THE EVOLVING ROLE OF HEAD OF DEPARTMENT IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DES	Department of Education & Skills
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HETAC	Higher Education Training Awards Council
HoD	Head of Department
HoS	Head of School
NCEA	National Council of Educational Awards
NIHE	National Institute of Higher Education
QQI	Quality Assurance and Qualifications Ireland
RTC	Regional Technology College
SM	Senior Management
TUI	Teachers Union of Ireland
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

ABSTRACT

Academic Heads of Department play a central role in higher education leadership and management. However the role is often unscripted and unacknowledged. Although this subject has been investigated internationally, little research has been undertaken in Ireland on academic middle management in higher education.

This study investigated the role of Heads of Department in an Irish Institute of Technology through their lived experiences. The study explored the socio-political and cultural discourses and institutional practices that shape Irish higher education where Heads of Department are located. Adopting a social constructionist paradigm and a case-study method, the research examined the micro-practices of leadership and management enacted in the role

The findings of this study add further weight to the evidence in the literature about the impact of the discourses of neoliberalism and managerialism on Irish higher education at the macro, meso and micro–levels. For HoDs in this study the discourse and institutional practices of managerialism entails less autonomy and a more regulated, monitored and managed regime than in the past.

The study reveals that the managerialist discourse positions HoDs as middle managers in the IoT sector where their identity and role is constructed in terms of their middle or in-between position in the hierarchy; expressed and defined by their relationships with those above and those below. Thus HoDs negotiate at the meso-level a network of power relations which are structural and multi-dimensional. This positioning is disempowering for HoDs as they have key responsibilities in relation to staff and students but have low levels of authority and power.

HoD is a multi-faceted role enacted as leader and manager, at the micro-level, with a hybrid mix of operational and strategic leadership. HoDs are caught between an institutional culture of managerialism and a professional need for collegiality at department level. However, relational leadership is at the heart of the HoD role as influencing, building trust and team work are pivotal to leading academic staff. Thus

the study argues for a shift to constructing HoD leadership as a relational, dynamic and flexible practice viewed through the lenses of context and relations of power. The study identifies enabling practices and agency introduced by HoDs to counteract the constraints of managerialism.

Although the results of the study cannot be generalised, as practitioner-based research it makes a number of recommendations for practice. These include reframing the HoD role in order to strengthen collegial forms of governance; and a call on senior institutional management to empower and support the HoD role. The study also recommends a bespoke training programme for HoDs including relational leadership; and the further creative and strategic development of HoD Forums in order to further enable agency.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This study aims to investigate the role of a Head of Department (HoD) as evidenced in their lived experiences in a selected third level Institute of Technology (IoT) in Ireland. The study will explore the socio–political and cultural discourses that shape Irish higher education; the context in which HoDs are located. It will examine how HoDs experience their role as leader and manager and the main affordances and constraints in the role. The study also seeks to identify the supports which are most useful to HoDs.

The rationale for this case study emanates from my desire to develop a deeper understanding of the actual world of the work of academic HoDs in an Irish HEI. HoDs are in a precarious position in the hierarchy of higher education institutes (HEIs). They are the middle managers caught between the wants and needs of academic staff and students, and the demands of senior management. While there have been many studies on leadership in higher education, few have focused exclusively on the HoD and fewer still have focused on HoDs' experiences of their role. The HoD is an important part of the leadership and management structures of higher education. The complexities of the HoD position calls for them to be both a manager of resources as well as a leader of the academic department, responsible for and towards many in the organisation.

Research is undertaken using an interpretive paradigm in order to meet the aims of the thesis. This is in line with a social constructionist approach. Using a case study method, semi- structured interviews and a focus group were undertaken with all the HoDs working in the case institute where I have worked for almost thirty years, eighteen as HoD. A National Survey of HoDs in the IoT sector was also undertaken in addition to reflective journaling of my own experiences as a researcher during the process.

This chapter presents a justification for the need to research the role of HoDs and presents an overview of the thesis. First, the rational for this topic is addressed and

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the research aims and the research questions are identified. Second, the study's theoretical framework is introduced and the methodology is described and then the significance and outcomes of the study are discussed. Third, the research context and the researcher's position in relation to the study are established, and finally, the ethical issues are considered and the overall structure of the thesis is outlined.

Context of the Study

Higher education in Ireland is currently undergoing significant change with the 'National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' (also known as the Hunt[1] report) concluding it is 'at a point of transition' (DES, 2011, p.4). Key changes in the sector include growth in student numbers, economic imperatives; casualisation of staff, decreased government funding and greater accountability (Bolden et al., 2012; DES, 2011; Jones, 2012). These changes have also impacted on management practices and culture in higher education as institutions have responded to demands of government and higher education funding bodies (Deem, 2008; DES, 2011). While the role of the academic HoD has always been regarded as important in higher education, these changes have a significant impact on the position, as HoDs take on much more strategic and leadership roles within their institutions (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003). Changes in funding mechanisms and greater surveillance and accountability for the quality of all aspects of the running of HEIs including teaching and learning results in the HoD being firmly at the heart of higher education leadership and management.

Recent research suggests that the role of HoD is complex and demanding (Branson et al. 2016; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Inman, 2011; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Preston & Price, 2012). Given their middle management position they require a high level of interpersonal skills to negotiate up, down and across the institutes within which they work. The HoDs work long hours and have heavy workloads, (Deem, 2000; Smith 2002, 2005, 2007) leading to stress and work-life balance issues. Further they

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[1] The National Strategy report is frequently referred to as the Hunt Report after its Chairperson, Dr. Colin Hunt. The Chair, appointed by the Minister of Education and Skills, comes from an industry background and emphasised the 'human capital' approach to higher education.

receive little if any formal training for the work involved (Deem, 2004; Inman, 2011; Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007).

These issues are framed within the changing role of IoTs within the higher education (HE) sector in the Republic of Ireland. The Irish HE sector is a binary system including both the traditional university sector and the more recent Institute of Technology sector (Clancy, 2015a, DES, 2011). This case study is located within the Institute of Technology sector where the structure and functions of the HoD role is different to that of the university sector. The IoT sector has, from its inception, been controlled and monitored closely by the Department of Education (and Skills) initially through the Vocational Education Committees (VEC) and National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) and latterly through the Higher Education Authority (HEA) (Walsh, 2014b). The IoTs have never enjoyed the same level of autonomy as the university sector in Ireland. Although the Regional Technical Colleges (RTC) Act (1992) ostensibly gave the IoT sector greater autonomy over its own affairs, the system was structured in such a way as to retain overall control of the sector. Parallel with the apparent increase in autonomy of the sector there was an increase in managerialism as a form of governance within the public sector. This resulted in a requirement for greater accountability, transparency and surveillance in the guise of increased controls and auditing. Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) embraced this process throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (Lynch, 2012).

The influence of the managerialism culture on Irish higher education intensified following the economic crash of 2008. The major impacts on the HoD role were that it promoted 'the decentralisation of budgetary and personal authority to line managers, and project-led contractual employment arrangements rather than permanency' (Lynch, 2014, p.145). Consequently, there was a moratorium on new posts, an increase in casualisation of academic staff (Courtois et al., 2015) and a major reduction in salaries, while student numbers continued to increase. These changes lead to increasing student-staff ratios and it became more difficult to motivate staff and maintain quality. The introduction by the HEA of Performance Compacts (an agreement between the HEA and individual HEIs on performance targets) and their monitoring (Annual Self Evaluation and Progress Reports) has led to less autonomy and greater auditing within the higher education (HE) system. The

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potential Technological University (TU) status proposed for the IoT sector has also set new metrics (HEA, 2012). These are mainly in the research area and entail an increased emphasis, even privileging of this activity, not traditionally a strength of the IoT sector.

The role of HoD has changed in tandem with the changing context and culture of the higher education sector. The role has become more complex with HoDs having high levels of responsibility and low levels of autonomy (Preston & Price, 2012). Bureaucracy has increased and the role has become progressively more operational leaving little time for leadership and reflection (Pepper and Giles, 2015). Overall it has often been a neglected position, poorly defined, and inconsistently enacted (Bryman, 2007a; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Pepper & Giles, 2015).

Certainly from my experience as HoD there are conflicting perceptions of the role. Anecdotally some colleagues believe the workload and tensions associated with being a HoD outweigh whatever rewards are gained in the position. It is perceived that HoDs take on increasing amounts of administrative tasks and bureaucratic work at the expense of teaching, research, academic freedom and collegiality. On the other hand, senior management perceives HoD as operational managers lacking strategic and leadership skills. If as the research suggests the role is an important one at a key point in the implementation of strategy, the HoD requires more support.

Despite the role of HoD, being regarded as complex and difficult, there are academics including myself who enjoy being in this leadership and management role. Further in the case institute, three short term HoD positions were recently advertised and these positions attracted a number of internal applicants.

Aim of the Research

This study aims to investigate the role of a Head of Department (HoD) as evidenced in their lived experiences in a selected third level Institute of Technology (IoT) in Ireland. The study will explore the socio–political and cultural discourses that shape Irish higher education; the context in which HoDs are located. It will examine how

HoDs experience their role as leader and manager and the main affordances and constraints in the role. The study also seeks to identify the supports which are most useful to HoDs.

Although it would be incorrect to extrapolate from this qualitative study to other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) it is anticipated that the research study will provide insight into the working experiences of HoDs within a specific HEI and will help inform higher education practice more widely.

Research Questions

The overarching research questions are:

1. How do Heads of Departments experience their role and in particular how do they make sense of their leadership and management of an academic department?
2. How do institutional, socio-cultural and political contexts and discourses, where these HoDs are located, shape their sense-making about the role?

Rationale and Significance of the Research

Gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of department heads will not only add to the body of knowledge, but add to the understanding of the role. While it is not the aim of this case study to provide findings that can be generalised to all HoDs within the HEI sector, they may assist academics in the sector relate to the findings and perhaps help them to reflect and get an understanding of their own situation and that of and others (Silverman, 2010). It may help aspirant HoDs who are thinking about or are about to commence a career as a HoD.

A more in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges as identified by HoDs is important for senior management in HEIs to give them insight into the role of HoD as enacted on the ground. This will help them in ensuring that the work of HoDs is aligned to the strategic aims of the institution and could also inform the training, development and support for HoDs.

HoDs are the corner stone of academic leadership and management in higher education (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011). They are the institute leaders who are in direct contact with management, academic staff, and students on a daily basis. Although there are studies on the role of HoDs in HEIs in New Zealand (Branson et al., 2016), South Africa (Davis et al., 2016), Australia, (Pepper & Giles, 2015, Ramsden, 1998), USA (Hecht, 2004; Wolverton et al., 2005) and the UK (Deem, 2008; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011), the literature review reveals only one study in the Irish context (O'Sullivan, 2014) which explored effective leadership facets in HoDs. These international studies highlight a number of issues linked to how HoDs (or middle managers or Chairpersons of Departments as they are also termed) experience their roles across a range of HEIs. This, when added to the earlier studies undertaken by Deem (2000), Smith (2002, 2005, 2007) and more recently Branson et al. (2016), provide an overview of the role and how it has evolved over the last twenty years. This study aims to build on these studies but within an Irish context and within that an IoT context. By using a case study to explore the lived experiences of all the HoDs in the case institute, it is hoped that the role might be better understood. The survey of HoDs nationally will add depth and authenticity to the interviews.

Location of the Study

The Chosen Higher Education Institute

The case study institute was chosen because it is an IOT which has been in operation in Ireland since the early 1970s and is regarded as medium sized. Its growth and position reflect the history the sector and is typical of an institute in the IoT sector in that:

- It is essentially a teaching institute but is increasing its research capacity in response to policy pressures
- It offers a broad range of academic programmes, but is attempting to realign the academic offering by concentrating on niche areas
- It is reviewing its organisation aligned to a possible merger with another IoT, subsequent to applying for Technological University status
- There is an increasing emphasis on level 10 (Doctorate) qualifications among the academic staff through a combination of existing staff upskilling and a

Level 10 recruitment policy in line with the requirements for Technological University status

- It is a medium sized institute (approx. 7,200 students) in a regional location and has a diverse student body, which is increasing
- It has seven departments in place across three academic schools (Science, Engineering and Business & Humanities) and a thriving Life Long Learning section, each with their own unique working norms and practices
- HoD appointments in the case institute were permanent, although recently the trend has changed to appointments on a contract basis.

Participants of the Study

In order to commence the study, all HoDs in the chosen institute were invited and agreed to participate. The participants of the study are seven, six serving, HoDs at an Institute of Technology in Ireland. They represent the total number of Heads of Department in situ at the time of the research in 2015. The participants were three female and four male and come from the three Schools of the case institute; Business, Science and Engineering. Three of the participants were in permanent positions while another three were on temporary contracts. In depth interviews and a focus group was completed with the participants, accompanied by analysis of documents about the management structures, policies and processes of the case study institute.

Table 1. 1 Overview of Research Participants June 2016

No.	School	Years in Academia	Years as HoD	Professional Background
1	Business	10	6.0	Academic
2	Science	20	10	Academic
3	Engineering	8	2.5	Engineer/Academic
4	Science	15	1.5	Academic
5	Engineering	10	1.0	Engineer/Academic
6	Business	15	3.5	Academic
7	Engineering	2	0.75	Engineer/Academic

Forty one Heads of Department participated in a National Survey sent to all HoDs in the Irish IoT sector in 2015, with their profile outlined in Chapter 5.

Personal Context of the Researcher

Prior to entering academia, I worked as a professional accountant in various positions, in practice, industry and in Africa with a NGO.[2] I commenced working in the case study institute in 1989 as a lecturer and fifteen years ago moved to the HoD role. I initially worked as a HoD in the mid-1990s in an acting capacity, returned to teaching and was appointed as a HoD on a permanent basis in 2003.

My background and accountancy education directed me towards a positivist and 'modernist' view of the world and a belief in the neoliberal system. However, through my working life and education particularly through my work in Africa and this doctorate programme, I have shifted my perspective towards a post-modernist and social constructionist one. The doctorate has enabled me to contextualise and extend my understanding of social constructionism initially developed while undertaking an MA in Teaching and Learning. It has made me examine the purposes of education and Higher Education in particular, through the lenses of power and neoliberalism.

Power is one concept that I have come to understand in a new way through the Doctorate in Higher and Adult Education (DHAE). I now realise that power is exercised in different ways, processes and modes in higher education. It is exercised through complex networks and flows by industry and the corporate world on the state, by the state on HE institutions, within the institution by senior managers, right down to academics and onto the student, using different technologies and processes. As part of this study I sought to understand the role, identify the challenges that face HoDs in the changing environment within which they work and how their previous experiences in other roles can facilitate them in that process. Further I wanted to identify the constraints and affordances for HoDs within the system and explore the leadership and management aspects of the role within the day to day experiences.

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[2] Non – Government Organisation

My own experience, perspectives and influences are also important as I am an inside researcher (as explored later in the Methodology Chapter 4).

From the time I commenced working in the case institute, the landscape has changed significantly, but when you are at the coalface day by day it becomes difficult to see the changes and see how they impact on your role and your life. The DHAE programme has allowed me to examine the role that the HoD plays in the leadership and management of the case study institute and the experiences of those who enact the role.

Higher Education Context

The purpose of education can be located within a contested sphere, with multiple discourses evident, central of which is the traditional view of higher education as providing academic and professional education, vocational discourses and a growing emphasis on a neoliberal view of higher education serving the knowledge economy. The vocational and neoliberal views are reflected more clearly within the IoT sector than the university sector in Ireland. When the Regional Technical Colleges were established in 1972 their main function was to prepare students for employment in industry. Educating students for the workplace became the main focus of government policy in the following decades, with a particular emphasis on science, engineering and technology (Lynch, 2012). Preparing graduates for the world of work remains a core mission of the IoTs today.

In the USA, Giroux (2002) argues that neoliberalism and capitalistic market principles have negatively impacted on institutions of higher education because corporate power and influence have gone unchecked. In other words, as HEIs are swayed by corporate models of management they become more accountable to these models as opposed to ensuring that students are educated holistically in democratic and social justice values as well as skilled for employment. This research explores the current context and ethos of the IoT sector in Ireland.

It has been argued that the transformations in higher education are challenging assumptions not only about the purposes of higher education and its place in society, but also about the most appropriate systems of management, leadership and teaching

that should operate within the sector (Bryman, 2007a, Deem & Breheny, 2005; 2007b; Lumby, 2012). Some authors suggest that traditional models of leadership of higher education have 'been eroded by the demand for greater accountability and transparency' (Bolden et al., 2012).

The changes in higher education outlined have resulted in a shift away from 'collegial' approaches to more 'corporate' and 'business like' approaches to managing higher education (Bolden et al., 2012; Deem 2008; Henkel, 1997). This shift has been accompanied by the professionalisation of the management and leadership functions (Deem et al. 2007, Henkel, 1997) in higher education and the growth of hybrid academic administrative roles (Smith, 2005).

