | Cross-case findings for T1 | Cross-case findings for T2 | Cross-case findings for T3 | Cross-case findings for T4 | Cross-case findings for T5 | Cross-case findings for T6 | |

Figure 8: In-case and cross-case analysis of findings

The presentation of findings in the following sub-sections first looks at the findings in respect of the social construction of followership, by looking at the constructs of followers and followership, the perceptions of followers' behaviours, and constructs of effective or ineffective followership. I then present the findings relating to the leadership process which, according to the conceptual model, includes the leadership that is co-produced through the combination of leading and following behaviours and the outcomes that emerge from that leadership. Organisational context and organisational culture are critical to both the social construction process and the leadership process. The findings in respect of organisational context are presented with reference to their implications for the other findings. As well as presenting the findings under each theme, these findings are discussed in the context of the relevant literature.

Perceptions of followership and followers

The findings in respect of the participants' perceptions of followers and followership are presented in this sub-section. As well as their overall perceptions of followership, the findings also address the participants' views of types of followership, the motivations that lead to followership and the implications of being a follower.

Overall perceptions

The overall perception of followers was more positive than negative. While a number of participants referred to negative connotations associated with the term follower or the idea of followership, many more expressed broadly positive views. Consider the following quotes as examples of positive perceptions:

“I have a lot of admiration for followers, I'll tell you why. I would come up with ideas when I'm cutting the grass, and then I come back in here, and I can give that idea to a group of people and they will follow through with it.”

(Luke, a member of institutional leadership at Ceres Institute)

“I mentioned followership already - you can have all the leadership skills in the world but if you don't get people in behind something, I don't mean slavishly following, I mean following an agenda that at this time is important for the University and for them. And to me that's what a follower means, getting in behind something. A follower is a person who wants to get some direction, wants to contribute, wants to make a difference...”

(Robin, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

However, those positive views were also tempered with statements about the possible negative aspects of being a follower. Of those who referred to negative associations with followers and followership, a number qualified their words by indicating that they did not agree with that characterisation but were instead reflecting negative stereotypes that existed in the broader environment. For example, consider the following quote:

“I don't think that it has the negative connotations that you sometimes get in the media and so on.”

(Thomas, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

In total, 13 participants expressed positive perceptions of followers. Of those expressing positive beliefs, 69% were members of academic staff and 31% were institutional leaders. Meanwhile, 7 participants (24% of total participants) expressed negative perceptions and they were comprised of 71% academic staff and 29% institutional leaders. Looking across the two cases, 69% of those expressing positive beliefs were from the Ceres Institute and 57% of those expressing negative beliefs were from the same Institute.

Related to these positive and negative perceptions of followership was the idea expressed by 12 (41%) participants that followership was essential or necessary. This recognition of the positive role that followers play in the leadership process was evident even among individuals who expressed negative beliefs about the nature of followership as can be seen from the following quote:

“Possibly a slightly negative connotation, but necessary.”

(Jane, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

The participants that shared this idea consisted of 50% institutional leaders and 50% members of academic staff. Figure 9 illustrates the overall perceptions of followers and followership across both groups of participants and both institutions.

Two types of followership

Following on from the general positive or negative perceptions of followers discussed above, it was evident that many participants believed that there were two types of followership and by extension two types of followers. In broad terms, these two types of followership could be described as active (or proactive) and passive.

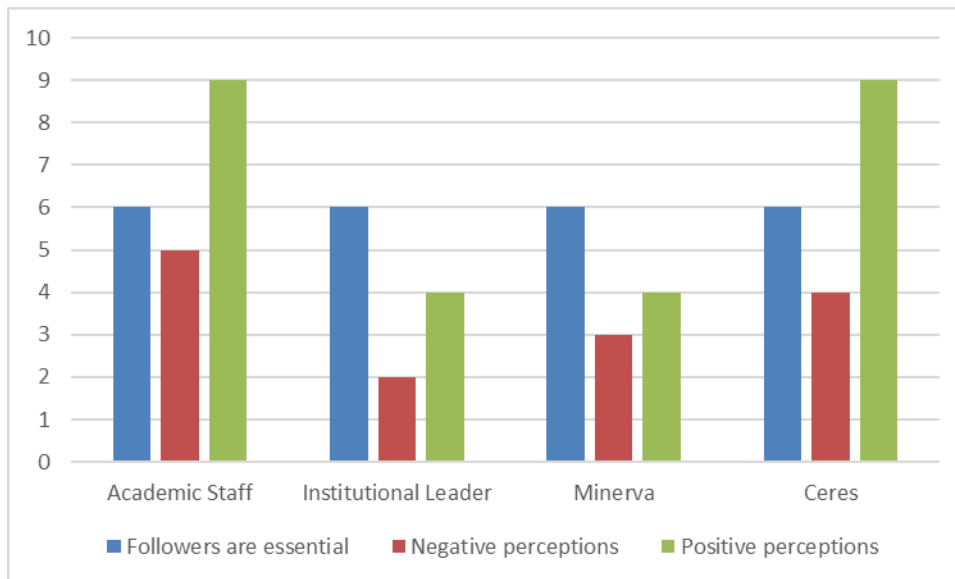


Figure 9: Summary of participants' perceptions of followers and followership

Proactive followership involves active support of a leader or process but also involves a strong element of critique with an appropriate level of challenge if the situation requires it. The following quote is one participant's description of such a follower:

“A person who is cooperative, not necessarily does everything, you need people that will question things, have a bit of an independent mind, you don't want a yes person.”

(Patrick, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Passive followers are individuals who are blindly following a particular leader or agenda. The word 'sheep' was used by a number of participants to refer to such followers as evidenced by the following quote:

“It can mean somebody who has given up their control to somebody else and they are just like sheep and they are just following blindly.”

(Martin, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

The analysis shows that 22 participants (76%) referenced one or both of these types of following, with 13 discussing active followership and 10 referencing passive followership. Of these, 73% were members of academic staff and the remaining 27% were institutional leaders, meaning that members of academic staff are over-represented proportionately.

This finding indicates that there is an acceptance that followers have some level of agency or choice with respect to their role, and behaviour, and that they are not merely defined by their position within the organisational hierarchy.

Followers' motivations

An implication of the discussion above is that followers may choose to be active or passive. Extending this idea of follower choice further, the analysis of the data revealed followers' beliefs relating to the reasons or motivations that lead an individual to choose the role of follower in a particular context. This assumes a degree of agency on the part of followers to decide, at least in certain circumstances, whether they will follow and how they will follow. It is not uncommon, in the context of higher education, for individuals to have a choice as to their involvement in a particular project or initiative. Five motivations emerged from the analysis of the data and these are discussed below.

Seeking an easier life – where the individual was looking to avoid additional workload or other demands and stresses that would accompany a leading role. When followers discussed this motivation, it was generally in negative terms, for example:

“I think they probably reduce their stress level, they have a slightly easier life, they don't have to think independently about it and they can go with the collective, it's often an easier route for them.”

(Anna, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Unable or unwilling to lead – due to lack of knowledge or lack of confidence, or for some other reason, the individual in question deemed that they were not best suited to the leadership role. For example, consider the following quote:

“There are some people who would be tremendously stressed out by being the lead and having to get all the money and it wouldn't be good for them, wouldn't be good for their health...”

(Kevin, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Belief in the vision or leader – the follower role is chosen because the individual genuinely believes in the leader or the vision/goal that is presented:

“So, follower, first of all is someone has to have faith in what they're following, whether it's a person or an idea or whatever.”

(Thomas, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Self-interest or self-advancement – an individual is motivated to follow a particular leader in the hope of gaining opportunity or favour from the leader. Discussions of this reason are broadly negative as evidenced by the following quote:

“There is an opportunity to go on the coattails of somebody else, let them do the hard work and row in on the coattails and benefit...”

(Simon, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Avoiding risk or difficulty – due to the perceived risk associated with a leading role, the individual opts for a follower role as a safer less stressful option.

“Some people can be very, who follow, can be really structured, have a very strong work ethic, but like to work in a structured environment where you have less risk.”

(Maurice, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

Table 8 shows a breakdown of the number of participants that referenced each of these motivations.

| | Chosen for an easier life | Chosen if unable or unwilling to lead | Chosen if you believe | Chosen to achieve favour, benefit or progression | Chosen to avoid difficulty or risk |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|---|
| Total | 10 | 11 | 17 | 5 | 10 |
| Academic Staff | 7 | 7 | 13 | 3 | 7 |
| Institutional Leader | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Minerva Uni. | 5 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 7 |
| Ceres Inst. | 5 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 3 |

Table 8: Motivations for choosing to follow

In total, 23 participants referenced one or more of these reasons. As can be seen from the table, belief in the vision or the leader was referenced by the highest number of participants (74%). After that, the three 'away from' motivations (i.e. seeking an easier life, being unable or unwilling to lead and avoiding risk or difficulty) were each referenced in almost equal numbers (43%, 48% and 43% respectively). Self-interest was the motivation which was least referenced (22%). Members of academic staff referenced belief in the vision in greater proportion, representing 76% of the participants referencing this motivation (academic staff are 66% of total participants). Between the two institutions, there was a large difference in respect of the motivation relating to avoiding difficulty or risk where participants from Minerva University made up 70% of the total number which referenced this motivation. This may point to an element of the organisational culture which means that risks and difficulties are more prevalent or intractable.

Implications of followership for followers

The analysis of the data shows that over 90% of the participants believed that there were costs or implications associated with the decision to choose or adopt a follower role. The study found that these implications could be divided, in almost equal number, into positive and negative groupings (63% and 70% respectively). Among the most referenced positive implications identified are:

- The opportunity to contribute to something that you believe in
- Personal and career development
- Learning such that you can lead in the future

Reflecting the previous finding relating to the reasons or motivations for choosing to be a follower, the opportunity to contribute to a process or project that you believed in was cited as the most significant positive implication with 71% of participants. The next most commonly referenced implication was the opportunity for personal and career development (47% of participants). Curiously, the converse of this was also cited as the main negative implication for followers, with 58% of participants reporting that being a follower would be an impediment to personal and career development. However, this apparent contradiction may be explained by the finding that participants believe the

positive implication (i.e. personal and career development) materialises when the follower is active and engaged, and the negative implication (impediment to personal and career development) arises when the follower is passive. Among the other negative implications discussed by participants were:

- Less influence
- Reputational damage if the leader fails
- Risk of criticism or social exclusion from following an unpopular leader

It was posited by a number of participants that sometimes both positive and negative implications could be realised in the same context. For example, a follower could benefit in terms of career progression from following a particular leader while at the same time suffering criticism or social exclusion because that leader was broadly unpopular.

Discussion of findings relating to perceptions of followership and followers

The main findings under this theme can be summed up as follows:

- Mostly positive perceptions.
- Very few completely negative perceptions. Instead, negative statements qualified to indicate that, while participants recognise that there are negative connotations, they don't agree with these negative views.
- Followers and followership seen as essential.
- Two types of follower or followership, active (or proactive) and passive.
- Several factors motivate individuals to choose the role of follower and these are (in order of frequency reference):
 - Genuinely believe in the vision, leader, process, etc.
 - Unable or unwilling to lead
 - Seeking an easier life

- Seeking to avoid risk
- Self-interest, e.g. career progression etc
- Choosing to be a follower has potential positive and negative implications for the individual and these include (in order of frequency of reference):
 - Positive - opportunity to contribute to something you believe in
 - Negative - lack of influence or control
 - Positive - opportunity for learning or development
 - Negative - risk to reputation, development, etc

The main finding, in respect of the constructs of followers and followership, within this theme was that, despite some negative associations, broadly speaking the phenomenon of followership was recognised, understood and appreciated. Where there were negative associations, these could, to a degree, be described as semantic in nature. By that I mean that they often related to an individual's understanding of the term follower, rather than their experiences of followers and followership. In a number of cases, negative associations on the part of a participant were accompanied by the emergence of positive constructs when the phenomenon was explored more deeply. Some participants even showed awareness that their negative associations were limited and related to an association with the word rather than their real-world experiences. In addition, there is recognition that followers and followership are essential to the success of the leadership process.

This mostly positive perception of followers and followership is not reflected in the relevant literature which, for the most part, highlights negative associations with the nature of followership and the follower label. The literature variously refers to followers as passive, ineffective, weak, lazy, or even dangerous (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019; Ford and Harding, 2018; Hopton et al., 2015; Schedlitzki et al., 2018). In addition, the follower label is seen as being fundamentally a negative label and represents a ceding of

influence and autonomy to the leader which brings with it the, mainly negative, assumptions about the type of person who would voluntarily choose such a role (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019; Hopton et al., 2015). This is particularly the case in the context of higher education, and especially among academic staff, where issues such as autonomy with respect to work, and academic freedom, are very much at odds with the features commonly associated with the follower label (Billot et al., 2013).

Therefore, the study participants' broadly positive perceptions of followership and their understanding of the role and value of followership within the broader leadership process represent a significant, and somewhat unexpected, finding. This may be explained by the fact that the current study was designed to be follower-centric and reverse the lens, while much of the literature, as discussed previously, does not take this perspective and, while focusing on followers and followership, is leadership-centric.

The finding in respect of the two types of following is very much in keeping with the literature on followership role orientation and followership behaviour styles (Carsten, 2017; Carsten et al., 2016; Kelley, 1988). This literature discusses the two main role orientations as active and passive, similar to the descriptions by the study participants. The fact that the participants are able to describe and discuss these sophisticated models of followership points to the existence of constructs which have been developed and refined via the process of social construction. This is reinforced by the existence of well-developed positive constructs of followership and followers as discussed above.

The literature discusses followers' motivations and there is some overlap between the motivations discussed in the literature and those described by the study participants. Broadly speaking, the literature focuses on what might be termed more negative reasons or motivations for choosing followership. The issue of risk and uncertainty is prevalent in the literature, as is the desire to have an easier life (Blom and Alvesson, 2015). The motivation of self-interest is also referenced in the literature, with individuals adopting follower roles because they see that they will derive benefit from cooperating (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019). Finally, the literature refers to the scenario where an individual is unable or unwilling to lead and therefore chooses the role of follower. In particular,

there is a recognition that sometimes an individual will lack the confidence or knowledge required and therefore will not try to lead. In addition, the individual may want to lead but may not be able to attract followers and for this reason will be unable to lead (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019). The literature is largely devoid of positive motivations for adopting the role of follower. In the study, the most referenced reason for choosing to follow was a genuine belief, on the part of the individual, in the vision, leader or process. This positive motivation is closely associated with the notion of a committed follower which is discussed below, and in this context it represents a possible answer to the question posed in the literature, namely, why would anyone choose to be a follower?

The literature does not address the implications of followership in detail, but it does discuss some negative consequences of choosing to be a follower. These include loss of autonomy and influence, as well as diminished status and a lack of privilege *vis-à-vis* the leader (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019). The literature does not address positive implications such as opportunity to contribute, nor does it reference the opportunity for development and growth.

Finally, the literature indicates that an important step in developing more complex constructs of followership is to understand that the label or role of follower is not defined by an individual's appointed position or role within an organisation (Billot et al., 2013; Kelley, 2008). Furthermore, it is not predetermined by certain attributes and behaviours that define a 'born follower'. Instead, followership is a choice and the individual has agency in deciding when and how he or she will be a follower. The participants' perceptions of followership demonstrate a clear understanding of the concepts of agency and choice as they relate to followers and followership. This again indicates that the participants have well-developed and complex constructs of followership.

Followers' attributes and behaviours

To understand followership, it is vital to be able to answer some fundamental questions. What are followers' traits, how do they think and how do they behave? In this sub-

section I look at the findings relating to followers' attributes and behaviours. By looking at these from the perspective of followers, we will gain an insight into the internal constructs which individuals hold in respect of how a follower is and how a follower acts. Such constructs are an important component of the process by which individuals socially construct followership for themselves and across their organisation.

From the different data sources and the different analysis approaches, the study elicited the behaviours and attributes that the participants believe characterised followers, generally and specifically in higher education institutions. A large number of traits and behaviours were referenced. For example, in the Repertory Grid study there were 173 different constructs cited and over 270 references were coded via the combined MCA and thematic analysis. Through the analysis and triangulation process, described above, that looked at what participants were trying to convey about followers' attributes and behaviours, 27 common attributes and behaviours were identified. By design, the Repertory Grid study looks at constructs in terms of a continuum between two poles (e.g. *Positive v Negative*). In the conversation during the study, participants were asked to name and explain the two poles. When analysing the interview data via MCA and thematic analysis, it was also apparent that the attributes and behaviours which were referenced by the participants were readily divided into similar pairs of polar opposites. Therefore, in the discussion of followers' constructs of attributes and behaviours in this sub-section, and throughout the thesis, they are frequently referred to in pairs which represent the poles at either end of a continuum.

Additional analysis found that the majority of these 27 attributes and behaviours could be further categorised into 6 higher level categories. These higher-level categories are outlined in Table 9.

| Category | Description |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Sociability | Attributes and behaviours which relate to the individual's demeanour and actions in the context of social interactions in the workplace. |
| Self or Other Orientated | Whether an individual is motivated more by self-interest or a broader range of concerns such as those related to group, institutional or societal needs. |
| Action Orientation | Describes how an individual is likely to act in relation to work situations in general. For example, do they get involved and take initiative or do they tend not to volunteer and allow others to make the running. |
| Conscientiousness | Individuals' actions and behaviours which are generally seen as being in support of the goals and needs of the organisation. |
| Mindset | Describes the general mindset of the individual as it applies to a broad range of work situations. |
| Competence | Attributes and behaviours relating to the perceived ability or capability of the individual in the context of the workplace. |

Table 9: High-level categories of attributes and behaviours

Table 10 shows the constructs, i.e. the attributes and behaviours, identified under each category, as well as the degree to which they were referenced within the study data. Where necessary, the table contains some notes to explain aspects of the constructs which may not be clear from the construct titles.

| Attributes & Behaviours | Note | Rep Grid | | MCA/TA | |
|---|--|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| | | Participants | References | Participants | References |
| Sociability | | 12 | 28 | 8 | 15 |
| Easy – Difficult | Interpersonal behaviours which are easy and constructive versus difficult and challenging. | 8 | 15 | 7 | 13 |
| Pro-social – Anti-social | People who are outgoing versus more introverted individuals. | 4 | 4 | - | - |
| Quiet – Outspoken | Specifically in the context of work situations (e.g. team meetings). | 6 | 9 | 1 | 2 |
| Self or Other Orientated | | 14 | 19 | 13 | 19 |
| Focus on broader society – Self-focused | | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Institutional Focus – Narrow Focus | | 4 | 4 | - | - |
| Team Player – Individualist | An individual who generally acts in the interest of the group versus an individual who acts primarily on their own behalf. | 11 | 14 | 13 | 19 |
| Action Orientation | | 18 | 30 | 29 | 76 |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Engaged – Disengaged | | 6 | 8 | 28 | 59 |
| Proactive – Passive | | 18 | 22 | 10 | 17 |
| Conscientiousness | | 10 | 19 | 26 | 70 |
| Conscientious – Unconscientious | | 7 | 11 | 26 | 70 |
| Helpful – Unhelpful | | 3 | 5 | - | - |
| Reliable – Unreliable | | 2 | 3 | - | - |
| Mindset | | 18 | 60 | 21 | 45 |
| Ambitious – Content | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Confident – Unsure | | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Creative – Unimaginative | | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Critical thinker – Uncritical thinker | | 5 | 5 | 8 | 12 |
| Independent thinker – Dependent thinker | | 18 | 18 | 3 | 3 |
| Open, flexible – Closed, inflexible | | 8 | 9 | 6 | 11 |
| Positive – Negative | | 6 | 8 | 9 | 13 |
| Pragmatic – Less practical | | 3 | 3 | - | - |
| Strategic thinking – Non-strategic thinking | | 2 | 4 | - | - |
| Strong and Clear – Nebulous and uncertain | | 2 | 4 | - | - |
| Competence | | 8 | 13 | 7 | 10 |
| Capable – Less capable | | 2 | 2 | - | - |
| Knowledgeable – Uninformed | | 5 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| Seniority – Inexperience | | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Uncategorised | | 3 | 3 | | |
| Blame others for performance – Being reflective on performance | | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Considerate – Theoretically minded | An understanding for the human aspects of a situation versus an understanding based on academic or theoretical knowledge. | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Externally focused – Broader inclusive view | Exclusive focus on the needs of external bodies or individuals versus a view which also included the interest of groups and individuals inside the organisation. | 1 | 1 | - | - |

Table 10: Participants' references to followers' attributes and behaviours

From the data as summarised in Table 10, it is apparent that a smaller number of attributes and behaviours are referenced to a higher degree than others. When the table is adjusted to include only constructs which are referenced in both of the data sets and which are referenced by a minimum of 25% of participants in at least one of the data sets, Table 11 below is the result.

When considering the numbers of references to the various categories and constructs outlined above, it is important to bear in mind that the Repertory Grid study consisted of 18 participants in total and these were exclusively members of academic staff in the two institutions. Bearing in mind the numbers of references, as summarised above, the categories and constructs are further discussed below.

| Attributes & Behaviours | Rep Grid | | MCA/TA | |
|---|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| | Participants | References | Participants | References |
| Sociability | 10 | 24 | 8 | 15 |
| Easy – Difficult | 8 | 15 | 7 | 13 |
| Quiet – Outspoken | 6 | 9 | 1 | 2 |
| Self or Other Orientated | 11 | 14 | 13 | 19 |
| Team Player – Individualist | 11 | 14 | 13 | 19 |
| Action Orientation | 18 | 30 | 29 | 76 |
| Engaged – Disengaged | 6 | 8 | 28 | 59 |
| Proactive – Passive | 18 | 22 | 10 | 17 |
| Conscientiousness | 7 | 11 | 26 | 70 |
| Conscientious – Unconscientious | 7 | 11 | 26 | 70 |
| Mindset | 18 | 37 | 21 | 45 |
| Critical thinker – Uncritical thinker | 5 | 5 | 8 | 12 |
| Independent thinker – Dependent thinker | 18 | 18 | 3 | 3 |
| Open, flexible – Closed, inflexible | 8 | 9 | 6 | 11 |
| Positive – Negative | 6 | 8 | 9 | 13 |
| Competence | 5 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| Knowledgeable – Uninformed | 5 | 7 | 3 | 3 |

Table 11: Highest referenced constructs of followers' attributes and behaviours

Sociability

How individual followers behave in terms of their interpersonal demeanour and approach while engaging with others in the workplace is seen to be important to the success or otherwise of a process or initiative. For example, Hannah, a member of academic staff in the Ceres Institute, commented as follows:

“... the person I am thinking about is such a kind, good communicator and she gets on so well with everyone, that the way she deals with people, she just makes the process so much easier”.

Attributes and behaviours of followers which referred to their sociability or otherwise, were referenced by a significant number of academic staff in both institutions during the interviews and the Repertory Grid study. Participants most often referred to the degree to which an individual was easy or difficult in certain workplace situations and highlighted the implications of the behaviour. The quotation above falls into the category of someone who is easy (interpersonally). The following quote, from a member of academic staff in the Minerva University, illustrates the nature and implications of difficult interpersonal behaviour:

“There was a negative attitude, or aggressive attitude, coming from some people and they were not allowing many of the people who wanted to speak to have a fair say. This was in a meeting, and two the people in the meeting were trying to dominate, it came across that they were not sincerely taking on what was being said.”

(Sheila, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Related to this is the degree to which an individual is outspoken or quiet in such work-based social situations. Interestingly, participants spoke about behaviours which were challenging at either end of the continuum between quiet and outspoken, and a number referred to the more helpful people in these situations being those that are outspoken to the right degree. Consequently, when participants were asked, during the Repertory Grid study, to indicate the positive and negative pole for this construct, many had

difficulty. When the various individual constructs are examined, there is further evidence of this. Contrast the following sample constructs from this category:

More reserved v Good communicator

Quiet v Vocal (opinionated)

In the first case, the quiet pole seems to have the more negative connotation, while in the second there seems to be more negativity associated with the outspoken pole. In the interviews, these two scenarios were also referenced as evidenced in the following quotes:

“I have a strong feeling that we had too many people, too many loud voices all wanting to be heard, all wanting their own way.”

(Deborah, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

“As I recall, there was very little discussion. It's often very difficult to get, to get discussion at [that forum], people often don't say very much. So there was a respectful audience.”

(Daniel, a member of the institutional leadership at Minerva University)

In general, significant value is placed on the individual follower's ability to exhibit a range of prosocial behaviours in the context of the workplace.

Self or other orientated

Not unrelated to sociability, self or other orientation refers to how an individual relates to others but extends to describe what motivates this action. Are they motivated by the needs of their group or team? Alternatively, are they motivated by the needs of their institution or the broader society? Or are they narrowly focused on their own needs or interests?

The most referenced construct in this category, and in the study as a whole, was that of team player versus individualist. When citing examples of good or effective followership, participants often referred to actions that were in the interest of the team or group, as illustrated by the following quote:

“And actually there was a person there who, there was a lot of disagreement, or a lot of discussion, it wasn't disagreement it was discussion, with everyone trying to get their point heard, but a member of staff who isn't on the Executive was able to see and say that we have to go with a common voice, we have to have one ticket item.”

(Philip, a member of the academic staff at Minerva University)

Conversely, when poor followership is illustrated, it is often with examples of actions which are motivated by individual interest. Consider the following quote from a member of academic staff in the Ceres Institute as an example of such individualist behaviour:

“A number of lecturers exhibited this at the last programmatic review, they were very possessive of their modules and they didn't want any changes made to them, where they were located et cetera and they weren't open to any changes, so they stuck rigidly and they had different meetings off to the side to make sure that, protectionism I suppose.”

(Simon, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Consider the following sample constructs from the Repertory Grid study:

Collegial v Competitive

Foster group collaboration v Close down collaboration

Sharing knowledge v Solo run

In each case, these reflect a similar theme whereby the non-group pole has a negative label or connotation.

Participants also cited examples of individuals and groups acting in the best interests of the institution as a whole. For example, one of the institutional leaders in the Minerva University commented:

“The main one for me would be that some of the research centres volunteered to teach. Teach courses into the – state-of-the-art courses – into the general curriculum. These are busy people, they are in the research track, they're fighting for their life in grants, a lot of them, but they would still do something like that, I think that was very positive.”

(Maurice, a member of the institutional leadership at Minerva University)

An orientation away from the individual's self-interest is generally referenced in the context of a follower contributing to success or progress. In particular, team- or group-oriented behaviours appear to be highly valued.

Action orientation

Action orientation refers to how a follower generally acts in respect of a particular process or initiative. It is to a degree an overarching attribute that governs a lot of other behaviours in respect of the process. Across both data sets, constructs within the category of action orientation are referenced by almost 100% of participants. Action orientation is also at the core of the two different types of followership described in the previous sub-section. The two constructs in this category are engaged/disengaged and proactive/passive.

The engaged/disengaged construct, it can be argued, is at a higher level as it addresses the follower's tendencies, or not, to become involved in the process. As such, it can be argued that engagement is a prerequisite for the follower's participation in the process, as evidenced by the following quote:

“So a follower really needs to be a person who is engaged, that is, interested in the project, willing to contribute to it.”

(Patrick, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Follower engagement is generally seen by participants as being essential to the success of an initiative or process. The nature of engagement and the conditions under which it may or may not happen are discussed in later sub-sections of this chapter.

The proactive/passive construct refers to whether an individual will generally initiate action, act when prompted, or remain passive in respect of the process. Participants have indicated that they see two types of followership, defined by proactive (or active) followers and passive followers, and these are seen as good and bad forms of followership respectively. Proactive followership is characterised by followers who are actively contributing and in addition are often volunteering or taking initiative within the process. This is seen as positive and contributes to the success of the process as evidenced by the following quotes:

“What I’m buzzing about actually is how so many people are proactive in getting in behind this and saying “How can I make a difference?”

(Carmel, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

“When we were developing our own academic plan, somebody decided to poll our views. They took the strands of the university [strategy] and broke it up into groups and polled our views in respect of the different areas. They took the initiative.”

(James, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Passive followership, on the other hand, is generally seen as having negative implications for the process. Followers who are passive are at best seen as neutral:

“They won’t take initiative, they probably won’t, they probably would be positive enough, and open to new ideas but yes, they are open to new ideas, because if they are followers they are happy to do things but they won’t take initiative.”

(Eve, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

but can also be viewed in a negative light as the following quote illustrates:

“And then I suppose you’ve got passive followers, but they’re not even followers because they’re not doing anything.”

(Luke, a member of the institutional leadership at Ceres Institute)

Action orientation is, given the frequency with which it was referenced by almost all participants in the study, very significant for followership. In particular, engagement is necessary at the very earliest stage of the followership process and presages the nature of the followership throughout. The importance of engagement for the effectiveness, or otherwise, of followership is discussed further in the following sub-section.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness refers in the first instance to the individual's contribution to completing the tasks required for the success of the process or initiative. It goes beyond this however to also describe their demeanour as a follower and whether that demeanour involves a general willingness to contribute or help.

People who are seen as conscientious are often described as productive, hard-working, or as having a good work ethic. This is evident in the following quotes:

“In my head, a follower is somebody who probably quietly goes about their day-to-day job and probably does a very good day-to-day job, they are probably a productive and extremely important part of the organisation.”

(Julia, member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

“Also, I think some people can be absolutely fantastic followers in that what they do is that they will be highly structured, they have a really strong work ethic and work output.”