Ethical Considerations

There are a number of ethical issues which have to be considered when undertaking education research (Cohen et al., 2011). These issues include minimising potential harm to participants be it psychological and emotional. Before commencing the research and ensuring confidentiality of the participants throughout the process, informed consent was gained from the participants (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014; Silverman, 2010). As I am an inside researcher, these matters are even more acute. As participants are viewed as co-researchers, where the data can be of a confidential and personal nature and where self-reflection is a continuous aspect of the process, these issues are even more pertinent.

In order to meet the ethical considerations, the researcher followed a number of steps which were approved through the Research Ethics Subcommittees of Maynooth University and the case-study institute. Initially the purpose of the study was explained to the participants and their written consent sought. The outline question schedule was forwarded to them in advance so any issues with the topics could be resolved. Appendix 1 contains a copy of the interview schedule.

I ensured that the participants' views are authentically reflected in the study. This was achieved by sending participants transcripts and asking for any comments that they may have had on the data. Anonymity and confidentiality are difficult to ensure

as there is a small number of participants and a limited number of Institutes of Technology. Therefore it is important that the participants' views are reflected fairly. While participants gave consent to doing the interviews, they were afforded the opportunity to withdraw at any stage. My role as an insider researcher gave rise to particular power dynamics, relationship and knowledge which raise ethical considerations which are discussed in greater depth in the Methodology Chapter.

Outline of the Study

The dissertation is organised over eleven chapters. Chapter 1 has set out the rationale for the research and explained the research question and the approach to the study. Chapter 2 outlines the context within which the case institute is located. It traces the origins of the IoT sector, how it came into being and how it compares and contrasts with the University sector in Ireland. It also discusses how the IoT sector will evolve in the foreseeable future. Chapter 3 reviews and analyses the literature related to the research aims and questions. It explores the changing context of higher education with specific reference to the impact of the discourses of neoliberalism and its organisational arm, managerialism. It probes research on management and leadership particularly within a higher education context. It also reviews relevant international studies on the role of HoD. Chapter 4 justifies the theoretical framework and the methodology and describes the data collection and analysis methods. It justifies the lenses of postmodernism and power and identifies the ethical considerations within the study.

Chapter 5 provides a presentation of the findings of the National Survey. It establishes the main areas of work identified by the respondents in the role, how they judge effective performance and the skills and competencies required for the role. The chapter also explores the challenges for HoDs and how the role is supported. Finally, it examines how the role could be developed and improved.

Chapters 6 to 9 provide a presentation of the findings of the interviews with the six HoDs in the case institute. Chapter 6 explores the HoDs background and investigates reason why they became HoDs. It reviews the affordances, constraints and challenges in the role and discusses the training and development opportunities

provided by the case institute. Chapter 7 reviews the day to day operational nature of the role and discusses the management and leadership aspects of the role. It reflects on the unseen aspects of the role including the impact on the HoDs personal research and the life-work balance. Chapter 8 positions the HoD as a middle manager within the structure of the case institute and explores the relational nature of the role in terms of senior management, academic staff, peers and others. The chapter charts the gradual disempowering of the role. Chapter 9 reviews the key attributes and qualities necessary in the role and how the role can be made more effective. It indicates the need for greater autonomy in and support for the position.

Chapter 10 discusses the findings from the interviews, the National Survey and the focus group in the light of the literature. The main themes emerging from the study are identified in terms of: the impact of the social, economic and political discourses on the role; the positionality of the role; the operational versus the strategic focus of the role; power and influence in the role and how the role could be improved and supported. Finally, Chapter 11 outlines the conclusions following on from the discussions in Chapter 10. Recommendations are made and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT OF INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the higher education sector in Ireland, with particular reference to the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector in which the study is located. Firstly, it will review the history of the Irish third level system and discuss the changes that have occurred within the sector over time. The chapter will trace the movement of Irish HE from an 'elite' to a 'mass' system and within that how the IoT sector developed. The different missions of the University and the IoT sectors will be explained in the context of the emergence of a binary system of higher education. Finally, the chapter will explore how the governance and reporting structure of the IoTs have changed since the RTC Act (1992), together with some personal reflections on how these changes have impacted on the sector and on the role of HoD that is at the heart of this thesis.

Origins of the Irish Higher Education System

Although Irish scholars had a strong teaching tradition in the middle ages (Flechner & Meeden, 2016), it was not until 1592 that the first university in Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, was founded. By 1880, the Royal University of Ireland was founded which recognised the granting of degrees to Catholic institutions; St Mary's Belfast, St Patrick's College Maynooth and the Catholic University of Dublin which became University College Dublin. These universities eventually became the National University of Ireland incorporating colleges in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Maynooth and Belfast. These early universities had 'for the most part been available to a tiny elite segment of the population' (Clancy, 2015a, p.1). The Irish universities viewed scholarship, pursuit of knowledge and enquiry as their primary aim. There was limited emphasis on providing professional qualifications which were viewed as the remit of the Guilds through their apprenticeship programmes.

As Kavanagh (2016, p. 332) stated:

> Out of this arose the modern value of the free pursuit of knowledge by scholars who were themselves free to do so and out of that has come so much of what we understand to be science and disinterested research.

Historically, Irish higher education institutions were autonomous and this did not change with the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. In fact, Irish higher education did not feature in the national discourse of the newly emerging state from 1922 -1945 as Walsh (2014a) has indicated:

> Higher education was virtually invisible in the rhetoric of protectionist economic development…The Universities featured hardly at all in a dominant national discourse marked by traditional Catholicism, protectionism, and social conservatism…they attracted only a small minority of the population, were severely under-resourced and were oriented strongly towards training for the professions. (p.7)

The lack of state support and indeed neglect of higher education is evident in the fact that while the number of full-time students doubled between 1948 and 1964, there was no significant capital investment in the sector by successive governments. In this period HE catered for the 'privileged elite' with 65% of entrants coming from backgrounds in the professions, employers and higher white collar workers (Clancy, 2015a; Walsh 2014a). In addition, the courses provided by the universities were almost exclusively for the professions (such as law, medicine), arts and humanities disciplines, with business, science and higher technical education languishing behind. The low value placed on vocational and technical studies demonstrates further the elitist nature of higher education up to the 1960's.

Change in Irish Higher Education System

In the late 1950's and early 1960's there was a significant change in Irish economic and social policy following the election of Sean Lemass as Taoiseach (Prime Minister). He pursued a more open economic policy and investment in employment, health, education, housing – key social services. His mantra was; 'A rising tide raises all boats.' The publication of the first OECD report of the Irish education system, 'Investment in Education' in 1965 has been identified as a major driver of change at

this time (Fleming et al., 2017; Grummell & Lynch, 2016; Walsh, 2014a). This report identified education, in general, and HE, in particular, as crucial to economic development. According to Fleming et al. (2016):

> This was the beginning of a change in values and language (education was hereafter an investment) and a change in emphasis about the purposes of education that would inform public spending over the coming decades. (p. 25)

The OECD report resulted in a significant increase in spending on HEIs through large scale capital investment, almost exclusively in the university sector. While the university sector retained a large degree of autonomy, the increased government funding required greater liaison with the Department of Education. As a result of this the Higher Education Authority (HEA) was founded in 1968 as a liaising body – 'a buffer' - between the universities and the government. Initially the HEA was established on an ad-hoc basis but gradually was assigned considerable powers and responsibilities for the financing of the universities.

Another significant development at this time in education policy was the introduction of free secondary education in 1967 and free school transport in 1969. Education was now seen as a public good and led to increased enrolments in second level. In 1969, a means-tested grant scheme was introduced for higher education which facilitated greater access for students, particularly for those who heretofore could not afford it. Through these policies the state created a critical synergy between free secondary education and economic growth which, in turn, drove demand for higher education (Clancy, 2015a; Hazelkorn & Moynihan, 2011; Walsh, 2014a). Subsequently, the desire to widen participation led to the abolition of university tuition fees in 1997.

The Regional Technology Colleges (RTCs)

In parallel with the developments outlined above, higher technical education came to the fore. The OECD report, 'Investment in Education' (1965), led to the establishment of a Steering Committee on Technical Education in 1966. This group concluded there was an urgent need to produce technically qualified people in order

to plan for industrial development. They recommended that eight Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) be established with a new role for higher education as outlined by the committee:

> To educate for trade and industry over a broad spectrum of occupations ranging from craft to professional, notably in engineering and science but also in commercial, linguistic and other specialities. They will, however, be more immediately concerned with providing courses aimed at filling gaps in the industrial manpower structure, particularly in the technician area. (Government of Ireland. 1967, p. 2)

Seven RTCs were established in 1972; each one was managed by a Board of Management reporting through the local Vocational Education Committees (VECs) to the Department of Education. The National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) was also founded in 1972 as the body responsible for oversight of the new RTCs; approving courses, awarding qualifications and negotiating reciprocal recognition with other countries. Initially, the RTCs awarded Higher Education certificates and diplomas only, not degrees.

The development of the RTC sector was further bolstered by support from the European Social Fund as all certificate and diploma programmes were funded by the ESF from 1975 onwards, with 12,000 students on ESF-funded courses by 1984-85 (Walsh 2014a, p. 24). This enabled an expansion of student numbers and access to higher education across the country.

Under the RTC and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) Acts, 1992, the functions of the IoTs' were further identified as:

> To provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the Colleges, as well as to:
>
> • Engage in research, development and consultancy work,
> • Exploit any research, consultancy or development work,
> • Enter into arrangements with other institutions in or outside the State for the purpose of joint programmes in both teaching and research.

There were 11 colleges across regional locations nationally when the Acts were introduced, and 13 in 2000 (see Appendix 6, Map of Irish HEIs). By 2000, all RTCs had been re-named Institutes of Technology (IoT) in somewhat controversial circumstances, officially in recognition of their university-level teaching and research but unofficially because the nomenclature of 'Institute of Technology' was perceived as having higher status; similarly, permission was given in 2007 to rename the 'Director' as 'President' (Clancy 2015a; Hazelkorn & Moynihan, 2011).

National Institutes of Higher Education (NIHEs)

The development of the NIHEs was another important step in the diversification of Irish HE. Their role was to combine 'extensive specialisation in technical courses at diploma and certificate level with the prestige of degree courses in arts (and) humanities' (Walsh, 2014a, p.22). The first NIHE was opened in Limerick in 1972 followed by another NIHE in Dublin in 1980. This latter institution operated 'entirely at degree level offering a range of business, technology and computer applications courses' (Walsh, 2014a, p.23). The establishment of these two NIHEs and the RTCs indicated an upgrading of higher technical education. Although the RTCs were under the control of the VEC sector, the NIHEs reported to the HEA, similar to the universities. This, together with the ability to award degrees was to prove significant in the NIHEs subsequently achieving statutory independent status with the NCEA as their awarding body in 1981 (Walsh, 2014a, p. 28). They achieved university status in 1989.

Moving from an Elite to a Mass System

The establishment of the RTCs and NIHEs reflected a change in emphasis in Irish higher education. Heretofore third level education was confined to four universities who provided education almost exclusively for the professions, including the public sector (such as law, medicine, education etc.). The RTCs had a broader brief, responding to changing demands in work force skills in the technical, technological, scientific and business areas. This new investment in HE by the government was the beginning of a change from an elite to a mass education system. As Walsh (2014a) has succinctly described:

The emergence of the economic imperatives in educational policy, closely linked to 'human capital' ideas mediated through the OECD and adopted by Irish domestic elites, exerted a decisive influence on the transformation of Irish Higher Education from an 'elite' to a 'mass' system within a single generation. (p.29)

Hazelkorn & Moynihan (2011) go so far as to suggest that the growth of the IOT sector was 'a success story of massification, laying the foundations for Ireland's Celtic Tiger'.

Participation in higher education has increased dramatically from 1950's to 2015. In the 1950's a mere 5% of school leavers progressed to HE. In 2015/2016, two thirds of this age group participated in HE, up from 44% a decade ago and the Government has set a target of 72% by 2020 (Clancy, 2015a; Fleming et al., 2016; OECD, 2016).

Binary System

The establishment of the RTC and the NIHE sectors has been described as creating a binary system in Irish HE (Hazelkorn & Moynihan, 2011, p. 176). Irish higher education is, however, more complex and varied than the term usually suggests (Skilbeck, 2003). There are seven universities, fourteen IoTs, nine Colleges of Education, the National College of Art and Design, two non-state aided private colleges and other national institutions (see Appendix 6, Map of Irish HEI's). Notwithstanding this, the universities and IoTs have been treated differently in policy, funding and recognition leading to this perception of a binary system (Clancy, 2015; Hazelkorn & Moynihan, 2011).

From the beginning there were differences between the RTC, University and NIHE sector in the reporting structures, missions and academic programmes. The University and NIHE sectors reported to the HEA, the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research but retained their autonomy. On the other hand, the RTCs were administered by the local Vocational Education Committee but were 'effectively controlled by the Department of Education' (Walsh, 2014a, p.25). This continued until March 2006, when the IOTs came under the national remit of the HEA.

The mission of the IoT sector is quite different from that of the traditional university sector. Distinctions between programme type, qualification and student background further emphasise the differences between the two sectors (Webb et al, 2002 p. 132). From their inception, the IoTs have focused on applied programmes, educating and training students for employment, which meets the needs of industry and regional requirements. The movement into the humanities area has been rare and indeed where departments are called humanities, this incorporates the applied social sciences rather than the traditional humanities' disciplines of the university sector. As Fleming et al., (2017, pp. 5-6) make clear there are marked structural and cultural differences between the two sectors. The university sector has a very strong emphasis on research and publications as compared with the IoT sector. The programmes offered in the IoT sector have a greater vocational and technical remit and offer Level 6 and 7 programmes as compared to the university sector. The geographical locations of the IoTs are regionally based and are smaller in size than the universities.

The following table captures the differences between the two sectors in terms of student enrolments in 2014/15:

Table 2. 1 Comparison of Enrolments in Universities and IOT Sectors 2014/15

Profile	Universities	Institutes of Technology
Level 6 and 7 enrolments	5,172	33,777
Level 8 enrolments	75,947	40,810
Research student enrolments	8,020	1,913
Postgraduate students (national share)	80%	20%
Part-time undergraduate enrolments (national share)	31%	69%

Profile	Universities	Institutes of Technology
Part-time postgraduate enrolments (national share)	71%	29%
Widening Access		
New entrants to higher education (national share)	52%	48%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged new entrants	45%	55%
Mature students full time new entrants (national share)	35%	65%
Participants in labour activation programmes	21%	79%

(Source: HEA, 2016b)

These figures reflect the diversity of mission between the two sectors with the universities showing higher postgraduate numbers and the IoTs presenting higher numbers of part-time, mature and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups within their cohort. Furthermore, the Level 6 and 7 enrolments are greater in the IoT sector, representing 87% of this cohort.

Institutional differentiation is embedded in the fabric of how the university and IoT sectors are organised and managed, and how academic work is determined (Clancy 2015a; Hazelkorn & Moynihan, 2011). The IoTs were established to provide vocational and technical education and training. While the majority focus on higher certificate and BA (Ordinary) level, only the larger IoTs concentrate on advanced professional qualifications, at doctorate level. Practical, vocationally oriented teaching has been a defining characteristic of the IoTs, exemplified by low student/staff ratios compared to the universities: 14:1 vs. 20:1, respectively, in 2015/2016. IoT academics are contractually obliged to teach 17–19 hours per week. Until recently, academic staff appointed to IoTs was recruited primarily on the basis of their ability to teach, and depending upon the institution, to teach at undergraduate level only (Hazelkorn & Moynihan, 2011).

Another distinction has been the role of research in the mission of the universities and IoTs. The emphasis in the IoTs is on teaching, and only recently on research. In contrast, research for a university academic is a key part of the remit. The 1967 Steering Committee did not specify research as a fundamental function of IoTs although both the 1992 RTC and DIT Acts acknowledged this role 'subject to such conditions as the Minister may determine'. In contrast, the 1997 University Act re-confirmed research as an unqualified function of universities stating that a 'university shall promote and facilitate research'. This policy has impeded the development of research in the IoTs.

In 2003, the Department of Education and Science invited the OECD to evaluate the performance of higher education and recommend how it could better meet Ireland's strategic objectives. The OECD (2004) reaffirmed the binary system as the best mechanism to maintain diversity in Irish higher education. However, more recent government and HEA initiatives have encouraged and promoted critical mass and synergies between all HEIs, and especially between universities and IoTs, which have also contributed to a re-alignment within higher education, under the guise of collaboration and partnerships. Consequently, there is evidence of 'mission drift' between the two sectors. The IoT sector's focus on apprenticeships and Certificate (Level 6) and Diploma (Level 7) courses has shifted to Bachelor degree (Level 8) and Master's (Level 9) programmes. The university sector has broadened both its access to lower socioeconomic groupings and increased its offerings and is more aligned to the needs of industry, professional bodies and the region. The provision of advanced qualifications and the growth of research activity within the IoT sector has also helped blur the boundaries between universities and IoTs, with all the accompanying demands for funding and support (Hazelkorn & Moynihan, 2011, p. 178).