(Maurice, member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

In addition, conscientious followers are seen as having sufficient perspective to know what is required to move the process or initiative forward. This perspective is coupled with a disposition towards work which means they will proceed with the necessary tasks without intervention from managers or leaders. The following quotes are illustrative of this aspect of conscientiousness:

“That people are willing to roll their sleeves up to help and they are not being asked to do it.”

(Carmel, member of academic staff at Minerva University)

“So, in that situation, and it's usually the same people, who step forward and say I'll do that. The person who realises that need...”

(Eve, member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

The constructs which were suggested during the Repertory Grid study also reflected these twin aspects of conscientiousness (i.e. a capacity for work coupled with a perspective on the work required) as illustrated by the following examples:

Productive v Destructive

Hard working v Lazy

Go the extra mile v Do minimum required

Mindset

As is evident from the reference data presented above, the category covering the follower's mindset has a high level of significance.

While the mindset of an independent thinker, or the opposite mindset of a dependent thinker, was most referenced, it is important to note that the construct of *Independent thinker v Dependent thinker* was one of the two constructs (along with *Proactive v Passive*) which were suggested to the participants. A critical mindset, in the sense that the individual is able to evaluate or think about matters critically, was referenced as an important attribute for followers. As well as direct references, it was alluded to by individuals indicating that a follower should not follow blindly but instead should challenge when necessary. For example, consider the following:

“You're following somebody but in the full awareness, not following blindly... because people following them know exactly what they're following. So, it's a thinking follower.”

(Joan, a member of the institutional leadership at Minerva University)

“Probably somebody who supports somebody but challenges them as well and maybe likes their ideas but is not prepared to just simply blindly accept everything that they are told.”

(Martin, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

It seems that critical thinking and independent thinking, while not entirely interchangeable, were very closely associated with each other in the participants' constructs. For example, consider the following quotes which describe the same phenomenon, whereby a follower does not just accept what they are told and instead evaluates and challenges it. In describing this phenomenon, the participants separately identify independent thinking and critical thinking as the salient mindset.

“A person who is cooperative, not necessarily does everything, you need people that will question things, have a bit of an independent mind, you don't want a yes person.”

(Patrick, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

“If you go out and you say it's all bells and whistles and it will be brilliant, you're going to get people's backs up, and the people who are undecided, they're going to use their critical thinking and say ‘It can't be true that there are no problems with it’, so they may not be against this but they will be just, ‘what you're saying can't be true’”.

(Thomas, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

A follower mindset that allows them to be open to new ideas and flexible in terms of exploring and accepting different options (or the opposite, a closed mindset), was referenced by a significant number of participants as being an important factor in the progress, or otherwise, of a project or initiative. For example:

“... they probably would be positive enough, and open to new ideas ,..”

(Eve, a member of the academic staff of Ceres Institute)

Participants also referred to whether an individual had a positive or negative mindset, towards work generally or towards the specific process at hand, as a significant follower attribute.

The follower's mindset is often referenced as a context or condition which in turn brings about or facilitates certain follower behaviours or actions.

Competence

A follower's ability to actually make a contribution to an initiative or process is addressed by this category. The attribute which was most salient for participants within this category was whether a follower was knowledgeable or not. As can be seen from the following quotes, the implication was fairly direct, namely, that a knowledgeable follower is better able to contribute to the process than an uninformed one:

"I have [other] departments working on it and there are very, very good people who are very knowledgeable."

(Joseph, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

"A person who has a lot of IT knowledge, and we are looking at ways to record information and they are volunteering a lot of good suggestions and they have knowledge that I wouldn't have myself in terms of moving the project forward."

(Patrick, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

"... they haven't got the necessary skills or the knowledge around whatever the project is."

(Grace, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Also within this category, participants referred to the issue of seniority or status and how it impacts upon followers' behaviours. Seniority or status was suggested, almost as a proxy for level of knowledge, as the reason why an individual follower did not engage with a process:

“...but to a large extent I didn't really engage because I was still in my first two years and I was trying to get myself established.”

(Helen, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Lack of status, this time in the form of probationary or temporary contract status, was also cited as a reason why some followers are not able to challenge or be critical in the context of the leadership process:

“I think for any precarious staff member, I would advise them to follow. Any part-time contracted staff, anyone that's precarious, I would advise them to follow – if you are a critical voice, you'll be the first to be cut.”

(James, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Table 12 shows the numbers, from each study's dataset, of participants at each institution, and in each academic discipline, who referenced the various constructs. Figure 10 illustrates the data contained in Table 12 and also includes the data for the two institutions combined.

On reviewing this data, it is apparent that, in general terms, there is a reasonable level of consistency across both sites and also across both high-level academic disciplines (i.e. Science & Engineering and Business & Humanities). It is noteworthy that the construct referring to whether a follower is knowledgeable or not is referenced in far greater numbers by participants in the Ceres Institute. In the Repertory Grid study, not a single participant from Minerva University referenced this construct. This finding may reflect the fact that the Ceres Institute is strongly focused on applied programmes and research and in this context knowledge, and technical knowledge in particular, may have a higher salience than in a more traditional university.

| | Rep Grid | | MCA/TA | | Rep Grid | | MCA/TA | |
|---|----------|---------|--------|---------|----------|-------|--------|-------|
| | Ceres | Minerva | Ceres | Minerva | S & E | B & H | S & E | B & H |
| Sociability | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Easy – Difficult | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Quiet - Outspoken | 5 | 1 | 1 | – | 5 | 1 | – | 1 |
| Self or Other Orientated | 5 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| Team Player - Individualist | 5 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| Action Orientation | 10 | 8 | 14 | 15 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 8 |
| Engaged - Disengaged | 4 | 2 | 12 | 15 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 8 |
| Proactive - Passive | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 2 |
| Conscientiousness | 5 | 2 | 11 | 14 | 5 | 2 | 11 | 7 |
| Conscientious - Unconscientious | 5 | 2 | 11 | 14 | 5 | 2 | 11 | 7 |
| Mindset | 10 | 8 | 12 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Critical thinker – Uncritical thinker | 3 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Independent thinker – Dependent thinker | 10 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 8 | 1 | 2 |
| Open, flexible – Closed, inflexible | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Positive - Negative | 4 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Competence | 5 | | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Knowledgeable - Uninformed | 5 | – | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |

Table 12: Most referenced constructs by institution and academic discipline

Another finding that emerges from this review is that participants from the broad academic area of Science and Engineering refer to attributes and behaviours in the sociability category in significantly greater numbers than those in the area of Business and Humanities. In particular, the construct which describes followers as easy or difficult interpersonally is heavily referenced by those in Science and Engineering. This would seem at odds with the broad expectations that those in science and engineering would be less focused on social and interpersonal factors than those in Business and Humanities.

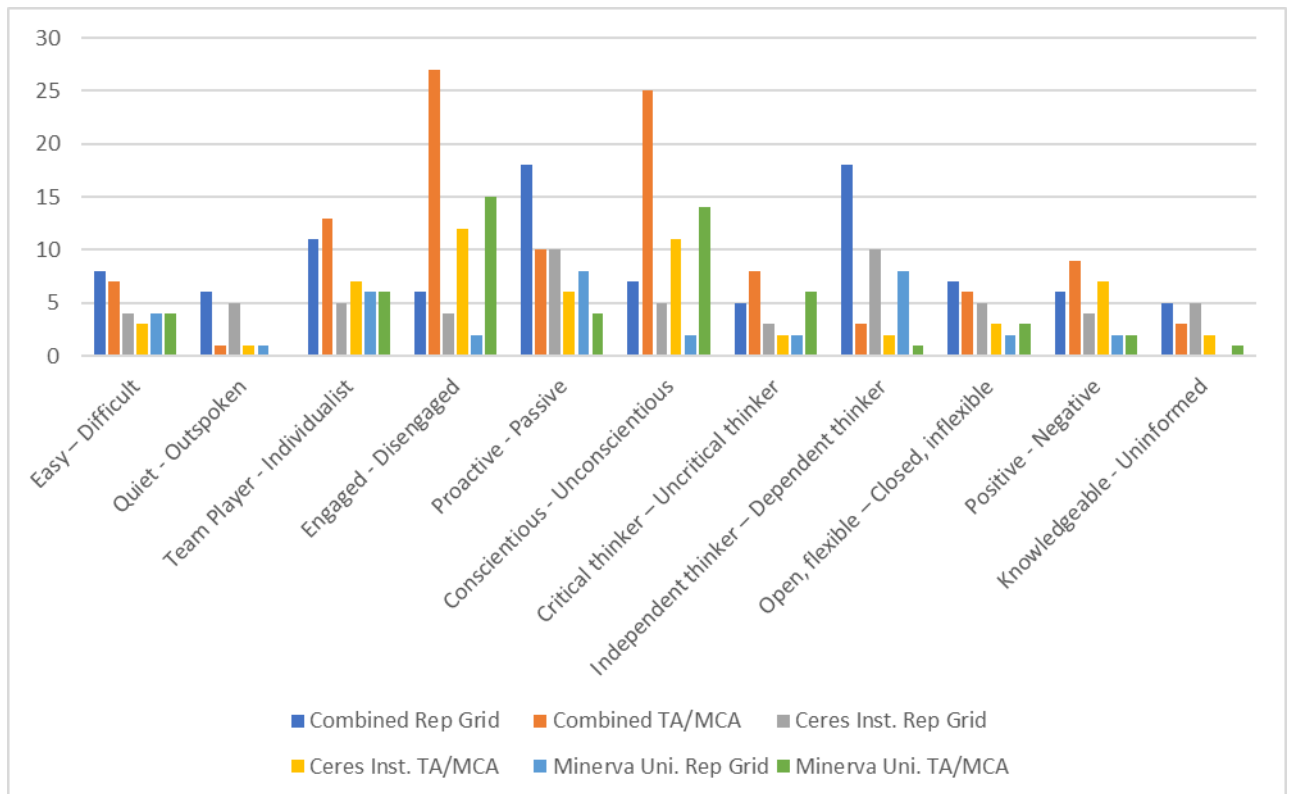


Figure 10: Most highly referenced constructs broken down by institution

Discussion of findings in respect of followers’ attributes and behaviours

The main findings in respect of follower’s attributes and behaviours are summarised as follows:

- Identified 27 common constructs of followers’ attributes and behaviours.
- The majority of these belonged to one of the following 6 categories:
 - Sociability
 - Self or other orientation
 - Action orientation
 - Conscientiousness
 - Mindset

- Competence
- Within these 6 categories, there were 11 highly referenced (within both data sets) constructs of attributes and behaviour.
- The common constructs, the categories and the highly referenced constructs provide a useful and interesting taxonomy which may help future followership research.

As discussed above, there were large numbers of constructs and references within the two data sets which were analysed using multiple approaches to yield a comprehensive picture of the participants' constructs of the attributes and behaviours of followers.

These constructs refer to what the literature calls micro-behaviours (and/or micro-attributes) and while they are often studied as components of higher order attributes or behaviours, there is value in exploring them in their own right (Yukl et al., 2019). Studies of various aspects of leadership and followership have tended to focus on higher order attributes and behaviours and as a result only a narrow subset of micro-behaviours has been examined. This narrow focus has meant that the taxonomies or typologies of leader and follower attributes and behaviours are incomplete, with the result that research efforts have been less fruitful than they could have been in the area of leadership (Antonakis and House, 2014; Yukl et al., 2019) and followership (Baker, 2007).

While I refer to attributes and behaviours, it is important to note that in most instances a construct can describe both an attribute and a behaviour. For example, somebody can be anti-social (i.e. an attribute) or act anti-social (i.e. a behaviour). Frequently, in the literature, attributes and behaviours are used interchangeably with the focus being on behaviours because these can be observed whereas attributes are internal states that beget behaviours.

In this study, which focused on shared, rather than individual, constructs of followers' attributes and behaviours, the data was analysed and coded in an inductive manner to yield a set of 27 common constructs. This represents a detailed taxonomy of followers'

micro-behaviours (and/or micro-attributes) which represent the shared experience of the study participants. Therefore, this taxonomy is descriptive (i.e. it describes the actual attributes and behaviours of followers) rather than prescriptive (i.e. indicating the desirable or required behaviours of followers) in nature (Crossman and Crossman, 2011). The followership literature describes a number of descriptive taxonomies or typologies of followers' behaviours, including Kelley (1988), Miller (2004), Kellerman (2007) and Carsten (2010). However, each of these is very much focused on higher-order constructs, rather than micro-behaviours (Crossman and Crossman, 2011). Consider Kelley's (2008; 1988) framework which is illustrated in Figure 2. This framework describes a multi-level taxonomy. Kelley identifies two behavioural dimensions, namely, *Proactive v Passive* and *Independent thinking v Dependent thinking*. Kelley's behavioural dimensions are equivalent to the constructs referenced in the current study. Kelley uses the individual follower's orientation, in respect of each pole of the behavioural dimensions, to describe five follower types or role orientations. Kelley also presents 4 "qualities of followers" which he claims that all effective followers share (see Table 13).

| Qualities of Followers |
|---|
| They manage themselves well. |
| They are committed to the organization and to a purpose, principle, or person outside themselves. |
| They build their competence and focus their efforts for maximum impact. |
| They are courageous, honest, and credible. |

Table 13: Kelley's Qualities of Followers (Kelley 1988)

Kelley's behavioural dimensions are present, on a one-to-one basis, in the taxonomy developed in the current study. In addition, the attributes and behaviours addressed by the "qualities of followers" are also represented by constructs within the taxonomy. Kelley's framework for effective and ineffective followership will be discussed in greater detail in the next sub-section. Carsten and colleagues (2010) do present a taxonomy which includes 12 codes or constructs of micro-behaviours (see Table 14), but they then proceed to group or align these under three follower role orientations, namely, passive,

active and proactive. Comparing the behaviours identified by Carsten et al. with the findings from the current study, there is a significant degree of commonality. Within the 27 common constructs described in table 10 above, there are corresponding constructs for 11 of the constructs listed by Carsten et al. (2010). The reduced list of 11 highly referenced constructs from the current study, shown in Table 11, contains one-to-one correlations with 8 of the behaviours in the taxonomy developed by Carsten and her colleagues, and when the coding definitions used in the current study are taken into consideration, 11 of the 12 constructs are represented.

| Codes or constructs | Included in taxonomy from this study |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Team player | Yes (one-to-one) |
| Positive attitude | Yes (one-to-one) |
| Initiative/proactive behaviour | Yes (one-to-one) |
| Expressing opinions | Yes (one-to-one) |
| Flexibility/openness | Yes (one-to-one) |
| Obedience/deference | No |
| Communication skills | Yes (one-to-one) |
| Loyalty/support | Yes (via coding definition) |
| Responsible/dependable | Yes (via coding definition) |
| Taking ownership | Yes (one-to-one) |
| Mission conscience | Yes (one-to-one) |
| Integrity | Yes (via coding definition) |

Table 14: Constructs or Codes of Followers' Behaviours (Carsten et al. 2010)

The taxonomies of followers' behaviours presented by Kelley and Carsten et al. exist as constituents of higher-level taxonomies which address follower role orientations. The taxonomy presented here does not assign the basic constructs of attributes and behaviours to any particular higher-order attributes or behaviours. Instead, the proposed taxonomy groups the constructs under category headings, which are broadly descriptive of the types of constructs contained within the category. This means that the constructs may be associated with any number of higher order behaviours, or none, thereby affording greater flexibility and scope to future research and researchers that may utilise or adopt the taxonomy (Antonakis and House, 2014; Yukl et al., 2019). The taxonomy provides additional flexibility due to the fact that each of the constructs

represents a continuum of behaviours between the two poles that describe the construct. This means that each construct concisely and efficiently encapsulates and represents the complexity and nuance inherent in followers' attributes and behaviours in a way that is not possible when using discrete labels or descriptors.

The taxonomy of attributes and behaviours presented in Table 10 above (as well as the abridged version shown in Table 11) has two levels, with common basic constructs grouped under 6 categories as described in Table 9. As described above, the categories are independent of any higher-order attributes or behaviours. As this study was designed to explore the phenomenon of followership in a holistic manner, it was not optimised for the discovery or development of a taxonomy of followers' attributes and behaviours. Therefore, while the taxonomy accurately represents the participants' constructs, and it broadly aligns with the findings in the literature, further work would be required to validate and further develop the taxonomy, particularly if it were to be used in organisational contexts outside of higher education. That said, the taxonomy meaningfully represents the array of attributes and behaviours exhibited by followers in the context of specific leadership processes, and as such provides a useful resource which may facilitate, analysis and discussion, in the context of this study and in future research, of both followership in higher education and of followership in general.

Effective and ineffective followership

In the previous sub-section, the attributes and behaviours exhibited by followers were discussed. Part of that discussion touched on attributes and behaviours which led to favourable outcomes or good followership. Following on from this aspect of the previous discussion, this sub-section looks, in a more comprehensive manner, at the followers' perceptions and beliefs relating to effective and ineffective followership. As well as looking at which follower attributes and behaviours are believed to correlate with effective or ineffective followership, the analysis also seeks to determine if there are other factors which are interesting or important to the phenomenon.

In this context, the findings from the Repertory Grid study were of particular significance. Due to the design of this study, participants not only identified followers'

attributes and behaviours, but also indicated the degree to which these were exhibited by different types of followers (the elements in the repertory grid), both real and hypothetical. I have discussed above how the data from the 18 individual repertory grids was analysed to create a composite repertory grid consisting of the 27 common attribute and behaviour constructs discussed in the previous sub-section, and numerical ratings which indicate which pole of the construct better describes each of the elements. Given that the elements are real life examples, supplied by the participant, of followers who made positive, negative and neutral contributions to a specific leadership process, the data contained in the composite repertory grid reflects the participants' beliefs about which attributes and behaviours contribute to effective and ineffective followership.

In addition to the Repertory Grid study, the thematic analysis of the interview data was also used to discover useful information about followers' constructs of effective and ineffective followership. In the remainder of this sub-section, I present the findings in respect of effective and ineffective followership that emerge from the analysis and triangulation of the data from data sets.

Constructs of effective and ineffective followership from the Repertory Grid study

Looking first to the findings from the Repertory Grid study, the 27 constructs of followers' attributes and behaviours, discussed in the previous sub-section, were used to develop the composite repertory grid which is shown in Figure 11. The first step in analysing the data contained in this grid is to conduct an 'eyeball' examination of the grid. Consider the right-most column of the grid. This represents the 'Worst follower' element and a cursory look at the ratings for the various constructs shows that the majority are rated at 4 or 5. This indicates that for the majority of the constructs the worst follower will be very close to the attribute of behaviour described by the right-hand pole of the construct. Taking the very first construct on the grid (i.e. *Ambitious v Content*), the rating for the worst follower is 5, meaning that this follower would definitely be described as content and not described as ambitious. There is one outlier construct where the worst follower is rated as 1 but this is a construct with only a single reference within the study.

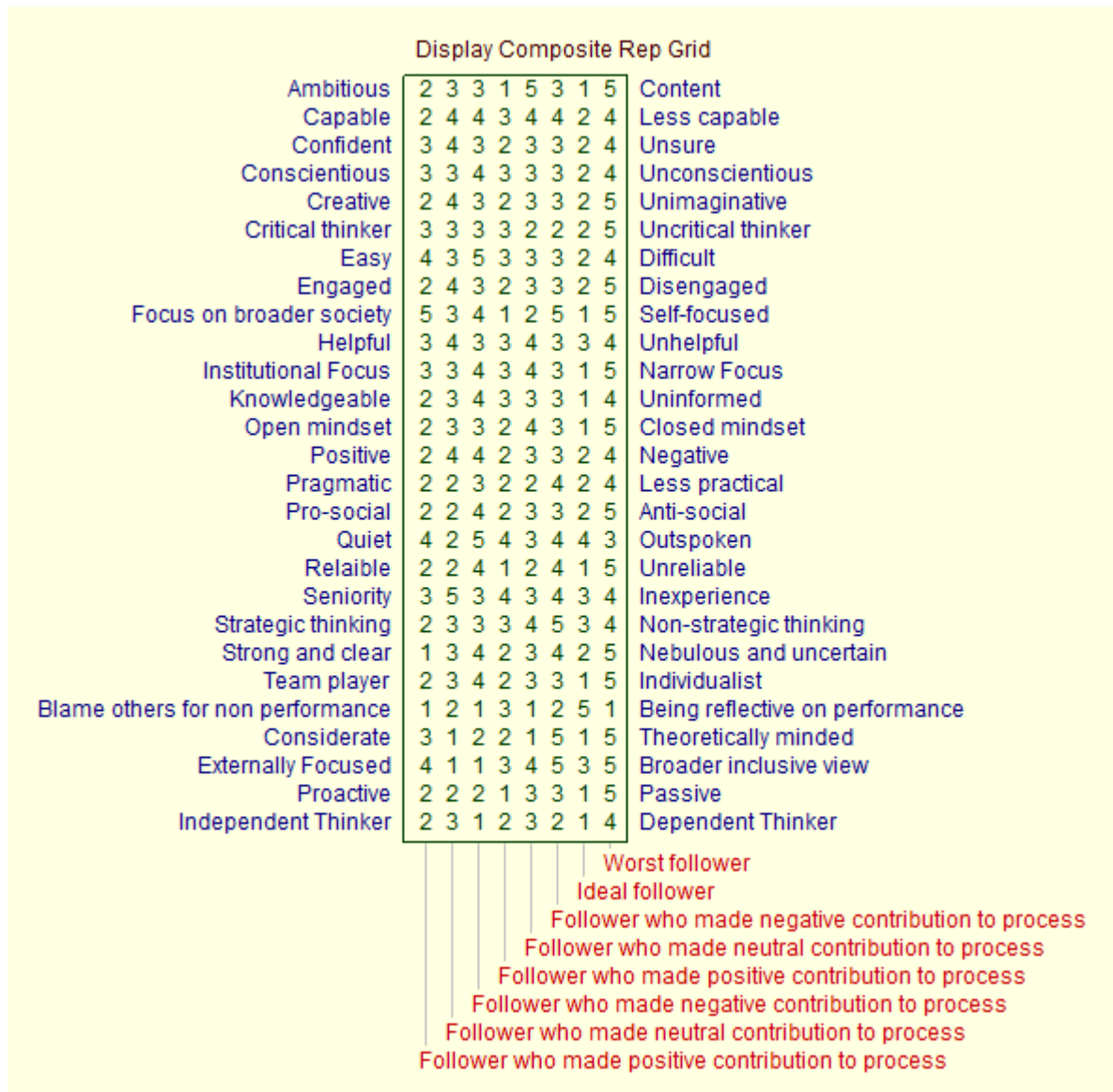


Figure 11: Composite grid for all participants in the Repertory Grid study

There is also an interesting rating of 3 for the worst follower in respect of the *Quiet v Outspoken* construct. This instance highlights why it is not sufficient to only examine the grid data. This rating can only be explained by listening to the discussion with the participants in respect of this construct. During the Repertory Grid study, each participant was asked to consider each of the constructs that they had provided and to consider which pole of the construct was most likely to be associated with a follower making a positive contribution. For the participants that provided the *Quiet v Outspoken* constructs, a number had difficulty nominating a positive pole. In discussing this with them, it emerged that they do not favour an individual who is entirely at either

pole because both extremes can be problematic. From the eyeball test of the grid, the worst follower is right in the middle of the continuum and the ideal follower is more towards the outspoken pole.

Looking at the column which represents the ideal follower (i.e. second column from the right), ratings of 1 and 2 are most common and the two outliers discussed above are also in evidence. There are also a number of ratings of 3 in this column. These indicate constructs where neither of the poles were entirely positive. In the previous sub-section, the 27 constructs were refined to a more significant subset consisting of the 11 most referenced constructs. Figure 12 shows the repertory grid that results when only these constructs are used.

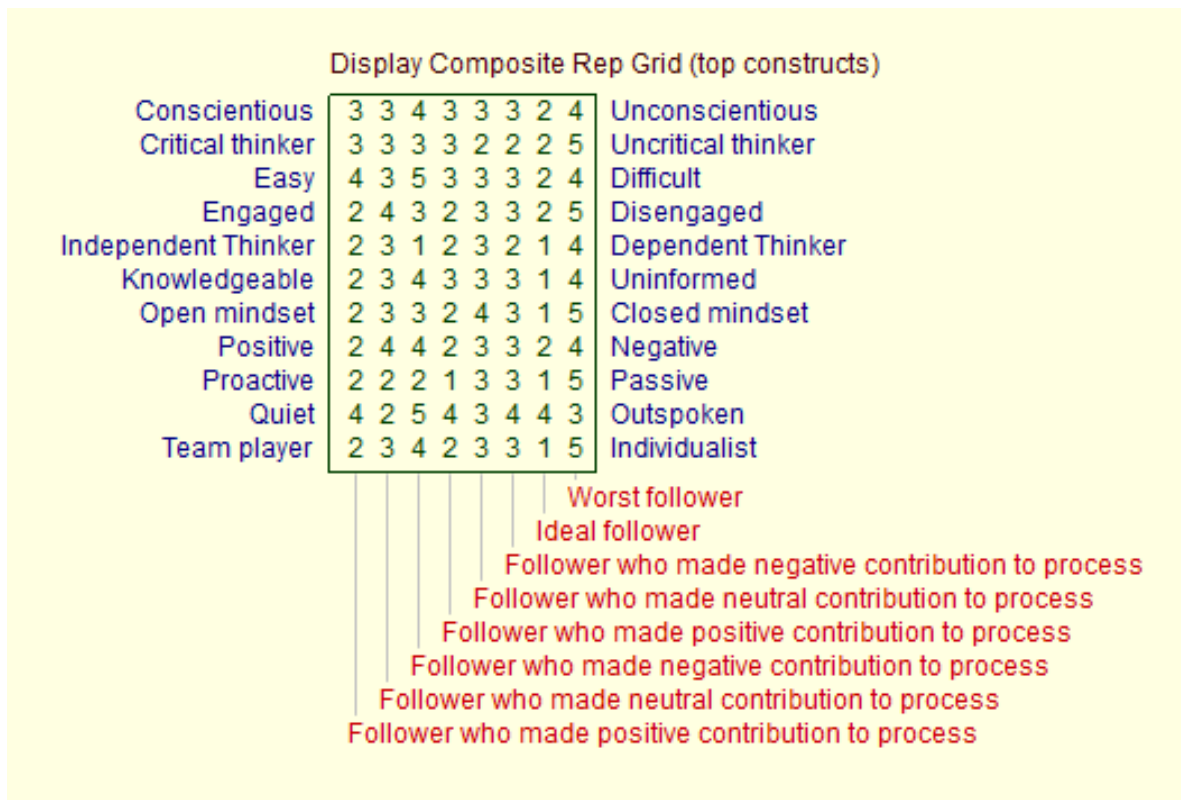


Figure 12: Composite repertory grid focusing on the most referenced constructs

For this grid, there is a much clearer polarisation between the ideal and worst follower. Apart from the outlier *Quiet v Outspoken* construct, the ideal follower receives a 1 or 2 rating while the worst follower receives a 4 or 5 for each of the constructs.

As discussed above, there are a number of analysis approaches beyond the manual approach applied above. In this context, given the large number of constructs, PrinGrid analysis can particularly useful. This analysis creates a plot which illustrates the constructs, and the poles of those constructs, that are associated with each element. The plot also provides an illustration of how different elements are associated with each other.

Figure 13 shows the PrinGrid plot for the composite repertory grid shown in Figure 11. Note the location in the plot of the ideal follower and worst follower elements. They are almost polar opposites of each other in the diagram, which is in line with expectations. Analysing the locations of the other elements shows that the elements representing followers who made a positive contribution are very close, in the plot, to the ideal follower which shows that they have similar profiles. Contrast this with the elements representing followers who made a negative contribution who are located much further from the worst follower, thus indicating less alignment in their profiles.

The PrinGrid diagram also provides a graphical representation of which constructs are associated with each element. Closeness of a construct pole to an element on the diagram indicates that this construct pole is central or important to that element. Examining the plot in Figure 13, you can see that construct poles such as team player, proactive, engaged and conscientious are all present in and around the ideal follower element.

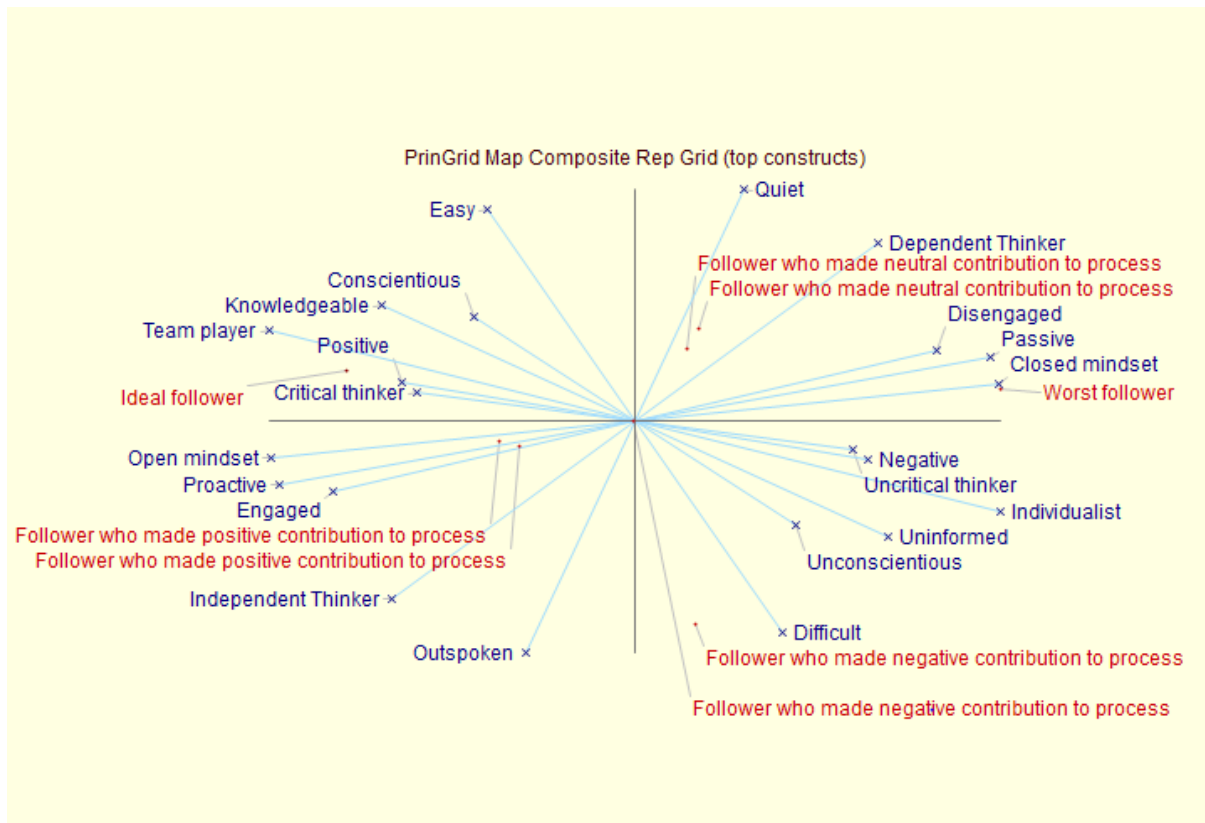


Figure 14: PrinGrid map of grid which contained the most referenced constructs

While the PrinGrid analysis provides clear illustrations of the associations between elements and constructs, it is important to remember that these plots are not representing quantitative data and, in that sense, cannot be treated as statistical data. The plots are an accurate reflection of the profiles and trends contained in the data and as such they help to highlight possible findings within the data. However, these findings must be confirmed through the analysis of the meanings contained in the participants' conversations and discussions. The relevance or otherwise of these findings to the themes emerging from the participants' interviews is discussed below.

Another technique that can be useful for analysing repertory grid data is the focus cluster technique. This effectively identifies cluster relationships evident in how the different elements and constructs are rated by the participants. In simple terms, the closer together two elements, or constructs, are in a focus plot, the more similar their profiles are. This type of analysis can be used, for example, to identify constructs that may be placed under a similar category. Figure 15 shows the focus cluster plot for the

repertory grid based on the top referenced constructs. The cluster plot for the elements shows a very clear cluster of the two elements representing followers who made a positive contribution, and these are associated fairly closely with the ideal follower element. Of interest is the cluster of the two elements which represent followers who made a neutral contribution and one of the elements representing followers who made a negative contribution. This may suggest that the profiles of a negative follower and a neutral follower are very similar and that by extension the contributions of a negative and neutral follower have the same impact. This echoes, to an extent, the negative association with neutral followers which is evident in the corresponding PrinGrid plot (see Figure 14). Interestingly, the plot shows that this cluster is more closely associated with the positive and ideal followers than with the other negative follower element and the worst follower element. One interpretation of this plot is that there is a type of negative follower who is essentially a neutral follower and then there is another type of negative follower, possibly one who actively opposes or works against the process, that is closer to the profile of the worst follower. In relation to the cluster plot of the constructs, there is little of note except possibly the cluster of the *Quiet v Outspoken* construct with the *Independent thinking v Dependent thinking* construct. As we saw above, the *Quiet v Outspoken* construct is something of an outlier in that neither pole is associated with ideal or worst followers. Its association with the *Independent thinking v Dependent thinking* construct may suggest a similar lack of polarisation for that construct. As discussed below in more detail, there is some evidence of this lack of polarity in the participants' interviews when they speak of the need for challenge but not too much challenge.

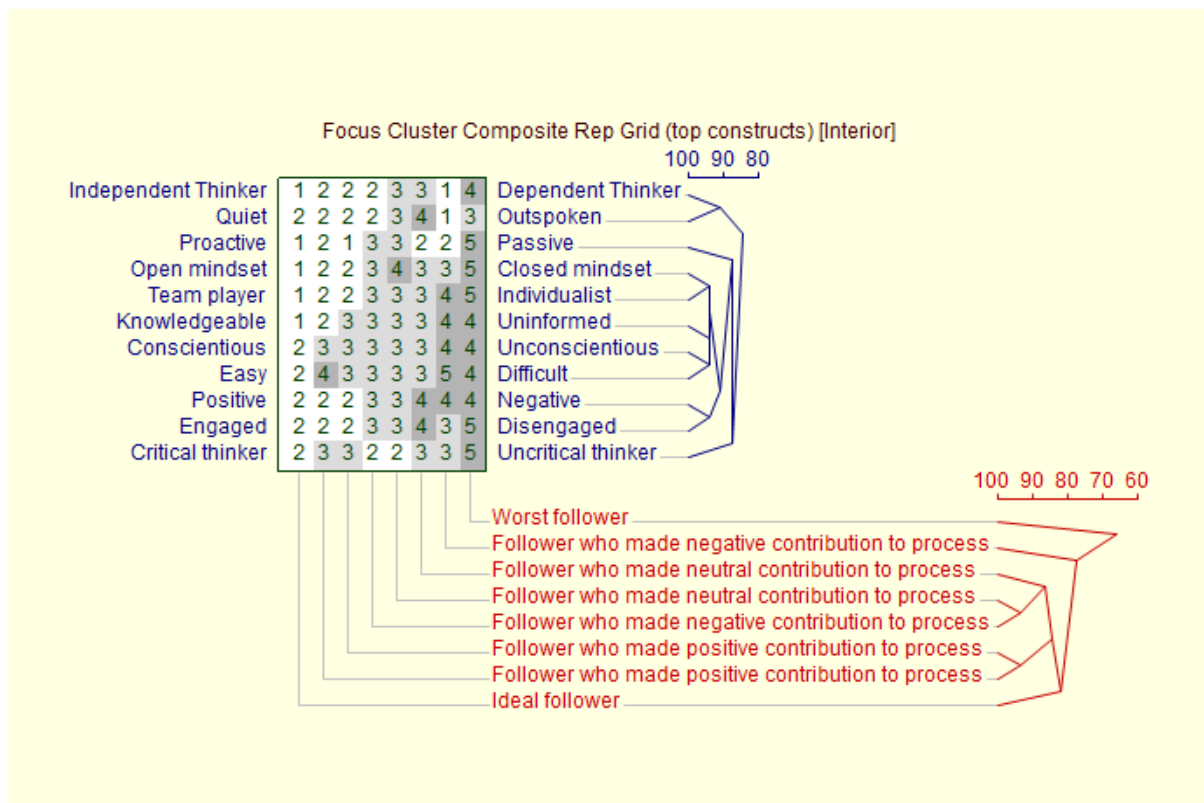


Figure 15: Focus cluster of grid which contained the most referenced constructs

Looking at the two case study institutions separately, a composite repertory grid was developed for each and these were analysed as before. Figure 16 and Figure 17 show the PrinGrid diagrams for the Ceres Institute and Minerva University respectively. In broad terms, there are no significant differences between the diagrams from the two institutions and they are both in line with the overall findings.

In summarising the findings from the Repertory Grid study, the data indicates that the ideal, or most effective, follower has the following profile:

- A pro-social individual who has an easy interpersonal style and who is not too outspoken or too quiet.
- They are engaged with their work as well as being proactive and conscientious. In addition, they are a team player.
- They are generally positive and open-minded with a capacity for critical and independent thinking.
- They are knowledgeable in relation to their work.

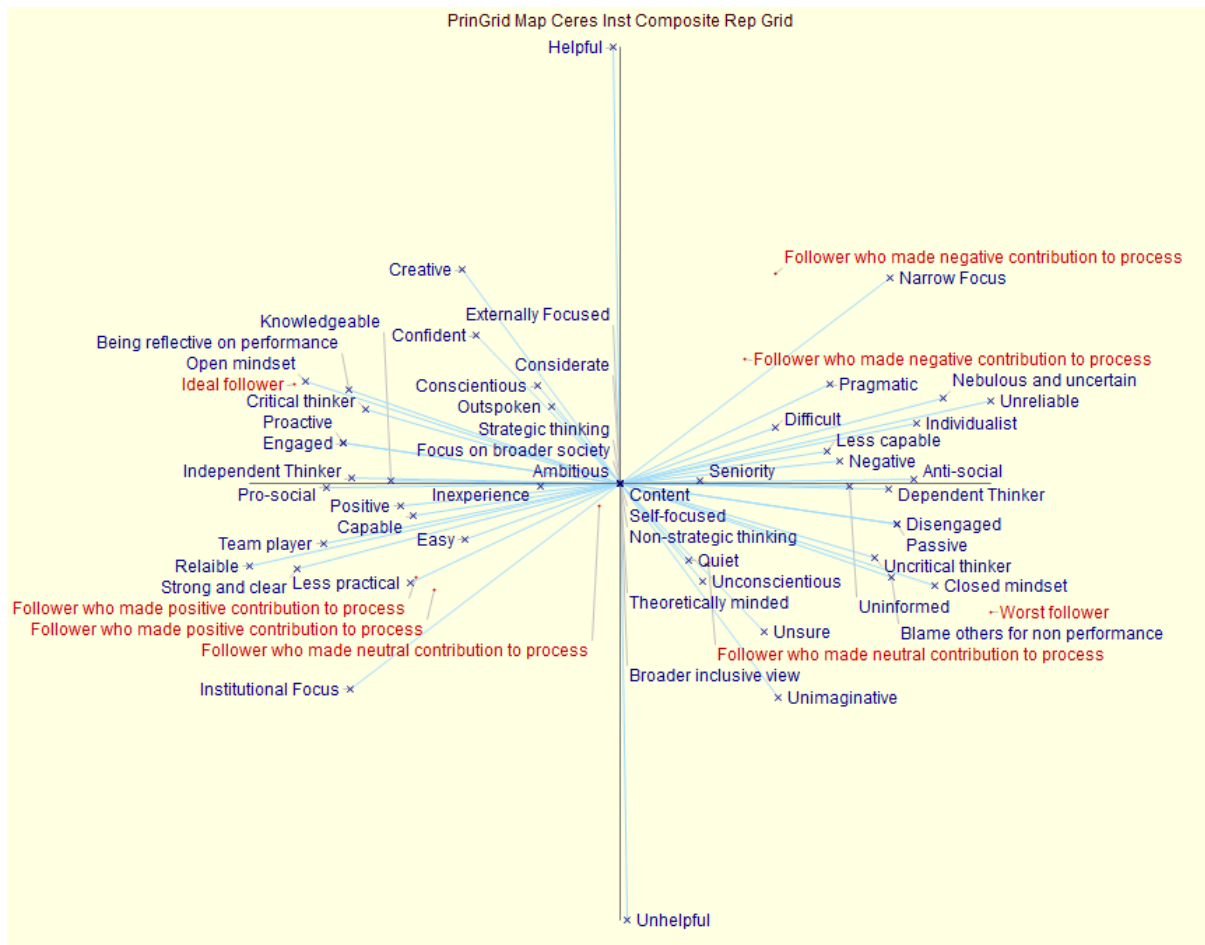


Figure 16: PrinGrid map of the composite grid for the Ceres Institute

In contrast, the worst, or most ineffective, follower has the following profile:

- Anti-social with a difficult interpersonal style.
- They are mostly motivated by self-interest and act accordingly.
- They tend to be disengaged and passive in relation to their work and are generally not conscientious.
- They may have a negative mindset and be closed to new approaches or initiatives.
- They will have a limited capacity for critical and independent thinking, and they may lack the requisite knowledge to perform and evaluate their work.

The findings from the Repertory Grid study suggest interesting factors in relation to effective and ineffective followership. However, it is important to assess these in combination with the findings that emerge from the analysis of the participants' interviews. This is important in the first instance to achieve the triangulation effect

When the results of the repertory grid analysis were combined with the analysis of the participants' interview data, an overarching framework for effective and ineffective followership emerged, which maintained the findings in respect of followers' attributes and behaviours, while also accommodating a broader range of factors. This framework is discussed in detail below.

A framework for effective and ineffective followership

The evidence suggests a framework for effective and ineffective followership which is based on three overarching factors. The framework proposes that an effective follower is committed, constructive and able to challenge. The more that these three factors are in evidence, the more effective a follower will be. Conversely, the more that they are absent, the less effective a follower will be. The findings and evidence in respect of the three factors are discussed below.

Committed

Participants variously spoke about the need for the follower to “genuinely believe”, “buy-in”, or be “committed” as a necessary prerequisite to followership. Without this commitment or belief, the result was either a passive, disengaged model of followership or a failure to follow at all.

Almost 60% of participants referred to the importance of committing to the leader or, more often, the vision or process. The following quotes are an illustrative sample of the participants' sentiments:

“Being a follower allows you to contribute to something you might genuinely believe in.”

(Daniel, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

“A follower is usually somebody who is that believer, someone who buys into whatever the leader is talking about or where the leader wants to go, they want to travel on that journey and help get there.”

(Carmel, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

“So, follower, first of all is someone has to have faith in what they're following, whether it's a person or an idea or whatever.”

(Thomas, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

It is noteworthy that many participants qualified the need for commitment or belief by emphasising that it must be genuine or authentic. For example, consider the following quotes:

“I suppose it is somebody who follows because they believe in what the vision is and that there is not necessarily something in it for them, so there's not so much ego in it.”

(Hannah, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

“That there isn't an agenda, that they are committed and engaged with the process because they believe in it and they don't feel, they're not doing this because they'll get promoted or to get extra money or people will like me more.”

(Grace, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

This latter quote also highlights the close relationship that exists between the idea of commitment and the construct of an engaged follower that was an important factor in the profile of the ideal follower discussed above. Within the data, belief or commitment is frequently referenced as the reason for followers' level of engagement and the converse is also referenced, where lack of faith or belief leads to lack of engagement:

“The academic staff, I think it was generally an air of cynicism, that this was a box-ticking exercise. A lot didn't engage, some did, but a lot were honest I think.”

(Joseph, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Looking at the reasons cited by individuals as to why a follower becomes committed, four themes emerge. Belief in the vision, project or process is the reason which is most referenced by participants (60% of the subset of participants that referenced the idea of commitment).

“If they actually believe in what they are following, then there are advantages in that they are supporting an agenda that they actually want to see come to fruition.”

(Julia, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

This is followed by belief in the leader, which is cited by more than 40% of the relevant participants. Similar numbers of participants refer to the belief that it is the right thing to do as the key reason for commitment. Finally, a smaller number of participants refer to the notion of being influenced or inspired. In this context, being inspired or influenced is in effect proposed as the reason for the belief in the leader or the process.

“I think it is somebody who obviously follows another or others, and follows because they are influenced by somebody else...”

(Deborah, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Across the two cases, the idea of commitment was referenced more by participants from the Minerva University, with 60% of those who referenced the idea coming from that institution as opposed to 40% from the Ceres Institute.

Constructive

From the discussion of the findings of the Repertory Grid study described above, it is clear that there are a number of attributes and behaviours which are associated with effective followership. These attributes and behaviours result in the follower making a positive contribution and facilitating the process. In other words, they result in a follower who is constructive. A constructive follower will be engaged, proactive, easy (interpersonally), a team player and conscientious. The nature of these attributes and behaviours was discussed in detail above and their association with ideal or effective followership was highlighted in the findings from the Repertory Grid study, discussed above. The analysis of the interview data also produces evidence which shows that participants associate these attributes and behaviours with effective followership. Almost all the participants in the study referenced at least one of these attributes or behaviours as being linked to effective followership. Figure 18 shows the total number of participants who associated constructive attributes and behaviours with effective

followership, as well as showing the breakdown of referencing participants across the two institutions. In the case of proactive, engaged and conscientious, over 70% of participants have indicated that one or more of these are associated with effective followership. Looking at the distribution of the referencing participants across both institutions, broadly speaking they are very similar and there are no significant differences on any of the factors.

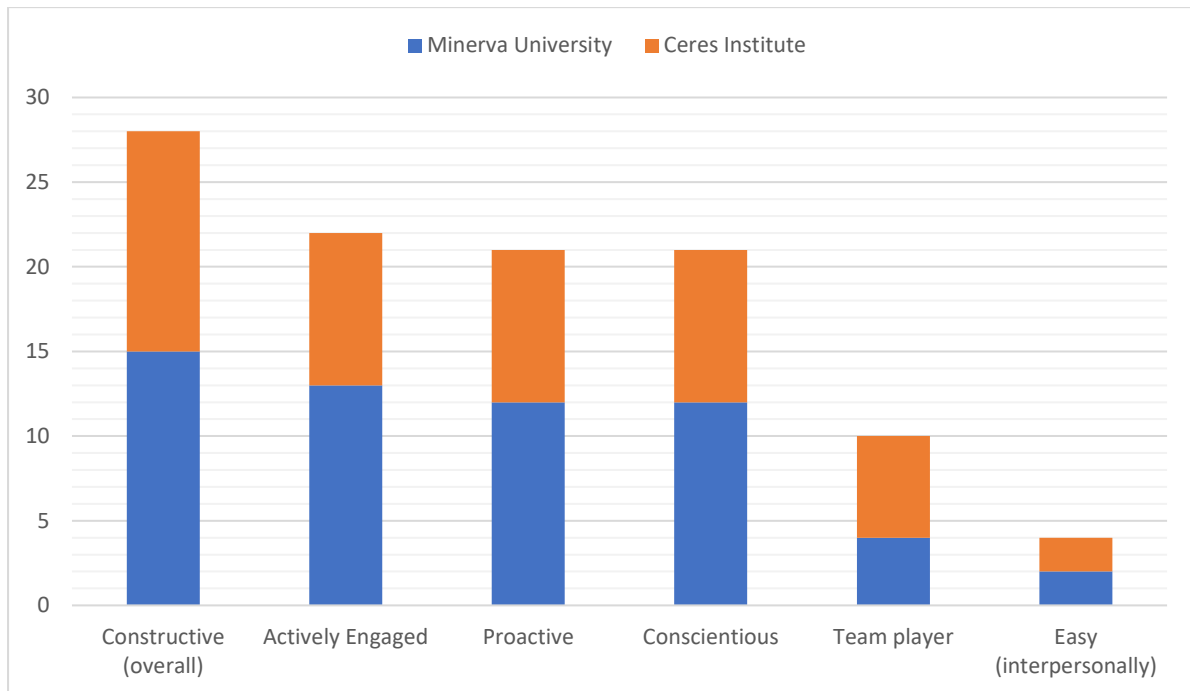


Figure 18: References to constructive attributes and behaviours by institution

The Repertory Grid study consisted only of participants who were members of academic staff. The analysis of the participants' interviews allowed me to confirm that the participants who were institutional leaders also associated these attributes and behaviours with effective followership. All of the institutional leaders referenced at least one of the attributes or behaviours and therefore, overall, institutional leaders referenced constructiveness in proportion with the numbers of institutional leaders in the study. They also referenced the engaged, proactive and conscientious constructs in proportion with their numbers. Figure 19 shows the breakdown between academic staff and institutional leaders who referenced the constructiveness attributes and behaviours.

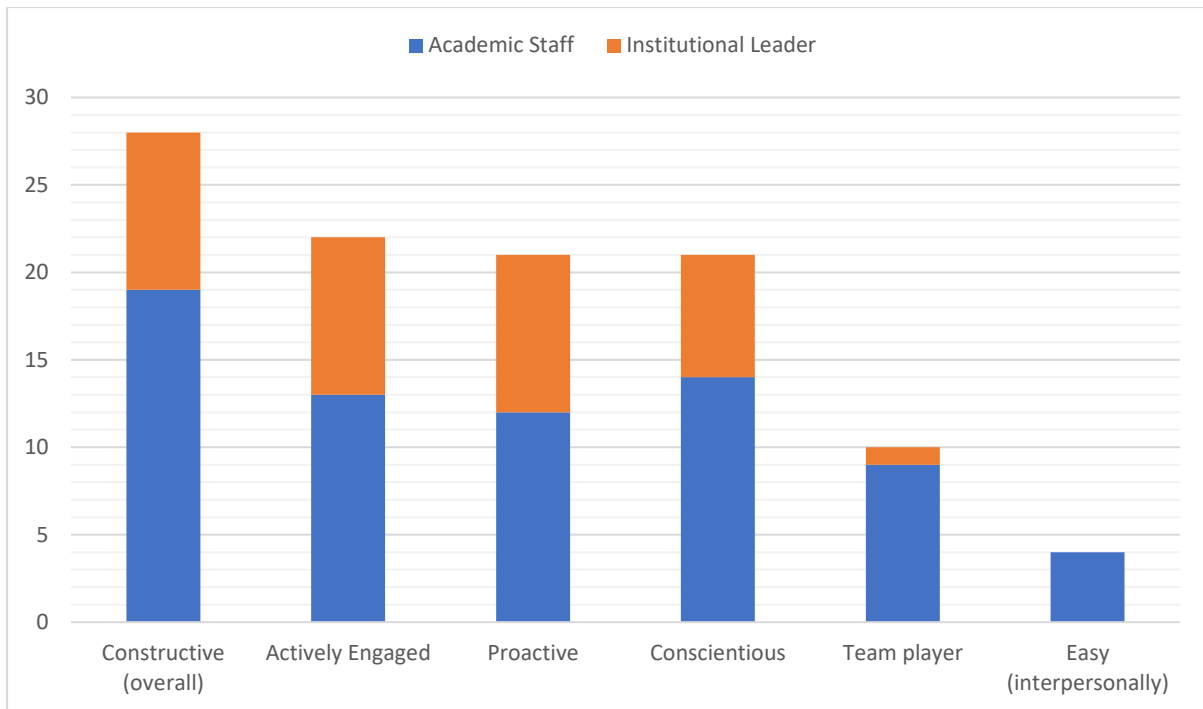


Figure 19: References to constructive attributes and behaviours by participant type

Finally, the following quotes are examples of institutional leaders referring to constructiveness attributes and behaviours (active engagement and proactivity respectively) in the context of effective followership which facilitated the progress or success of the process:

“Yeah, I think people who will go for something, say if we're going to do this, let's go for it, I'll do my part and follow this direction that has been set out, and we'll strive for ways of doing that. That's good active following...”

(Brian, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

“... and people came to us saying that they wanted to be a pilot, saying that they already had ideas... That was useful because it helped us to say right in the implementation phase we already had people chomping at the bit to be first in.”

(Sharon, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

Able to Challenge

Over 75% of participants indicated that an effective follower is one who can challenge the leader or the process at the right time and in the right way. Consider for example the following quote:

“It could also be someone who is prepared to challenge the leader over certain things. To be a follower in principle and say broadly I’m in agreement with this, however I reserve the right to speak my mind, and if I think this is going in the wrong direction then I will, I will say that.”

(Daniel, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

The alternative to this ability is the type of follower referred to by a number of participants as a sheep. This follower will accept without question and will blindly follow the leader or the process. For example, consider the following:

“Sheep is the word I think of, followers are synonymous with sheep. I suppose someone who goes with the crowd”

(Simon, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Even when a follower is conscientious and hard-working, if they lack this ability to challenge they are thought of as less effective. For example, consider this quote which describes a follower but with a clear sense that something important is lacking:

“A follower can get things done and will implement change but doesn't think why they are implementing that change.”

(Philip, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

What factors give rise to followers who have this ability to challenge? Analysis of the data suggests that there are three main factors. Firstly, the follower must have the right demeanour or mindset. In particular, as discussed above, independent thinking and critical thinking have been referenced as mindsets which enable a follower to evaluate and challenge the leader or the process.

The second factor referenced which may impact on the follower's ability to challenge is the relationship between the leader and the follower. Reference is made to trust or respect between leaders and followers, which allows the leader to understand that the follower is not being disloyal when he or she challenges the leader on an issue. Consider the following description of the relationship between leader and follower:

“So you have to – it's not about proving loyalty in a naïve way, like you are blindly following, but if a leader can look to you...I'd like to think in certain roles my Head of Department believes in me enough, I think he knows that there is a limit to my loyalty, in a good way, that if you push things a certain way that I would break ranks and I think that actually strengthens the bond between us as leader and follower.”

(Thomas, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Rather, the follower is actually helping the leader and the process and as such is contributing to the effectiveness of both. For example, the following quote describes how a follower's ability to challenge is important for the leader's decision-making process:

“I would say to carry out the instruction of the leader to the best of your ability but still with a level of questioning of key decisions where it is needed. I would say that a follower is there to advise as well. While the decision-making process is the responsibility of the leader, the leader can only make good decisions if they are totally and greatly informed. So I think the role of the follower, ... one of the main roles is to explain to the leader what the pitfalls, what the advantages are, of certain decisions.”

(Maurice, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

Finally, there are aspects of the organisational environment or culture which can foster, or otherwise, an ability to challenge on the part of the followers. For example, a number of participants reference status within the organisation as a factor. Perceived low status can impede the ability to challenge in two ways. Firstly, the follower may decide that

his or her status means that their words of challenge will be ignored or have no impact and therefore they may decide not to challenge in the first place. Consider the following:

“There is an issue though around influence and what gets included and what doesn't, so I think if you were to ask our staff they may say that it was a waste of time.”

(Paul, a member of institutional leadership at Ceres Institute)

The second way that low status can impact on the ability to challenge is where the follower perceives that he or she is vulnerable and that by challenging they will attract some form of punitive behaviour from the leader or the institution. For example:

“Any part-time contracted staff, anyone that's precarious, I would advise them to follow – if you are a critical voice, you'll be the first to be cut... I think in this field it is those that are tenured, that are secure, that don't have to worry and then they can have the critical voice and not fear.”

(James, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

The impact of organisational environment or culture on the ability of followers to engage is referenced by participants from both case study institutions in almost equal numbers.

Discussion of findings in respect of effective and ineffective followers

The main findings with regard to effective and ineffective followership can be summarised as follows:

- There is evidence from Rep Grid study linking constructs of followers' attributes and behaviours to effective and ineffective followership.
- When combined with findings from participant interviews, a broad framework for effective (and by extension ineffective) followership emerges.

- This framework is based on the 3Cs – i.e. an effective follower is *committed*, *constructive* and able to *challenge*.
- The *committed* follower genuinely believes in the vision, leader, process, etc. Commitment is an essential prerequisite which enables the attributes and behaviours associated with effective followership.
- The *constructive* follower exhibits a range of attributes and behaviours which, combined, mean that the follower is helping to drive the process, leader, etc towards success.
- These behaviours include engagement, proactivity, conscientiousness, competence, team-orientation and sociability.
- The follower who is able to *challenge* ensures that the leader and the process are ‘kept honest’ and that any missteps or indiscretions are highlighted and challenged.
- This follower is capable of critical or independent thinking and the organisational environment is also an important factor.

Within the literature, the issue of effective and ineffective followers is often discussed in conjunction with typologies of followers. In considering the relevant literature, the models presented by Zaleznik (2011; Kellerman, 2007) and Miller (2004) are very much leader-centric, in that they highlight what leaders should do to cultivate effective followership, and as such are less applicable in the context of the current study which is follower-centric. The models presented by Kelley (1988), Chaleff (2009) and Kellerman (2007) are more applicable in that they focus on followers’ attributes and behaviours and the implications that these have for followership and the leadership process.

Kelley’s model was discussed above and is illustrated in Figure 2. Kelley describes five types of followers and these are defined by their two behavioural dimensions or constructs, namely, *Independent thinking v Dependent thinking* and *Proactive v Passive*.

Kelley also identifies, separate from the behavioural dimensions and types of followers, qualities which are exhibited by effective followers. These qualities of effective followers are shown in Table 13.

Chaleff describes a model of followership which is structurally similar to Kelley's, in that it also defines different types of followers (four as opposed to Kelley's five) according to their orientation with respect to two behavioural dimensions (Chaleff, 2009). In Chaleff's model, the dimensions are, the degree to which a follower will support a leader, and the degree to which the follower is prepared to challenge the leader, i.e. *High support v Low support* and *High challenge v Low challenge*. Figure 20 shows the Chaleff model and indicates how the types of followers align with the orientations in respect of the behavioural dimensions. For example, a follower who exhibits high support and high challenge is defined as a partner in Chaleff's model.