Hazelkorn and Moynihan (2011, p.191) point to the policy debate as regards retaining diversity without encouraging 'mission drift' and reconciling institutional ambition with tightening resources and the pursuit of excellence. Don Thornhill (2003), former chairman of the HEA, acknowledged 'concern with nomenclature and titles and a perception that there is not parity of esteem between the two sectors of higher education'. The OECD (2004, p. 37) was supportive of the need to retain a

'differentiated tertiary education system' and said 'steps [should be taken] to integrate the components better than…at present.' However, it argued that 'for the foreseeable future there [should] be no further institutional transfers into the university sector'.

Taking an opposing stance, Skilbeck (2003, p.12) questioned whether providing more advanced programmes to increase the proportion of enrolments in higher education did represent 'mission drift in a negative sense' as distinct from responding to 'individual demands for advanced qualifications' and societal 'demands for higher levels of competence and knowledge'. Coolahan foresaw that such developments were likely to 'see more pressure from the extra-university sector for greater status within the higher education system…confirming the desire to move towards a more open, even-structured higher education system' (2003, p. 18). His view was echoed by the Institutes of Technology in Ireland (IoTI), which anticipated that if the OECD's recommendation was implemented, 'the impact would be to initiate a drift towards convergence and to incentivise perversely that which the report least desires' (Coy, 2005, p.10).

Impact of Austerity on Irish Higher Education

The 2008 economic crash precipitated major changes in Irish higher education. In particular, the economic crisis impacted severely on the funding and resources allocated to HE which heretofore was funded mainly from public funds. This radically changed the policies and landscape of Irish higher education. In 2007, the Government imposed an Employment Framework which prevented institutions from recruiting staff on a permanent basis, thus staff that retired or left the sector were not replaced. This put enormous strain on the system and the morale of the staff. With student numbers increasing in parallel with falling staff numbers, the overall student to staff ratio increased from 1:1.156 in 2007/08 to 1:1.206 in 2016/17 (HEA, 2016a, p.85).

Fleming et al. (2017) have summarised the effect of the economic downturn as follows:

> The economic collapse…has impacted heavily on support of H.E. There has been a 19 percent drop in the recruitment drop in staff numbers from 2008 to 2012…These cuts are in contrast to an increase in student numbers by more than 31,000 from 2008 to 2014. Reductions in staff numbers and an increase in the number of staff …who are employed on temporary or insecure contracts compounds the problem of staff/student ratios. (p. 34)

With the reduction of funding from the public purse and government policy, the HE sector was forced to seek alternate modes of funding. The key areas from which revenue was sourced were: research, fee paying international students and fee paying part-time students. This has resulted in the greater commodification of higher education. Lynch et al. (2012, p.12) argue that this reflects international trends where 'selling education as a commodity is now a key component of the service economy'.

The IoT sector and in particular, the case institute, proved particularly nimble in sourcing funding from fee paying international and part–time students. Fee paying international students represented 5% of the 2013/14 student cohort (HEA, 2106a. p. 85) and part-time enrolments (also fee paying) represented (2015/16) 22% of total enrolments. All three areas, though fee producing, have brought additional challenges to the Institutes.

Traditionally, research was not a major source of funding for the IoT's. However, there is an increased emphasis in the sector on research. This is evidenced by a doubling of staffing in the area over the period 2011 to 2015 albeit from a small base. Allied to this there has been an emphasis on increasing the level of qualifications to Level 10 (doctoral level) for academic staff through a combination of recruitment and upskilling of existing staff. A key challenge in relation to improving the research profile is the difficulty of motivating staff to undertake the extra workload of doing Level 10 qualifications and carry a research workload in addition to an already heavy teaching load (17-19 hours per week).

With regard to the increased importance of international students, there are challenges in relation to acculturation, language and extra tutorial supports. Part-time students require flexible delivery, which necessitates the implementation of robust quality assurance systems in order to ensure that they achieve the same outcomes as their full-time counterparts. Their profile is often different, with many

part-time students having family, work and other commitments which have to be balanced with study.

National Strategy for Higher Education

During the economic downturn the government commissioned a highly influential report, 'National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' to review the sector (DES, 2011). The report, known as the Hunt Report[3], aimed to reorient higher education to serve the needs of the economy and was 'framed in the context of the objectives in the Government framework for the Smart Economy' (DES, 2011, p. 3).

As Walsh and Loxley (2014) have succinctly described it:

> (it) represents the latest and most assertive attempt by the Irish state to reconstruct higher education…is one of many in a long line of official reports and governmental initiatives, which promote a reorientation of HE to serve broadly utilitarian objectives … (and) reflect wider international trends and influences, mediated both through the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and European institutions. (p. 1128)

The report maps the future of Irish Higher Education (HE) over the next 13 years. It is linked specifically to the labour market requirements and the need to produce a supply of highly skilled graduates to meet the demands of the economy. Its key objectives reflect this emphasis and can be summarised as follows:

- Meeting the demands of the global economy, 'acknowledging the well-established human capital paradigm' (Walsh and Loxley, 2014, p. 1124). Widening access is mentioned but only as a mechanism for driving industry needs.
- Greater efficiency within the system, which reflected both a significant reform of governance structures and a rationalisation of the current institutions.

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[3] The National Strategy report is frequently referred to as the Hunt Report after its Chairperson, Dr. Colin Hunt. The Chair, appointed by the Minister of Education and Skills, comes from an industry background and emphasised the 'human capital' approach to higher education.

Mercille and Murphy (2017) argue that the Hunt Report was used as an opportunity to transform the Irish HE landscape during the economic crisis in order to bring neoliberal policies, or the policies of the market place into HE:

> The transformations began before the economic crisis of 2008 but have intensified since then. This corresponds to a deepening of neoliberal reforms in Ireland and globally during the last few years, as economic turbulence has been used as a pretext to further attack labor (sic), reduce government budgets and curtail the provision of social services….The Hunt Report…clearly outlines the state's plans for transforming higher education into the next two decades along the line of neoliberal values and principles. (p.384)

The impact of neo liberalism and new public management on higher education and the IoT sector will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The Hunt Report strongly supports diversity in the HE sector and in particular, for maintaining the distinction between existing universities and institutes of technology where 'each play different and complementary roles to meet the diverse need of students, society and the economy' (DES, 2011., p. 98). It summarises the benefits of a binary system as follows:

- It is better able to offer a spectrum of opportunities to meet different student needs and interests
- It is better able to meet dynamic needs of modern labour markets
- It can improve the effectiveness of institutions as they each concentrate on particular fields and accumulate quality and expertise in these fields
- It can enhance innovation by allowing individual institutions to experiment… unsuccessful experiments have only localised costs, while successful innovations can be rolled out across the system (DES, 2011, p. 98).

The Report states there is no case for any new university in Ireland on the basis set out in the Universities Act 1997 (Section 9). It recommended that:

> In the interests of retaining diversity any IoT in the interest of retaining a broad diversity of activity within the system and the efficient use of resources, no application to convert any institute of technology into a university should be considered. (DES, 2011, p. 101)

This has obvious implications for the IoTs aspiring to university status as well as the government agenda for the new entity, Technological University. The Hunt Report did, however, promote the restructuring and rationalisation of the IoT sector. Consequently, new governing bodies have been established in the intervening years (as described in later sections) and the Report emphasised a 'human capital' approach to higher education. Lynch et al. (2017, p. 13) described how:

> The focus on the human capital value of education… (was) married to a new education project focused on educating students for a market economy.

These values prompted proposals for the IoT sector that are far reaching in terms of the requirement to restructure the sector, encouraging amalgamations and mergers across the university and IoT sector in a cost-effective drive to close smaller institutes and establish larger educational 'centres of excellence'. Current policy favours retention of the binary system but it is envisaged that some merged IoTs will achieve the status of Technological Universities (TU) (Clancy, 2015a; DES, 2011). The TU status, within agreed parameters, is the carrot offered to encourage amalgamation between two or more existing entities. Some support the proposal and argue that, unfortunately, IoTs have struggled with their brand and identity with internal and external stakeholders. According to Hazelkorn and Moynihan (2011, p. 191): 'Evidence suggests that industry, philanthropists and students (domestic and international) tend to choose partnerships with universities rather than IoTs.'

Others disagree, arguing that it may damage the existing identity and reputation of the IoT sector, especially their regional and local identity amongst students, local industry and community partners (Clancy, 2015a). The proposal to restructure the HE sector has had two major consequences on the IoT sector. Firstly, a number of IoTs initiated negotiations with other IoTs to merge. In 2017, there are four such amalgamations at various stages of completion within the sector. The case institute is one of these amalgamations. Secondly, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been established in order to gain TU status including: increasing staff and students Level 10 qualifications. The case institute is in the process of negotiating with another institute and is being driven by these KPIs. It is assumed that the proposed mergers will lead to the elimination of duplication in academic programmes and

creation of centres of excellence, although there is little evidence to support this as of now. This policy context has created an impending sense of change and uncertainty in the sector and the case institute which impacts on the work of staff including HoDs, as revealed in the later findings and discussion chapters.

Governance and Structure of IoTs

Since their inception in 1971 as RTCs, the institutes were under the direct control of the Department of Education and Science via the local Vocational Education Committee (VEC). The VECs were originally created by the Vocational Act (1930) in each county to administer continuing and technical education to 14-16 year-olds. Each VEC was elected and consisted of councillors and nominated members of interested parties. Over time their remit was increased to include post-primary education, further and adult education (and the RTC sector until the mid -1990's). Through its regional remit, the VEC is one of the largest and most influential of the educational management bodies in the state.

Whereas the IoT sector was firmly established under the control of the Department of Education (though the VECs), the university sector was given greater autonomy as defined by the Universities Act 1997. The universities were given autonomy to govern their own affairs within the traditional principles of academic freedom with indirect governance by the HEA. Freedom of academic staff in their teaching, research and other activities was confirmed, while at the same time the presidents were given chief executive powers (Clancy, 2015a; Lynch et al, 2017). As Walsh (2014b) stated:

> The Act recognised institutional autonomy within a framework of enhanced accountability and implicit responsiveness to national priorities (p. 45).

With growing discontent over the lack of control and autonomy as compared with the university sector, plus the growth of student numbers in the RTC's, there was a need to review the RTC organisational structure (Walsh, 2014b, p. 36). The RTC Act (1992) established the RTCs on a statutory basis and created self-governing structures for the colleges in line with the university sector. A new layer of senior management was introduced with the registrar, secretary /financial controller and

development reporting directly to the Director (later President) of the institutes. However, the Department of Education retained substantial powers and control over the RTCs (Walsh, 2014b, p. 36).

The overall mission of IoTs did not change and the 1992 Act Section 5 enshrined their role as providing: 'vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial social and cultural developments of the state'. It is very clear from this section of the Act that the Minister of Education (and Skills) had direct power over the RTC sector, such as the nature of the research consultancy and development work (Subsection C), the right to acquire land (Subsection I). The Minister also had the power in subsection 2a to attach other functions to the RTCs as considered necessary. Indeed, the Act is very much a functional one in that it prescribes the roles and duties of the Governing Body, the links with the VECs and so on. Nowhere in the Act was academic freedom mentioned unlike the Universities Act. Such autonomy as was given was in relation to the annual funding allocated by the Minister and this was subject to scrutiny. It was not until the Institute of Technology Act 2006, (Section 7) that the concept of academic freedom was enshrined in the statute books. The RTC sector was seen as a key plank in developing and providing courses relevant to the needs of industry and as such established two new RTCs in the Dublin region, Blanchardstown (1999), and Tallaght (1992).

Further legislative changes saw the replacement of the National Council of Educational Awards (NCEA) by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) in 1999 and the creation of the national Quality Assurance and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in 2012. In line with European guidelines, this led to the establishment of a National Framework of Awards. The IoTs came under the aegis of HETAC but over a period of time were granted autonomy to award their own qualifications up to degree, Master and Doctorate level, as appropriate.

In 1998, all RTCs were re-designated as Institutes of Technology (IoT). Hazelkorn and Moynihan (2011, p. 177) argue this occurred in somewhat controversial circumstances:

Officially in recognition of their (RTC's) university-level teaching and research but unofficially because the nomenclature of 'institute of technology' was perceived as having higher status; similarly, permission was given in 2007 to rename the 'Director' as 'President'.

Subsequently in 2006, the IoTs came under the remit of the HEA, which assumed responsibility for the allocation of funding to the sector. However, as Walsh (2014b, p. 47) highlights:

The Minister retained much greater powers over the technological colleges than the universities: the governing authorities were required to comply with 'policy directions as may be issued by the minister from time to time', including directions regarding the level and range of their academic programmes…Moreover the governing authorities were also explicitly required to ensure that the colleges contributed to 'the promotion of the economic, cultural and social development of the State', as well as having regard to a range of other official objectives, including equality of access and promotion of the Irish language.

Role of Higher Education Authority (HEA)

The HEA is the state authority which ensures that the HE sector complies with government policy and is responsible for allocating funding. As Figure 2.1 below indicates there is a clear reporting line from the state via the HEA to the HEIs through strategic dialogues with the individual HEIs to agree performance compacts. The HEA also exhorts HEIs on the one hand, to increase the standards of education provision, while at the same time looking at methods of increasing efficiency (DES, 2011).

Flow diagram with three downward-pointing chevrons on the left and bullet point boxes on the right:

Minister for Education and Skills
- Sets national objectives for the higher education sector through national strategy, periodic reviews and development

Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- Advises on national goals
- Allocates performance funding
- Evaluates HEIs' plans and agrees compacts with HEIs
- Responsible for coherent system outputs that meet national objectives

HEIs
- Reflect national objectives in their institutional plans
- Are part of a regional cluster and reflect its objectives in their institutional plans
- Amend plans based on dialogue meetings with HEA
- Implement and are accountable for institutional plans

Source: Adapted from HEA (2013)

Figure 2. 1 Division of responsibilities in the strategic dialogue process

In an article in the Irish Times (2016), the CEO of the HEA, Tom Boland outlined how the HEA monitors HEIs in line with Government expectations through performance compacts and agreements with each HEI. He stated that 'these agreements provided metrics to assess performance'. He continued 'three institutions, who did not meet the agreed performance level, now face a potential funding penalty' and that there must 'be a strategy to address any deficiencies.' Throughout the article, the emphasis is on performance and metrics; the words 'education' or 'students' were not mentioned. This demonstrates the type of performance measurements which are now evident in the Irish higher sector. In effect, according to Lynch (2011), Irish HEIs have adopted an 'audit culture' in which 'quality assurance', 'performance appraisals' and 'benchmarking' are part of their reformed governance. Such reforms have led to fundamental changes including intensification of government control over higher education; commercialisation of institutions; and the introduction of the Performance Based Indicators. As Lynch et al. (2012, p. 140) explain 'the values of new managerialism were strongly endorsed

in HE'. The impact of managerialism on Irish higher education will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Organisation Structure of the Case Institute

The organisation structure of the case institute is outlined in Figures 2.2 and 2.3 below which show the changes in the structure from 1990 prior to the RTC Act (1992) to December 2016. The structural adjustments and additions are the consequence of the legislative and policy changes discussed above.
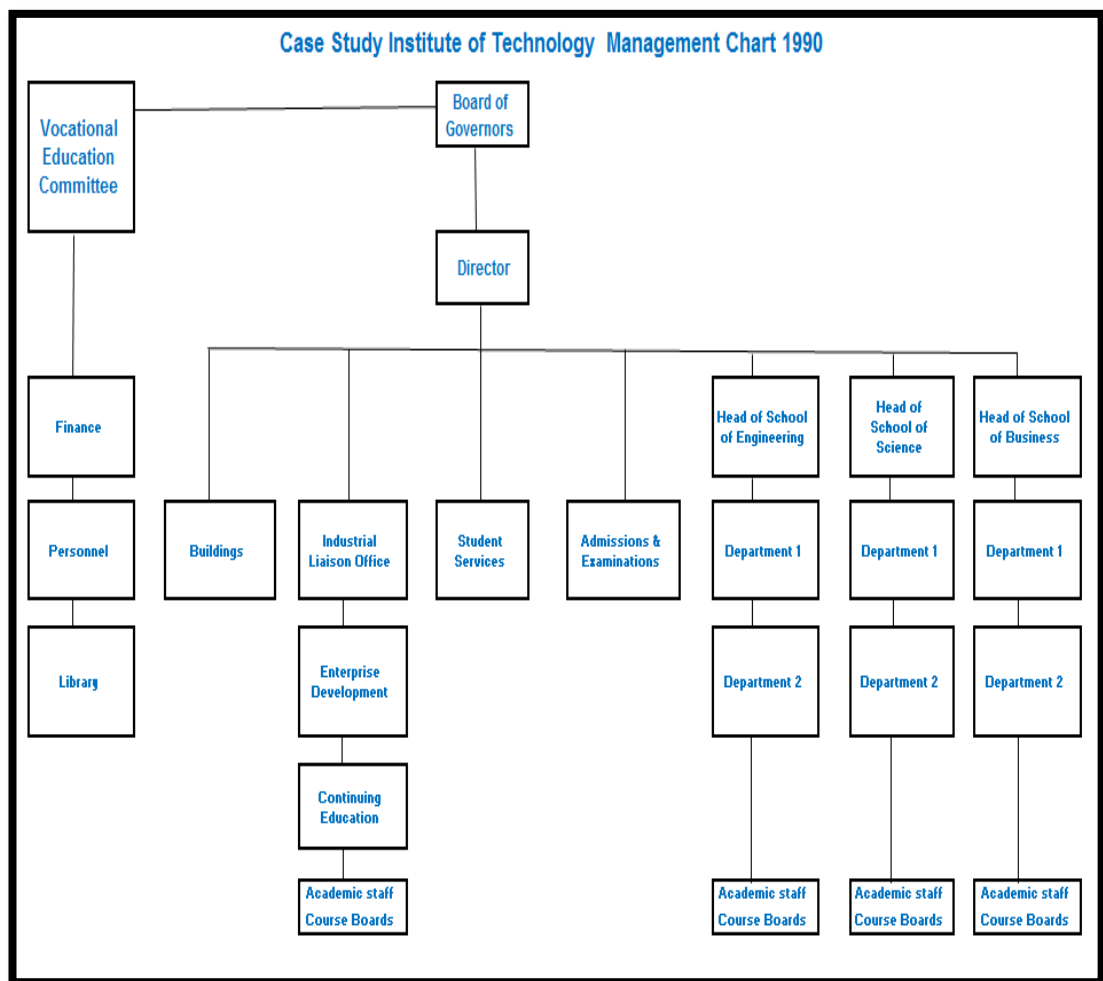
Figure 2. 2 Organisation Chart Case Institute 1990

Case Study Institute of Technology Management Chart 2016

Governing Body

Senior Executive
President
Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar
Vice President for Corporate Affairs   Vice President for Development & Research
Heads of Faculty
Head of Outreach Campus

PRESIDENT

Academic Council

Committees of Academic Council

Programme Research Boards

Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar — **Assistant Registrar** — **Academic Council & Committee Administration** — **Quality Assurance & Collaborations** — **Academic Administration Admissions & Examinations** — **Library** — **Centre for Teaching & Learning** — **Student Services**

Vice President for Corporate Affairs — **Governing Body & Committee Administration** — **Computing Services** — **Finance** — **Estates** — **Human Resources** — **Sports & Recreation**

Vice President for Development and Research — **External Services** — **Enterprise Development** — **Postgraduate Studies** — **International Affairs EU & Non EU** — **Communications**

Head of Faculty of Lifelong Learning — **Location 1** — **Location 2** — **Location 3** — **Collaborative Partnerships**

Head of Faculty of Engineering — **Department 1** — **Department 2**

Head of Faculty of Science — **Department 1** — **Department 2**

Head of Faculty of Business & Humanities — **Department 1** — **Department 2** — **Department 3**

Head of Outreach Campus — **Deputy Head of Outreach Campus**

Academic & Admin Staff

Programme Boards

Figure 2. 3 Organisation Chart Case Institute 2017

A comparison of Figures 2.2 and 2.3 shows how radically the IoT has been transformed over the last quarter of a century. As can be seen from Figure 2.2, the VEC managed all non-academic matters and the Director (later President) dealt with academic matters and liaised with the VEC on non-academic affairs. This chart shows the overriding importance attached to academic matters within the RTC where the academic voice had a central position in the organisation.

Twenty–five years later, a dramatic change has occurred. The Board of Governors has been replaced by the Governing Body and the Director is now President with more executive powers. The VEC's role has been appropriated by a new cohort of senior managers and there is now in place an Academic Council. The increased

importance of research is reflected in its position in Figure 2.3, whereas there was no mention of research in the 1990 Organisation Chart. With the growth in part-time students, a separate faculty Lifelong Learning was created to cater for this area in the case institute. This is usually managed through the academic faculties in other IoTs. What is notable is that although student numbers and academic staff numbers have increased exponentially in the 25 years, the school/faculty structure has changed minimally. Only one extra academic department has been added to the existing structure.

The foregoing charts clearly show that there has been an exponential growth, from 1990 to 2017, in the number of professional managers appointed to the case institute. This represents the rise in managerialism that has occurred in the IoT sector since the RTC Act (1992) and is consistent with international experience. The organisation charts highlight the layers of bureaucracy that have developed outside the academic departments where there has been minimal change. According to Lynch et al. (2012, p.21) over the last 10 years there has been a move from 'an academic focus to an operational focus within Irish higher education'. What is not mapped within these charts is the broader policy and other stakeholders who influence the governance of the organisation. This is discussed in the later findings chapters, particularly Chapters 8 and 10.

Role of Head of Department

Although technically an academic post, the HoD contract is a hybrid mixture of teaching, research, leadership and management. The duties are reflected in Section 5 of the HoD job description (see Appendix 5). The HoD reports through the HoS to the President. S/he must cover all aspects of directing and managing the academic programmes within the department. The HoD has a key role in the development and implementation of quality assurance and must provide academic and strategic leadership to the department. There are also teaching duties required. However, the role as experienced by HoDs and described in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, is somewhat different. Within the role there is a strong emphasis on implementation rather than development of strategy. The operational, time consuming day to day management

of the department takes place at the expense of the leadership aspect of the role. The study shows that although reporting to their HoS, the HoD has many masters.

Personal Experience

As a member of the case institute for almost 28 years, 10 as a lecturer and 18 as a HoD, I have witnessed major changes in the system. When I joined in 1989, the institute was a Regional Technical College with 1,200 students approximately and no part-time students. There were no undergraduate degrees (Level 8), the highest award was an NCEA validated diploma (Level 7). In the 2016/17 academic year 7,200 students registered, 3,939 Level 8 students and 493 postgraduate students and the IoT can award qualifications up to Level 10. In 1989 there were no international students or part-time students. In 2016/17 there were 253 non-EU international students and 4,660 mature students of whom 2,100 are on full time programmes.

A new governance and management structure has been established over the last twenty years and the role of both lecturer and HoD has been diminished. The case institute has become more bureaucratic and more subject to external and internal surveillance through continual reviews and audits. Within the case institute the Senior Management teams appear to have gained a greater degree of power since their inception in the early 1990's. Although the Heads of School form part of the Senior Management Team (SM), the perception is that there are two layers within this team, the key layer excluding the HoSs. This has led to a lack of an academic voice at the key decision making body. The emphasis on increasing the professional services, particularly at management level, rather than strengthening the academic management of the schools is indicative of this. The organisation charts above give clear evidence of this.

Two key consequences of this have been the privileging of research over teaching and the pervading role of finance over everything. These changes are discussed in more detail later in the findings chapters. As Lynch et al. (2012, p. 106) point out, there has been:

A sea change of the discourses and practices governing the management of institutions that traditionally had a public sector remit – efficiency, accountability, competition and measurable outcomes that ultimately demonstrate value for money.

Also, as indicated above, the addition of professional managers has by sheer numbers reduced the previous academic power base that existed within the previous HE system.

The workload has increased and there is little time, if any, for reflection on the role. As the autonomy in the role of HoD reduces, it seems to become more difficult to manage and lead the department under one's care.

Conclusion

This chapter has tracked the development of the IoTs following the recommendations of the OECD Report, *Investment in Education* (1965) and the *Steering Committee on Technical Education* (1966). This development reflected a change in government policy which began to view education as a key driver for economic growth and technological development. It also marked the move from an elite to a mass system of higher education in Ireland. The establishment of the RTC sector created a binary system in Irish HE. The new institutes had a different mission, reporting structures and academic programmes than the university sector. The RTCs provided vocational, technical and applied education preparing students for employment in industry.

With the implementation of the RTC Act (1992), RTCs gradually achieved more autonomy in academic and corporate affairs. RTCs became IoTs and although still tightly controlled by the Department of Education, they were able to award their own degrees and manage their own finances.

With the economic crash in 2008, closely followed by the Hunt Report (2011), Government funding was reduced impacting on staffing levels and financial resources for the sector. This, allied with an increasing number of students attending HE, put enormous strains on the HE system. There was an increasing need to look at

other funding mechanisms through research, internationalisation and fee-paying part-time students. The IoT sector responded positively to this.

The review of higher education, the Hunt Report, proposed a major rationalisation of the HE system, leading to mergers and the forming of a new entity the Technological University (TU). Hence a number of IoTs (including the case institute) entered into negotiations with other institutions. The criteria for TU status has led to an emphasis on increasing student numbers, research and augmenting staff qualifications to PhD level.

In recent years I have also witnessed the growth of a managerialism culture within the case institute and the sector. This is reflected in the privileging of efficiencies over education and the privileging of research over teaching within higher education. The changes in the reporting structure, as illustrated in Figures 2.2 and 2.3 also indicate the increasing privileging of professional services over academic affairs.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As outlined in the opening chapter, this study aims to investigate the role of a Head of Department (HoD) as evidenced in their lived experiences in a selected third level Institute of Technology (IoT) in Ireland. The main research questions for the thesis are:

1. How do Heads of Departments experience their role and in particular how do they make sense of their leadership and management of an academic department?

2. How do institutional, socio–cultural and political contexts and discourses, where these HODs are located, shape their sense-making about their role?

This chapter critically examines the research literature that links to the research questions and grounds the study. The literature included in this review focuses on the dominant discourses within higher education in three key areas. Firstly, in order to understand how HoDs construct their role, it is necessary to conceptualise the context of higher education and the changing socio–political context within which HEIs currently operate and specifically the IoT sector. The analysis is located within the theoretical framework of governmentality and concentrates on the emergence of neo-liberalism as a historically specific set of economic, cultural and societal discourses and practices. This reflects Foucault's use of the term governmentality to mean the art of government and to signal the historical emergence of distinctive types of rule (Foucault, 1978). Secondly to comprehend the leadership and management role of HoDs it is essential to analyse the literature on leadership and management in higher education with particular reference to roles, structures and power. Finally, I explore recent research on academic middle–managers in higher education and consider the implications of this research for the study.

The research articles, studies, essays and reports reviewed often deal with more than one of these areas in the same text. The review is primarily focused on the late postmodern period (approximately 1990 to 2017). Though not intended to be exhaustive, the review attempts to incorporate many of the more commonly cited works and themes for each conceptual area with specific emphasis on the implications for middle management in higher education.

This review is organised by conceptual area even though many researchers did not typically explore the changing context of HE, leadership and management and role of HoD (in higher education) independently. Many of the researchers focused on the relationships between conceptual areas. This focus on relationships helped guide the methodology used in this study as will be outlined in Chapter 4.

Changing Context of Higher Education

Contemporary literature on higher education emphasises discourses of inordinate change, nationally and internationally. Common discourses include references to the massification and commodification of higher education, economic imperatives, globalisation, decreased state funding, increased competition and the pursuit of greater efficiency and accountability (Barnett, 2016; Black, 2015; Bolden et al., 2015; Deem, 2008; DES, 2011; Marginson, 2006; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rizvi, 2011; Scott et al, 2008;). While change is not new to higher education institutions (HEIs), what sets the current era apart from previous periods of change is its scale and complexity (Barnett, 2016; Dowling-Hetherington, 2014).

HEIs are operating in a far less secure environment than heretofore (Pausits & Pellert, 2009). The very purposes of higher education have undergone public and political scrutiny (Deem et al., 2000, 2008; Rowland, 2006) for various reasons from questioning the role of the university (Barnett, 2005; Qualter & Willis, 2012) to the effects of globalisation and technology (Ritzvi, 2017; Skilbeck, 2001) and arguing about whether higher education is key to economic growth (Bolden et al. 2012; DES, 2011; Marginson & Considine, 2000).

The history of higher education shows that it has varied in its purposes and institutional shape over time, in particular between the university and institute of technology sectors in Ireland (as outlined in the previous chapter). However, despite these different forms within the sector, HEIs have always embodied 'communities of scholars' who worked to defend their academic freedom (Hamlyn, 1996). This is expressed in the seminal work published in 1852 by Cardinal Newman 'The Idea of a University' which questions the purpose and role of a university. He concluded that the purpose of the university is to provide liberal education:

> To open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to know, and to digest, master, rule, and use its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, resource, address, eloquent expression, is an object as intelligible (for here we are inquiring, not what the object of a Liberal Education is worth, nor what use the Church makes of it, but what it is in itself. (Newman 1852, p. 122−123)

He went on to say with reference to the University sector:

> ...a University, taken in its bare idea, ….has this object and this mission; it contemplates neither moral impression nor mechanical production; it professes to exercise the mind neither in art nor in duty; its function is intellectual culture; …It educates the intellect to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth, and to grasp it. (Newman 1852, p. 122−123)

Independence of intellectual thought and culture and pursuit of knowledge is thus viewed as a defining feature of higher education, enabling scholars to pursue research and teaching outside the control of powerful interest groups. While the institutional histories of universities and institutes of technology have differed in an Irish context (as outlined earlier), they can be mapped in the same historical way. Figure 3.1 below captures the historical phases of Western higher education from Plato to current times (acknowledging that these are not discrete phases with overlaps and cross-fertilisation between them).

The **Platonic** phase: focus on knowledge, scepticism and critical thinking in an Academy, and the attainment of freedom and independence through critical inquiry

The **Medieval** phase: a broadening of participation, emphasis on joint learning between scholar and student, institutional independence and the awarding of degrees. It was also characterised by an emphasis on the educational process as valuable in and of itself

The **Newman** phase: focus on knowledge for its own end, where higher education emphasised reason and reflection and thus contributed to the formation of individuals and provided an emancipatory and liberal education (for an elite)

The **Counter-course/culture phase:** rejected notions of higher education formed up to the 1960s as ideologically driven. Such institutions were viewed not as the neutral bastion of knowledge that they purported to be but as promoting the advance of a modern technological (and capitalist) society (for growing numbers)

The **Neoliberal** phase: the notion of higher education as set out in earlier phases is replaced by one which emphasises management, resource allocation, performance indicators and demonstrating clearly the contribution the institutions make to the economy by way of student throughput to the labour market with specific sets of skills (massification)

Adapted from Barnett (1990, 2004, 2016) and Hamlyn (1996)

Figure 3. 1 Historical phases of higher education

Newman's notions of higher education as a protected space for scholarship with 'images of ivory towers have long since been rendered obsolete' (Anderson, 2006, p. 579). Many indeed, believe that higher education including the university is in 'crisis'. Some even believe that the university is 'in ruins' (Readings, 1996). In the United States, (Gumport, 2000), drawing on an extensive set of case studies, goes so far as to suggest that we are at a defining moment in the history of higher education. Similarly, Barnett (2004) in the UK questions the identity of universities in an 'age of super-complexity':

> Is the university to be a site of democratic rights, of societal enlightenment, of knowledge production for a technological society, of inculcating skills for the workplace, of personal transformation or of critical analysis? Is it to get by through its own wits, transforming itself to take on the image of any client or state agency that comes its way or is it to maintain some kind of allegiance to a sense of enduring entity? Are its internal processes to be characterised by tight managerial disciplines that enable it to live 'in the real world' or is it to forge, within itself, a kind of organic community? (p. 70)

Barnett is juxtaposing the purposes of HE to pursue knowledge and liberal education against the alternative of meeting market needs. He appears to be suggesting that these alternatives may not be mutually exclusive and proposes finding a way to a new kind of status quo that allows traditional academic values to thrive in 'the real world'. While more recently others argue that the current system of higher education is untenable and will be swept away unless bold and radical steps are taken:

> The next 50 years could see a golden age for higher education, but only if all the players in the system, from students to governments, seize the initiative and act ambitiously. If not, an avalanche of change will sweep the system away. Deep, radical and urgent transformation is required in higher education. The biggest risk is that as a result of complacency, caution or anxiety the pace of change is too slow and the nature of change is too incremental. The models of higher education that marched triumphantly across the globe in the second half of the 20th century are broken. (Barber, Donnelly and Rizvi 2013, p.5)

Neoliberalism Discourse

In tandem with the aforementioned changes, it is argued that the emergence of neoliberalism ideology underpins much of the current discourse of higher education (Ball, 2012; Giroux, 2005; Grummell & Lynch, 2016; Mercille & Murphy, 2015; Turner, 2008). The following section explores the notion of neoliberalism. Although often used interchangeably with the term globalisation and regarded as an economic theory, neoliberalism is a complex set of values, ideologies and practices that affect the economic, political and cultural aspects of society. Harvey (2005) defined neoliberalism as:

> A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the State is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate for such practices....State

intervention in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum….
(2005, p. 2)

The central tenets of neoliberal ideology include assumptions of the individual citizen as self-interested, a commitment to laissez-faire economics, and a valorisation of free trade and the market (Chomsky 1999, Harvey, 2005, 2006; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Ritzi, 2017; Steger & Roy, 2010; Turner, 2007). Apple (1996, p. 94) contends that neoliberalism has a 'vision of the weak state' where society lets the 'invisible hand' of the free market guide all aspects of its interaction. Lynch (2014) concurs that neoliberalism assumes that the market is the primary producer of cultural logic and value:

> …solutions to societal ills, and the management of social change, can be best understood through the deployment of market logic and market mechanisms. (p. 4)

Within the neoliberal form of government, the concept of the citizen is thus transformed. Lynch argues that, fundamentally, neoliberalism is predicated on the premise that the citizen's relationship to the state and others is 'mediated via the market' (2015, p. 193). This point has been elaborated by Giroux (2002; 2005) who has written extensively about the negative impact neoliberalism has on citizens and, in particular, the provision of public services. He concludes that:

> Under neoliberalism, politics are market driven, democratic citizenship subordinated to market values,….there is an absence of questioning, with the market an arbiter of social destiny. Neoliberalism empties public treasury,…hollows out public services and limits the vocabulary…It leads to managerial control, fashioning compliant workers, depoliticised consumers and passive citizens. (Giroux et al., 2005, p. 428)

Other authors concur that the most significant shift, wrought by the emergence of neo-liberalism, is the profound disengagement of government from the social or public domain, and its emphasis on privatisation (Ball, 2012; Collini, 2012; Davis et al., 2006; Grummell & Lynch, 2016; Mercille and Murphy, 2015). The responsibility for welfare, health, education, housing and so on, is separated from the public sphere and attached to the domain of the market and private enterprise.