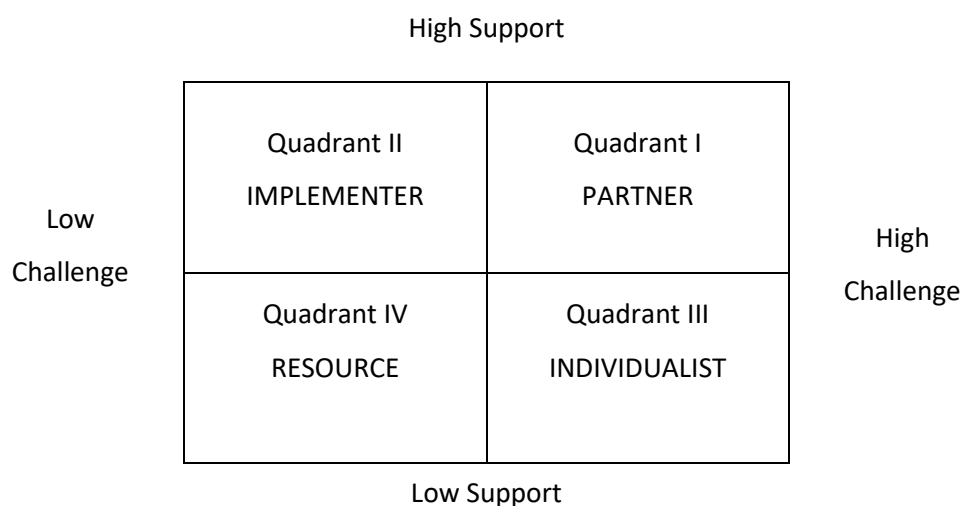


Figure 20: Chaleff's Typology of Followers (Chaleff 2009)

With respect to each of the types of follower in his model, Chaleff also describes a range of attributes and behaviours which characterise that type. In broad terms, Chaleff equates effective followership with his model of courageous followership and he even uses the terms interchangeably in places. He presents a range of higher order constructs of attributes and behaviours that are important for the courageous or effective follower. These include self-management, initiative, passion and breaking the rules.

Kellerman's model differs from the other two in that different types of followers are defined by their orientation within a single behavioural dimension, that of engagement. The model describes an engagement continuum that goes from feeling and doing nothing at one pole to committed, passionate and involved at the other pole. Between these poles, Kellerman positions five types of followers which she titles *Isolates*, *Bystanders*, *Participants*, *Activists* and *Diehards*. Kellerman addresses the issue of effective followership, in fact she discusses good and bad followers at a macro level and does not offer a detailed discussion of the behaviours that constitute effective or ineffective followership beyond indicating that effective, or good, followers will understand the leader's purpose and motives and will support these if they are ethical and appropriate, while an ineffective, or bad, follower will either fail to support a good leader or unthinkingly support a bad leader (i.e. one whose motives and methods are unethical or inappropriate) (Kellerman, 2007).

As discussed above, following the analysis of the various data from this study, a framework emerged which associates three factors with effective followership. Under this framework an effective follower is *committed*, *constructive* and able to *challenge*. I refer to this herein as the 3Cs framework.

In this framework, commitment is a vital prerequisite to followership. This finding strongly suggests that the degree to which a follower is committed and genuinely believes in the vision, the leader or the process determines the subsequent levels of engagement, proactivity, conscientiousness, etc. The models in the literature, discussed above, all allude to the idea of commitment, belief, or passion, but it would appear that they view it more as a desirable attribute in a follower (i.e. someone who is able to commit to a person or a cause), rather than as occupying the vital role it does in the 3Cs framework. Kellerman's model is perhaps the closest to the proposed framework, in that one end of her continuum of engagement is described as "passionately committed" (Kellerman, 2007). However, it is ultimately used merely as a means to describe the degree of engagement, rather than being the reason for engagement in the first place. It is difficult to overstate the importance of commitment in the study participants' constructs of followership. It is the foundational element that made followership

meaningful and possible. A number of authors have referred to the downsides or risks associated with followership (Alvesson and Blom, 2018; Hopton et al., 2015; Kelley, 2008; Shamir, 2007). Some have even posed the question as to why, given the obvious downsides, anyone would choose to be a follower (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019; Kelley, 2008). The finding in respect of commitment suggests that this factor, i.e. genuine belief, may be the element that allows followers to overlook the problems associated with followership in service of a greater good or purpose. The importance attached to commitment has significant implications for the leadership process because it means that, unless commitment can be fostered in sufficient numbers of followers, the process is very likely to fail.

Once a follower has committed to the vision, leader or process, their effectiveness is apparent through their constructive contribution to the success of the leadership process. A constructive follower exhibits a range of attributes and behaviours and these were discussed in detail above. The profile of a constructive follower that is contained in this framework is more detailed and more nuanced than comparable models in the literature. Not only does the framework identify key constructs but it is able to indicate the point on the continuum, represented by the construct, which is associated with effective followership. The other models touch on some of the same attributes and behaviours but to a lesser degree and with a tendency towards more abstract or higher-order attributes and behaviours. Because of the level of detail in terms of attributes and behaviours associated with effective followers, this framework may be useful in the design and delivery of followership development activities and programmes.

The final factor which makes up the framework for effective followership is the ability of the follower to challenge the leader, where it is ethical or appropriate to do so. Participants were very strong on the need for followers to be able, and willing, to challenge the leader or the process if they believe that an incorrect or suboptimal course of action is proposed. Even more important was the responsibility to challenge when an illegal, unethical, or corrupt action was apparent. This concept of challenge was prominent in the other models discussed. In the case of Kelley and Chaleff, the ability to challenge was one of the two behavioural dimensions used to define their model of

followership (Chaleff, 2009; Kelley, 1988). Furthermore, Kelley (2008) indicates that this ability and willingness to challenge when necessary is at the core of the meaning and value of followership in an organisational and global context. Kellerman (2007) proposes that the ability to challenge is the key defining characteristic of good or effective followership. In these models the willingness to challenge is very much associated with the attributes and behaviours of the individual follower. The ability to challenge may depend on a wider range of factors which can include attributes and behaviours, the individual's role or status, the approach or demeanour of the leader, and the organisational environment. In the context of higher education, this idea has even greater salience, which was clear in the findings, as it aligns with important aspects of the organisational culture including individual autonomy, professional credibility, academic freedom and critical evaluation.

The framework speaks primarily of effective followership but it also accommodates less effective, or ineffective, followership, which is defined by the diminution or absence of some, or all, of the factors which lead to effective followership.

Unlike the models from the literature, the framework presented here deals solely with effective and ineffective followership and is not linked to a particular typology of followers. Similar to the reasons outlined in the previous sub-section in relation to the taxonomy of attributes and behaviours, the participants' constructs in relation to effective and ineffective followership are described independently of any other models in order to provide greater scope and flexibility for this study and future research.

The 3Cs framework of effective and ineffective followership represents an important finding from this study in terms of constructs of followership in higher education. There are novel factors and different levels of detail and emphasis contained within this framework when compared with other models. However, it is important to recognise that the current study was not designed to research effective and ineffective followership specifically and therefore the findings will need to be further explored and validated via more focused studies. That said, the framework accurately reflects the constructs of the participants in this study. It contributes significantly to a general

understanding of the phenomenon of followership in higher education which was the goal of this study. The framework may also be viewed in terms of the implications it has for the leadership process and the development of followership within higher education institutions. Finally, it suggests interesting and novel factors which may be further explored in future research.

Models of following

The preceding sub-sections addressed constructs of followers and followership. As such, they highlighted what participants believed or perceived followers, their actions, and their behaviours, to be. These constructs of followership allow an individual to decide how he or she will be and act, or not, when in a follower role. Therefore, individuals' constructs beget different approaches to, or models of, following. In this sub-section, the evidence and findings in respect of different models of following are presented and discussed.

The data was analysed to see how following was described by the participants. This included descriptions of the participants' own following behaviours as well as those of others. The participants were asked about two models of following, namely, authentic following and courageous following, and were asked to discuss what they thought each model entailed. It is notable that most of the participants were able to engage with these models and present their perceptions of each. This highlights the existence of positive constructs and models of followership and reinforces the similar finding discussed above. From the data, two other models of following emerged. Firstly, more than 50% of participants referenced following behaviours which were present when the leader, or the leadership process, was overwhelmed, insufficient or absent. The second model of following that was evident in the data was that of non-following. These models of following are discussed below.

Authentic following

When participants were asked to discuss what they understood by authentic following, all were able to engage with it positively. Almost all of the participants who discussed authentic followership indicated that a genuine belief in the person, vision or process

that was being followed was the major determinant of authentic followership. For example:

“The other thing about authentic followership is that you're not just a follower because you believe that this leader or this project is taking you where you want to go, but that you actually genuinely believe in the project itself.”

(Daniel, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

This clearly echoes the commitment factor discussed above in respect of effective followership. Among the other aspects of authentic followership which were discussed were ethical behaviour, having a conscience, and focusing on what is best for the organisation or the broader society.

Courageous following

A single participant spoke against the notion of courageous following. All of the other participants perceived it to be a positive model of following and spoke of a number of factors which defined courageous following. The factor which was referenced by the highest number of participants was the notion of ‘swimming against the tide’. Again, this was related to belief or commitment to a particular leader or process but had the additional element that following was evident despite this being an unpopular choice. When there was criticism or even challenge from others, the courageous follower was seen to continue following because they believed it was the right thing to do. Consider the following quote:

“Sometimes being the follower is not necessarily the most prudent thing to do, but you might have great belief in the person that is leading. Sometimes in a business situation you might think that somebody has the right course of action so choose to follow them, but that might not be the popular course of action and that can put you then in some degree of jeopardy.”

(Hannah, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

This quote also highlights one of the other factors, referenced by a significant number of participants, that of risk or lack of safety. The courageous follower will choose to follow even when there is uncertainty or genuine risk. This could be the risk of criticism referred to above but could also be the risk of the project failing or the lack of safety that comes from being involved in a demanding and unpredictable process.

Other aspects of courageous following which were referenced were challenging the leader when necessary and loyal support of the leader when he or she is 'under fire'.

Following when leadership is overwhelmed, insufficient or absent

Generally, followership or following are spoken of in the context of leadership or leading. For example, one participant spoke of good followership being the result of good leadership. In another instance, a participant commented:

“By default, those that don't become leaders become followers.”

(Patrick, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Given this notion that following is in the shadow of leading, what happens when leadership is challenged or lacking in some way? When analysing the discussions of following, it was found that a significant number of participants discussed following in situations where the leader or the process was overwhelmed by workload or other challenges. Participants also spoke of absent leadership, or circumstances where the leadership was not entirely adequate.

In line with the findings in relation to effective followership, the following behaviour referenced by the highest number of participants in this context was that of facilitating the process. In effect, the followers acted in a manner that, to some degree, bridged the gap created by the shortcomings of the leadership. For example, consider the following quote:

“So I can think of people who are being courageous and they are key enablers even though they are followers.”

(Robin, a member of the institutional leadership at Minerva University)

Some participants even refer to followers showing leadership in this context.

Related to this is the followers' ability and willingness to understand and address the needs of the leader, process or organisation. Participants who are members of institutional leadership and academic leaders in particular, referred to individuals in follower roles who understood the needs of the leader or the institution and acted accordingly. Consider the following quote where a member of academic staff, who is an academic leader, describes both the understanding and action orientation of a member of academic staff:

“... he is very proactive in moving the course forward and engaging with industry to make sure we are relevant, but he has been a driver coming into programmatic review, in looking at areas, pre-empting it, looking at areas that will need to come into programmatic review for us, changes that will already need to happen.”

(Julia, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

In such situations, it was also found that followers were willing and able to use their social capital in order to influence or motivate others in support of a challenged leadership process. In the following quote, a member of academic staff describes how his intervention had a positive impact on others, perception of the leadership process:

“... we did presentations and things, and I presented ... and I think it had a positive effect because I was somebody without so much of a vested interest in the [process]. I was giving other people's views rather than my own.

(Thomas, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Another interesting finding is that of followers who engaged in following behaviours even when there was 'bad' leadership because they wanted to do the right thing for the institution or the broader society. For example, consider the following quote where a member of academic staff at the Ceres Institute, who struggled to engage with the

formal leadership process, still engaged in following behaviours which were aligned with the Institute's strategy:

“... and what I actually contributed, hopefully in, in other ways I contributed, you know through the work with postgraduate studies and so on. Meeting the requirement (for technological university designation) that we enhance our postgraduate studies, that kind of thing.”

(Joseph, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

More than 50% of participants referred to this model of following and there were essentially equal numbers of participants from both institutions.

Non-following

Above, a negative type of following was discussed which was characterised by a passive and disengaged follower who did not make a contribution. This is an example of non-following, which is used to describe any actions on the part of followers which make it less likely that the leader or the process will achieve the desired outcomes.

Non-following was in evidence in the participants' discussions of following. In particular, they spoke of two types of non-following, the passive following referenced above and a more active form of non-following where individuals were purposefully working against the process.

The passive form of non-following was enacted in two ways. Individuals either 'voted with their feet' and did not engage with the process at all or they engaged in a manner that could be described as going through the motions. Participants referenced individuals not engaging at all with greater frequency (just over 60% of relevant participants) than the going through the motions type (less than 40% of relevant participants). In total, 69% of participants referred to this type of non-following. Of those who discussed a reason, or reasons, why an individual would adopt this non-following model, 50% referenced a lack of faith in the process. For example, consider the following quote:

“Not everyone was there and I deduced from that that if you had an issue with the process you wouldn't turn up.”

(Mark, a member of the institutional leadership at Ceres Institute)

The other most commonly cited reason for this model of following was that of practical considerations such as workload. Related to this was the issue of the institutional environment, which was also proposed as a reason for little or no engagement. For example, participants referenced financial difficulties which led to individuals focusing on more pressing priorities than engaging with the leadership process. The individual's role or status was also cited as a reason, whereby the individual felt that their status meant that they were not knowledgeable enough to contribute or that their contribution would have very little impact.

The second form of non-following involves individuals actively working against the leadership process. Just over 55% of participants discussed this type of non-following. The main form that this active non-following took was obstructive or difficult behaviour in the context of the leadership process. The following quote describes an instance of such behaviour:

“A number of lecturers exhibited this at the last programmatic review, they were very possessive of their modules and they didn't want any changes made to them, where they were located et cetera and they weren't open to any changes, so they stuck rigidly and they had different meetings off to the side to make sure that, protectionism I suppose.”

(Simon, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

The obstructive behaviour can also take on more subtle forms, two of which were referenced by participants. Firstly, the individual can use their social capital to try to influence others to act against the leader or the process. Another approach is to suggest or point out perceived problems with the process as a means to block, or at least delay, progress.

Among the reasons cited for adopting such an approach, self-interest was referenced by over 50% of the relevant participants. This self-interest could range from a desire to protect one's courses or research to a wish to reduce workload as illustrated by the following quote:

“She is not prepared to do her job properly and so it's easier just to be obstructive.”

(Hannah, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

The next most commonly cited reason was practical considerations such as a belief on the part of the individual that the proposals would not work in practice, as evidenced in the following quote:

“Rather, it will be a pragmatic resistance, where they say this doesn't work for us or we don't like what this does to the way we do things.”

(Daniel, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

The other reason that is referenced is that of principled objection, where the individual disagrees in principle with what is proposed.

Discussion of findings in respect of models of following

The main findings in relation to models of following can be summarised as follows:

- Models of following can be split into two categories:
 - Positive models associated with effective followership
 - Negative models associated with ineffective followership (non-following)
- Authentic following is a positive model which is characterised by genuine belief (devoid of self-interest) and ethical behaviour.

- Courageous following involves following in a manner that equates with ‘the right thing to do’, even when it is unpopular (in the eyes of colleagues or leaders) or risky – swimming against the tide.
- There are examples of positive models of following even when leadership is overwhelmed, insufficient or absent.
- These models include followers compensating for the shortcomings in leadership by exhibiting leading behaviours.
- Two models of non-following were evident:
 - Passive non-following
 - Active non-following (resistance)
- Passive non-following may result from practical considerations or follower status.
- Active-non following may result from self-interest, practical considerations or principled resistance.

Recall the model shown in Figure 7 which conceptualises the broad phenomenon of followership. Individuals and groups form or create their constructs (i.e. ideas, understandings, perceptions, etc.) of followership through processes such as identity construction. These constructs then influence how the individual will think and act when they are actually engaged in followership or following (Epitropaki et al., 2017). The term *following* refers to how you think and what you do when you are in the role of follower and it is guided or informed by your constructs.

While each follower will follow in her or his own particular way, scholars and practitioners have devised typologies of followers, or models of following, to help them better understand the phenomenon. Some of these typologies, or models, have been discussed above. This study did not seek to understand following via the narrow lens of

a particular, pre-existing, typology and instead adopted a more inductive approach to explore participants' discussions of extant or novel models of following.

Participants were given the opportunity to discuss two, broadly positive, models of following, namely, authentic and courageous following.

Initially, as is often the case in the study of followership, authentic following was only discussed in the context of authentic leadership, with the clear understanding that authentic followership arose as a result of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2011). Over time, as the authentic model of following was explored, it began to take on its own significance. Avolio & Reichard (2008) presented a conceptualisation of authentic followership based on three psychological elements, one of which was 'a sense of psychological ownership' which resonated with the findings in respect of authentic followership from this study. De Zilwa et al. (2014) also propose a conceptual framework for authentic followership which consists of a psychological capacity for authenticity, secure attachment to the leader, and a positive organisational culture and environment. Meanwhile, Crawford et al. (2018) focus mainly on two aspects in their conceptualisation of authentic followership. The first again focuses on a psychological capacity for authenticity, while the second aspect is positive organisational engagement. The findings from the current study show that participants believe that genuine belief in the vision, leader or process was by far the most important aspect of authentic following, with ethical behaviour the next most important. Both of these elements, i.e. genuine belief and ethical behaviour, are covered by the definition in the literature of psychological capacity for authenticity. The relational and organisational factors were discussed by participants in other contexts, but not specifically in relation to authentic following.

As discussed in the previous sub-section, the main proponent of courageous following was Chaleff (2009). He proposes that there are five dimensions of courageous following: courage to assume responsibility, courage to serve, courage to challenge, courage to participate in transformation and courage to take moral action. Each of these dimensions is united by the overarching requirement for the follower to have the

courage to do the right thing irrespective of the context or the consequences. It is this overarching attribute or behaviour that was most referenced by the study's participants when discussing courageous followership. Phrases such as 'don't go with the flow' or 'swim against the tide' were used to describe this quality and, in each instance, the reason given for adopting this model of following was that it was the right thing to do.

That the participants were able to engage with these positive models of following, and that they were able to identify an (if not the) important element of the courageous model, points to well-developed constructs of followership, which in turn lead to a mature and meaningful interpretation of models of following. This is evidence of participants' significant lived experience of followership, and through this experience followership has been socially constructed within these institutions and, one might assume, across higher education institutions in general.

For too long, the leadership literature represented followers and followership, when it engaged with the subject at all, as factors that had to be controlled and manipulated by the leader in order to achieve success. Latterly, the emergence of follower-centric and followership-centric research and theories has strongly promoted the notion that followership is defined by the fact that individual followers have agency and choice and that followership, and by extension leadership, is only possible if the follower willingly chooses to follow (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The ability to choose and followers' agency are at the core of the model of courageous following discussed above. When the data from this study were analysed, it emerged that the participants discussed two overarching models of following, one broadly positive and the other broadly negative, which are predicated upon, and consequently reinforce the significance of, followers' choice and agency.

It is possible, for a variety of reasons, that the leadership of a particular process will be found to be lacking, by which I mean that the leadership is not conducive to the success of the process. This may be because the circumstances are challenging or resources are inadequate and as a consequence the leadership becomes overwhelmed and can no longer lead the process effectively. Alternatively, a situation may arise where the

leadership has a specific shortcoming and because of that the leadership is insufficient to guarantee the success of the process. Finally, the leadership may have misread or misjudged circumstances to such a degree that they are in effect absent. Within the models of following, presented in the literature, are instances of following despite the nature of the leadership. Followers have been found to act in the best interest of the organisation in situations where there is ineffective or unethical leadership (Chaleff, 2009; Kellerman, 2007) and this can even involve followers exhibiting leadership attributes and behaviours (Chaleff, 2009; Collinson, 2005). Similar constructs of collegial and pro-organisation behaviour are seen in the literature on organisational citizenship behaviour (de Geus et al., 2020).

The findings from the study include similar instances of following despite the nature of leadership. Followers are seen exhibiting what are effectively leadership attributes and behaviours. In addition, there are instances cited where the follower understands the challenge faced by the leader and behaves in a way that compensates for the leader's shortcomings. Of particular interest are the instances where followers who deem that leadership is inadequate continue following the general direction set out in the vision. This scenario, in effect, describes following despite leadership being all but absent. These findings highlight again the importance and value of committed followers, because it is commitment to the organisation, vision, leader or process that leads to this following despite the nature of leadership. In addition, the existence of this model of following emphasises the importance of follower development within organisations, because it shows that effective followers can compensate, supplement, and at times even substitute for overwhelmed, insufficient or absent leadership.

The second model of non-following which was discussed by participants saw individuals deliberately exhibiting attributes and behaviours which were intended to ignore, impede or derail the leadership process, this model is referred to as non-following. Non-following, as described by the participants, took two forms, a passive form which involved disengagement or non-cooperation and an active form which involved resisting and working against the process.

Frequently, ineffective or passive followers are characterised as disengaged or lazy. Within the literature, very little consideration is given to the possibility that this passivity or disengagement may be a deliberate choice and, as such, is an act of non-following. The evidence from this study shows that individuals will engage with this type of following if they don't have faith in the leader or the process, or the organisational circumstances are such that they don't believe that it is worthwhile for them to engage in following. Importantly, they don't disagree with the vision and if the leader, process or circumstances were more favourable they may well switch from non-following to following.

Active non-following is much more visible and clear cut than the passive form. At its core is a genuine objection to, or disagreement with, what is proposed or intended. The objection may be on a point of principle or it may relate to more pragmatic matters such as self-interest (e.g. personal workload). As outlined above, this active non-following can range from open resistance and disruptive behaviour explicitly intended to halt the process to more subtle forms such as arguing and influencing, which can impede or block the process while avoiding direct confrontation.

To date, the study of non-followership has been effectively absent from the broader study of followership. Specific elements of non-followership, such as resistance, are studied in other fields such as change management and organisational behaviour, but not in the context of leadership and followership. These findings suggest that knowledge of non-followership and its nature is important to understanding the phenomenon of followership, as well as having implications for the leadership process and the practice of leadership.

The leadership process

Followers' following behaviours are an essential element of the leadership process, where they are combined with leaders' leading behaviours to co-produce leadership, which in turn leads to the outcomes of the leadership process.

In this sub-section, I discuss the leadership processes which were studied in each of the institutions that comprised the case study. In particular, I discuss perceptions of the

leadership process, with a focus on the implications that following behaviours had for the process.

Initially, I look at the issue of followers' participation, or not, in the process, before going on to examine the process and the outcomes of the process. The focus is on perceptions and experiences of those who had the role of follower in these leadership processes.

Participation by followers in the leadership process

When describing followers' involvement in the leadership process, study participants referenced three types of participation, which is in keeping with other findings discussed earlier. Over 80% of participants cited some level of active engagement with the process. At the same time, almost two thirds of participants cited instances of little or no involvement by followers. A smaller number of participants (20%) referred to the likelihood of challenge or resistance from followers when the time came to implement the strategy. It is interesting to note that these references to resistance by followers came solely from participants at the Minerva University and the reason given for this resistance was self-interest or at least narrow interest (e.g. focused on needs of their own course or department). For example

“The main obstacle that I can see is that some people are very protective of their programme whereas when you come out with an academic strategy what you're trying to do is implement the strategy across the University for how people may deliver their programmes, or add things to them or it may even delete their programme from the curriculum, so you may still see some academic backlash, from people who want to keep their programme running...”

(Maurice, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

Looking at the reasons cited for active engagement, it was indicated that followers engaged either because of the approach taken by the leader(s) or because there was support for the vision. The latter aligns with the findings above in respect of commitment while the former suggests that a well-designed and/or a well-implemented

process can engender engagement, although it is likely that an initial level of commitment must exist before a good process can have such an effect.

The number one reason referenced for followers' lack of engagement was cynicism on the part of followers. This cynicism was variously directed at the authenticity of the process, the motives or goals of the leader(s), the appropriateness of the vision and the state of the institution (e.g. whether the institution will be able to implement the strategy).

Beyond this initial reason, three other reasons were referenced in near equal numbers. They were practical considerations (e.g. workload), the vision was divorced from reality (i.e. did not accurately reflect followers' day-to-day experience and priorities) and the approach taken by the leader(s).

The leadership process

In the case of the Minerva University, participants indicated that the process was led by either one individual or a small number of people. This aligns with the findings in relation to a top-down approach, discussed below. Participants in the Ceres Institute indicated, in almost equal numbers, that the process there was led by an individual, or individuals, or that it was led by a broader management group.

In keeping with these findings about who was leading the process, most participants in both institutions referred to the approach taken to the leadership process as predominantly top-down. The following quote gives a good representation of the types of views expressed in respect of the top-down nature of the process:

“I would say that it is driven by certain agendas so there is a top-down approach, there is also an Americanised way, town hall meetings, lingo and jargon of American politics coming into it. They tend to be how you imagine with big glossy PowerPoints, a veneer of discussion but more really this is the vision, get behind it.”

(James, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

A much smaller number of participants referred to the approach taken as being a hybrid, distributed or bottom-up approach.

A considerable majority of participants (more than 75% of the total with near equal numbers in each institution) described the leadership process as consultative and inclusive. However, some qualified their description by questioning whether the consultation was authentic or worthwhile. An example is the following quote which accepts that the consultation took place but raises significant questions about the authenticity of the consultation process:

“I think there's been a lot of talk about how much consultation there was, I know there were town hall meetings, to what extent there was general consultation, I think you find differing views on that. Certainly I would have colleagues who would have very strong views as to the absence of any genuine consultation around the academic strategy.”

(Daniel, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

Similar criticisms were posited by the smaller number of participants who described the consultation as flawed or insufficient. The following quote highlights a criticism of the quantum of consultation:

“... whereas our staff probably just had two sessions with it. One in terms of the rollout of what was going to be involved and then in their working groups. I think that was pretty minimal myself, to be honest.”

(Peter, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

While the following questions the nature of the consultation:

“I've seen it locally recently, management would have said they consulted with staff, they send out a open email saying if you have a problem, and that is where sometimes the definition of consultation will need to be looked at ... we were consulted but it was just an email with the survey.”

(Simon, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

In both institutions, participants spoke positively about the process in terms of it being better than previous leadership processes within the institutions. However, there were also negative aspects highlighted. In particular, participants referenced the feeling that the process was not genuine, that it was a box-ticking exercise and that the leaders just wanted to get through it, so it was rushed.

Outcomes of the leadership process

When participants were asked about the outcomes of the leadership process, they either deemed the process to have been successful or else they indicated that the process was a qualified success.

Approximately 50% of the participants in each institution indicated that the process was a success. Of those participants who proposed a reason for the success of the process, the vast majority referred to the approach taken by the leader(s) to the process. Consider, for example, the following quotes:

“The process itself was a positive outcome”

(Matthew, a member of institutional leadership at Ceres Institute)

“Yes, I do. I think the engagement of people, both academic, admin etc, they were brought along with the process.”

(Sheila, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Just over 40% of participants indicated that the process had been a qualified success, and these were split evenly between the two institutions. The main reason people gave for deeming the process to be a qualified success was doubt about the real impact of the strategies developed or whether they would be implemented. A smaller number indicated that, while the process had successfully developed a strategy, it was a qualified success because it had not really engaged people. Others questioned the validity of the strategies that had been delivered and whether they were aligned with the real needs and priorities of the institutions.

Discussion of findings in respect of the leadership process and outcomes

The main findings relating to the leadership process and its outcomes are summarised below:

- Where engagement was lacking, the primary reason given was cynicism about either the leadership process, the appropriateness of the vision or the state of the institution.
- Most experienced the leadership process as top-down in nature, despite the institutional leaders describing the process as distributed or a hybrid of bottom-up and top-down.
- Most described the process as consultative, but many qualified this by indicating that, while there were consultation opportunities, the consultation exercise was not sufficient or genuine.
- Participants considered the process a success or a qualified success.
- Success generally meant that it satisfied the needs of the institution or the leaders.
- Qualified success usually meant that there were questions about sufficient resources (given the state of the institution) or resolve (in the face of expected resistance) to implement the strategy.

Reflecting the finding with respect to non-following from the previous sub-section, there is evidence that there was a high level of passive non-following in the leadership processes studied. Participants indicated that they chose not to engage, and the main reasons given for this choice were dissatisfaction with the approach taken in the leadership process, lack of belief in the vision presented, or issues relating to the institutional culture or environment.

The approach taken by the institutional leaders in the leadership process is cited as a reason for non-following. While the institutional leaders in both institutions described

the leadership process as distributed, or a hybrid of top-down and bottom-up, a significant majority of the members of academic staff in both institutions described the process as top-down. This divergence between the different perceptions is important because it can lead to, as it did in these cases, non-following and disengagement from the process. Many of the participants indicated that they saw the process as an exercise in selling the institutional leaders' vision. Given the earlier findings regarding the importance of commitment, this finding suggests that a process which is perceived as top-down may not be conducive to fostering commitment among followers. This in turn can lead to non-following.

A related issue was that of the manner in which the process was implemented. While it was described as consultative, many saw the consultation as insufficient or insincere and as a result there was lack of engagement in the process. Members of academic staff and institutional leaders in both institutions expressed this view of the process and its impact on the level of engagement. Interestingly, many participants commented negatively on the fact that there was a significant degree of disengagement and that the leaders were aware of this but still 'pushed through' with the process. Many felt that that this seeming lack of genuine interest on the part of the institutional leaders in whether followers engaged in the process called into question the motives of the leaders and the authenticity of the process.