Harvey (2006, p. 145) contends that neoliberalism has 'swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment'. Neoliberalism has thus become a hegemonic discourse with pervasive effects on ways of thought and political, economic and social practices to the point where it is now part of the 'common sense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world' (Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 27). Davis and Bansel (2007, p. 251) suggest that one of the 'calculated tactics of power' through which neoliberal forms of governability have been established without drawing either analysis or resistance has been 'piecemeal functionalism, a tactic in which 'functional' components are … adopted in a more or less piecemeal fashion, lessening the chance people will grasp the overall scheme and organise resistance' (2007, p. 251). Piecemeal functionalism operates, partly, through constructing the illusion that each institution creates the processes for itself, voluntarily adopting neoliberal strategies in the interests of vying for increasingly scarce government funding as well as competing in local and global markets (Davis & Brunel, 2007, p. 252). Others argue that neoliberal ideas take root through a homogenised popular culture and centralised control of public pedagogic spaces (Giroux, 2014, 2015). Fitzsimons (2017, p. 10) contends that these are powerful mechanisms in determining 'whose voices are heard, what counts as representation, what behaviours are considered normal, and, conversely, what is thought of as subversive.' Giroux (2015) goes so far as to argue that education systems themselves have been a significant domain for consensual adoption of neoliberal logic as common sense.

Ireland has not been exempt from the global influences of neoliberalism. Indeed, it has been described as a 'prototypical neoliberal state' (Allen, 2007, p. 62), evident in its political- economic development since the 1970s. The country has been characterised by a relatively low level of government expenditure on public services, light regulation of the financial system, a large dependence on foreign capital and flexible labour markets (Allen & Boyle, 2013; Fitzsimons, 2017; Fraser et al., 2013; Mercille & Murphy, 2015; Power et al., 2013).

Fitzsimons (2017) argues that Ireland's neoliberalism was largely influenced by a Celtic Tiger economic growth period of the 1990s, a time during which there was

rapid expansion of the higher education sector. During this time, another key factor in the development of Irish neoliberalism was 'the Trojan horse of corporatist social partnership' (Fitzsimons, 2017, p. 12). Ireland's model of social partnership involved the State, trade unions, and employer and farmer organisations agreeing social and economic policies for blocks of time. Allen (2000, p. 14) demonstrates how the first social partnership agreement in 1987 introduced three key features of neoliberalism, namely: cuts in public spending; tax breaks for private enterprise; curbing of trade union activity and power including the teacher unions in the IoT sector. It also facilitated the introduction of casualisation of teaching staff through new temporary employment contracts.

Mercille and Murphy (2015, p. 2) argue that the shift to neoliberalism in Ireland was accelerated by the global economic downturn in 2008 and the subsequent economic crash that 'facilitated the transformation of Irish higher education along neoliberal lines' (Mercille & Murphy, 2015, p. 2). This process corresponds to a general observation that throughout the history of neoliberalism, crises, real or constructed, have been used as opportune moments to roll out further rounds of regulatory restructuring (Brenner et al., 2010).

Neoliberal Discourse and Higher Education

So, how has the neoliberal discourse impacted on higher education? Perhaps most consequentially, the literature highlights how neoliberalism has spawned a demand for the purposes of education to be recast in largely economic terms (Ball, 2012; Clancy, 2015; Davies et al. 2006; Grummell & Lynch, 2016; Lynch, 2014; Olssen & Peters; 2005; Walton, 2011). Neoliberalism proposes that education be directed to meet the requirements of the global economy (Ball, 2012; Davies et al., 2006; Giroux, 2005; Harvey, 2006). Around the world, this instrumental view of education is now promoted robustly by most international organisations and national governments alike (OECD, 2015). This approach is almost universally informed by a shift from social democratic to neoliberal assumptions (Ball, 2008). As Apple (1996) contends the very purpose of education is transformed:

> No longer is education seen as part of an alliance which combined many
> minority groups….who acted together to propose (limited) social democratic
> policies for schools. (p. 92)

Hence, the emancipatory and liberal concerns of education are either side lined or else rendered secondary. Lynch notes: 'the discourse around education changed from one focused on rights and needs to one focused on markets and choices' (2015, p. 192). Accordingly, educational systems are now under enormous pressure, not only to increase the amount of formal education young people receive, but also to align education to the requirements of the global economy and to develop 'human capital' (Ball et al, 2010; Marginson &Van der Wande, 2007; Ritzi, 2017).

Human capital theory suggests that in a global economy, economic performance is aligned to the workforce; people's knowledge resources, skill levels, learning capabilities and cultural adaptability. It, therefore, encourages policies that enhance labour flexibility, not only through the deregulation of the market, but also through reforms to systems of education and training, designed to align them to the demands of a changing economy (Clancy, 2015a; Lynch, 2015; Schultz, 1961). Education not only increases personal incomes –since it can explain occupational wage differentials– but can also contribute to national productivity (OECD, 2016):

> From an aggregate perspective, a well-educated workforce is also crucial for
> raising productivity, ensuring resiliency and adaptability to the changing needs
> of the labour market but also for making use of innovation. Both the capacity
> to generate and absorb innovation are affected by the quality of the human
> capital, which in turn is often enhanced by the education levels of the
> workforce. (p. 8)

This human capital perspective on educational purposes expanded to a broader emphasis on the notion of the 'knowledge economy'. Shore and Wright (2017) propose that governments everywhere are now seeking to harness university research in order to promote technological innovation, growth and national competitiveness. One effect of this is a fundamental shift in the discourse of what counts as knowledge. As Lyotard (1994) noted in his essay on 'The Postmodern Condition', knowledge has increasingly replaced raw materials and cheap labour as the core trading commodity in the struggle for power between nation states:

The question (overt or implied) now asked by the professionalist student, the State, or institutions of higher education is no longer 'is it true'? But 'what use is it?' ... This creates the prospect for a vast market for competence in operational skills. (p. 51)

The idea of the HEI as a place of advanced learning and critical thinking or of higher education as a 'public good' has been replaced by the narrower instrumental view of higher education knowledge as a personal investment and form of training (Lynch et al., 2015; Shore & Wright, 2017). Within this knowledge-economy paradigm, heightened individualism (which marks neoliberal systems) is registered in terms of individual freedoms, of autonomy and choice (Foucault, 1977, p. 193). Hence students have been recast as 'rational, self-interested, choosers and consumers' while education itself is increasingly being re-conceptualised 'as a commodity: something to be sold, traded and consumed' (Roberts, 2007, p. 350). The customer-supplier metaphor has been challenged by Qualter and Lillis (2012) as valueless in supporting the education of students:

The notion of the customer – supplier relationship undermines the much more complex and productive relationships where students are viewed as contributing to their own education, as 'members of a "community" of learners and knowers' in which staff challenge their thinking, encourage them to engage with new ideas and ultimately judge them on achieving the goals set for them. (p. 123)

Hurley (2014) and Lynch (2012) trace the shift in Irish discourses from human capital to neoliberal notions where the 'student is defined as an economic maximiser, governed by self-interest' (p.96). Limond (2007, p. 170) goes so far as to suggest that neoliberalism values education only as preparation for work in order to facilitate human consumption.

In summary, the literature reviewed highlights that neoliberal discourse has resulted in privileging a particular way of conceptualising the purposes of higher education around the valorisation of the market and the economy. A major consequence of such an approach has been to undermine the link that education has traditionally had with the notion of public services – that is, services that are common to all people as part of a collective societal endeavour, that emphasise a participatory process in

defining them, while taking into account a diversity of contexts, concepts of well-being and need (Barnett, 2016; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Lynch, 2015; Ritzi, 2017).

The neoliberal discourse suggests that education now needs to produce different kinds of subjects who are better able to work creatively with knowledge; who are flexible, adaptable and mobile; who are globally minded and inter-culturally confident and who are lifelong learners (Ball, 2016). What this discourse implies is that education does not have any intrinsic value as such, but must always be linked to the instrumental purposes of human capital development and economic growth. Rizvi (2017, p. 10) argues that as a result 'education's moral and social ameliorative role has been compromised'. This does not mean that ethical and cultural concerns are no longer relevant to education, but that these concerns are aligned to the broader framework of education's economic ends (Barnett, 2016; Turner, 2011). However, as Bourdieu reminds us, an economic view of education fails to examine the role of education in terms of cultural capital and its impact on the reproduction of the social structure (2004, p. 17).

Irish Higher Education and Neoliberalism

Ireland continues to be strongly shaped by the neoliberal discourse on education, as the sector has become increasingly important in the context of the economic recovery of the country (Finnegan, 2008; Gallagher, 2012; Garvin, 2012; Holborow, 2012; Lynch et al., 2012; Mercille & Murphy, 2015). This is not to say that Irish higher education before neoliberalism was progressive and non-elitist; rather, it is to describe and analyse the transformations that have occurred in recent years under neoliberalism.

There is now an identifiable discourse within Irish higher education that fuses neoliberal ideology and educational policy. According to Lynch, neoliberalism dominates policy discourse in Ireland today and marks a shift in government policy where 'Irish education has moved from being a state governed by theocratic principles to one governed by market principles' (2015, p. 190). From the late 1960s, Irish education policy began to move away from the Newman model of educating 'good members of society' (Collini, 2012, p. 46; Walsh, 2014a) that had

guided universities since the foundation of the state (Holborow, 2015). The discourse of Catholic-inspired liberalism in the National University of Ireland's constituent colleges was replaced by globalisation and collaboration with industry, firstly, through human capital and more recently, neoliberal discourses. As outlined earlier, the establishment of the Institute of Technology sector in 1972 can be viewed as contributing to this goal by providing technical education for employment in science, engineering and business areas at the heart of human capital approaches.

The transformation of Irish higher education since the 1970's, has been characterised by 'more systematic intervention by the state', including 'greater monitoring of institutional activity and sustained official pressure … to pursue explicitly economic functions' (Walsh, 2014b, p. 33). The state intervention extended to not only influencing the system structures and relationships but also the type of programmes offered. Government determination to promote expansion in targeted disciplines was underlined by an agreement in 1990 with HEIs to provide 3,600 places in electronics, technology and business studies (O'Buchalla, 1992, p. 70). Grummell and Lynch. (2016, p. 219) questioned the implications of these underlying ideologies whereby:

> This move to make education into a marketable commodity has had profound implications for the purposes of education in terms of what is taught (and not taught) who is taught and what types of subjectivities are developed in schools and colleges. (p. 219)

Neoliberal education reforms in Ireland have been influenced significantly by European and global institutions, in particular, the EU and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Lynch, 2015; Sellar & Linguard, 2013;). Ireland has borrowed policy ideas from abroad in order to shape its own education system as can be seen, firstly, in the rise of human capital approaches between the 1960s and 1980s (Hurley, 2014), and more recently in Ireland's *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011). This not only occurred at policy level but crucially, as Mercille and Murphy (2015, p. 5) argue 'Irish officials and institutions have actively transformed the education system by following their own (neoliberal) class interests.' This mixture of policy, economic and cultural forces has deepened the influence of neoliberalism in Ireland. The

following section will discuss the Irish government's *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* as indicative of this shift.

The government's key education strategy for higher education was published in 2011 and is known as the Hunt Report, after its chairperson (DES, 2011). It clearly outlines the Irish state's plans for transforming higher education over the next two decades along the lines of neoliberal values and principles (Holborow, 2012; Lynch et al., 2012; Mercille & Murphy, 2015). It has been noted that the panel of 'experts' who drafted the report was 'replete with corporate and political elites - and not a single Irish academic staff was included' (Mercille & Murphy, 2015 p. 7). This is an example of how Ball (1994, p.50) describes academics as 'an absent presence in the discourses of education policy'. Lynch et al. observe that the report is 'laced with new managerialism language of efficiency, flexibility and accountability,' legitimated through the lens of austerity politics that dominated at this time in the wake of the global economic recession (2012, p. 20).

The outset of the Hunt Report suggests that Irish higher education is 'at a point of transition' and identifies the specific challenges for the Irish higher education sector as: 'increasing numbers; unemployment and changing patterns of work bringing a new urgency and an emphasis on life-long learning and up-skilling and the importance of higher education in driving economic revival' (DES, 2011, p. 7).

A rise in performance measurement and accountability is evident in government policy through its funding body (HEA[4]) exhorting higher education institutions on the one hand, to increase the standards of education provision, while at the same time looking at methods of increasing efficiency (DES, 2011). As outlined earlier, the CEO of the HEA, Tom Boland, spoke about how it monitors HEIs in line with government expectations through agreements with each HEI, whereby 'these agreements provided metrics to assess performance'(Irish Times (March 15, 2016). Aside from the HEA, HEI's are also required to respond to statutory agencies in industry and other areas such as the 'The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs' as

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[4] Higher Education Authority (HEA)

well as being subject to league tables and rankings nationally and internationally, 'over which they have no control' (Lynch, 2015, p. 194).

In effect, according to Lynch (2015), Irish HEIs have to respond by adopting an 'audit culture' in which 'quality assurance', 'performance appraisals' and 'benchmarking' are part of their reformed governance by these statutory agencies and reports. Such reforms have led to fundamental changes including intensification of government control over higher education; commercialisation of HEIs and research; and the introduction of Performance Based Indicators.

The transformations in higher education outlined above are challenging assumptions, not only about the purpose of higher education and its place in society, but also about the most appropriate systems of management and leadership that should operate within the sector (Black, 2015; Bryman, 2007a; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Lumby, 2012). The literature reviewed in the following section is invaluable in highlighting how neoliberal discourses and the changes in higher education impact on higher education leadership and management at all levels, including that of department head. Some authors suggest that traditional models of leadership of higher education have been eroded by the demand for greater accountability and transparency (Bolden et al., 2012) and this has meant that HEI's have had to 'examine how to better lead their organisations and find approaches which fit best in the HE context' (Black, 2015, p. 55).

Others argue that increased competition between providers has driven higher education institutions to respond in a more market driven way and have made collegial leadership and shared decision-making increasingly difficult to maintain (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Yielder & Codling, 2004). The following section will explore how managerialism, the organisational arm of neoliberalism, has impacted on HE governance, management and leadership.

Managerialism and Higher Education

A major theme in the recent literature on management and leadership in higher education centres on the impact of neoliberalism on the mode of governance in HE

and the emergence of 'managerialism' (Bryman, 2007; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Deem, 2003a, 2004, 2008; Grummell & Lynch, 2016; Lynch et al., 2012; Lynch, 2014). The managerialism approach in higher education has been described by Deem (2004) as implementing neoliberal tenets about new forms of governance in HEIs. Grummell and Lynch (2016, p. 216) go further and suggest that 'new managerialism' in education is not a 'neutral strategy; it is a political project heralding a new mode of governance that provides a unique type of moral purpose and regulation to public service organisations.'

So, what is the impact of new managerialism on HEI's governance and management? Hood (1995) provides a classic account of the new 'set of doctrines' in management of public organisations deriving from neoliberalism principles. He concludes that most commentators have associated managerialism with seven dimensions of change in organisations: greater disaggregation; enhanced competition; the use of management practices drawn from the private sector; greater stress on discipline and parsimony in resource use; a move towards more hands-on management; a concern for more explicit and measurable standards of performance and attempts to control according to pre-set output measures (Hood, 1995, p. 95–7). Deem (2003a, 2004) in her analysis of managerialism extends the characteristics. Table 3.1 below compares Hood and Deem's characteristics of managerialism.

Table 3. 1 Comparison of Hood's and Deem's Characteristics of Manageralism

Hood (1995, 2000) Characteristics of managerialism	Deem (2003; 2004) Characteristics of managerialism
• Disaggregation of units	• Erasure of bureaucratic rule-following procedures
• Enhanced competition	• Monitoring employee performance (and encouraging self - monitoring too)
• Use of management practices drawn from the private sector	• Emphasising the primacy of management above all other activities
• Greater stress on discipline and parsimony in resource use	• Attainment of financial and other targets
• Hands-on professional management	• Importing ideas and practices from the private world of business into the world of public service

• Explicit standards and measures of performance	• Publicly auditing quality of service delivery and the development of quasi-markets for services
• Greater emphasis on output control	• Public and private arrangements are represented as 'partnerships' and include outsourcing services
	• Efficiency and effectiveness
	• Labour-force restructuring to enable more team-work, flexibility and casualisation of work
	• Imposed external accountability, including performance indicators, league tables, target-setting, benchmarking and performance management

Deem (2003a, 2004) in her analysis of managerialism extends the characteristics to include: the erasure of bureaucratic rule-following procedures; the primacy of management above all other activities; monitoring employee performance (and encouraging self-monitoring too); the attainment of financial and other targets, devising means of publicly auditing quality of service delivery and the development of quasi-markets for services. New agreements between public and private sectors are represented as 'partnerships' and include outsourcing services like counselling, and private finance initiatives for new buildings (Deem & Brehony, 2005, p. 220). Managerialism relies on importing ideas and practices from the private world of business into the world of public service, on the assumption that the latter are superior to the former (Deem, 2003a).

It has been argued that fundamentally managerialism prioritises efficiency and effectiveness at the expense of more broadly-based moral and social values related to social rights, trust and equality within higher education (Ball, 2012; Davis & Bansel, 2007; Lynch, 2015).

Lynch et al. (2015, p. 30) argue:

> It literally changes how we speak about education: the nomenclature of the market is adopted with references to clients, customers and efficiencies, rather than citizenship and social rights

In addition, labour-force restructuring is advocated to enable more team-work, flexibility and casualisation of academic labour (Courtois et al., 2015). Finally, managerialism is associated with new kinds of imposed external accountability, including the widespread use of performance indicators and league tables, target-setting, benchmarking and performance management (Lynch, 2015). The performance of individual members is continuously audited, assessed and rewarded in order to ensure that their institution is able to compete in local and global HE 'markets'. This results in overtly managing academics and academic work in the context of publicly funded education, using specific performance and quality indicators for teaching and research. The emergence of managerialism has been accompanied by the professionalisation of the management and leadership functions (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Henkel, 1997) in higher education and the growth of hybrid academic administrative roles (Smith, 2005; Whitchurch, 2008).

Bolden et al. (2012) found in their research that the increasingly 'executive', 'corporate' and 'managerial' ways in which leadership and management roles are framed within UK higher education institutions may accentuate academic disengagement from such activities. Unfortunately, despite a rhetoric of 'distributed leadership' (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009) many academics have felt themselves side-lined rather than embraced within the governance and running of their institutions (Rayner et al., 2010).

In 1998–2000 Deem et al. (2003) conducted a study to examine the extent to which 'new managerialism' was perceived to have permeated the management of UK universities. The research concluded that the features of 'new managerialism' most evident in UK higher education appeared to be: changes to the funding environment, academic work and workloads (more students, a smaller unit of resource per student and pressure to do both teaching and research to a high standard); more emphasis on team work in both teaching and research, partly in response to external audit; the introduction of cost-centres to university departments or faculties; greater internal and external surveillance of the performance of academics and an increase in the proportion of managers, both career administrators and manager-academics, in universities.

In the literature there is an emerging consensus that managerialism as a form of governance of higher education needs to be reviewed. Middlehurst (2013) argues the case cogently for a comprehensive review of HEIs internal leadership and governance structures that amounts to inverting the management pyramid. He contends, the internal governance and management architecture that has developed in HEIs reflects an outmoded command and control ideology rooted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Bacon (2014) also questions 'the notion that the values of managerialism – expressed in approaches such as monitoring employee performance, meeting targets and publicly auditing quality – somehow represent the only way to deliver change in complex 21st century knowledge-based organisations' (2014, p. 14).

Managerialism and Collegiality

Managerialism can be seen as an alternative model of management for higher education to that existing up until 1980s when governance entailed a compromise between corporate bureaucracy and academic self-government (Smith and Webster, 1997). The compromise facilitated a trade-off between managerial control and academic professional autonomy. This mode of governance known as 'collegiality' in UK and Europe and 'shared governance' in USA involved consultation of academics by academics informally and formally through committees, with minimal bureaucratic procedures (Bacon, 2014; Birnhaum, 2000; Bolden et al., 2015; Mintzberg, 1983; Waring, 2017).

Bryman (2007a, p. 17) suggests a key problem with research in this area is knowing exactly what is meant by the term 'collegiality' as many writers do not indicate how they are defining it. Hence, he identifies two key characteristics of collegiality. The first associates collegiality with consensual decision-making. Decisions are arrived at through discussion and debate, and outcomes accomplished through the full participation of knowledgeable and committed peers. Bryman (2007a, p. 17) notes this aspect of collegiality is viewed as slow and inefficient by those supporting a managerialism ethos. It is also sometimes viewed as facilitating resistance to change because academic staff are frequently perceived as being reluctant to change and hence 'consensual decision-making can be depicted as playing into their hands'

(2007, p. 18). The second characteristic associates collegiality with mutual supportiveness among staff. Being 'collegial' in this sense means supporting others in a professional, and sometimes personal way, which would include mentoring and working together in teams.

More recently, it has been argued, that the discourses and practices of managerialism are threatening collegiality and the core values of liberal education and academic freedom (Bacon, 2014; Bolden et al., 2015; Waring, 2017). Bolden et al. (2008) summarise these inherent tensions as being between individual autonomy and collective engagement, collegiality and managerialism, academic versus administrative authority, cultures of informality and formality, the values of inclusivity encroached upon by professionalism and an overall ethos of stability as opposed to change.

Some authors contend that managerialism seeks to control, re-organise and regulate the work of academics (Bacon, 2014; Deem, 2004; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Waring, 2017). In the UK context, Preston and Price (2012, p. 410) propose, that managerialism has resulted in a fundamental review of higher education management and has impacted greatly on academic roles. Deem (2004) contends that managerialism exercises power through a 'practical control technology' that challenges established practices among professional academics and leads to a de-professionalisation of the role. It has been argued that the emphasis on managerial processes in HEIs has led to a democratic deficit as 'advocates of managerialism do not seem to tolerate debate or questioning and prize efficiency over equity and justice' (Kimber & Ehrich, 2015, p. 85). Ball (2013, p. 6) goes as far as to say that the audit culture of new managerialism fundamentally changes what it means to be an educator:

> The sinews of power are embedded in mundane practices and in the social relationships and the haphazard and contingent nature of practices. This was never more clear to me than in the work I have done on 'performativity,' in looking at the ways in which lists, forms, grids, and rankings work to change the meaning of educational practice – what it means to teach and learn – and our sense of who we are in terms of these practices – what it means to be an educator, and to be educated.

As explored later in this thesis, in the Irish context Lynch (2014, p. 149) agrees with Ball and has highlighted how managerialism's focus on measured performance has undermined 'trust in professional integrity and peer regulation' of academic work.

Birnbaum (2004), in the USA warns that making drastic changes from a softer, more collaborative governance structure to one that is harder and more bottom-line driven is unlikely to produce the results desired by critics. He argues that the 'purpose of academic institutions is not to create products but to embody ideas' (Birnbaum, 2004, p. 18). He concludes that involving faculty in shared governance might make it more difficult for institutions to change. Changes that are made, however, would embody the core values of the academy and be more likely to be successful.

The Scandinavian experience suggests attempts to strengthen academic leadership according to new public management ideas may be very difficult and even dangerous for higher education facing a rapidly changing environment (Askling & Stensaker, 2010, p. 122). This point is reinforced by Bolden et al. (2013, p. 2) who concluded that:

> The emerging forms of management and leadership in higher education may be experienced as conflicting with ideals of collegiality, academic freedom and ultimately distancing and disengaging the very people that universities seek to influence and involve in institutional governance, strategy and change leadership.

The discussion so far has highlighted how managerialism and collegiality have been conceptualised, in some of the literature, as competing cultures in higher education, focusing on tensions and a mismatch between the different approaches of managing higher education (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Waring, 2017). However, Macfarlane (2015, p. 103) describes this as 'one of the most popular 'good guy, bad guy' moral dualisms in higher education studies'. Other critics argue against a simplistic view that neoliberal values have completely replaced the traditional values of HE. This literature suggests that placing managerialism and academic autonomy as opposites is misleading and does not capture the intricacy and interdependence of such practices. Clegg and McAuley (2005) argue for a 'breaking with the simple managerialist/collegial duality' which

they view limits consideration of a broader range of management and leadership literature relevant to management roles in higher education (2005, p. 19). They argued that:

> The managerialist/collegiality dualism by mis-describing the complexity and range of possibilities for conceptualising developments in higher education has become part of the problem. It oversimplifies and exaggerates many of the negative consequences of managerialism it seeks to critique. Imagining more productive relationships in higher education, in ways that do not look nostalgically backwards to an older, more elitist system, may be part of the first steps towards realising universities as more humane places in which to practice. (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p. 31)

Shore (2010) concurs and argues further that the neoliberal mode of governance has only 'added a new layer of complexity to the university's already diverse and multifaceted roles in society' (2010, p. 18). Echoing Simkins (2005) he contends that, such a layering of different, and often contradictory, policy agendas reflects the complex and richly textured nature of contemporary life in academia.

So how true is it that managerialist agendas have 'colonised' education? As discussed above much has been written about this and the debate continues. However, positioning a managerialist future against a collegiality past does not seem particularly helpful. Rather, in this, as in many other aspects of the organisational world, things are much more complex. Some authors suggest it is more helpful to see our current educational world as one in which discourses are in contention, different accommodations are being reached in different contexts and these accommodations are changing over time in a very dynamic way (Simkins, 2000; Shore, 2010). Others argue it is important to recognise that 'there is a complex dialectic between pressures towards managerialism co-existing in tension with collegiality, and between different and contested interpretations of core pedagogic concept' (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p. 31). Bacon's (2014) proposes a revised idea of 'neo–collegiality' as a waway forward to a variety of possibilities for collegiality that are rooted in the values of democracy, inclusivity and trust. At a time of significant change in HE, as Bacon (2014, p.16) suggests there is a real need to attempt to rebuild trust between those at the top of the hierarchy and those that represent a HEI's greatest asset – the academics.

In summary, for some, the notions of collegiality can be problematic, evoking nostalgic images of a golden past that never was. Yet, the underpinning values of democratic accountability and shared endeavour offer an important starting point and as Waring (2017, p. 546) proposes 'a necessary vehicle to begin to challenge the current model of command and control and to at least offer some hope that things can be done differently.' What is inescapable is that both managerialism and collegiality have, and will continue to have, a significant bearing on how IoTs are managed in the Irish context. There has always been a mixed experience within the IoTs where a high level of collegiality existed within a sector that from its inception also operated within a hierarchical control structure (Walsh, 2015b). A key challenge for HoDs is to balance the competing demands of senior management and outside stakeholders in terms of performativity and efficiencies, and at the same time ensuring that academic staff is supported in a collegial manner so they can continue to contribute as they traditionally have. The role of HoD is walking the tightrope between these two competing demands. The implications of this tension for a HoD are well depicted by the metaphor of the circus rider entering the ring, each foot perched on a prancing horse:

> Under her left foot the 'white horse' of educational enlightenment tosses her mane to rejoice at Michael Fullan, reflective practice, teacher-led reform, evidence informed professionalism, creativity, networks and the lateral spread of innovation. The rider's right foot perches on the flare-nostrilled 'black horse' of competition and managerialism, hierarchies of status,…central direction and blame culture. Adrenaline pumps, the band plays. Can these fiery beasts be made to dance together? (Wilkins, 2003, p.9)

The debates about managerialism outlined above raise the question once again as to what are the most appropriate systems of management and leadership for higher education? (Black, 2015; Bryman, 2007a; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Lumby, 2012).The following section will explore insights from the literature on leadership and management in higher education, assessing their broad implications for the IoT sector.

Leadership and Management in Higher Education

The terms 'leadership' and 'management' are used in the literature sometimes interchangeably and also as distinct concepts and practices. Research on management has a long history and includes a wide range of topics relevant to the operation of organisations, the coordination and planning of activities and the acquisition and deployment of resources to achieve optimal levels of performance (Kezar et al., 2011: Middlehurst, 2012). Early studies of leadership took place within the 'scientific management' research paradigm associated with Frederick Taylor (1911) and Henri Fayol (1930) which may explain the correlation of the two concepts.

The distinction between management and leadership is regularly set up to contrast trivial, boring management with exciting, important leadership (Bolden et al., 2011). Zaleznik (1977) viewed the influence of leaders as:

> Altering moods, evoking images and expectations, and establishing specific desires and objectives [...] The net result of this influence is to change the way people think about what is desirable, possible and necessary. (p. 71)

Leadership is a sense-making activity that entails symbolic actions and processes that generate meaning (Bryman, 1996; Ladkin, 2010). The emphasis of leadership is thus not on the formal, 'objective' behaviour but on thinking, valuing, emotions and identities. Nicholls (1987) agrees and has succinctly described the difference between management and leadership as:

> Management can get things done through others by the traditional activities of planning, organizing, monitoring and controlling - without worrying too much what goes on inside people's heads. Leadership, by contrast, is vitally concerned with what people are thinking and feeling and how they are to be linked to the environment to the entity and to the job/ task. (p. 21)

Kotter (1990) in a seminal study of leadership and management in complex organisations, building on the work of Zaleznick (1977), argued that leadership and management are different but complementary and that in a changing world, one cannot function without the other. He enumerates and contrasts the primary functions of the manager and the leader as captured in Figure 3.2 below.
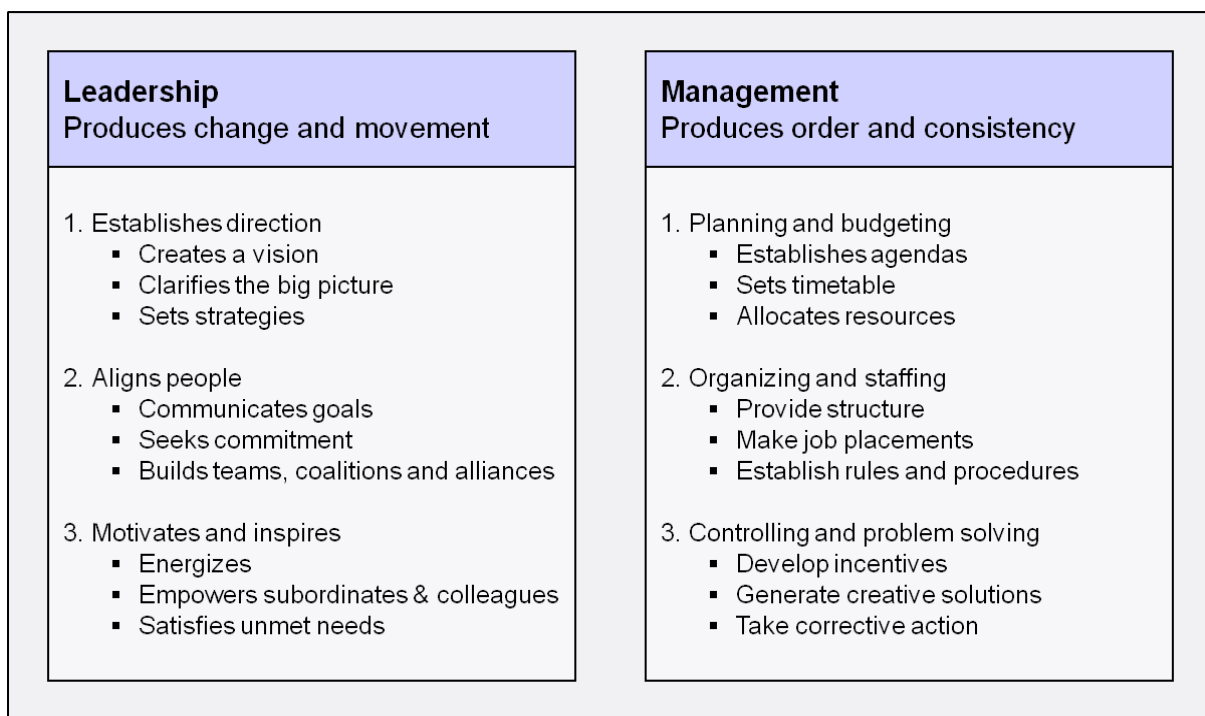
Figure 3. 2 Kotter (1990, p. 6) Leadership and Management Functions

Kotter (1990) concludes that managers promote stability while leaders press for change and only organisations that embrace both sides of that contradiction can thrive in turbulent times. Yielder and Codling (2004, p. 6) concur and provide a useful summary:

> Management refers to an orientation towards results and goals, organizing tasks and systems, while leadership alludes to an orientation towards human relations and organizing people.