Overall, the participants felt that the leadership process had been successful in that it had delivered, at least initially, the outcomes that the leaders desired. However, many deemed it to be a qualified success because, in the opinions of some participants, the process may have yielded the outcomes that the institutional leaders wanted, but may not have delivered what the institution needed. Others viewed the outcome of the process as a qualified success because they perceived that the process was not yet complete. Furthermore, they had serious misgivings about whether the resources or resolve existed to finish the job. Many cited the institutional culture and environment as a barrier to the success of this leadership process, and leadership processes more generally. In broad terms, these concerns applied to both institutions, although the causes of the concerns were different in both institutions. Participants expressed doubts

about whether the institutions had the resources, following financial reduction and other institutional crises, to properly implement the vision. Perhaps more damning were the questions over the resolve and ability of the institutional leaders to implement the vision. Many predicted the occurrence of active non-following in the form of resistance by individuals and groups when the time came to implement the measures required to realise the vision. Some predicted that such resistance would be successful because they did not believe that the institutional leaders were capable of implementing the vision, particularly in the face of resistance. The literature suggests that, in times of crisis, followers are more likely to engage in following and may seek more decisive, top-down, leadership (Shamir and Howell, 1999). However, this is not in evidence in the findings from this study, where followers readily engaged in non-following and were prepared to challenge the institutional leaders and the leadership process.

There was engagement with the leadership processes studied but the level of disengagement, or passive non-following, was much higher. In addition, many predicted that active non-following would also occur as the institutional leadership moved to implement the vision. In this context, non-following is related to the design and implementation of the leadership processes, which resulted in a failure to develop committed followers. This finding emphasises the importance of committing sufficient time and resources to designing and implementing a leadership process which fosters commitment. Key to developing committed followers is the initial formulation of the over-arching vision and motives for the leadership process. The findings show that, unless care is taken, these may be aligned to the institutional leadership with negative implications for follower commitment and the success of the leadership process. In designing and implementing such a leadership process, due cognisance must be given to the organisational culture and environment, as discussed in more detail in the next sub-section.

Organisational culture and context

I referred earlier to the unique organisational environment and culture that exists in higher education institutions. Throughout this study, participants referred to aspects of

their organisations, and the sector in general, in the context of discussing followers or followership.

Generic aspects of the organisational culture in higher education institutions and the public sector

The most prevalent aspect of the broader culture of higher education institutions which was referenced by the participants in this study was individual autonomy and the related challenge to formal authority. Over 35% of participants spoke of their own autonomy or others' claim for, or expectation of, autonomy. Autonomy was referenced in almost equal numbers by participants from both institutions with a slightly higher number from the Ceres Institute, which is of interest because one would expect the Minerva University, which has a more traditional university culture, to have a greater affinity with autonomy. Discussions about autonomy are often accompanied by negative comments about the institutional leadership or management as it is juxtaposed with individual autonomy and self-management. Consider the following quotes which illustrate how participants promote the idea of autonomy while at the same time talking down formal leadership or management:

“I have a manager but I regard that a lot of what I do, I am self-employed, and given my responsibility and it's up to me to make the most of that.

I am completely responsible for what I deliver to my students, how they are formed as [graduates], I am totally responsible for being up-to-date on what I do... Fortunately, I think I can manage my job. The biggest problem I will have with my job is bureaucracy getting in the way of it. I'm motivated by what I do, for my students, I want the best for them.

My main concern is bureaucracy will kill me.”

(Joseph, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

“I think that most academics have a lot of independence as academics, in the university sector most lecturers have a lot of autonomy but ultimately you are accountable in some way to somebody. But also you

are accountable to yourself and I think that is the biggest policing agent in that sort of field, yourself.

But certainly I have a boss and bosses, and I know that I have a Head of Department and it's important that I do know that and I realise that there are people further up the food chain who could destroy me if they wanted to."

(Martin, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

Clearly, this attitude to formal leadership will have implications for the effectiveness of any leadership process.

Another aspect of the culture of higher education institutions which was referred to by participants is the promotion or prioritisation of academic values, as well as calls on the institution and others to respect the individual's right to academic freedom. The participants who referenced this aspect of the culture did so with the perspective of academic freedom being used as a reason for non-cooperation or resistance. These were characterised as invalid calls to academic freedom as evidenced in the following quote:

"I think that brings more coherence to programmes because I suppose in the past people would shout out this idea of academic freedom i.e. we can do what we want, which is a misrepresentation of the phrase academic freedom."

(Patrick, a member of academic staff at Minerva University)

The issue of territorialism, or a silo mindset, was referenced by a number of participants. This was generally mentioned in negative terms and referred to actions which were aimed at defending or preserving an individual's course or department at the expense of, or at least with little regard for, the greater good of the institution. This protectionism has implications for the leadership process as it can, as discussed earlier, foster significant levels of resistance against the leader or the leadership process.

Beyond the broad culture of higher education institutions, there was reference, by a number of individuals in the Ceres Institute, to a public sector mindset which was

characterised by a poor work ethic and not caring about the quality of the work that is done. For example, consider the following:

“The high-level answer is our system. We have a system which we now find very difficult to manage. For example, this institution is a 4½-day-per-week institution and many of the staff go home at lunchtime on Friday. Another issue is that the teaching contact quantum is the only performance measure on the contract. That all shapes our culture. Because of that, there are people who think they don't have to attend anything that is organised by the Head of School or Department Head. And I know in the coming months when we go to implement the strategy there are people who will say what's this, I'm not part of this, I never agreed to this.”

(Paul, a member of institutional leadership at Ceres Institute)

“In the public sector, very little. ... I think most people don't really care.

(Eve, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

There was also a single reference to this type of behaviour among the academic staff at Minerva University but, interestingly, it was attributed to an invalid definition of academic freedom rather than a public sector mindset, as can be seen from the following quote:

“She was indicating that the time that she had worked as a Head of School, she was very disappointed in the staff in her School because they were deciding that, for example, “I don't teach on a Tuesday afternoon because I want to collect my children.” She was thinking that this is a free-for-all and people were taking academic freedom too far, some people think - some academics think they have freedom on everything they do.”

(Sharon, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

There is a belief, certainly among members of the institutional leaders, that this public sector mentality fosters an attitude towards work and towards the institution which is not conducive to effective followership or leadership.

Aspects of the specific institutional culture

Some participants spoke of positive aspects of the institutional culture, including collegiality, acceptance of change, and a happy workplace. These aspects were cited by a small number of participants (about 15% of total participants, whereas negative aspects were referenced by over three times as many participants). Where participants referenced these positive aspects of the organisation, they also indicated the positive implications for the leadership process.

Over 50% of participants referenced negative aspects of the institutional culture. Participants from the Ceres Institute were much more likely to emphasise negative aspects (almost 75% of those referencing negative aspects were from the Ceres Institute) but this must be viewed in the context of the significant and recent institutional crisis experienced by the Ceres Institute. In fact, institutional crisis, and its impact, was one of the most referenced negative aspects and it was only referenced by participants from the Ceres Institute. The main implication for followership and leadership that emerges as a result of institutional crisis is a reduced capacity to focus on, or engage with, the leadership process due to the effort of dealing with the crisis.

While the Minerva University did not experience a specific crisis, it had suffered from the general financial crisis that had impacted the entire higher education sector. This was felt in terms of lack of resources, resulting in difficult working conditions. Participants from both institutions cited these lingering effects of the financial crisis as having an impact on the institutional culture and by extension on the leadership process. For example, consider the following quote:

“Anyway, this has the potential to derail the [strategy], it's hard to argue about improving things when people are struggling with the basics of covering the teaching hours adequately without adequate numbers of staff.”

(Joan, a member of institutional leadership at Minerva University)

This has an implication for the leadership process and may get in the way of effective followership, partly because it takes away from people's ability to contribute but also because it causes a disconnect between the strategic vision and the individuals' lived experience, thus causing a barrier to belief in the vision.

A similar impact results from any of the many other negative views that were expressed by participants and which combine to create a negative sense of the place, and which in turn undermine the individuals' commitment and engagement. Consider the following quote which refers to a general negativity which is impacting on engagement:

*“I think there is a general - and I say this from being on the factory floor
- I think there is a negative air about the place, so some people
contributed, a lot didn't.”*

(Deborah, a member of academic staff at Ceres Institute)

Sources of leadership

An interesting finding, in the context of followership, is to whom, or to where, individuals in higher education institutions look for leadership.

Over 70% of participants referred to this issue and, of those, 85% were members of academic staff. Some participants referred to multiple sources of leadership. For example, they may have referenced a senior academic as a source of leadership from a research perspective, but they may also reference their Head of School or Department as a general source of leadership.

Figure 21 gives a high-level breakdown of the numbers of participants indicating where they looked for leadership, under three broad categories, formal leadership structures, sources other than formal leadership structures or a lack of leadership.

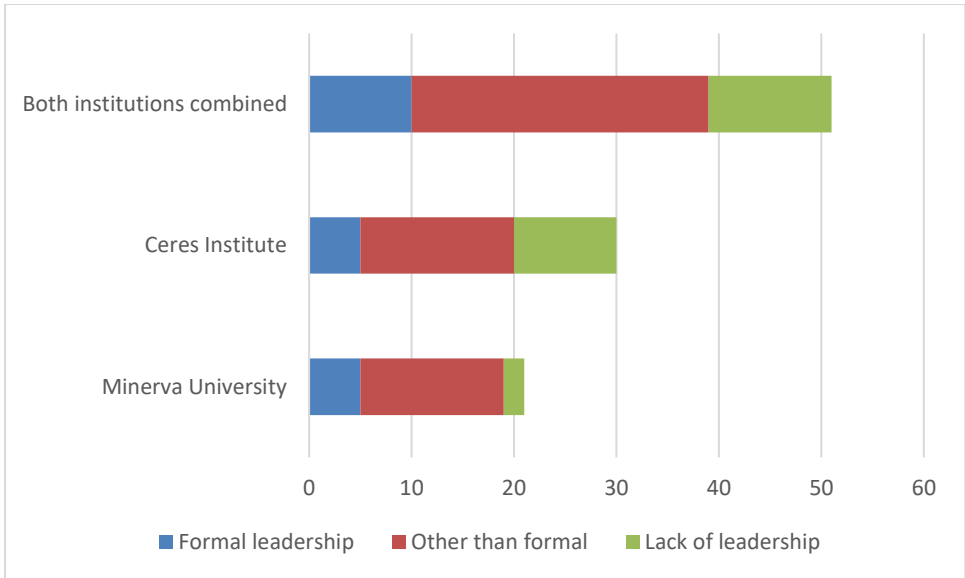


Figure 21: Sources of leadership broken down by institution

Participants are three times more likely to look for, and find, leadership away from the institution’s formal leadership structures. In this case, formal leadership structures consist of formal line-management and any formal mentorship programmes implemented by the institution. When participants look outside these formal structures, they look to a range of sources as illustrated in Figure 22.

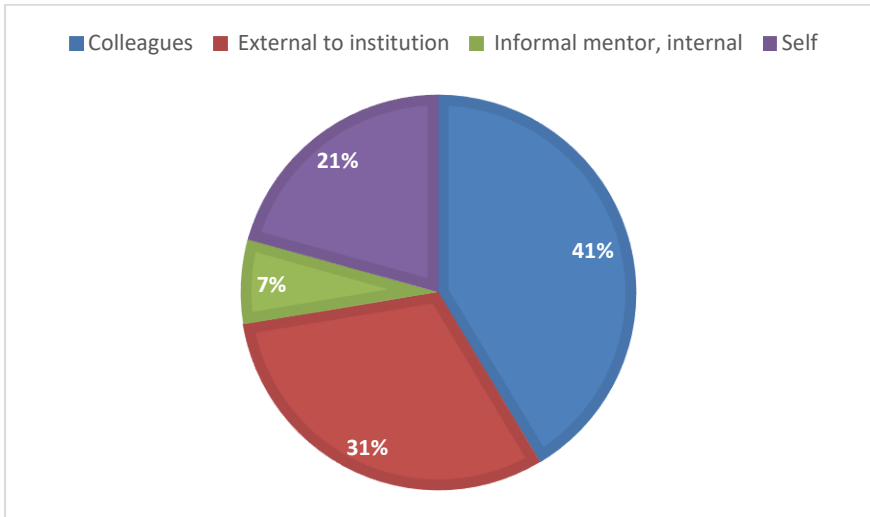


Figure 22: Informal sources of leadership

This may have a significant implication for any leadership process which utilises the formal leadership structures, because the followers may not recognise or accept the leader’s validity and as a result may not accept or commit to the process.

Discussion of findings in respect of organisational environment and culture

The main findings regarding the organisational environment and culture are summarised as follows:

- Generic aspects of the organisational culture of HEIs and the public sector were evident.
- Most prevalent was the assertion of the existence, and superiority, of self-management or autonomy. This was coupled with a lack of faith in institutional leadership and management, which has significant implications for the leadership process.
- The most prevalent aspect of the specific organisational environment and culture was that of institutional crisis.
- Institutional crisis had implications for leadership and followership because it was an impediment to follower engagement with the leadership process.
- Members of academic staff frequently, and in significant numbers, looked for leadership outside the formal leadership structures.
- This has implications for the leadership process as this is usually operationalised via the formal leadership structures.

There is evidence that, in line with expectations, the members of academic staff in both institutions place a high value on autonomy and self-management. This may explain why the only behaviour from the taxonomy developed by Carsten et al. (2010) which was not discussed by participants in this study was obedience or deference. It is understandable that, in a culture that placed a high value on autonomy, obedience and deference would not be deemed to be an important part of following.

While the literature suggests that the existence of high levels of autonomy and self-efficacy might result in a resistance to followership and following (Bastardo and Van Vugt, 2019), the findings from this study suggest that this negativity towards following in general is not present. Consider also that the study found that lack of engagement, or passive non-following, was the most prevalent form of non-following. The literature suggests that high levels of autonomy are associated with organisational cultures which exhibit high power distance and loose cultural norms. These features have been shown to promote proactive following or non-following (Blair and Bligh, 2018; Carsten et al., 2010). This would suggest that the autonomy of academic staff, or the value they place

on that autonomy, is not solely responsible for non-following and the lack of engagement in the leadership processes. Instead, another factor, or a combination of factors, must be responsible.

Both institutions have experienced significant crises and related challenges. As stated above, the literature suggests that times of crisis may actually increase the tendency for individuals to defer to a strong leader and adopt a follower role. The evidence from the study does not support this. Rather, the crisis was referenced as a reason why individuals were cynical or negative about the institution and the leadership. There is no evidence that faith in the leadership grew, or that followership occurred, as a consequence of the crises.

It is noteworthy that participants often pair expressions about the benefits of autonomy with expressions about the shortcomings or downsides of institutional leadership. Other studies of leadership in higher education have also referenced this attitude towards institutional leadership (Bryman, 2007). DeRue and Ashford (2010) discussed a leadership and followership construction process which proposed that a presumptive leader only really becomes a leader if her or his claim to be a leader is granted by the other group members, who in turn adopt follower roles. There is evidence that, in the institutions studied, it is not the preference for autonomy on the part of the academic staff but rather, as DeRue and Ashford would put it, a failure or unwillingness to grant the identity of leader to the formal institutional leadership that results in non-following in the form of disengagement. This seems all the more likely when you consider the findings relating to whom/where academic staff look for leadership. That participants are three times more likely to look for leadership somewhere other than the formal leadership structures suggests that the institutional leadership are not viewed as valid or able leaders in the eyes of the academic staff. This is an example of what Kerr and Jermier (1978) call leadership neutralisers. As mentioned above, findings similar to this have been discussed in other research relating to higher education leadership (Bryman, 2007). What is not clear, and warrants further study, is whether this lack of faith in the formal institutional leadership is as a result of the attributes and behaviours of the institutional leadership, and therefore correctable via the design and implementation

of the leadership process, or is a more fundamental feature of the organisational culture and environment in higher education institutions. Whichever is true, this finding is highly significant to the design, implementation, and ultimately success of the leadership process in higher education institutions.

It is clear that aspects of the organisational culture and environment have an impact on followers and followership, but this impact was not entirely in line with expectations. A preference for autonomy does not appear to create an environment which is incompatible with effective followership. However, a strong tendency to look for leadership, away from the formal structures of institutional leadership, whether because of, or in spite of, what the institutional leaders actually do, has significant implications for the leadership process.

Variations between the findings in respect of the different cases

This was a case study of specific leadership processes within two Irish higher education institutions. In keeping with the case study approach the findings, as discussed in this chapter, emerged from a combination of in-case and cross-case analysis of the data from each of the institutions.

In considering the findings in respect of each institution and how they vary from each other, broadly speaking, the findings are quite similar and there are no highly significant institution-specific findings or recommendations.

The lack of major differences in the findings is contrary to expectations, given that these institutions are quite different in terms of their history, organisational maturity, governance and mission focus. In addition, the Ceres Institute was at the time of the study, according to the participants, dealing with a crisis situation whereas the Minerva University was in a post-crisis situation where the crisis was still salient as a recent experience and the effects of the crisis were still evident in aspects such as staffing levels, infrastructure and funding. Despite these differences it is evident from the study that the experiences and perceptions of academic staff in both institutions were broadly comparable. This may point to the identity of the academic professional being more

significant in terms of the development constructs of followership than the institutional environment.

Looking at some of the variations that, while minor, were evident in the findings, one sees that while the majority of both groups of participants were positive about followers and followership, those from the Ceres Institute were positive in greater numbers, almost twice as many, than the Minerva University. Also, participants in the Minerva University were more than two times more likely to be motivated by a desire to avoid risk when choosing to adopt the role of follower.

In identifying the attributes and behaviours exhibited by followers, participants from the Ceres Institute posited, in significant numbers, that a follower should be knowledgeable. In contrast this property was not referenced by any of the participants in the Minerva University. The mission of the Ceres Institute, both in teaching and research, focuses on applied and career-focused programmes and projects. In this context it may be that knowledge, and in particular practical or applied knowledge, has a high degree of importance.

In discussing aspects of the organisational culture which had implications for followership, participants in both institutions referred, in similar numbers, to elements such as academic freedom, professional credibility and personal autonomy as important factors. This again suggests that the identity of the academic professional, which these elements are generally associated with, is a significant and consistent factor in the experiences and perceptions of followership, even across different institution types. One element that was discussed by participants from the Ceres Institute was the impact of a broad public sector culture on issues such as commitment and conscientiousness. While similar issues were discussed by participants in the Minerva University, they were attributed to misinterpretations of the meaning of academic freedom. This may point to a process of post-hoc sensemaking where common behaviours, which are observed in both institutions, are attributed, separately and after the fact, to different aspects of the organisational culture or environment.

While there are some variations in the findings from both institutions, they are more similar than they are different. As discussed above, this points to the possibility that the identity of the academic professional is a more impactful factor than is the type of institution in the development of constructs of followers and followership. This is quite significant because the academic professionals in both institutions have very different roles, contracts of employment and qualification profiles, and yet it appears that there are certain elements that are both common and influential. Consequently, this phenomenon may be an interesting avenue for future research.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the findings from the research study were presented and discussed. Table 15 summarises the findings in relation to each of the themes.

| Theme | Findings |
|---|---|
| <p>Perceptions of followership and followers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly positive perceptions. • Very few completely negative perceptions. Instead, negative statements qualified to indicate that, while participants recognise that there are negative connotations, they don't agree with these negative views. • Followers and followership seen as essential. • Two types of follower or followership, active (or proactive) and passive. • Several factors motivate individuals to choose the role of follower and these are (in order of reference): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Genuinely believe in the vision, leader, process, etc. ○ Unable or unwilling to lead ○ Seeking an easier life ○ Seeking to avoid risk ○ Self-interest, e.g. career progression etc • Choosing to be a follower has potential positive and negative implications for the individual and these include (in order of reference): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive - opportunity to contribute to something you believe in ○ Negative - lack of influence or control ○ Positive - opportunity for learning or development ○ Negative - risk to reputation, development, etc |
| <p>Followers' attributes and behaviours</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified 27 common constructs of followers' attributes and behaviours. • The majority of these belonged to one of the following 6 categories: |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sociability ○ Self or other orientation ○ Action orientation ○ Conscientiousness ○ Mindset ○ Competence ● There were 11 highly referenced (within both data sets) constructs of attributes and behaviour. ● The common constructs, the categories and the highly referenced constructs provide a useful and interesting framework which may help future followership research. |
| <p>Effective and ineffective followership</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is evidence from Rep Grid study linking constructs of followers' attributes and behaviours to effective and ineffective followership. ● When combined with findings from participant interviews, a broad framework for effective (and by extension ineffective) followership emerges. ● This framework is based on the 3 Cs – i.e. an effective follower is <i>committed</i>, <i>constructive</i> and able to <i>challenge</i>. ● The <i>committed</i> follower genuinely believes in the vision, leader, process, etc. Commitment is an essential prerequisite which enables the attributes and behaviours associated with effective followership. ● The <i>constructive</i> follower exhibits a range of attributes and behaviours which, combined, mean that the follower is helping to drive the process, leader, etc towards success. ● These behaviours include engagement, proactivity, conscientiousness, competence, team-orientation and sociability. ● The follower who is able to <i>challenge</i> ensures that the leader and the process are 'kept honest' and that any missteps or indiscretions are highlighted and challenged. ● This follower is capable of critical or independent thinking and the organisational environment is also an important factor. |
| <p>Models of following</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Models of following can be split into two categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive models associated with effective followership ○ Negative models associated with ineffective followership (non-following) ● Authentic following is a positive model which is characterised by genuine belief (devoid of self-interest) and ethical behaviour. ● Courageous following involves following in a manner that equates with 'the right thing to do', even when it is unpopular (in the eyes of colleagues or leaders) or risky – swimming against the tide. ● There are examples of positive models of following even when leadership is overwhelmed, insufficient or absent. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These models include followers compensating for the shortcomings in leadership by exhibiting leading behaviours. • Two models of non-following were evident: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Passive non-following ○ Active non-following (resistance) • Passive non-following may result from practical considerations or follower status. • Active-non following may result from self-interest, practical considerations or principled resistance. |
| <p>The leadership process and outcomes</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where engagement was lacking, the primary reason was cynicism about the leadership process, the appropriateness of the vision or the state of the institution. • Most experienced the leadership process as top-down in nature, this is despite the institutional leaders describing the process as distributed or a hybrid of bottom-up and top-down. • Most described the process as consultative, but many qualified this by indicating that, while there were consultation opportunities, the consultation exercise was not sufficient or genuine. • Participants considered the process a success or a qualified success. • Success generally meant that it satisfied the needs of the institution or the leaders. • Qualified success usually meant that there were questions about sufficient resources (given the state of the institution), or resolve (in the face of expected resistance), to implement the strategy. |
| <p>Organisational environment and culture</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic aspects of the organisational culture of HEIs and the public sector were evident. • Most prevalent was the assertion of the existence, and superiority, of self-management or autonomy. This was coupled with a lack of faith in institutional leadership and management which has significant implications for the leadership process. • The most prevalent aspect of the specific organisational environment and culture was that of institutional crisis. • Institutional crisis had implications for leadership and followership because it was an impediment to follower engagement with the leadership process. • Members of academic staff frequently, and in significant numbers, looked for leadership outside the formal leadership structures. • This has implications for the leadership process as this is usually operationalised via the formal leadership structures. |

Table 15: Summary of findings

Together, these findings bring clarity and detail to the picture of followership and they show how the different aspects interact and how findings under one theme have implications for other aspects of the phenomenon. The findings, presented and discussed in this chapter, provide a comprehensive and meaningful explanation of the nature of followership in present-day higher education institutions. In the next chapter, the findings are positioned, in the context of the study research questions, in terms of their implications for the practice of followership and leadership, and in respect of existing and future research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This research study explores the phenomenon of followership in higher education institutions. The study adopts both a follower-centric and a followership-centric perspective. In adopting a follower-centric approach, the majority of participants are members of academic staff in the respective institutions. A followership-centric approach is achieved by focusing the inquiry on how the participants feel, think and act in the context of their role as follower. In keeping with the underlying theoretical framework for this study, followership is not a subset of leadership. Neither is it a standalone phenomenon which can be studied independently of leadership. Rather, the phenomenon of leadership is co-produced, within the leadership process, by the combined efforts of followers engaging in following or followership, and leaders engaging in leading or leadership.

In the context of the detailed presentation of findings contained herein, it is helpful to revisit the conceptual model (see Figure 7) which emerged in the course of the data analysis. It is now possible to develop and enhance the conceptual model with further detail which has emerged from consideration of the findings. Figure 23 shows a modified version of the conceptual model. In representing the phenomenon of followership, the model illustrates three overarching processes, namely, the process of the social construction of followership, the process of enacting followership and the leadership process.

At the core of the conceptual model is the process of social construction whereby an individual's constructs of followership are formed within the context of the institution. The process of social construction is complex and multi-faceted and involves different social and cognitive mechanisms which include, for example, development of an individual's constructs via internal cognition (personal level), influence of one-to-one relationships on constructs (interpersonal level), and modifications to constructs because of group dynamics and behaviours (collective level). Through the process of social construction, the individual comes to know, understand and internalise, how they

perceive, and feel about, followership, and ultimately how they should behave or act as a follower in the specific context. The study found the constructs grouped into three categories. Firstly, there were general perceptions of followers and followership. Secondly, there were constructs of the attributes and behaviours commonly exhibited by followers. Finally, drawing from the other two categories, there were the followers' constructs of effective (and ineffective) followership.

Critically, in this model, followership is a choice and the individual has the freedom and agency to determine what kind of follower he or she will be, in relation to each specific leadership process. Guided by the constructs developed through the process of social construction the follower must choose what model (or models) of following to enact. Among the factors that influence this choice are the individual's beliefs and level of commitment to those beliefs, self-interest, and practical considerations such as workload and available resources. Each of these factors can lead to different types of following, depending on other factors such as the goals of the leadership process. For example, consider an individual who is strongly committed to the success of the institution. Such an individual is likely to choose following rather than non-following and also, depending on the organisational environment, is likely to act in the best interest of the institution irrespective of the behaviours exhibited by leaders. Alternatively, if an individual is highly committed to the principles and values of their academic profession or discipline, then he or she may engage in non-following when confronted with a leadership process which has goals that are at odds with those principles and values.

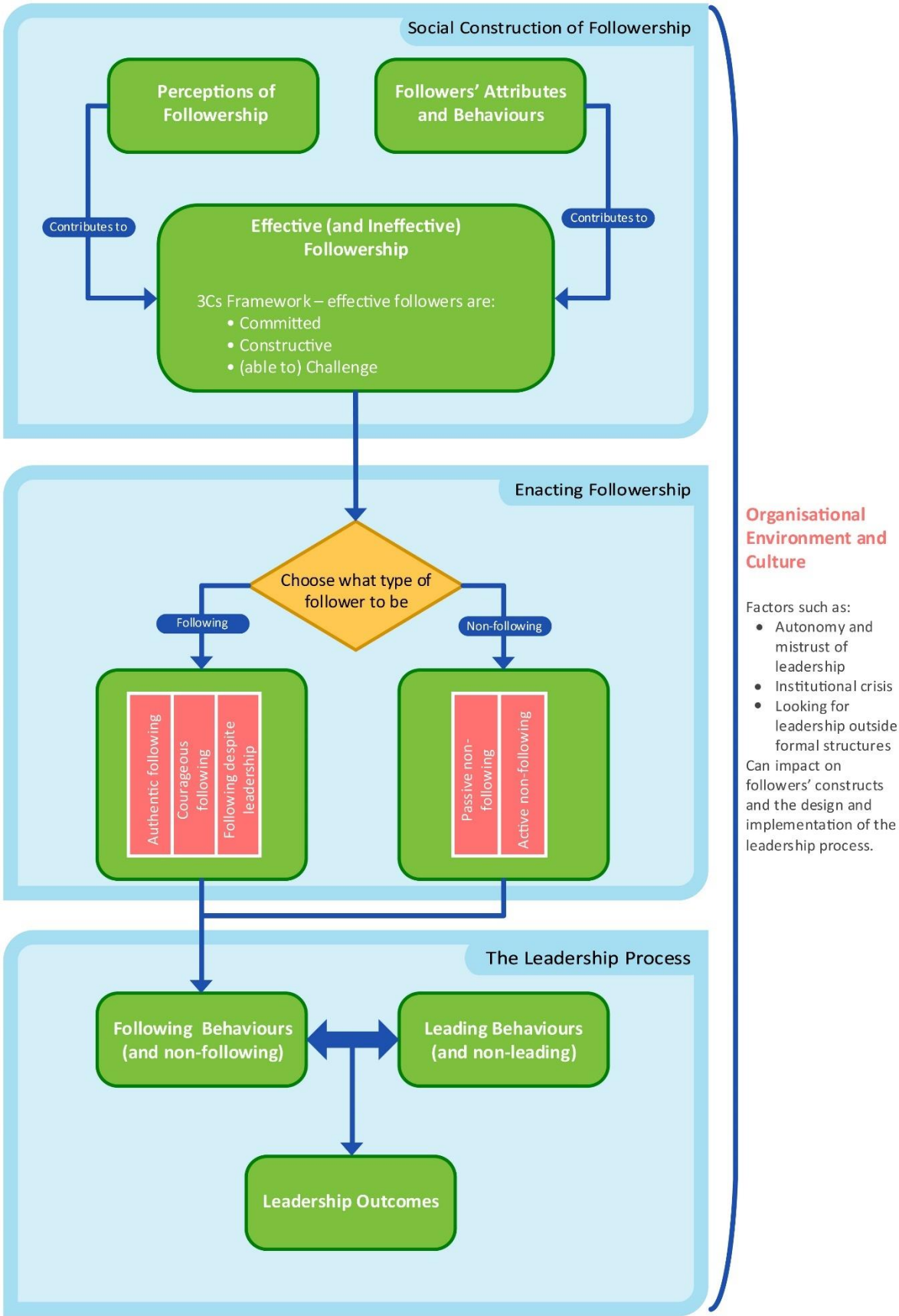


Figure 23: Modified conceptual model highlighting findings

Following behaviours are a key part of the leadership process. Together with leading behaviours, these interact and combine to produce (or co-produce) leadership and leadership outcomes. Within the leadership process, a range of individuals, both leaders and followers, will engage and interact in a variety of ways, influenced by their individual and shared constructs, and the outcomes of the leadership process are ultimately determined by the nature and quality of those interactions. This is why Uhl-bien et al. describe leadership as “a relationship with consequences”(Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The interactions that happen between leaders and followers, in the context of the leadership process, can range from informal one-to-one engagements to formal and structured activities such as consultation workshops or project meetings.