Increasingly, it is recognised that, whilst leadership and management are contrasted in theory, in practice the difference between leadership and management is unclear (Graham, 2016). Indeed, Gronn (2003) points to the vast leadership 'industry' in which governments, corporations and HE systems have a huge vested interest, suggesting that the discourse of 'leadership' has become ubiquitous. He poses an interesting question: "what changes, if anything, when commentators begin to privilege words such as 'leader', 'leading' and 'leadership' as discursive modes of representing reality, instead of previously favoured terminology such as 'manager' and 'management'?" (p. 269). As a result of the contemporary mythology

surrounding leadership a distinction has emerged which 'claims a great divide between management/managers and leadership/leaders – between bureaucrats and people of true grit capable of offering strong ideas and a sense of direction with which people choose to comply' (Alveeson & Sveningsson, 2003, p. 1436).

In recent work, Hamel (2007, 2012) contends that in order to survive, organisations need to reinvent both leadership processes and management structures in ways that are better adapted to complex and uncertain environments, globalisation, technology, connectivity and knowledge-societies:

> We have for many decades been living in a "post-industrial" society. I believe we are now on the verge of a "post-managerial" society, perhaps even a "post-organizational" society. ….it does imply a future in which the "work of management" is less and less the responsibility of "managers." To be sure, activities will still need to be coordinated, individual efforts aligned, relationships nurtured, objectives decided upon, and knowledge disseminated. But increasingly, this work will be distributed out to those on the periphery. (2007, p. 10)

In the interests of clarity, leadership and management will be referred to separately in this thesis where relevant, but otherwise treated as inter-connected concepts and practices.

Research on Leadership and Management

A striking feature of research on leadership in organisations over the past century is that despite increases in volume and range, the nature of leadership remains elusive. As Bolden (2004) has highlighted:

> There is no widely accepted definition of leadership, no common consensus on how best to develop leadership and leaders, and remarkably little evidence of the impact of leadership or leadership development on performance and productivity. (p. 3)

Bryman's review of research on leadership effectiveness in higher education comes to similar conclusions: 'Not enough is known about exactly what makes an individual effective as a leader in the higher education context, and what in turn can make them ineffective' (Bryman, 2007a, p. 14). On the other hand, Simkins (2005)

argues that much of the current discourse on leadership implies that 'the holy grail of effective leadership practice is within our grasp or at least that the search for it is not in vain'. He continues that in leadership research 'making sense of things' is as important as 'seeking what works' (2005, p. 10).

Middlehurst (2012) suggests that there are methodological issues associated with leadership research over time. First, until the latter part of the 20th century, most research espoused a positivist research approach in the search for universal leadership traits (Kezar et al, 2006) and second, different viewpoints were adopted as to the concept and focus for leadership. For example, some research studies focused on the characteristics of people (personal traits makes leaders) or behaviour (it is how leaders behave that makes them leaders), while other studies concentrated on those in formal leadership positions (context where leaders operate makes them leaders) or on processes of leadership (it is how leaders get things done that makes them leaders) (Grint, 2005; Middlehurst, 2012). The key findings of this literature on traditional leadership has been summarised by Simkins (2005, p.11) as follows:

- leadership resides in individuals
- leadership is hierarchically based and linked to office
- leadership occurs when leaders do things to followers
- leadership is different from and more important than management
- leaders are different
- leaders make a crucial difference to organisational performance
- effective leadership is generalisable

One of the problematic features of this traditional leadership research is its leader-centric focus (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011; Kezar et al., 2006; Middlehurst 2012). Leadership is typically defined as some sort of an influence process where one person (leader) leads other people (followers). It is the leader who is the central character, whose traits and behaviour create effects. Followers are mainly responses to this influence. Strictly speaking, the manager/leader is the only actor while followers are objects of leadership turned into some kind of tools to be used as an extension of the manager (Kezar et al. 2006; Middlehurst, 2012).

The focus of leadership studies has undergone a paradigmatic shift in the last 20 years. Kezar et al. (2006) suggested that in the 21st century:

> Leadership has moved from being leader-centered, individualistic, hierarchical, focused on universal characteristics, and emphasizing power over followers to a new vision in which leadership is process-centered, collective, context bound, non-hierarchical, and focused on mutual power and influence. (p. ix)

Social constructionism, critical and postmodern paradigms are being used to contextualize the study and practice of leadership in higher education (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012; Collinson, 2011). Middlehurst (2012) contends that:

> Modern (or rather post-modern) studies recognise leadership as context bound, focus on mutual power and influence, place emphasis on collective and collaborative perspectives including leadership processes and with an orientation towards the perspectives of followers. (p. 8)

More recently, a number of researchers have proposed critical approaches that challenge dominant ways of understanding and studying leadership (Alvesson, 2011; Alveeson & Blom, 2015; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012; Collinson, 2011; Grint & Holt, 2011). Broadly speaking, these researchers in the field of critical leadership studies, share similarities in their critiques of the way in which the words 'leadership' and 'leader' have often been taken for granted as somewhat universal, generalisable and unproblematic. Instead, they consider leadership as a social process whereby 'the use of the very word 'leader' brings into being socially constructed positions' (Ford, 2010, p.81).

Alvesson et al. go so far as to suggest that leadership is a dominant discourse in society today:

> considering the current popularity of leadership as forming a regulative ideal for people in business and working life and producing subjects eager to constitute themselves as 'leaders' doing 'leadership' (Foucault, 1976; 1980) we could frame this as a very powerful discourse. (2012, p. 209)

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2012) contend that the discourse-driven nature of leadership is neglected in most of the literature and research. If it is considered, then

leadership is viewed as multi-level phenomena, where societal and organisational discourses are key elements, producing 'regulatory ideals' for doing leadership – as leaders and followers – which individuals and groups interpret, adapt, vary and improvise. This means a key source of leadership is the socio-political context in which it occurs. Central to this discourse of leadership is the notion of power relations which I will discuss in the next section.

Leadership and Power

Inherent in many discussions today of leadership is the concept of power. Anthony Giddens (1979) defines power as 'the transformative capacity through which people are capable of achieving certain outcomes' (p. 88). Traditionally, on a micro level, power is conceived of as something residing in humans, as an individual's possession. This humanist perspective of power draws on a concept of agency in which human beings are assumed to be fundamentally free to think and behave as they would like, but are obstructed by society (Alveeson & Deetz, 1999). In contrast, at a macro level, power is conceived as institutional and characterised by structural control. This structuralist perspective, often expressed in Marxism or Feminism, constructs power as negative and oppressive, marginalising structurally oppressed groups of people who need to be 'empowered' in order to resist those forces (Alvesson, 2011). Both conceptualisations of power are criticised by postmodernists for ignoring the complexity, contestation and fragmentation of social reality (Ball, 2013, 2016; Gillies, 2013; Lukes, 2005).

Traditional leadership studies assume that the interests of leaders and followers coalesce and, therefore, tend to see power as an unproblematic form of organisational authority whilst resistance is viewed as abnormal or irrational. When considered at all, power is conceived narrowly as either positive (in the sense of leaders empowering followers) or negative (seen as synonymous with coercion). Collinson (2011) suggests that mainstream studies typically prefer to explore 'influence' (positive) and distinguish this from power (negative). Researchers who regard educational leadership as discourses, have explored issues of power in educational contexts – how various discourses exert power both on and through the leaders. Much of this research is influenced by the work of Foucault (Ball, 2013;

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Gillies, 2013; Mifsud, 2015). Gillies (2013, p. 32) highlights the value of bringing Foucault's analysis of power relations, which is discussed in the next section, to educational discourse:

> Given the scale of the educational leadership literature and the relatively small amount of questioning voices raised against it, it seems eminently timely to bring Foucault into the lists.

In reconceptualising power, Foucault (1978) argues that power is neither an individual's possession nor is it necessarily negative and oppressive. Rather, 'power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another' (Foucault, 1978, p. 93).

Foucault (1980, p. 156) describes power as 'a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise (it) just as much as those over whom it is exercised'. Foucauldian power is, thus, an 'exercised' strategy, not a possession; it has no essence, and it is not an attribute, but a relation, passing through both the dominated and the dominating. Foucault (1983) rarely uses the term 'power' on its own, as he argues that it exists only within relationships 'The term 'power' designates relationships between partners' (p. 217). Foucault (1980) conceives of power dynamically, by proposing a model in which power relations dissipate through all relational structures of society.

In Foucault's sense, power is a mechanism that works in and through institutions to produce particular kinds of subjects, knowledge and truth (Foucault, 1979, 1980). For Foucault (1980), power is a sinuous and insinuating mechanism that works its way in a 'capillary' fashion into the 'very grain' of individuals, inhabiting their bodies, their beliefs and their self-hood and binding them together as institutional subjects (p. 39). Power, in this sense, is both coercive and enabling, in that it is not imposed from 'outside' or 'above', but circulates within institutions and social bodies, producing subjects who exert a 'mutual hold' on one another. This is termed by Foucault as 'a mutual and indefinite 'blackmail', which binds superiors and subordinates in 'a relationship of mutual support and conditioning' (p. 159).

Following this line of thought, Foucault encourages us to look at power as not only negative/oppressive, but also positive/generative (Foucault, 1979). In this way, power 'enables certain possibilities to become actualities in a way that excludes other possibilities' (Adler & Gundersen, 2007, p. 129). Moreover, with the exercise of power comes the possibility of resistance, as Foucault (1981) pointed out:

> [I]n power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all. (p. 292)

Stephen Ball builds on Foucault's theory of power in his work seeing power as embodied in, produced by and lived out in 'shifting and changing interactive networks of social relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and structures that are political, economic and personal' (Ball, 2013, p. 29–30). According to Ball, power paradoxically both liberates and enslaves. On the one hand, individuals gain more power in educational management; on the other, 'their bodies become docile in the process. Both managers and managed are implicated in power relations, where the manager's autonomy becomes the teacher's constraint' (1993, p. 118). Ball describes management in education as a 'technology of power'. He also argues that management is a professional discourse which "allows its speakers and its incumbents to lay exclusive claim to certain sorts of expertise --- organisational leadership and decision-making - and a set of procedures that casts others as subordinates, as objects of the discourse." (Ball, 1990, p. 156).

Collinson (2011) contends that the majority of leadership studies, even critical approaches, tend to concentrate on leaders' power in terms of their control in a somewhat deterministic way that ultimately undermines and overlooks followers' resistance. He claims instead that leadership researchers can gain new insights by focusing on how leaders exercise multiple (economic, political and ideological) forms of power through differing strategies such as monitoring work, producing institutional visions and reengineering structures. Different forms of power provide different opportunities for resistance for their followers (Foucault, 1978), such as distancing, dismissing organisational visions, and/or enabling/restricting outputs.

Postmodern and critical theories of leadership have yielded a range of insights that are of practical use in higher education, including the following (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 108):

- Understanding historical patterns of power and conflict are essential to becoming an effective leader

- Academic staff, unions and boards of governors all play a significant role in shaping the power dynamics that affect leadership processes and these need special attention

- Leaders need to develop political skills in environments where power is being centralised

- Mid-level leaders are negotiators; their role is typically constrained more by power and conflict than leaders at other levels.

In summary, dominant approaches to leadership have become part of public discourses (and vice versa) that enable people to make sense of leadership in their everyday contexts in specific ways. In my study, I understand power as exercised through how we engage with certain narratives and discourses of leadership, which in effect, work to enable and constrain us to think, talk and enact leadership in certain ways. However, these discursive resources of leadership, embedded in a matrix of power relations, are always open to resistance as individual HoDs can draw upon a range of discursive resources to make sense of their leadership. Leaders can utilise the power of their position in different ways. The concepts of 'power over,' 'power through' and 'power with' define three ways positional power can be used by leaders (Allan et al., 2006). HoDs as leaders can use their positional authority (power over) to endorse policies, but by using collaborative leadership (power with) they can achieve 'buy-in' from the department community, especially with senior management, for cultural change that truly supports faculty.

The following section will explore the literature in relation to leadership in the specific context of higher education.

Leadership in Higher Education Context

A key theme in the literature focuses on leadership in the specific domain of higher education and the appropriate models for academic leadership. As Simkins (2005, p. 9) argues:

> We now live in a world dominated by the idea that leadership is one of the major factors—sometimes it seems the only factor—that will determine whether an educational organization, be it a school, a college or a university, will succeed or fail…Yet despite the fact that we seem to know so much, leadership in education remains a stubbornly difficult activity….the nature of leadership remains elusive.

One of the most frequent assertions of the 'new' thinking about leadership is that context is important. A key question that arises in the literature, therefore, is whether higher education is a distinctive environment from other organisations in which to lead and manage. In a recent UK HEI survey (Bolden et al., 2012), 71% of the respondents indicated that there are unique requirements for leadership in higher education. The distinctive factors identified in the literature in respect of managing HEIs include:

- diversity of perspectives and goals within an unusually flat management structure (Bolden et al., 2012)
- multiple and divergent cultures amongst disciplines (Trowler, 2008; Becher & Trowler, 2001))
- nature of academic work (Deem, 2008; Lumby, 2012)
- autonomy of staff (Lumby, 2012)

Academics are highly autonomous, independent minded and see themselves as self-employed. Their loyalty tends to be towards their discipline rather that their institution and they work in an environment where academic freedom is highly valued (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Bolden, et al., 2015). Academics feel entitled to autonomy and protection and 'it is the intensity of this requirement in higher education which makes it distinctive' (Bryman, 2009, p. 3). A similar point is made by Deem (2004, p. 110) who concludes that 'trying to manage anything involving academics is like trying to herd cats.'

Mintzberg (1989, p. 355) described a higher education institution as an exemplar of the 'professional bureaucracy' in which high levels of control are exerted over the core functions of the organisation by the professionals (academic staff) working within it. The professional bureaucracy emphasises authority of the professionals, in other words 'the power of expertise'. Bolman and Gallos (2011) highlight that in HEIs a longstanding 'professional bureaucracy regime' translates the power derived from expertise into discretion to identify how service users should be treated and what work should be done. Each individual decides how to act because his or her exclusive expertise is seen to justify, even demand, such autonomy. From this perspective, HEIs are not regarded as organisations where hierarchical or managerial approaches to leadership would flourish; instead leadership would be better regarded as a responsibility shared amongst staff. Support for an inclusive, collaborative approach to leadership in higher education is reinforced by Ramsden (1998, p.4) who explained:

> Leadership in higher education is a practical and everyday process of supporting, managing, developing and inspiring academic colleagues. Leadership in universities should be by everyone from the Vice Chancellor to the casual car parking attendant, leadership is to do with how people relate to each other.

Kezar et al. (2006) extend this relational view of leadership to explore the role of sub-cultures in HEIs. They argue that HEIs are "loosely coupled" organisations with multiple organisational sub-cultures. According to these researchers, for leaders to be effective in higher education, it is important to know which sub-cultures are involved in, or impacted by, decisions and decision processes. Further, Kezar et al. (2006) observe that in most HEIs the culture is entrenched in long-standing traditions which can influence the success or failure of institutional decisions.

On the other hand, Lumby (2012, p. 6) contends that not just one characteristic makes HE a distinctive environment for leadership but a mix of factors. She identifies the key factors as: 'the ambivalent goals, the multiple and divergent cultures amongst disciplines, and above all, the nature of academics and academic work, create a distinctive environment.'

There is a kaleidoscopic array of research on leadership in action and attitudes to leadership as several authors have sought to identify the nature of leadership in higher education (Bryman, 2007a, b; Bolden, Petrov & Gosling 2008b; Middlehurst, 2013). This research generally involves empirical work with a distinctive approach, in which several different theories of leadership are taken to construct a lens to examine the higher education context. Rayner et al. (2010, pp. 622- 623) has provided a useful categorisation of these studies into seven approaches to leadership, evident in higher education, as outlined below:

(1) *Collegiate leadership* (Bush, 1995), which emphasises a democratic approach to decision making and the importance of participatory systems of management.

(2) *Transactional leadership* (Bush, 1995; Law & Glover, 2000), which represents a political and contingency explanation of leadership, in which a leader is expected to use a 'carrot and stick' approach to motivating and managing a workforce.