The purpose of the leadership process is to successfully harness the capabilities of followers and leaders such that they work together to allow the institution to achieve the desired goals or outcomes. The outcomes of the leadership process, or leadership outcomes, can be specific, e.g. successful achievement of the goals envisaged at the outset, or more general, e.g. result in the professional development of the individuals involved or lead to the creation of more cohesive and effective workplace teams. In creating a leadership process to achieve the desired leadership outcomes, one must ensure that the process is designed and implemented in such a way as to ensure that it is compatible with the prevailing values, cultures and configurations of power and influence within the organisation. In addition, the demeanour and behaviour of the leaders in the context of the leadership process, especially when interacting with followers, must align with the culture, values and way of doing things in the organisation. Essential to addressing these factors is a knowledge of the perceptions, beliefs and motivations of the individuals involved and as there are many more followers than leaders engaged in the process, it follows that the design and implementation of an effective leadership process requires the best possible understanding of followers’ constructs. An effective leadership process can deliver benefits beyond the achievement of outcomes. As discussed below, the nature of the leadership process, and the interactions that take place between leaders and followers during the process, can modify followers’ constructs and thereby negatively or positively influence their participation in future leadership processes.

Another important process, which is not explicitly illustrated in the conceptual model, is that of developmental feedback. Once an individual has developed her or his constructs these will influence the mode of following chosen and, ultimately, the nature of interaction in the leadership process. This participation in the leadership process effectively tests the individual's constructs and results in feedback to the individual regarding the appropriateness or effectiveness of those constructs. This feedback will have a developmental impact on the nature of the constructs. If the feedback validates the constructs, then they will become stronger and more salient for the individual. If the feedback in some way undermines or invalidates the existing constructs, then this will result in the constructs being modified to accommodate this feedback. Therefore, at the highest level this process consists of a development stage, a test stage and an evaluation (or reevaluation) stage. However, the process is, in practice, complex, multi-faceted and largely subconscious. Via this process of developmental feedback, the social construction process is both cyclical and continuous.

The leadership process is influenced by the organisational environment and culture in two main ways. Firstly, the organisational environment and culture are important factors in the process of social construction whereby followers' perceptions, beliefs and ideas about followership are created. These constructs of followership in turn influence how individual followers behave in the context of the leadership process. Secondly, as discussed in Chapter 3, the nature of higher education institutions has resulted in specific approaches to leadership aimed at addressing the unique aspects of factors such as decision making and member participation in this context.

This model provides a theoretical and conceptual basis on which to explain and understand the phenomenon of followership in higher education, in the context of this study and beyond. In this concluding chapter, I discuss the findings and implications of the study under the following headings:

- Addressing the research questions
- The contribution of the study
- Implications and recommendations for practice
- Limitations of the study and possible future research

6.1 Addressing the Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following overarching research question:

How is followership practised by academic staff in higher education institutions and what are the possible implications for leadership outcomes?

This research question was further divided into five subordinate questions. The findings of the study, as they apply to, or address, each of the subordinate questions, and by extension the main research question, are discussed below.

What are the beliefs, experiences, perceptions and expectations of academic staff, working in higher education institutions, of their role in the leadership process?

In the relevant literature, and beyond, followers and followership have negative associations or connotations. Because of these negative connotations and other downsides to followership, such as loss of influence, discussed earlier, it is expected that individuals will be averse to followership and adopting the role of follower. Given the salience of factors such as personal autonomy and professional credibility, it is suggested in the literature that members of academic staff in higher education institutions are even less likely to look favourably on followership or the follower role (Billot et al., 2013; Kligyte and Barrie, 2014).

Contrary to the expectations contained in the literature, this study found that the academic staff, in the institutions studied, had well-developed constructs of followership. They were generally positive about the nature of followers and they showed a good understanding of the essential role played by followers in the leadership process. Furthermore, there was a clear understanding that followership was not defined by one's role or position in the organisational hierarchy. Neither was it the case that there were certain individuals that were, due to demeanour, personality or behaviour, destined to be followers. The participants understood that followership involved choice or agency and that the same individual could choose to lead, follow, or not follow, depending on circumstances or context.

The issue of choice is a critical element in understanding followership. In exploring choice with participants, they were asked to discuss what is perhaps the most basic choice with respect to followership, i.e. the choice between adopting, or trying to adopt, a leader role and adopting a follower role. In discussing the motivations that would lead an individual to adopt a follower role, genuine belief in the vision, leader or process was the most common motivation. This theme of genuine or authentic belief being the foundation on which followership is built recurs again and again in the study's findings and therefore appears to be a very significant factor.

Individuals were also mindful of the implications for them as individuals of adopting the role of follower. Positive implications are most cited, and these are linked by the word opportunity, namely, the opportunity to contribute to something you believe in, or the opportunity to develop or learn.

The academic staff in the higher education institutions studies have a largely positive perception of followership in general. More importantly, they understand the nature of followership in two key aspects. Firstly, they understand the essential role of followership in the leadership process and, secondly, they understand that individuals have choice and agency about when and how they engage in followership. This suggests that the academic staff are not antagonistic towards followership and will, in the right circumstances, adopt the role of follower. However, it also means that if they do adopt a follower role, they will do so purposefully and knowingly, and not simply because it is determined or expected due to their position within the organisation.

How do academic staff working in higher education institutions enact followership?

In looking at how members of academic staff enact followership, the study explored, in the first instance, the attributes and behaviours of followers. At the outset, it is important to understand that attributes and behaviours are neither good nor bad. For example, in many of the models in the literature, attributes and behaviours which are associated with an active, or proactive, action orientation, are associated with good or effective followership. However, a capable, engaged, proactive individual may just as

well put these attributes and behaviours to use working against the aims of the leadership process, i.e. active non-following. While it is useful to explore the attributes and behaviours of followers, it is important to understand that the attributes and behaviours are not necessarily good or bad. Neither do they, by their existence, dictate that a follower will be good or bad. Higher-order constructs such as good or bad followership are complex phenomena which rely on multiple factors, including but not confined to followers' attributes and behaviours. Therefore, it has been argued that the approach, common in the literature, of studying, defining and categorising attributes and behaviours in the context of higher-order constructs is suboptimal (Yukl et al., 2019). The approach taken herein was to initially explore the attributes and behaviours on their own with a view to developing a model which has greater validity, applicability and flexibility.

The study explored the attributes and behaviours of followers and identified 27 shared constructs that described the attributes and behaviours commonly exhibited by members of academic staff when they were engaging in followership. The constructs do not describe single attributes or behaviours, but instead describe a continuum between two poles. This approach is consistent with the viewpoint discussed above whereby value judgements and simplistic labels are avoided, and results in a more representative and flexible model. Of the 27 shared constructs, 11 were very highly referenced and these were found to encapsulate or accommodate comparable models from the literature. The value of taking this comprehensive and broad-based approach is that it allowed for the identification of significant categories of attributes and behaviours. Six categories were identified which encompassed the common constructs and as such these are sufficient to describe the attribute behaviour profiles of all followers within this study. The categories identified were sociability, self or other oriented, action orientation, conscientiousness, mindset and competence. The taxonomy based on these six categories may be helpful in describing the attribute and behaviour profile of followers in general and may facilitate future research of the phenomenon of followership in higher education and beyond. In addition to aiding future research efforts, the taxonomy may be of practical assistance to institutional leaders. Firstly, it can provide a useful template for leaders wishing to assess the capabilities and contribution of

followers. In addition, the categories and the related attributes and behaviours can be used in the design and delivery of programmes aimed at developing followership knowledge and skills within organisations.

As discussed above, choice plays a significant role in the practice of followership. Irrespective of the attributes and capabilities an individual may possess, he or she must choose to engage or not in followership. The choice is not only about whether to adopt the role of follower or not, but is also about what type of follower, or non-follower to be. The study identified a number of models of following and non-following. These models describe how individuals actually enact following and as such they represent the choice that the individual has made based on their constructs of followership and prevailing organisational factors.

The models fell into two broad categories, models of following and models of non-following. Among the models of following discussed were authentic following, and courageous following. Of particular interest, is the model that I have labelled *following despite leadership*. This model describes the situation where followers can, and often do, effectively engage in following in circumstances where leadership is lacking, or absent entirely. For example, participants described situations where leaders were challenged and unable to exert control in certain situations and followers recognised this and acted in a way that aided the leaders in progressing matters. This shows the impact that following behaviours can have in the success of the leadership process, and the organisation generally, and emphasises the importance of actively and formally developing followership within organisations.

Contrary to the connotations of followers and followership in some of the literature, and more generally, disengaged followers may not be lazy, uninterested and unproductive. Instead they may be deliberately choosing to withhold their support from the leadership process as an act of non-following. In broad terms, non-following is characterised by individuals either not engaging in the process (passive non-following) or actively working against the process (active non-following). This study found evidence of both types of non-following as well as highlighting some of the reasons,

discussed below, for non-following. This finding identifies non-following as an extant and significant phenomenon within the broader phenomenon of followership, and suggests that it may have significant implications for the leadership process.

The study found that there are three main drivers of the choice of model of following (or non-following), belief or commitment, self-interest, and practical considerations. Practical considerations refer to factors such as an individual's workload or the availability of sufficient resources. In the context of this study, practical considerations were generally given as reasons for choosing to engage in the model described as passive non-following. The nature of this choice can be simply because the individual does not have the time or resources to engage or it may be more nuanced whereby the individual is unhappy that the institutional leaders have not provided sufficient resources and for that reason chooses not to engage.

The other two drivers were associated with models of both following and non-following. Self-interest relates either to opportunities (e.g. for gain or advancement) or challenges (e.g. to wellbeing or status) within the context of the role of follower. An individual motivated by self-interest who perceives the role of follower as a challenge to that self-interest is likely to choose to engage in non-following, and certainly will not choose courageous following which is characterised by followers acting appropriately despite the consequences for their own interests. Conversely, an individual who perceives opportunity within the role of follower may, for reasons of self-interest, adopt the role of follower. At its best this can be positive because there may be mutual benefit to both the follower and the institution. Leaders are often encouraged to utilise self-interest as a means to motivate or incentivise follower loyalty or participation (Lockwood and Davies, 1985). However, leader-member exchange theory posits that there is also a substantial downside to this approach. If an individual is solely driven by self-interest, then their following may not be authentic, and their loyalty and participation may vary or wane if they perceive that their self-interest is no longer being served.

Belief in, or commitment to, a person or a principle can be a very significant factor in an individual's choices about following and this is discussed below in the context of

effective followership. But belief can also lead to non-following when the goals of the leadership process are contrary to that belief. The relevant literature suggests that is often encountered in the context of higher education institutions where adherence to academic principles on the part of academic staff results in resistance to, or disengagement from, a leadership process which has goals that do not align with those principles. The evidence from this study would seem to support that viewpoint.

What do academic staff believe constitutes effective or ineffective followership and how may leaders help or hinder followers?

Any discussion of effective or ineffective followership must take cognisance of the fact that followers' attributes and behaviours are objectively neither good nor bad. A very effective individual who possesses all the 'good' attributes and behaviours may still decide, depending on the context, to be an effective non-follower instead. Therefore, perspective is key when exploring the issue of effective followership. Herein, effective followership is defined from the perspective of the institution and therefore, effective followership describes attributes and behaviours exhibited by a follower which helped the institution's leadership process towards the achievement of the desired outcomes.

As discussed above, an individual may use the same attributes and behaviours in pursuit of effective followership, or non-followership. This means that it is not attributes and behaviours alone, as suggested by some models, that are the determinants of effective followership, and other factors must be involved.

This study looked beyond behaviours and attributes in seeking to explain the nature of effective followership. The outcome of this approach was the development of what is herein referred to as the 3Cs framework of effective followership. According to this framework, an effective follower is committed, constructive and able to challenge.

A constructive follower exhibits similar attributes and behaviours to those that are associated with effective followership in the literature. These include engagement, proactivity, conscientiousness, and being a team player.

When an individual has a genuine belief in the vision, leader or process, they will engage with the leadership process and apply their knowledge and capabilities to help towards the achievement of the desired outcomes. This concept of follower commitment was referenced repeatedly by the study participants in explaining not only effective followership but also follower engagement, and why someone would choose to adopt the role of follower in the first place. It is difficult to overstate the significance and salience of commitment within this study as a factor in effective followership and the success of the leadership process.

An effective follower must be able to challenge the leader or the process when necessary. This ability to challenge, and its importance for effective followership, is also referenced in the relevant literature.

In looking at how the leadership process and the institution as a whole may be able to help promote or develop effective followership, initially the focus is on commitment. The findings from this study suggest that considerable time and resources should be devoted to achieving commitment. The literature also suggests that a leader or leadership process that recognises the importance of commitment and consequently is heavily focused on building commitment and consensus is most likely to succeed in the context of higher education institutions (Bryman, 2007; Lockwood and Davies, 1985; Maassen and Stensaker, 2019).

The ability to challenge depends partly on the traits of the individual and partly on organisational factors. One of the organisational factors relates to the status or position of the individual whereby members of staff who have low status or precarious contractual situations feel less able or less willing to challenge the leadership process. The other factor relates to the approach or demeanour of leaders to the leadership process. Participants spoke of engaging with the leadership process only to have their contributions or challenges fall on deaf ears. Of particular concern were the long-term implications of this scenario. It was found that followers were either less likely to engage with, or more likely to actively work against, future leadership processes in the

institution because of the perception that challenge was not welcome and leaders were not listening.

While attributes and behaviours are not the sole determinants of effective followership, they are still an important part, particularly once commitment has been given. While there is evidence that the institutions, leaders and academic staff all understand and appreciate the value of followership to the success of the organisation, there was no evidence that they understood the corresponding value of a formal structured programme for developing followership skills and knowledge.

To what extent are the followers' beliefs and behaviours formed by the organisational context and cultures of the higher education institution?

The initial expectation, as discussed in the literature, that certain aspects of the culture in higher education institutions would result in members of academic staff being negative or hostile towards following and followership, were not entirely borne out by the findings in this study. There is strong evidence that the role of follower is accepted, understood and appreciated by members of academic staff.

However, there was also evidence in the findings of some of the challenges to rational and bureaucratic leadership and management which is common in higher education institutions (Bleiklie et al., 2015; Maassen and Stensaker, 2019). For example, the literature discusses challenges to the legitimacy of leadership power as the members of academic staff have vested that legitimacy in academic principles and norms (Bleiklie et al., 2015). Academic staff are said to have a greater affiliation with their academic discipline and their profession, rather than to their institution. This means that their professional identity and what matters to them professionally are more likely to be associated with their research, teaching and curricula. Therefore, when seeking leadership in relation to these important matters, they tend to look to respected individuals, both inside the institution and externally, such as senior departmental colleagues and prominent members of the research community. Consequently, the authority to lead is more readily afforded to these respected individuals. Other leaders and leadership processes, particularly if they impinge on the important matters of

research, teaching and curricula, are likely to be deemed invalid and thus rejected. There was significant evidence of this phenomenon in the institutions studied, which is seen in the degree to which members of academic staff in both institutions looked for leadership from sources other than the formal leadership structures of the institution. This finding has significant implications for leadership within these institutions and higher education institutions generally.

One of the more significant findings from this study is the salience of commitment as a precursor to engaged and effective followership. This finding prompts the question as to whether there are aspects of the organisational culture in higher education institutions that result in the high level of significance placed on commitment. A relevant issue may be the degree of professional affiliation or loyalty felt by academic staff. The result of this professional affiliation is that they view their role as a vocation rather than simply a job and their career motivations and goals tend to be linked to principles and ideals such as academic integrity and professional credibility. In such circumstances, where issues such as credibility and reputation are highly valued, it follows that the act of associating your personal credibility or reputation with a publication or a leadership process, i.e. committing to the publication or process, would be very important and meaningful, i.e. have greater salience.

From the interviews with institutional leaders in the study, and from broader experience, the importance of commitment does not appear to be fully appreciated. Leaders indicate that they understand the value of commitment or buy-in but at the same time express the opinion that the institution should be able to count on commitment and engagement from academic staff, and cite factors such as organisational loyalty, professionalism and even levels of remuneration as reasons for why this should be so. These views of institutional leaders show that, based on the findings of this study, they do not fully appreciate the nature of commitment in this context or its importance for the success of the leadership process and the institution. There is evidence from the leadership processes studied that this lack of understanding may have resulted in a failure to invest sufficient time and effort in consensus building. The failure to develop commitment not only has implications for followers' engagement

in the leadership process but it also deprives the leaders and the institution of a very important resource, namely, informal leadership. As discussed above, committed individuals will frequently engage in pro-leader and pro-institution behaviours and they will use their social capital or influence in the service of the leadership process and the institution. This is a very important resource and can often deliver progress when formal leadership is challenged. There was no evidence that the institutional leaders understood the value of informal leadership, how to foster or develop it, or how to use it in pursuit of leadership outcomes. Interestingly, the findings from the study indicate that the members of academic staff may have a better understanding of the nature and value of informal leadership.

As discussed above, the literature has identified the ability to challenge the leader or process as an important aspect of effective models of following. A number of the participants in the study referred to certain aspects of the culture, inherent in higher education institutions, as a factor in this ability to challenge. In particular, they referred to aspects of academic work, and how members of academic staff approach their work. It is in the nature of the academic profession to engage in critical evaluation and critical thinking and the members of that profession apply this approach to all aspects of their work within the institution, from their research and teaching to their participation in organisation-wide activities. This means that, in higher education institutions, many of the participants in the leadership process are able, willing and likely to challenge the leadership and the process.

What possible implications does the manner of followership have for the higher education institutions' achievement of leadership outcomes?

The findings show that there is a good understanding of the nature and value of followership among members of academic staff. There is an understanding of the role that followership plays in the leadership process and, in general, there are positive connotations associated with that role. If these positive constructs of followership are coupled with a genuine belief in the vision, leader or process, effective followership will ensue and the institution's chances of achieving its desired outcomes are significantly improved. In addition, the findings show that, once they are positive and committed,

followers will go above and beyond what is normally expected of the follower role, and may compensate for or even replace the actions of leaders, resulting in the achievement of leadership outcomes even where leadership is lacking. The converse is also true, in that if there is ineffective followership or non-following, this can have negative implications for the achievement of leadership outcomes.

These findings, which encapsulate followers' constructs of followership, may not necessarily be reflected in the actual following behaviours exhibited in the context of the leadership process. In looking at the actual following behaviours and the implications for the leadership process, an important initial step is to understand the nature and structure of the processes being studied. The leadership processes studied in both institutions were similar in a number of respects. Firstly, both were largely concerned with the formulation of an institution-wide strategy. The basic criterion for the success of the process in both cases was the formal approval of an agreed strategy document. Both processes were following on from a previous process which had the same goal, i.e. the development and approval of a strategy, but had not succeeded. Also, in the case of both institutions, there had been a change in the leadership in respect of the relevant process before the current iteration commenced. Finally, both processes were, for differing reasons, completed over a relatively short timeframe. These factors combined resulted in leadership processes which had non-standard configurations. If you consider the model proposed by Lockwood and Davies (1985) which describes four phases as follows, the ambiguous phase, the political phase, the collegial phase and the bureaucratic (or implementation phase), it is clear that the leadership processes studied did not progress to the bureaucratic phase. Also, because of the combination of the previous unsuccessful processes, the change in leadership, and the time pressures, much of the efforts and energies were focused on phase three, the collegial phase, i.e. the focus was on developing the content of the strategy document and gaining approval for the finalised document via the various forums.

Lockwood and Davies (1985) indicate that to neglect the earlier phases is to invite significant problems at the later phases. This and other analysis suggests that a poorly designed or implemented process will often have implications for followership. It is also

clear, from the preceding discussions, that the nature of followership can have implications on the leadership process and its outcomes. What is less clear is which direction of influence, i.e. the process on followership or followership on the process, is the strongest or most impactful. Regardless, it would appear that the leadership processes studied experienced some challenges because of a combination of their non-standard configurations and the following behaviours enacted.

A key imperative of the collegial phase is to obtain a sufficient level of collegial agreement to allow the document to be formulated and approved. To this end, the leaders will engage in processes such as consultation and internal marketing in order to get the requisite buy-in. From an operational or practical viewpoint, each process was configured and implemented quite differently from the other. Despite this, from the perspective of the members of academic staff, the experience of participating in the two processes was very similar. Most described the processes as top-down with a clearly identified leading force at the helm. The processes were described as inclusive with opportunities provided for participation but many queried both the motivation behind, and implementation of, these consultation exercises. The perceptions of the process varied but in general it was seen as a process aimed at fulfilling a requirement (“ticking a box”) rather than a genuine attempt to engage the academic staff. Many of those who engaged found the consultation process to be insufficient or inauthentic and a significant majority chose not to engage in the process.

The obvious implication of a lack of participation or engagement is that the process may not achieve the desired outcomes. However, short of this there are other implications which are of consequence. I described earlier how the process of developmental feedback can use experiences from a particular leadership process to modify the individuals’ constructs of followership and thereby affect their behaviour in respect of future leadership processes. Therefore, by engaging in a consultation exercise that is utilitarian, i.e. it minimally delivers the results required for the completion of the current process, but is ultimately inauthentic in nature, i.e. there is no genuine listening or engagement with the participants’ contributions, institutional leaders can sow the seeds of future non-following. In the current study there is evidence that this may have

been a factor in the level of passive non-following encountered. Participants spoke about past experiences leading to a general air of negativity or cynicism about the nature of the leadership processes studied. In addition, where lack of engagement, or passive non-following, is the dominant follower behaviour, the leadership process may progress to completion and certain outcomes may be achieved, but the findings show that where levels of followership are not sufficiently high, the outcomes and their validity are called into question. This touches on the issue of legitimacy which is discussed further below.

Another important factor at the collegial stage is to establish the legitimacy of the strategy, or policy, or decisions that emerge from the process at this stage. A necessary input for the implementation phase is that there is a legitimate outcome that has been agreed by the relevant parties. The task of determining legitimacy is nontrivial because different individuals and groups will have different criteria by which they test the legitimacy of an outcome. From this study it was clear that the institutional leaders gave considerable weighting to the development and formal approval of a strategy document as a measure of legitimacy. Meanwhile, the members of academic staff saw this as being far less significant and pointed to various aspects of the implementation as the more significant measures of legitimacy. This may explain why many participants indicated that the process was a success from the perspective of the institutional leaders but from the perspective of the academic staff it was seen as a qualified success at best.

The finding relating to academic staff seeking leadership outside the formal structures has substantial implications for the legitimacy of the leadership outcomes. If, as discussed above, the academic staff view the institutional leadership as invalid and reject it, then it is likely that the outcome of the leadership process will also be seen as invalid or illegitimate. A number of participants indicated that, while they did not agree with the content of the strategy, they did not seek to protest or resist at strategy formation stage because it was not important. Instead, they were reserving their acts of resistance for the implementation phase, perhaps because that is when the strategy becomes real or legitimate for them.

6.2 The Contribution of the Study

This study makes a number of novel contributions to the existing knowledge in respect of followership.

From the review of the literature, I believe that this is the first study to explore followership, at the level of the organisation, in higher education institutions, as perceived and enacted by members of academic staff. There are other studies but they either focus on non-academic staff or they focus on followership in the context of academic leadership, i.e. leadership in respect of teaching and learning (Billot et al., 2013). Another novel contribution of this study is that it 'reversed the lens' in that it explored the phenomenon of followership from the perspective of followers. This perspective is almost completely lacking in the existing literature on followership.

The study facilitated the development of an original conceptual model (see Figure 7 and Figure 23) which allows for the inclusion of the different elements and perspectives that combine to describe the phenomenon of followership. The model encompasses constructs of followership, the leadership process, and the organisational environment, and also indicates how these elements relate to, and impact upon, one another. In addition, the conceptual model combines and extends elements of various other models and, consequently, is suitably flexible to accommodate a number of different theoretical viewpoints on followership including, inter alia, cognitive, relational and identity-based approaches. This conceptual model provides a framework which may be useful for understanding and studying followership in a variety of contexts and as such may facilitate future research.

The study explored constructs of followers' attributes and behaviours and developed a taxonomy of those constructs which were commonly held. The taxonomy focuses on constructs of micro-level behaviours and attributes and allows these to stand alone as the basis of the taxonomy. These micro-level constructs have been explored in detail via the study using multiple data sources and analysis approaches to yield a detailed taxonomy of shared constructs. Existing taxonomies within the literature have generally employed these micro-level attributes and behaviours as constituents of higher-order

attributes and behaviours. For example, attributes and behaviours such as competence and proactivity are generally associated with higher order constructs such as effective followership or good followership. This taxonomy, by not attributing specific values or purposes to attributes and behaviours, provides greater scope for investigating how various attributes and behaviours can contribute to many aspects, and types, of followership.

This taxonomy contributes to the existing knowledge in a number of ways. Firstly, it provides a detailed taxonomy of followers' attributes and behaviours. Secondly, because it allows the various constructs to be represented and viewed in their own right without attributing value or purpose to them, it provides an open and flexible taxonomy that can be used to investigate a broad range of higher-order attributes and behaviours, as well as other aspects of followership. Finally, it is the first such taxonomy which has been developed within the context of followership and leadership in higher education institutions. Because this new taxonomy is focused on micro-behaviours and is open and flexible, it is hoped that it will facilitate future research into followers' attributes and behaviours in higher education and more generally. In addition, as discussed below, the taxonomy may also contribute to the design and delivery of followership development programmes.

A significant contribution from this study is the development of a framework to define and describe effective followership in the context of higher education institutions. This framework, referred to herein as the 3Cs framework, shares some elements with frameworks contained in the literature but it also includes unique elements which are not seen in existing frameworks. The framework proposes that an effective follower is committed, constructive and able to challenge. Most frameworks identify relevant follower attributes and behaviours which beget effective followership, as does the 3Cs framework. In addition, the 3Cs framework describes other factors which contribute to effective followership. These factors can be standalone in nature which means that they have a significant impact in and of themselves, or they can be supportive in nature, in that they facilitate, or provide the right conditions for, other factors to contribute to effective followership. For example, there are elements of the organisational

environment which, when coupled with the necessary follower mindsets, result in followers who are willing and able to challenge. The critical importance of commitment as a factor which enables effective followership in higher education is a very significant finding from this study because it has the potential to explain and address a range of issues related to followership and leadership in higher education. For example, commitment may provide an explanation for why members of academic staff are positively disposed to, and willing to accept, the role of follower. The 3Cs framework was developed in the context of higher education and it is likely that the features of the framework are most applicable to higher education institutions or similar organisations. However, it may also be applicable in more general contexts, perhaps with some modifications, as a model for exploring and explaining effective followership.

This study addressed non-following which is a field of study suggested by Uhl-Bien et al. (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014) but which has not been substantially addressed in the literature to date. Heretofore, the various models tended to view or categorise followers as effective or ineffective, from the perspective of the leader or the leadership process. Effective followers were engaged, proactive, competent, etc, while ineffective followers were disengaged, lazy and uncooperative. In such models, little or no consideration was given to the possibility that an engaged, proactive and competent individual may decide, for her or his own reasons, to apply those attributes and behaviours to ensuring that the leadership process fails. This study explored this phenomenon of non-following where followers exhibited choice and agency in deciding to work against the leadership process. This study describes two models of non-following, passive non-following which is largely characterised by a failure to engage properly in the leadership process, and active non-following which involves more definite, overt action aimed at blocking or undermining the process. In addition to these two models, the study also explored the circumstances or reasons which lead followers to choose non-following and the reasons for choosing each of the models. While this was not intended to be an in-depth study of non-following, it did establish that the phenomenon was present within the leadership process of the higher education institutions studied, and also explored some of its features. Considering how little non-following has been researched to date, these findings represent a meaningful contribution to the existing knowledge.

A further contribution is the finding in respect of ‘followership despite leadership’. While it is clear that there is an interplay between leading and following, followership does not only follow leadership. Followers make choices about following behaviours for reasons which are independent of the approach that the leaders take. An individual may exhibit following, or non-following, behaviours because of her or his own beliefs or interests. This is a model of following which, though it contains some of the features of authentic and courageous following, has not been described in the literature before. It may also have significance for the leadership literature and especially transformational leadership because it shows that the individual has been motivated or influenced to act in the furtherance of an institutional goal, but not by the leader or the leadership process. Given that followership is normally defined as a relationship where the leader influences or motivates one or more followers towards the achievement of a certain goal, this finding may lead to a change in the definitions of leadership and followership, or it may lead to a reframing of the relational aspects of leadership and followership.

The study found that members of academic staff frequently look for leadership from sources outside of the institution’s formal leadership structures. This finding contributes to the existing knowledge because it describes a phenomenon which may be at the root of a perceived reticence towards followership, as described in the literature, by members of academic staff. This finding is also interesting in the broader context of leadership in higher education. The literature has highlighted that leadership is problematic and that in particular formal institutional leaders are mistrusted and ignored (Bryman, 2007). This finding may provide at least a partial explanation for the difficulties associated with formal leadership in higher education.

6.3 Implications and Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this study have been reviewed to identify implications and recommendations for the practice of followership and leadership in the context of higher education institutions.

The relevant literature and the findings of this study have emphasised the role that followership plays in the leadership process. Quite simply, without followership the

leadership process will fail to achieve any of the desired outcomes. Given the importance of followers and followership, it is recommended that institutions should deliberately develop followership among the relevant members of staff, via professional development and other such programmes. When one considers that institutions will always have, and need, many more followers than leaders, it seems remiss that leadership development programmes are commonplace in most institutions, while the equivalent for followership are almost completely non-existent. The taxonomy of followers' attributes and behaviours, along with the 3Cs framework for effective followership, may provide helpful guidance on the content of followership development programmes. It is important that these programmes do not focus solely on developing the attributes and behaviours associated with effective followership. Of equal importance is an understanding of the role and value of followership in the success of the organisation and part of this will be to address and challenge the negative associations with followership. From this it follows that these programmes must also be delivered to those in leadership roles so that they can also fully understand and appreciate the value of followership. In addition, even those in senior leadership roles must frequently adopt the role of follower in certain contexts, for example, when they are part of a national project team.

The preceding discussions have highlighted the critical role that commitment, to the vision, leader or process, on the part of followers, plays in the effectiveness of the leadership process. While commitment does not guarantee effective followership, the absence of commitment almost certainly guarantees non-following. The implications of this finding are clear, and they strongly suggest that institutions should allocate significant resources to fostering commitment among the cohorts of staff that will be expected to adopt follower roles in the leadership process. The design and implementation of the leadership process should, particularly in the early part of the process, place substantial emphasis on assessing and, if necessary, increasing the level of commitment. Commitment has to be authentic and the processes through which it is developed or fostered must also be authentic. In most situations there will be no short or simple way to achieve commitment and instead it will be a complex and lengthy process which may require a variety of approaches including communication,

consultation, negotiation, assessment and feedback. Such is the importance of commitment that the process should not proceed beyond the initial stages until, and unless, sufficient commitment has been achieved. Furthermore, it will be important that the level of commitment is assessed throughout the process as actions or events may impact on the level of commitment, with a corresponding impact on the effectiveness of followership.

In addition, many of the approaches that build commitment and consensus can also be recruited to help in the creation of a genuine culture of listening within the organisation. This will drive follower engagement in current and future leadership processes as well as developing the followers' ability to appropriately challenge the leader, which is an essential element of effective followership. In general, the leadership process should not only seek to achieve certain outcomes but should also seek to mobilise followers effectively in the achievement of these goals. If organisations can choose, it is far better to achieve leadership outcomes and at the same time achieve high levels of follower engagement which will improve constructs of followership across the organisation via the process of developmental feedback discussed above. This is preferable, from the perspective of long-term organisational success, to achieving the same leadership outcomes but with less follower engagement.

In seeking to improve the effectiveness of followership and leadership in the organisation, institutional leaders should become more familiar with the nature and value of informal leadership. The findings discuss the notion of *following despite leadership* which describes a range of following behaviours that support, complement, or replace leadership behaviours in order to further the success of the leadership process and the institution. The study shows that formal leadership is not always able or allowed to address issues in the leadership process and, in such circumstances, followers can engage in informal leadership and thereby advance the process. Institutional leaders should acquaint themselves with informal leadership within their organisations by increasing their awareness of the sources of power and influence within the organisation. Furthermore, they should facilitate followers in developing and practising informal leadership.

This study has found that, to a significant degree, members of academic staff look to sources other than the institution's formal leadership structures for leadership. The main implication of this finding is that it will be difficult, or even impossible, for formal institutional leaders to successfully achieve leadership outcomes. In effect, it results in the relevant followers viewing the formal institutional leadership as invalid. This will especially be the case when the desired leadership outcomes impact upon the areas of research, teaching and curricula. This issue is further complicated because it is not certain, from this study, if this phenomenon occurs as a result of endemic aspects of the organisational culture in higher education institutions or because of aspects of the institutions' leadership processes, or both. Whatever the cause, it is clear, given the implications, that this issue cannot be ignored. Beyond conducting additional research to establish more clearly the root cause, there is a practical recommendation which may be relevant and helpful. When it is likely that this issue of invalid leadership will impact upon a particular process, the institutional leadership should engage, or recruit, appropriate respected individuals to design and communicate the relevant aspects of the leadership process. Ideally, the respected individuals would be identified or nominated by the relevant followers within the institution, thereby increasing the likelihood that the individual(s) will have credibility and their involvement will confer validity on the leadership process. There are examples within the study of the recruitment of respected individuals, in such a manner, with positive results.

6.4 Limitations of the Study and Possible Future Research

This was a detailed and broad study of many aspects of the phenomenon of followership. This type of study was appropriate in the context of very little extant literature in respect of followership in higher education. This study essentially explored the landscape and mapped out areas of interest. However, having identified areas of interest, the study did not have sufficient scope to explore these in greater depth. Therefore, while there are a number of interesting and novel findings, it will require future studies to develop and verify these findings.

The context for the study, i.e. higher education institutions in Ireland, obviously places limitations on the applicability of many of the findings. Further research would be required to verify if the models, frameworks and other findings from this study are applicable to the study of followership in a more general context.

The methodology chosen for this study was exclusively qualitative as this was appropriate for an in-depth of this phenomenon. Qualitative methods are best suited to such in-depth studies, but they do not provide results that can be generalised or statistically verified. Future research studies may wish to adopt a quantitative or mixed methods approach if their aim is to have findings which can be generally applied.

As discussed above, there are a number of interesting findings which are worthy of additional study to further develop them and to determine if they are applicable in more general contexts. Key among these is the 3Cs framework for effective followership which is strongly supported by the findings from this study and has the potential, if supported by future research, to provide a very useful framework for the future study of effective followership.

Associated with the 3Cs framework is the issue of commitment. It was such a significant factor in the findings from this study that it is worthy of further study. This future research could investigate a couple of different aspects of the phenomenon of commitment. Firstly, it would be important to determine if the salience of commitment applies in contexts other than higher education, or knowledge-based workplaces. Secondly, an understanding of the nature of commitment, and what fosters or diminishes it, would make a noteworthy contribution to the understanding of followership in any contexts where commitment was found to be a critical element of effective followership.

The study found that there are values and principles that are shared by the academic staff in both institutions, despite very different organisational environments and conditions of employment. The nature of these shared elements and the reasons for their existence may provide an interesting topic for future study.

As discussed above, this study examined the leadership process which resulted in the development and approval of an institute-wide strategy in both institutions. A subsequent leadership process, or processes, will focus on implementation of the strategy. It would be interesting and illustrative to explore, in light of the current study, leadership processes aimed at implementing approved strategies. This would allow a comparison of the experiences and behaviours of followers in the context of leadership processes with a different focus. For example, the findings from this study indicated that followers are expected to engage in active resistance when certain measures contained in the strategy are implemented. It would be very worthwhile to investigate if, as expected, there are greater tensions during what Lockwood and Davies (1985) call the bureaucratic phase, and what impact these have on followers, constructs.

Finally, the finding in respect of invalid leadership is particularly significant for the study and practice of both followership and leadership in higher education. A detailed study of the phenomenon has the potential to address a range of issues and challenges that are associated with followership and leadership in higher education.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

This research journey began with a practical problem encountered while attempting to deliver a strategic initiative in my own institution. The search for a solution eventually led me to the study of followership. Initially, the problem seemed to stem from a failure of leadership and so the literature relating to leadership in higher education was my first port of call. From here I moved on to the general leadership literature but was still unable to find a suitable explanation for the issue I had encountered. It was then that I became aware of a significant 'blind spot' within the leadership literature. In any leadership process there are a lot more followers than there are leaders and yet followers and followership received scant coverage in the literature. It became clear that followers played a critical role in the leadership process and yet they were largely ignored by the leadership literature. When followers were featured in the literature, it was as factors that the leader needed to mitigate, or as resources that needed to be manipulated. A further issue is that the perspective and voice of the follower was largely absent from

the leadership literature. It follows that the literature which looks at the phenomenon of followership from the perspective of followers is practically non-existent. Despite, or because of, this, it was clear to me that a comprehensive understanding of followership was essential to address many of the issues and problems associated with leadership in higher education, and beyond.

This study sought to conduct a detailed exploration of the phenomenon of followership among members of academic staff in higher education institutions. Using a case study approach and a social constructionist epistemology, the study studied followers' experiences and perceptions of followership in the context of an institution-wide leadership process in two Irish higher education institutions. The study has yielded findings which will hopefully enhance the understanding and future study of followership, as well as improving the practice of followership and leadership in higher education. More than anything else, I hope that the study helps to foster an appreciation of followers and followership. The world has many more followers than leaders and most of us, even those of us in leadership roles, will spend much of our working lives engaged in followership. Therefore, we should all be aware of the importance and value of followership and seek to develop our skills and knowledge, so that we can become more effective as followers.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT BRIEFING DOCUMENTS

There were separate participant briefing documents for the two categories of participants i.e. institutional leaders and academic staff in non-leadership positions. followers. A sample of each of the briefing documents is included in this appendix.

A1 Participant Briefing Document (Academic Staff)

The leadership process in higher education institutions:
exploring the implications of the traits and behaviours of
individuals in non-leadership roles for the success of the
process

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies.

To allow you to decide if you wish to participate in the study, it is important that you understand what the study entails. This briefing document will hopefully provide the information you require to decide whether or not to participate. If you have any further questions you may contact me using the contact details below.

RESEARCHER PROFILE AND STUDY OVERVIEW

Researcher: Mr Tadhg Leane

Programme: Doctor of Business Administration in Higher Ed. Management - DBA (HEM)

Institution: University of Bath (School of Management)

Current Role: Head of Strategic Development at Cork Institute of Technology

In the context of higher education institutions, the leadership process has been problematised by those working in the sector and in the literature. While the primary focus has been on leadership and leaders, there is a growing acceptance that those in other roles within the leadership process play a critical role in the success or otherwise of the process. This study will explore other roles within the leadership process in higher education institutions and will investigate the implications of the traits and behaviours of individuals in those roles for the success (or otherwise) of the leadership process.

The proposed study will consider the case of a leadership process (specifically the development of the institution's academic strategy) in two Irish higher education institutions. The case studies will feature two institutions with different missions (i.e. one University and one Institute of Technology).

A qualitative approach has been chosen and this will consist of two types of interviews. Firstly, institutional leaders will be interviewed to determine the nature of the leadership process and the desired outcomes from that process. Secondly, academic staff will be interviewed to explore the other roles within the leadership process.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION ENTAIL?

You will be required to participate in a single semi-structured interview (approximate duration 1 hour). This interview will discuss issues such as:

- The academic strategy process;
- Your role within, and contribution to, the process;
- The roles played by other individuals in the process;
- The outcomes of the process.

You will participate in the creation of a repertory grid during the interview. The repertory grid will explore the traits and behaviours of individuals involved in the academic strategy process and how these contributed to the process outcomes.

An indicative data collection protocol is shown in the Appendix.

If you consent, an audio recording of the interview will be made.

HOW ARE STUDY PARTICIPANTS CHOSEN?

The following are the criteria for choosing study participants:

- Participants will be chosen from two Irish HEIs (one University and one Institute of Technology). Participants will either be institutional leaders or members of academic staff.
- In general, the institutional leader participants will be those institutional leaders directly responsible for (or involved in) the development of the institution's academic strategy.
- Academic staff participants will have engaged with the academic strategy process to some degree. Generally, participants will be members of academic staff who carry the normal academic workload and duties common to their institution. However, members of academic management (i.e. heads of department) may be included.
- The goal is to achieve gender balance and a mix in terms of job seniority and discipline area of participants.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data collection will be carried out via semi-structured interviews. The goal of the interviews is to explore the subjects' experiences and perceptions of the leadership process in their institution. In addition, a conversation-based approach will be used to develop or elicit a repertory grid for each participant. The repertory grid technique was specifically developed to investigate personal meaning and constructs in respect of a specific subject or topic.

An indicative data collection protocol is shown in the Appendix.

The data gathered via semi-structured interviews will be analysed using inductive analysis techniques. In general, the analysis of repertory grids involves the identification of relationships between elements and constructs within the grid.

INFORMED CONSENT AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the study and if you agree to participate **you have the right to withdraw** (without consequence for you) at any stage. If you withdraw, your data will not be considered or used in the formulation of the results and findings of the study. If you agree to participate **you have the right to refuse to answer any questions** (without consequence for you).

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

All data collected as part of the study will be anonymised such that it will not be possible to identify the participants, individuals discussed or the HEI.

DATA PROTECTION

The data related to this study will be managed securely and in accordance with the relevant data protection regulations (i.e. General Data Protection Regulation, 2018). In particular:

- interview recordings and notes will be stored securely and will not be accessed by anyone other than the researcher;
- transcribed interviews and other products of interview data analysis will be anonymised to remove any personal identifiers;
- electronic copies of data will be encrypted and stored on secure IT systems.

Please note that, following the DBA (HEM) examination process and the completion of any related publications, the data collected during this study will be destroyed.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this research is to fulfil the requirements of the DBA (HEM) examination process. It is possible that the research may be used in a subsequent conference or journal publication.

CONTACT DETAILS

Tadhg Leane

████████████████████
████████████████

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study title: The leadership process in higher education institutions: exploring the implications of the traits and behaviours of individuals in non-leadership roles for the success of the process

I agree to participate in the above-named research study. I have read the Participant Briefing Document and I understand my role and my rights as a participant in this study.

Signature of Participant

Please print name

Date

Tadhg Leane (Researcher)

Date

APPENDIX: INDICATIVE DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

1. How would you describe your role?
2. How long have you been working in your current role?
3. What would you describe as the main focus of your role?
4. Do you have a manager or supervisor in this role?
5. Who do you look to for leadership?
6. How would you differentiate between management and leadership?
7. Who was leading this process?
8. What outcomes do you think they were trying to achieve from this process?
9. Can you describe the approach that the leaders took to this process?
10. How would you describe your role and involvement in this process?

Repertory Gid Elicitation

11. Do you think the process was a success?
12. Do you think it delivered what the leaders had hoped?
13. What do you think was the contribution of non-leaders to the process?
14. Finally, is there anything about the process that stands out for positive or negative reasons?

A2 Participant Briefing Document (Institutional Leader)

The leadership process in higher education institutions:
exploring the implications of the traits and behaviours of
individuals in non-leadership roles for the success of the
process

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies.

To allow you to decide if you wish to participate in the study, it is important that you understand what the study entails. This overview document will hopefully provide the information you require to decide whether or not to participate. If you have any further questions you may contact me using the contact details below.

RESEARCHER PROFILE AND STUDY OVERVIEW

Researcher: Mr Tadhg Leane

Programme: Doctor of Business Administration in Higher Ed. Management - DBA (HEM)

Institution: University of Bath (School of Management)

Current Role: Head of Strategic Development at Cork Institute of Technology

In the context of higher education institutions, the leadership process has been problematised by those working in the sector and in the literature. While the primary focus has been on leadership and leaders, there is a growing acceptance that those in other roles within the leadership process play a critical role in the success or otherwise of the process. This study will explore other roles within the leadership process in higher education institutions and will investigate the implications of the traits and behaviours of individuals in those roles for the success (or otherwise) of the leadership process.

The proposed study will consider the case of a leadership process (specifically the development of the institution's academic strategy) in two Irish higher education institutions. The case studies will feature two institutions with different missions (i.e. one University and one Institute of Technology).

A qualitative approach has been chosen and this will consist of two types of interviews. Firstly, institutional leaders will be interviewed to determine the nature of the leadership process and the desired outcomes from that process. Secondly, academic staff will be interviewed to explore the other roles within the leadership process.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION ENTAIL?

You will be required to participate in a single semi-structured interview (approximate duration 1 hour). This interview will discuss issues such as:

- The academic strategy process;
- Your role within, and contribution to, the process;
- The roles played by other individuals in the process;
- The outcomes of the process.

An indicative data collection protocol is shown in the Appendix.

If you consent, an audio recording of the interview will be made.

HOW ARE STUDY PARTICIPANTS CHOSEN?

The following are the criteria for choosing study participants:

- Participants will be chosen from two Irish HEIs (one University and one Institute of Technology). Participants will either be institutional leaders or members of academic staff.
- In general, the institutional leader participants will be those institutional leaders directly responsible for (or involved in) the development of the institution's academic strategy.
- Academic staff participants will have engaged with the academic strategy process to some degree. Generally, participants will be members of academic staff who carry the normal academic workload and duties common to their institution. However, members of academic management (i.e. heads of department) may be included.
- The goal is to achieve gender balance and a mix in terms of job seniority and discipline area of participants.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data collection will be carried out via semi-structured interviews. The goal of the interviews is to explore the subjects' experiences and perceptions of the leadership process in their institution.

An indicative data collection protocol is shown in the Appendix.

The data gathered via semi-structured interviews will be analysed using inductive analysis techniques.

INFORMED CONSENT AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the study and if you agree to participate **you have the right to withdraw** (without consequence for you) at any stage. If you withdraw, your data will not be considered or used in the formulation of the results and findings of the study. If you agree to participate **you have the right to refuse to answer any questions** (without consequence for you).

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

All data collected as part of the study will be anonymised such that it will not be possible to identify the participants, individuals discussed or the HEI.

DATA PROTECTION

The data related to this study will be managed securely and in accordance with the relevant data protection regulations (i.e. General Data Protection Regulation, 2018). In particular:

- interview recordings and notes will be stored securely and will not be accessed by anyone other than the researcher;
- transcribed interviews and other products of interview data analysis will be anonymised to remove any personal identifiers;
- electronic copies of data will be encrypted and stored on secure IT systems.

Please note that, following the DBA (HEM) examination process and the completion of any related publications, the data collected during this study will be destroyed.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this research is to fulfil the requirements of the DBA (HEM) examination process. It is possible that the research may be used in a subsequent conference or journal publication.

CONTACT DETAILS

Tadhg Leane

████████████████████

██████████

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study title: The leadership process in higher education institutions: exploring the implications of the traits and behaviours of individuals in non-leadership roles for the success of the process

I agree to participate in the above-named research study. I have read the Participant Briefing Document and I understand my role and my rights as a participant in this study.

Signature of Participant

Please print name

Date

Tadhg Leane (Researcher)

Date

APPENDIX: INDICATIVE DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

1. At the start of the process were you clear about the desired outcomes?
 - a. What were those outcomes?
2. Can give a brief overview of stages in the process?
3. At the outset what did you think would be the main challenges or obstacles to the process?
4. How important was it that academic staff were engaged in the process?
 - a. What contributions did you expect from them?
5. What approaches were adopted to engaging academic staff?
6. How would you characterise the engagement of academic staff in the process?
7. Where academic staff did not engage, what do you think was the likely cause of this lack of engagement?
8. Did the process achieve the desired outcomes?
9. How would you characterise the contribution of academic staff to the process outcomes?
10. Can you highlight an instance where academic staff behaved in a way that aided the process?
11. Can you highlight an instance where academic staff behaved in a way that hindered the process?

APPENDIX B: REPERTORY GRID STUDY

B1 Repertory Grid Study Preparation Worksheet

NB – This worksheet is for your use only and will not be used or analysed as part of the research study. You will retain this worksheet and will not share it with the researcher.

Consider the members of academic staff in your College/School/Department. In particular consider how they engaged in, or contributed to, the Academic Strategy process (if the Academic Strategy process isn't relevant you can substitute another process or initiative undertaken by your University/College/School/Department). Divide the members of academic staff into three groups as follows:

- Group G – staff who through their contribution progressed or improved the academic strategy process
- Group N – staff who through their contribution had a neutral impact on the academic strategy process
- Group P – staff who through their contribution hindered or weakened the academic strategy process

Use the following table to list the individuals in each group:

| Group G – staff who through their contribution progresses or improved the process | Group N – staff who through their contribution had a neutral impact on the process | Group P – staff who through their contribution hindered or weakened the process |
|---|--|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Considering each group in turn, choose two individuals to represent or epitomise the group. Use the table below to record the representatives of each group

| Element no. | Description | Name |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|------|
| G1 | Individual chosen from list G above | |
| G2 | Individual chosen from list G above | |
| N1 | Individual chosen from list N above | |
| N2 | Individual chosen from list N above | |
| P1 | Individual chosen from list P above | |
| P2 | Individual chosen from list P above | |

B3 Completed Repertory Grid

Participant Name: _____

| How two are similar | G1 | N1 | P1 | G2 | N2 | P2 | I | W | How third is different |
|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|------------------------|
| Don't engage | 5 | 1✓ | 1✓ | 5 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 | Engaging✓ |
| Outspoken✓ | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3✓ | 2 | 1✓ | 3 | 5 | Silent |
| Difficult | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 3✓ | 1✓ | 5 | 1 | Easy, engaging✓ |
| Truculent | 1 | 4 | 1✓ | 4 | 3✓ | 1 | 5 | 1 | Agreeable✓ |
| Insightful (prepared) ✓ | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4✓ | 1✓ | 3 | 1 | 5 | Un prepared |
| Well researched✓ | 5 | 3✓ | 5 | 5✓ | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 | Scattered |
| Hard working✓ | 5✓ | 2 | 5 | 5 | 3✓ | 2 | 1 | 5 | Not constructive |
| Mild agreeable | 5✓ | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2✓ | 5 | 3 | 3 | Argumentative✓ |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| ✓Proactive | 1 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 5 | Passive |
| ✓Independent Thinker | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | Dependent Thinker |

APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION SCHEMAS

There were separate data collection schemas for the two categories of participants, i.e. institutional leaders and academic staff in non-leadership positions. A sample of each of the data collection schemas is included in this appendix.

C1 Data Collection Schema (Academic)

| Question # | Question |
|---|--|
| Script: To start off I would like to talk about your role here in [institution name] | |
| F1 | How would you describe your role? |
| | |
| F2 | How long have you been working in your current role? |
| | |
| F3 | What would you describe as the main focus of your role? |
| | |
| F4 | Do you have a manager or supervisor in this role? |
| | |
| F5 | Who do you look to for leadership? |
| | |
| F6 | How would you differentiate between management and leadership? |
| | |
| Script: Now I'd like to talk to you about the academic strategy that was developed here in [institution name] | |

| | |
|---|---|
| F7 | Who was leading this process? |
| | |
| F8 | What outcomes do you think they were trying to achieve from this process? |
| | |
| F9 | Can you describe the approach that the leaders took to this process? |
| | |
| F10 | How would you describe your role and involvement in this process? |
| | |
| F11-F16 | REP GRID Elicitation (see below) |
| <p>This section of the interview will proceed as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The topic of the Rep Grid will be followership and the participants will be asked to focus on the following prompt as they go through the elicitation: “explore behaviours or traits exhibited by members of academic staff that contributed positively to the academic strategy process” This prompt will be visible to participants at all times and will be used to ensure that the constructs proffered are relevant. 2. Following an initial discussion on the topic of contributions to the process, the participant will be asked to make three lists of academic staff as follows: G – staff who through their contribution progresses or improved the academic strategy process N – staff who through their contribution had a neutral impact on the academic strategy process P – staff who through their contribution hindered or weakened the academic strategy process Once complete he/she will be asked to pick two individuals from each list. 3. The blank Rep Grid will be introduced to the participant and explained. The participants will use the individuals chosen in the previous step to represent the appropriate elements on the Grid and will complete the following table: | |

| | |
|----|-------------------------------------|
| G1 | Individual chosen from list G above |
| G2 | Individual chosen from list G above |
| N1 | Individual chosen from list N above |
| N2 | Individual chosen from list N above |
| P1 | Individual chosen from list P above |
| P2 | Individual chosen from list P above |

Using the combinations contained in the following table the participants will be asked to consider the elements (i.e. individuals) in groups of 3 and will be asked:

“thinking about their contribution to the academic strategy process, can you think of a way that two of them are similar (in terms of traits of behaviours) and the third one is different?”

The detailed elicitation steps are as follows:

- Decide how two of them are alike in some important way that makes them different from the third person
- Record which two are similar and which are different
- In the ‘Similar’ column of the Grid they will be asked to insert a word or brief description of the similarity of the two
- In the ‘Different’ column they will write a word or description of how the third person is different.

These similar and different descriptions represent opposite poles of a construct. Constructs can be probed through further questioning to ensure that it is clearly understood what the participant means. A process referred to as laddering is used to explore interesting constructs further. To ‘ladder up’ (i.e. to try to establish the core belief associated with a construct) a probing question such as “why is that important?” can be posed. To ‘ladder down’ (i.e. get a more concrete example or expression of the construct) a question such as “what specifically would they do?” can be used.

Element combinations for construct elicitation:

| | | |
|----|----|----|
| P1 | N1 | G1 |
| P1 | N1 | G2 |
| P1 | N2 | G1 |
| P1 | N2 | G2 |
| P2 | N1 | G1 |
| P2 | N1 | G2 |
| P2 | N2 | G1 |
| P2 | N2 | G2 |

4. The participant is asked to rate each of the elements with respect to each of the constructs using the following Likert scale:

| Score | Meaning |
|-------|---|
| 1 | Matches the SIMILAR description mostly or perfectly |
| 2 | Generally matches the SIMILAR description better than the DIFFERENT description |
| 3 | Is no more like the SIMILAR description than the DIFFERENT description |
| 4 | Generally matches the DIFFERENT description better than the SIMILAR description |
| 5 | Matches the DIFFERENT description mostly or perfectly |

In some cases, it is possible to rate the Grid with just tick marks but the use of the numerical scale allows the participants to indicate the degree to which a construct applies to an element with more nuance. In this example the use of numerical ratings will yield a richer data set with respect to followership constructs.

The participant is asked, in respect of each construct, to indicate with a tick, which pole they believe aligns with a positive contribution to the process.

5. The followers are asked the following questions which look at concrete examples of followers' positive and negative impact:-

F12. Tell me about a time when you or someone you know acting as a non-leader/subordinate engaged in behaviours that resulted in success? (need specifics on the position of the person if they did not use themselves as an example)

- a. What happened? (series of events, behaviours, actions, etc.)
- b. What were the outcomes?

F13 Tell me about a time when you or someone you know acting as a non-leader/subordinate engaged in behaviours that resulted in FAILURE? (need specifics on the position of the person if they did not use themselves as an example)

- c. What happened? (series of events, behaviours, actions, etc.)
- d. What were the outcomes?

6. The participant is asked to return to the grid and consider the notion of an ideal follower and a worst possible follower (columns I and W on the Grid). Having considered this they are asked to score their hypothetical followers in respect of the various constructs.

7. The participants are then asked the following questions to explore their overall perceptions of followers and followership:

F14. What does the term follower mean to you?

- a. What do you think of when you consider the word follower?
- b. What kind of person is a follower?

F15. Do you think there are benefits of being in a non-leader/subordinate?

- c. If yes, what are they?
- d. If no, why not?

F16. Do you think there are drawbacks to being a non-leader/subordinate?

- e. If yes, what are they?
- f. If no, why not?

Script: Finally, I'd like to talk about the outcome of the process

| | |
|-----|---|
| F17 | Do you think the process was a success? |
| | |

| | |
|-----|--|
| F18 | Do you think it delivered what the leaders had hoped? |
| | |
| F19 | What do you think was the contribution of followers to the process? |
| | |
| F20 | Finally, is there anything about the process that stands out for positive or negative reasons? |
| | |

C2 Data Collection Schema (Leader)

| Question # | Question |
|---|--|
| Script: To begin I would like to talk about the academic strategy process | |
| L1 | At the start of the process were you clear about the desired outcomes? b. What were those outcomes? |
| Ans | |
| L2 | Can give a brief overview of stages in the process? a. What activities per stage |
| Ans | |
| L3 | At the outset what did you think would be the main challenges or obstacles to the process? |
| Ans | |
| Script: Next, I'd like to talk about the approach taken to engaging academic staff in the process | |
| L4 | How important was it that academic staff were engaged in the process? b. What contributions did you expect from them? c. Elaborate per stage – what did you expect at this stage etc.? |
| Ans | |
| L5 | What approaches were adopted to engaging academic staff? a. What about informal approaches? Bargaining? Incentives? Reason? Coercion? |
| Ans | |

| | |
|--|--|
| L6 | <p>How would you characterise the engagement of academic staff in the process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Was there any resistance? b. Was there support? c. Was there apathy? |
| Ans | |
| L7 | <p>Where academic staff did not engage, what do you think was the likely cause of this lack of engagement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are there any particular stages where they engaged less or more? |
| Ans | |
| <p>Script: Finally, I'd like to talk about the outcomes of the process</p> | |
| L8 | <p>Did the process achieve the desired outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What about the outcomes at each stage? |
| Ans | |
| L9 | <p>How would you characterise the contribution of academic staff to the process outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What about at each stage |
| Ans | |
| L10 | <p>Can you highlight an instance where academic staff behaved in a way that aided the process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. At each stage? |
| Ans | |
| L11 | <p>Can you highlight an instance where academic staff behaved in a way that hindered the process?</p> |
| Ans | |

APPENDIX D: CODE BOOK

D1 Phase 2 - Generating Initial Codes (open coding)

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| A boss but not a manager | 1 | 1 |
| A coherent vision (accepted) | 1 | 1 |
| About action | 1 | 1 |
| Absent | 10 | 11 |
| Academic quality and quality assurance | 1 | 1 |
| Academic staff not engaged | 9 | 15 |
| Academics are critical and analytical, towards leaders, leadership, etc | 2 | 3 |
| Acceptable alternative to management in HE | 1 | 1 |
| Achieve change, make something new happen | 2 | 2 |
| Acting out of self-interest | 6 | 7 |
| Active, proactive, support but also challenge | 9 | 12 |
| Actively engaged | 16 | 18 |
| Actively engaged (2) | 12 | 23 |
| Actively working against the process and influencing others | 3 | 3 |
| Adherence to academic values | 1 | 1 |
| Administrative coherence, tidying up | 5 | 5 |
| Agreeable | 2 | 2 |
| An individual (or small number of individuals) | 19 | 20 |
| Anyone can show leadership | 2 | 3 |
| Authentic, believe in leaders vision | 13 | 19 |
| Authentic, genuine | 2 | 2 |
| Autonomous self-management | 7 | 7 |
| autonomous, accountable to self | 2 | 2 |
| Averse to confrontation or conflict | 3 | 4 |
| Averse to risk | 3 | 3 |
| Averse to work | 1 | 1 |
| Avoiding blame | 1 | 1 |
| Avoiding failure, danger | 1 | 1 |

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Battle weary | 1 | 1 |
| Believes and accepts change and works to implement | 4 | 4 |
| Better than before | 3 | 4 |
| Bottom-up | 3 | 3 |
| Broader management group | 6 | 7 |
| broader, institutional view | 1 | 1 |
| Building morale and institutionalisation | 8 | 10 |
| Challenges to command and control | 2 | 2 |
| Challenging from a good place | 9 | 9 |
| Charisma or influence | 6 | 8 |
| Chosen if don't want to lead | 2 | 2 |
| Chosen if individual unable (or less able) to lead | 8 | 10 |
| Chosen if no benefit for individual in leading | 1 | 2 |
| Chosen if there is good leadership | 8 | 12 |
| Chosen if you believe and want to be part of process | 13 | 18 |
| Chosen to achieve favour, benefit or progression | 4 | 5 |
| Collaboration and cooperation for good of institute | 1 | 1 |
| Collaborative, distributed | 1 | 1 |
| Colleagues | 12 | 15 |
| Collegial, professionalism, regard for colleagues | 1 | 1 |
| Competitive, about performance, status and getting ahead | 1 | 2 |
| Competing goals | 1 | 1 |
| Complacent, self-satisfied, laid back | 1 | 1 |
| Connecting the aspects of university mission, teaching, research and engagement | 2 | 2 |
| Consultation not genuine | 1 | 1 |
| Consultative | 21 | 35 |
| Contributing | 7 | 8 |
| Courageous | 16 | 16 |
| Curriculum development | 2 | 2 |
| Curriculum linked to employability and other uses is ok | 1 | 1 |
| Cynical, no faith in process | 7 | 14 |
| Default fallback if not a leader | 1 | 1 |
| Define institution's role | 3 | 3 |
| Develop followership | 1 | 1 |

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Did not engage because did not feel could influence outcome | 1 | 1 |
| Did not engage for reasons not related to the process or institutional culture | 2 | 3 |
| Didn't engage because the process was not authentic | 2 | 3 |
| Didn't feel involved, due to location of campus | 1 | 1 |
| Different approach would take longer with less certain outcomes but better engagement | 2 | 3 |
| Distributed | 1 | 1 |
| Doesn't reflect issues on the ground | 1 | 1 |
| Don't care about quality of work | 2 | 3 |
| Don't feel like taking responsibility | 2 | 2 |
| Don't take initiative | 7 | 9 |
| Egoless, don't think they should be leader | 1 | 1 |
| Egoless, engaged and inclusive | 1 | 1 |
| Embarrassed about state of institution | 1 | 1 |
| Engage people in process | 4 | 5 |
| Engaged, bought in | 2 | 2 |
| Ensuring curriculum delivers for students, employers, etc | 8 | 8 |
| equal teaching and research, engagement third | 1 | 1 |
| Essential to get things done | 11 | 14 |
| Exhibit leadership | 4 | 5 |
| External to institution | 9 | 10 |
| Facilitate development, learning, future opportunities | 7 | 11 |
| Facilitating progress | 12 | 14 |
| Facilitation | 1 | 1 |
| Focus on administration | 9 | 10 |
| Focus on engagement, citizenship | 1 | 1 |
| Focus on raising awareness among students | 1 | 1 |
| Focus on research | 8 | 9 |
| Focus on teaching | 11 | 13 |
| Focused within own area, siloed | 1 | 1 |
| Formal line manager | 13 | 13 |
| Formal mentor, internal | 2 | 3 |
| Fulfilled the requirements of my role | 1 | 3 |
| Giving up control | 7 | 7 |

| Name | Files | References |
|--|-------|------------|
| Going above and beyond | 2 | 2 |
| Happy | 1 | 1 |
| Having a vision | 8 | 8 |
| Helping to recruit or encourage other followers | 2 | 2 |
| Hostile to management, managerialism | 1 | 1 |
| Hybrid of top-down, bottom-up and middle out | 2 | 2 |
| Identify in hindsight | 1 | 1 |
| Impact, making the world better | 1 | 1 |
| Impediment to learning and growth, future opportunities | 10 | 11 |
| Improve staff workload | 3 | 4 |
| Inclusive | 14 | 19 |
| Influence | 3 | 3 |
| Informal mentor, internal | 2 | 2 |
| Informal, not coordinated | 1 | 1 |
| Innovative | 2 | 2 |
| Inspire | 2 | 2 |
| Institution in crisis, difficulty | 6 | 8 |
| Institution is not good, not good enough | 1 | 1 |
| Institutional cohesion, acting as one | 1 | 1 |
| Institutional inertia | 1 | 1 |
| Institutional management or bureaucracy an impediment | 1 | 1 |
| Institutional survival | 2 | 2 |
| Insufficient consultation | 5 | 8 |
| Insular | 1 | 1 |
| Involvement but not buy in | 5 | 5 |
| Keeping in contact with, not cap in hand | 1 | 1 |
| Knowledgeable | 2 | 2 |
| Lack of ambition | 1 | 1 |
| Lack of authority or responsibility | 1 | 1 |
| Lack of confidence | 2 | 2 |
| Lack of confidence in the institution and its staff | 1 | 1 |
| Lack of institutional coherence | 2 | 2 |
| Lack of leadership | 3 | 3 |
| Lack of principled resistance (calls to academic values) | 1 | 1 |

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Lack of vision | 2 | 2 |
| Lacks direction | 5 | 5 |
| Layered, status, looking down on | 2 | 2 |
| Leader as facilitator | 1 | 1 |
| Leader as mentor | 2 | 2 |
| Leader must believe in the follower as a follower | 1 | 2 |
| Leader posses more knowledge | 1 | 1 |
| Leadership as showing the way | 7 | 7 |
| Learn about the institution | 1 | 1 |
| Less frenetic, civilised | 1 | 1 |
| Less influence | 4 | 4 |
| Less job satisfaction | 2 | 2 |
| Less stressful | 10 | 11 |
| Looking for easy route | 4 | 5 |
| Maintain status quo, keep show on the road | 1 | 1 |
| Manager role or title causes one to look down on others | 1 | 1 |
| Managers in education no management experience | 1 | 1 |
| Misguided calls to academic freedom | 4 | 4 |
| Mistrust of formal authority | 2 | 2 |
| Must behave ethically | 1 | 1 |
| Must behave ethically (2) | 1 | 1 |
| Must have a leader | 2 | 2 |
| Needing change, behind the times | 1 | 1 |
| Negative | 7 | 8 |
| Neo-liberal | 1 | 1 |
| New approach to strategy, flexible | 1 | 1 |
| No leadership shown in the process | 1 | 2 |
| No one in charge, distributed | 1 | 1 |
| Not about people in power managing other people | 1 | 1 |
| Not chosen if risk from following is too high | 2 | 2 |
| Not engaging, voting with feet | 7 | 7 |
| Not entirely negative | 7 | 9 |
| Not heavily involved | 2 | 2 |
| Not involving schools, need for HoS involvement | 2 | 3 |

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Not leaders | 6 | 7 |
| Obstructing progress | 11 | 11 |
| Omissions from Strategy or Process | 1 | 1 |
| Ambitions regarding physical development | 1 | 1 |
| Others don't respect them | 2 | 2 |
| Part of a group | 1 | 1 |
| Passive | 5 | 6 |
| Poor communications | 3 | 3 |
| Poor morale | 1 | 1 |
| Positive | 5 | 5 |
| Pragmatic and aware | 1 | 1 |
| Pretending to follow | 2 | 3 |
| Problem with single heroic leader | 2 | 2 |
| Process focus | 18 | 18 |
| Process involved organisational growth or learning | 3 | 3 |
| Process was successful | 14 | 17 |
| Procedural, box ticking, had to be done | 2 | 5 |
| Provide insight | 3 | 3 |
| Providing the perspective of what is happening on the ground | 2 | 2 |
| Public sector mentality - don't care about quality of work | 3 | 3 |
| Qualified collegiality, will help if it doesn't cause them problems | 1 | 1 |
| Qualified success | 5 | 5 |
| Ready for change | 2 | 2 |
| Research intensive (changing to parity of esteem) | 1 | 2 |
| Resistance now that it is being implemented | 6 | 9 |
| Respectful silence | 1 | 1 |
| Restore confidence in the institution | 4 | 4 |
| Rigid and unyielding in thinking or behaviour | 2 | 2 |
| Risk if leader fails, failure by association | 5 | 6 |
| Risk of committing to uncertain outcomes | 1 | 1 |
| Risk of criticism or exclusion, social risk | 4 | 4 |
| Rushed | 3 | 3 |
| Safe | 6 | 8 |
| Sceptical | 1 | 1 |

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Self | 6 | 6 |
| Senior managers don't understand issues on the ground | 2 | 2 |
| Sheep, following blindly | 8 | 9 |
| Should include leadership | 5 | 5 |
| Show leadership | 2 | 2 |
| Showing allegiance, supporting someone | 1 | 1 |
| Silos, territorialism | 4 | 5 |
| Softer leadership, holding ones council | 1 | 1 |
| Sometimes must implement decision you do not agree with, duty, greater good | 3 | 3 |
| Stressful | 1 | 1 |
| Success shown in impact on day to day | 2 | 2 |
| Success to-date but real success in implementation | 9 | 11 |
| Successfully brought people together | 6 | 6 |
| Supervisor as mentor | 2 | 2 |
| Supervisor or line manager | 8 | 9 |
| Supportive | 3 | 3 |
| Takes time to get in to the organisation | 1 | 1 |
| Taking initiative | 1 | 1 |
| Targeting perceived difficult people | 1 | 1 |
| Teaching focused | 1 | 1 |
| The process is part of the end | 1 | 1 |
| Threat to continued existence | 1 | 1 |
| Too busy to engage | 1 | 1 |
| Top-down | 13 | 19 |
| Two different types of following | 6 | 6 |
| Uncertain or lack knowledge | 1 | 1 |
| Understanding for challenges faced by leader | 1 | 2 |
| University designation | 6 | 6 |
| Upheaval and change, lack of leadership | 1 | 1 |
| Varied (broad) focus | 4 | 5 |
| Vision, big picture for future | 5 | 5 |
| Volunteering | 3 | 4 |
| Willingness to listen | 1 | 1 |

D2 Phase 3 - Searching for Themes (developing categories)

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Omissions from Strategy or Process | 1 | 1 |
| Perception of management | 22 | 52 |
| Perception of priority or weighting of activities in role | 1 | 1 |
| Perception of role (focus) | 18 | 45 |
| Perception of who was leading the process | 23 | 27 |
| Perceptions of approach leaders took to the process | 26 | 113 |
| Perceptions of follower behaviours | 28 | 105 |
| Perceptions of followers | 27 | 95 |
| Perceptions of followership | 27 | 168 |
| Perceptions of leader behaviours | 4 | 5 |
| Perceptions of leader's desired outcomes | 23 | 59 |
| Perceptions of Leadership | 23 | 46 |
| Perceptions of organisational culture | 26 | 75 |
| Perceptions of others involvement in process | 24 | 76 |
| Perceptions of participant's own involvement in process | 21 | 34 |
| Perceptions of strategic vision and values | 1 | 1 |
| Perceptions of the outcomes of the process | 23 | 47 |
| Sources of leadership | 19 | 56 |

D3 Phase 4 - Reviewing Themes (coding on)

| Name | Files | References |
|--|-------|------------|
| Actively working against the process | 16 | 55 |
| How | 16 | 17 |
| Influencing others negatively | 4 | 4 |
| Obstructing progress | 11 | 11 |
| Why | 13 | 15 |
| Authentic following | 13 | 41 |
| A thinking follower (with a conscience) | 2 | 3 |
| Behaves ethically | 2 | 2 |
| Focused on what is best for broader institution or society | 2 | 2 |
| Genuinely believes in the vision or leader | 12 | 15 |
| Courageous following | 16 | 34 |
| Actively support leader | 3 | 3 |
| Against the tide | 6 | 6 |
| Courageous followership does not exist | 1 | 1 |
| Follow in face of uncertainty or risk | 5 | 5 |
| Prepared to challenge the leader (for right reason) | 3 | 3 |
| Effective and Ineffective Following | 30 | 199 |
| Believe in the leader | 8 | 11 |
| Believe in the vision, project, etc | 11 | 15 |
| Conditions | 7 | 9 |
| Facilitating progress | 29 | 114 |
| Inspired or influenced | 3 | 3 |
| Mindset | 18 | 39 |
| Right thing to do | 8 | 8 |
| Followers' Attributes and Behaviours | 30 | 282 |
| Actively Engaged | 23 | 39 |
| Conscientious | 22 | 47 |
| Default fallback if not a leader | 1 | 1 |
| Difficult (interpersonal behaviour) | 7 | 9 |
| Easy (interpersonal behaviour) | 4 | 4 |
| Egoless, don't think they should be leader | 1 | 1 |
| Facilitating progress | 12 | 14 |

| Name | Files | References |
|--|-------|------------|
| Giving up control | 7 | 7 |
| Keeping in contact with, not cap in hand | 1 | 1 |
| Knowledgeable | 2 | 2 |
| Lack of confidence | 2 | 2 |
| Lack seniority or low status | 3 | 3 |
| Leader must believe in the follower as a follower | 1 | 2 |
| Mindset | 20 | 40 |
| Must behave ethically | 1 | 1 |
| Must have a leader | 2 | 2 |
| Not ambitious | 1 | 1 |
| Not conscientious | 12 | 23 |
| Not entirely negative | 7 | 9 |
| Not leaders | 6 | 7 |
| Others don't respect them | 2 | 2 |
| Outspoken | 1 | 2 |
| Passive | 22 | 37 |
| Pretending to follow | 2 | 3 |
| Self-oriented | 8 | 9 |
| Seniority or high status | 3 | 3 |
| Team player | 10 | 10 |
| Uncertain or lack knowledge | 1 | 1 |
| Following role, leading behaviour | 15 | 40 |
| Facilitating progress | 13 | 13 |
| In spite of leadership | 1 | 2 |
| Influence others (positively) | 3 | 3 |
| Understanding what is required (in the circumstances for the institution, process, leader) | 5 | 5 |
| Limited or no engagement | 20 | 67 |
| How | 16 | 19 |
| Why | 14 | 26 |
| Organisational Culture and Context | 29 | 231 |
| Elements of Academic and Public Sector Culture (positive and negative) | 19 | 34 |
| Implications for followership and followers | 19 | 64 |
| Institutional Culture | 0 | 0 |

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Institutional Mission or Focus | 4 | 6 |
| Negative aspects of institutional environment and culture | 15 | 27 |
| Perception of role (focus) | 18 | 47 |
| Positive aspects of institutional environment and culture | 5 | 7 |
| Perception of management | 22 | 53 |
| A boss but not a manager | 1 | 1 |
| Autonomous self-management | 7 | 7 |
| Collaborative, distributed | 1 | 1 |
| Competing goals | 1 | 1 |
| Focused within own area, siloed | 1 | 1 |
| Formal line manager | 13 | 13 |
| Maintain status quo, keep show on the road | 1 | 1 |
| Manager role or title causes one to look down on others | 1 | 1 |
| Managers in education no management experience | 1 | 1 |
| Not about people in power managing other people | 1 | 1 |
| Process focus | 18 | 18 |
| Should include leadership | 5 | 5 |
| Supervisor as mentor | 2 | 2 |
| Perception of role (focus) | 18 | 47 |
| Engagement, citizenship, etc | 3 | 4 |
| Research | 8 | 10 |
| Second Order Activities | 10 | 12 |
| Show leadership | 2 | 2 |
| Teaching | 11 | 14 |
| Varied (broad role no focus) | 4 | 5 |
| Perception of who was leading the process | 23 | 27 |
| An individual (or small number of individuals) | 19 | 20 |
| Broader management group | 6 | 7 |
| Perceptions of approach leaders took to the process | 26 | 112 |
| Approach to consultation | 26 | 69 |
| Negative aspects | 6 | 11 |
| Overall approach | 17 | 25 |
| Positive aspects | 5 | 6 |
| Targeting perceived difficult people | 1 | 1 |

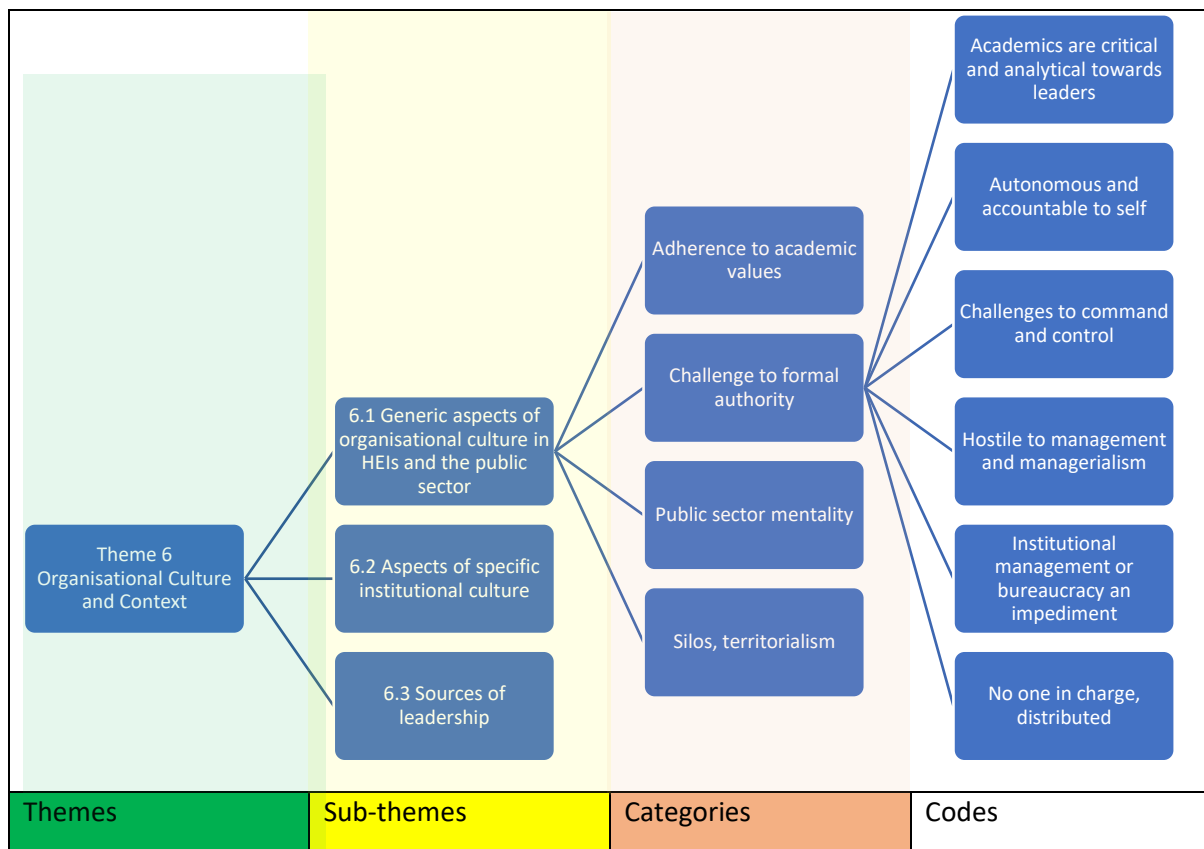
| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Perceptions of Followership | 29 | 250 |
| Active, proactive, support but also challenge | 13 | 17 |
| Chosen for an easier life | 10 | 21 |
| Chosen if unable or unwilling to lead | 11 | 15 |
| Chosen if you believe | 17 | 39 |
| Chosen to achieve favour, benefit or progression | 5 | 7 |
| Chosen to avoid difficulty or risk | 10 | 16 |
| Essential | 12 | 13 |
| Negative implications for follower | 19 | 35 |
| Negative perceptions | 7 | 8 |
| Positive implications for follower | 17 | 39 |
| Positive perceptions | 13 | 15 |
| Sheep, following blindly | 10 | 13 |
| Two different types of following | 9 | 12 |
| Perceptions of leader's desired outcomes | 23 | 59 |
| Administrative coherence, tidying up | 5 | 5 |
| Building morale and institutionalisation | 8 | 10 |
| Connecting the aspects of university mission, teaching, research and engagement | 2 | 2 |
| Define institution's role | 3 | 3 |
| Develop followership | 1 | 1 |
| Engage people in process | 4 | 5 |
| Ensuring curriculum delivers for students, employers, etc | 8 | 8 |
| Impact, making the world better | 1 | 1 |
| Improve staff workload | 3 | 4 |
| Institutional cohesion, acting as one | 1 | 1 |
| Institutional survival | 2 | 2 |
| Learn about the institution | 1 | 1 |
| New approach to strategy, flexible | 1 | 1 |
| Restore confidence in the institution | 4 | 4 |
| University designation | 6 | 6 |
| Vision, big picture for future | 5 | 5 |
| Perceptions of Leadership | 25 | 68 |
| Acceptable alternative to management in HE | 1 | 1 |
| Achieve change, make something new happen | 3 | 3 |

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| Anyone can show leadership | 2 | 3 |
| Approach | 5 | 7 |
| broader, institutional view | 1 | 1 |
| Characteristics | 4 | 5 |
| Charisma or influence | 8 | 13 |
| Having a vision | 11 | 15 |
| Identify in hindsight | 1 | 1 |
| Lack of leadership | 12 | 15 |
| Sceptical about implementation of plans | 1 | 1 |
| Stressful | 1 | 1 |
| The process is part of the end | 1 | 1 |
| Willingness to listen | 1 | 1 |
| Perceptions of others involvement in process | 24 | 120 |
| Actively engaged | 14 | 28 |
| Limited or no engagement | 16 | 36 |
| Practical resistance to implementation | 5 | 8 |
| Reasons for engaging | 14 | 18 |
| Reasons for not engaging | 13 | 21 |
| Resistance now that it is being implemented | 6 | 9 |
| Perceptions of participant's own involvement in process | 21 | 46 |
| Actively engaged | 14 | 16 |
| Limited or no engagement | 9 | 15 |
| Reasons for engaging | 10 | 11 |
| Reasons for not engaging | 4 | 4 |
| Perceptions of the outcomes of the process | 23 | 81 |
| Process was successful | 15 | 29 |
| Qualified success | 12 | 16 |
| Reasons for success | 11 | 18 |

D4 Phase 5 - Defining & Naming Themes (data reduction - consolidation)

| Name | Files | References |
|---|-------|------------|
| 1 Perceptions of Followership and Followers | 29 | 250 |
| 1.1 Overall Perceptions | 21 | 36 |
| 1.2 Two types of followership | 22 | 42 |
| 1.3 Followers' Motivations | 23 | 98 |
| 1.4 Implications of Followership for Followers | 27 | 74 |
| 2 Followers' Attributes and Behaviours | 30 | 235 |
| 2.1 Sociability | 8 | 15 |
| 2.2 Self or other orientated | 13 | 19 |
| 2.3 Action Orientation | 30 | 76 |
| 2.4 Conscientiousness | 26 | 70 |
| 2.5 Mindset | 21 | 45 |
| 2.6 Competence | 7 | 10 |
| 3 Effective and Ineffective followership | 30 | 201 |
| 3.1 Committed | 17 | 37 |
| 3.2 Constructive | 29 | 114 |
| 3.3 Able to Challenge | 22 | 50 |
| 4 Models of Following | 28 | 229 |
| 4.1 Authentic following | 13 | 41 |
| 4.2 Courageous following | 16 | 34 |
| 4.3 Following when leadership is overwhelmed, insufficient or absent | 15 | 40 |
| 4.4 Non-following | 24 | 114 |
| 5 The leadership process | 29 | 385 |
| 5.1 Participation by followers in the leadership process | 29 | 166 |
| 5.2 The Leadership Process | 28 | 138 |
| 5.3 Outcomes of the Leadership Process | 23 | 81 |
| 6 Organisational Culture and Context | 29 | 194 |
| 6.1 Generic aspects of organisational culture in HEIs and the public sector | 20 | 45 |
| 6.2 Aspects of the specific institutional Culture | 22 | 56 |
| 6.3 Sources of leadership | 28 | 92 |

D5 Example of flow from codes to categories to themes



D6 Example of Analytic Memo

Phase 6 - Producing the Report (analysis and...)

| Name | Files | Referenc |
|--|-------|----------|
| 1 Perceptions of Followership and Follow | 29 | 230 |
| 2 Followers' Attributes and Behaviours | 30 | 235 |
| 3 Effective and ineffective followership | 30 | 201 |
| 4 Models of Following | 28 | 229 |
| 5 The leadership process | 29 | 385 |
| 6 Organisational Culture and Context | 29 | 194 |
| 6.1 Generic aspects of organisational | 30 | 45 |
| 6.2 Aspects of the specific institution | 22 | 56 |
| 6.3 Sources of leadership | 28 | 92 |

Drag selection here to code to a new node

6.3 Sources of leadership

An interesting finding, in the context of followership, is to whom, or to where, do individuals in higher education institutions look, for leadership.

Over 70% of participants referred to this issue and of those 85% were members of academic staff. Please note that some participants referred to multiple sources of leadership. For example, they may have referenced a senior academic as a source of leadership from a research perspective, but they may also reference their Head of School or Department as a general source of leadership.

Participants are three times more likely to look for, and find, leadership away from the institution's formal leadership structures. In this case formal leadership structures consist of formal line-management and any formal mentorship programmes implemented by the institution. When participants look outside these formal structures, they look to a range of sources. Possible sources are: Colleagues, informal mentors, self and external to the institution.

This may have a significant implication for any leadership process which utilises the formal leadership structures, because the followers may not recognise or accept the leader's validity and as a result may not accept or commit to the process.

Analytic memos were used to synthesize structured ideas and arguments from the raw, unformed, themes and meanings contained in the nodes. Drawing these memos together provided the basis for the findings chapter.

D7 Example of Integrated Annotations

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 7 | 5:34.3 - 7:16.1 | Do you consider that you have a manager or a supervisor in this role? |
| 8 | 7:16.1 - 8:14.1 | Well, I consider that I have a boss but I don't know that I have got a manager or a supervisor on an ongoing basis. But certainly I have a boss and bosses, and I know that I have a Head of Department and it's important that I do know that and I realise that there are people further up the food chain who could destroy me if they wanted to. I think that most academics have a lot of independence as academics, in the tertiary sector most lecturers have a lot of autonomy but ultimately you are accountable in some way to somebody. But it also you are accountable to yourself and I think that is the biggest policing agent in the field yourself. |
| Annotations | | |
| Item | Content | |
| 2 | Observation - Participants laughs | |

Integrated annotations used to record important context such as observations, clarifications and assumptions.

| | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| 33 | 31:00.0 - 32:06.8 | ... ultimately, but what are the outcomes? I mentioned before that we needed a strategy for onboarding people, we're about to embark on the biggest change for this institution [confirms that onboarding means buy-in], we are about to submit an application to be designated as a TU. People need to be on board for that process and the implications of it, you need buy-in to do that, it won't work as a solo run. So that was one of the outcomes that I would have seen as... and that is now within it, we have the words "transformative University experience" within the plan and certainly the forward plan is presenting the TU as an outcome. I think that strategies have different purposes at different times, and that purpose is very strong for us at the moment and I was achieved. |
| 34 | 32:06.8 - 33:01.4 | How would you characterise the contribution of academic staff at each of the stages? |
| 35 | 33:01.4 - 33:57.1 | The process itself was a positive outcome, the text that emerged is positive as well, people generally like it. When we were discussing values there was general coherence around "Those are values that I as a staff member like and can abide by, but they are not the ones that the Institute is currently living". You have to surface that retrospective element and get it |
| Annotations | | |
| Item | Content | |
| 1 | Clarification from participant - means get buy in | |

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