(3) *Transformational leadership* (Bush & Glover, 2003; Gunter & Rayner, 2006; Rayner, 2007), which emphasises the leader's agency as a means of enabling vision, values, beliefs, behaviour and attitudes in the organisation. It is most frequently associated with a concern for pay-off and impact in language reinforced by a curious mix of quasi-religious terms such as transformation (miraculous change), mission, vision and charisma.

(4) *Collective leadership* (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008a), which draws upon theories of distributed or dispersed leadership and situated cognition as a major aspect of social organisation, and a unit of analysis in understanding leadership (Gronn, 2000, 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). It presumes that collective and multi-sited activity will occur both spontaneously or deliberately in the form of leadership within interactive communities of practice.

(5) *Managerialist leadership* (Deem, 2000; Middlehurst, 2004; Trowler, 2001; Whitchurch, 2008), which is technicist and instrumental and linked to the idea of the quasi-market – it is characterised by the use of performance targets, accountability, audit and practice-based data management, usually in

association with a tightly constructed regime of surveillance and meritocratic reward.

(6) *Remote or Distant leadership* (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008b; Smith & Adams, 2008), which is based on a concept largely emerging from a study of the university vice-chancellor as leading executive, controlling large and complex institutions. Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling (2008a) suggest that this is strategic leadership that is perceived as removed from and separate to the operational level of the organisation.

(7) *Hybrid Management* (Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling 2008b; Whitchurch 2008), which describes the creation of new combined patterns of leadership and leader, reflecting a dynamic mix of managerialist and academic values, priorities and method. At its simplest, this approach describes an institution within which there is emphasis upon integrating academic and professional managers/leaders.

In addition to the above approaches, a recent perspective that has gained prominence in the literature is the distributed or shared leadership approach. Distributed leadership has become the preferred approach to leadership in other sectors of education but has a much shorter history in higher education (Jones et al., 2012). Distributed leadership involves downward, upward, and horizontal dynamics of influence within an organisation. It is hence "represented as dynamic, relational, inclusive, collaborative, and contextually situated" (Bolden et al., 2011, p. 36). Thus, leadership is premised on assumptions that distributions of power, influence and control are possible and preferable within an organisation; that organisation members can lead themselves or even their superiors in some instances; and that everyone can become a leader (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

What distributed or shared leadership has often failed to consider, however, is the issue of power and how complex and strong hierarchical structure within many organisations may prevent all members from exercising their leadership. The notion that everyone can contribute towards leadership may be seen as simple rhetoric quite at odds with lived experience (Bolden et al., 2008). Some authors go further to suggest that the discourse of 'distributed leadership' may itself have a performative

effect on how people conceive of and engage with organisational priorities (Gosling et al., 2009). Lumby (2012) deploys Lukes' (2005) framework of power to argue that distributed leadership has become a disciplinary practice that controls and regulates thoughts and behaviour, somewhat ironically maintaining rather than challenging the status quo.

> There is, arguably, no such thing as an apolitical theory in education. Ignoring politics can be interpreted as a political act as much as overt engagement. In its avoidance of issues of power, distributed leadership is a profoundly political phenomenon, replete with the uses and abuses of power. (Lumby, 2012, p. 12)

Whilst much existing literature explores leadership of higher education at executive level, a number of studies have focussed on the role of middle management i.e. the HoD Preston and Price (2012, p. 410) argue that, 'given the problems of effecting change from the top or the bottom, there is then a vital role for leadership from the middle'. Bryman (2007b, p. 694) also concludes that the department level 'represents a critical unit of analysis in universities'. Waring (2017) concurs that while HEIs have evolved and diversified, their core purpose of teaching and research remains unchanged and in this respect academic departments represent the frontline in service delivery.

Heads of Department in Higher Education

Historically the HoD, as academic middle manager, has been an integral part of the organisational structure of higher education. The role has been described as a 'frontline position of leadership and influence' (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011, p. 387) that is responsible for providing 'vitality to the heart of higher education institutions'. Indeed, Jones (2011) suggested that:

> HoDs are academic leaders whatever level they occupy within the academic hierarchy…While the strains will undoubtedly differ, leadership is a sine qua non of the individual in charge…HoDs occupy a position at the heart of the organization, with a mandate to promulgate the features for which the organization wishes to be known. (p. 280)

Head of Department as Middle Manager

A key theme in the literature focuses on the position of HoDs as middle managers in a complex higher education organisation (Bryman, 2007a; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Kallenberg, 2007; Pepper & Giles, 2015). However, the concept of middle management is not well defined, open to interpretations and multifaceted in nature (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Pepper & Giles, 2015). Some authors provide positional definitions of middle management by focusing on the middle managers' position as occurring between two polarities, namely the upper echelon and the operating core (Curry & Proctor, 2005). Clegg and McAuley, (2005, p. 19) suggest that the concept of middle management has been viewed on one hand as the 'quintessence of what it is to be a manager', or on the other hand as an 'impediment between senior management and the workforce', with a number of polarities in between this. Using the positional context, middle managers are constructed as people occupying a position at the intermediary level of the organisation, a position that is two or three levels from top managers and one level above front-line staff, which is a position which enables them to manage and, in turn, be managed by others (Curry & Proctor, 2005).

Positional definitions of middle management provide confirmation of the strategic position of academic middle managers in HEIs which gives them leverage to have both an institution-wide overview and an understanding of the needs of those at the operational level i.e. the Department (Inman, 2011; Preston & Price, 2012). Kallenberg (2007, p 19) states that 'with regard to strategic innovation, academic middle managers are at a crucial position in the organisation'.

Hence, HoDs as academic middle managers can best be understood as being located in these two key contexts, the institute wide context and department context, which may reflect two different discourses. Hancock and Hellawell (2003) argue that the dominant narrative about the role of the middle manager centers on the twin discourses of managerialism and collegiality, with this duality pointing to the dilemma middle managers face in their day-to-day interaction with colleagues on one hand and with top management on the other. HoDs are expected to perform their roles in a manner that shows they assume an institute-wide managerial approach but

are expected to create conditions that show the departments they lead are student-centered, teaching and/or research focused, as well as collegial (Prichard, 2000).

There is evidence that HoDs, as middle managers, see themselves as representing core 'academic values' rather than 'organizational values' (Lumby, 2012; Qualter & Willis, 2012). Henkel (2000) argues that academics' identities are formed by 'the cross-cutting imperatives of discipline and enterprise (the university or college)' (Henkel, 2000, p. 17). Hellawell & Hancock (2001) in their study found heads of department frequently disassociate themselves from managerialist practices, which they identify only at the most senior levels, while they rely on negotiation 'within the confines of mutually understood norms of collegiality to bring about changes involving academic staff' (2001, p. 184). Moreover, because formal organisational structures based on collegiality are often at odds with the actual dynamics, middle managers engage in forms of ''hiding'' from both their superiors and those they manage (Hellawell & Hancock, 2003). However, Morris and Laipple (2015) argue that collegiality within a department can only exist within a climate of transparency, disclosure and mutual trust.

A counter argument to the importance of collegiality for HoDs is posed by Clegg and McAuley (2005). They argue that the focus on the collegiate/manageralism dualism is negative. Drawing on management literature, they propose that if we 'change the frame of reference to the role of …. middle managers, it is possible to recognise that middle managers can play a creative innovative role' (2005, p. 31). Clegg and McAuley have traced four dominant discourses on the role of the middle manager in higher education that have emerged since the 1970's (Clegg & McAuley, 2005). The role of the academic middle manager has been conceptualised as; representing the core organisational values, a conservative self-directed agent, a reinvented managerialist corporate bureaucrat, and a transmitter of core strategic values and organisational capability (Clegg & McAuley, 2005). Figure 3.3 captures these four interpretations of the role of HoD.

Discourse: early 1980s and persists	Era of delayered lean, mean organisations	Discourse: mid 1980s and persists
Middle manager seen as representing core organisational values and as an agent of control		Middle manager seen as a conservative, self-directed agent of control

Era of loss of control

Discourse: late 1990s	Era of corporate vision and change capability	Discourse: late 1980s and persists
Middle manager seen as a transmitter of core strategic values and organisational capability		Middle manager seen as a managerialist corporate bureaucrat and also as an agent of control

Figure 3. 3 Middle Management Discourses in Higher Education (Clegg & McAuley, 2007)

Central to these discourses of middle management are issues of power and autonomy for Heads of Department which are discussed in the next section.

Power and Autonomy and Head of Department Role

This issue of power and autonomy is a key one, highlighted in the literature where metaphors of the 'go–between' and the 'meat in the sandwich' prevail to describe the HoD's role. There is evidence of a sense of powerlessness in the role, particularly in relation to managing staff, dealing with poor performers and difficult people (Bryman & Lilley, 2009; Scott et al., 2008). It has been suggested that 'the pivotal role has built into it a degree of impotence as middle managers' (Clegg and McAuley, 2005, p. 26).

Hellawell and Hancock (2001) found in their study that middle managers in the ''newer'' UK universities experienced themselves as more vulnerable, more exposed to difficult pressures than the staff they managed, and that they had 'very few sanctions of any kind available to them in dealing with the full-time staff nominally

under their control' (p. 193). Others describe a sense of being sandwiched between competing expectations of senior management and departmental staff (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Bryman & Lilley, 2009). While Preston and Price (2012, p. 413) found in their research that HoDs had to resort to persuasion as they had no authority to encourage staff:

> Most of the ADs interviewed felt that, whilst they had plenty of responsibility for ensuring that operational processes and systems were in-situ and that performance management and work-load planning activities were undertaken in a timely manner, they had no authority to insist that they were done. Instead they had to use all their powers of persuasion to encourage people to conform, but with limited success.

This experience is collaborated by Smith (2007, p. 5) who reports that HoDs in his UK study believed they had 'little power or authority over staff and that they are unsupported by the university's senior management'. Likewise in South African higher education, Davis et al (2016) in their study described the role of HoD as that of a 'disempowered manager' where:

> (Top management) hand out responsibilities, but no empowerment…they were often held accountable for decisions they had not made and needed to solve problems others had created. (p. 1486)

Similarly, Pepper and Giles (2015, p. 9) in an international study across three continents portray the participants' sense of 'huge responsibility and little power' in the role. They also argue that the sense of 'responsibility without power' is linked to the location of HoDs, 'stuck in the middle' where they are caught in operational issues rather than strategic issues.

There is evidence to suggest that the sense of powerlessness impacts on HoDs relationship with Senior Management, leading to a fractured relationship and often disconnection (Davis et al, 2016; Deem, 2000). Preston & Price (2012) indicated how this limits the involvement of HoDs in strategy formation:

> (they) seem to be being asked to implement strategies but without authority and without respect, and the high levels of personal frustration at not being

able to contribute to the development of strategy or to be able to change things for the better for their colleagues was palpable. (p. 413)

Nonetheless, they often have little time left after dealing with the demands of day-to-day management tasks to become involved in strategic matters. In addition, Hellawell and Hancock (2001) found in their research that HoDs in many cases do not have sufficient control of resources and direction of their departments to be plausibly perceived as engaged with and influencing academic work.

While Kanter (1982) proposes that middle managers can exercise considerable power in certain organisational conditions: where they are not procedure bound; where there is variety in work and innovation is rewarded; where middle managers can be at the heart of activities (physically and emotionally); and where they can contribute to high-level decisions and strategic issues. Where these organisational conditions are not present, middle managers can experience themselves as alienated and marginal. This is increasingly evident in recent studies as revealed in the sections below.

Workload

Some studies have highlighted the emphasis on the operational side of the HoD's role and the overwhelming nature of the workload. Smith's (2007) survey of 200 HoDs concluded that:

> There is general agreement that the head of department role is a difficult one characterised by excessive workloads and 'role overload', i.e. having too many different things to do….There are a number of specific issues which leads consistently identify as being particularly problematic and stressful. By far the most common is dealing with staffing issues. (p.5)

The participants in Pepper and Giles' (2015) study also indicated the overwhelming nature of the role as reflected in paperwork, performance management, under-performing staff, putting out fires, dealing with complaints (p. 49). This is in accordance with Deem's (2000, p. 14) earlier description of the role:

> Long hours packed with meetings, mountains of paperwork and emails and search for additional resources with research marginalised and little time for reflection.

The operational nature of the role as outlined above has an impact on the leadership aspect of the role. An empirical project conducted in three New Zealand schools (Fitzgerald, 2009), revealed that 'management tasks and activities dominate teachers' work and there is, consequently, little or no time for leadership'. (p. 51)

This emphasis on the operational aspect of the role is just one aspect of the often conflicting demands of the role as discussed below.

Role Conflict

The conflicting nature of the role of HoD has been revealed in many studies. Henkel (2000) identifies three areas of potential conflict for HoDs:

1. Responding to the tide of external demands versus the need to engage in a strategic approach
2. Administrative versus academic work
3. Nurturing individuals versus changing departments.

Kallenberg (2007) explained the conflict as arising from the 'paradoxical position of the academic middle manager' who is:

> caught between several positions processes and interests… between 'top down' and 'bottom up' processes …between teaching staff and administrators, between education and research and finally between hierarchy and collegiality. (p. 22)

Poteigter et al., (2011, p. 84) differentiate four key aspects to the role: the academic role, the administration role, the management role and the leadership role. As discussed previously there is a major overlap between the management and leadership roles. According to Yielder and Codling (2004), both roles must work in harmony with one another:

On an operative level they are poorly differentiated. Role confusion and overlap between the roles and also that of administrators, may give rise to conflict of interest and inappropriately applied expertise. Inevitably this contributes to inefficiencies, diminished job satisfaction and reduces quality of overall 'management. (p. 320)

However, literature makes it very clear that many HoDs suffer from conflicts of identity in that they seek to maintain their academic identity, whilst leading and managing their departments under pressure from senior managers.

As Bryman (2007b) suggested, HoDs:

are often perceived as people in the middle, hemmed in by a pincer movement of senior management and academic staff. (p. 7)

Support for Heads of Department

The importance of support for the role of the HoD has been established by a number of studies (Branson et al., 2016; Floyd, 2012; Inman, 2009). The importance of support in preventing work stress has been highlighted by Morris and Laipple (2015):

Without support and access to leadership development opportunities, many individuals may burnout and derail their administrative career, others may remain but be ineffective in their roles. Losing promising leaders is bad for business and effects the morale of everyone with whom they work. (p. 242)

It is clear that HoD's do not always experience formal support mechanisms within the organisation and tend to rely on informal resources. Branson et al. (2016) in their New Zealand study found that meeting the former incumbent and current peers were key supports for the role. The study also revealed that the HoDs established an informal group and this enabled them to enhance their sense of agency as a group. This collaborates Deem's (2000, p. 7) findings which indicated that most HoDs 'had engaged in informal learning including seeking out more experienced colleagues'.

Preparation and Training

There is evidence to suggest that HoDs are unprepared for the intricacy and conflicting demands of the role. Wolverton et al. (2005) in the USA found that HoDs were unprepared for the complexity of the role and the wide variety of roles they had

to balance. The study also noted that when taking up the position, HoDs often did not possess the skills they needed to be effective leaders. Many HoDs also see themselves poorly prepared for the role in terms of both prior experience and training (Bryman, 2007a; Johnson, 2002; Scott et al, 2008) which makes the HoD 'vulnerable' (Kallenberg 2007, p. 24).

This raises the wider question of why HEIs as a learning organisation perpetuate a system where staff are ill-prepared or trained for a role. Is it mere incompetence or is it a situation whereby the role is learned by a combination of 'on the job' experience or picking up the role from more experienced colleagues? This experiential learning can be seen within the collegial frame of higher education or from a critical perspective as a form of control over the role of HoD. If the former is the reason, then senior management will be the victims of the experiences of each HoD with little coherence in the role between departments. If the latter, the HoDs will feel disempowered, deskilled (Davis et al., 2016) and less likely to buy in to the vision and mission of the organisation, which leads to an underutilisation of a key and expensive layer of management (Preston & Price, 2012). It is also an inefficient way of learning the role unless allied to formal opportunities to reflect on their experiences (Inman, 2009, p. 427).

In a US study of 1,515 university managers (academic deans, directors, associate deans and departmental chairs), Morris and Laipple (2015) found that there was limited preparation for leadership roles. Little was spent on leadership staff training in contrast to corporate America which spend $1.5 bl. per annum on leadership training:

> Most administrators rising from the faculty have had no prior training and development in business, management, or leadership. …The lack of a systematic approach to training, developing, and coaching academic leaders leaves to chance how they deliver on these results. Poorly prepared leaders may at best slow the progress of their organisation and at worst adversely affect productivity and morale. (p. 241)

Inman (2009) in her UK study indicated that 'the majority of what leaders do is learnt, self-taught, and acquired throughout their life history' (p. 417). Even when a

formal leadership training is available, Smith (2007, p. 6) reports it focuses only on health, safety and equality issues and is poorly attended as HoDs do not see it as relevant or useful. Indeed, this seems not to have changed since Deem's (2000) study indicated that only one third of her sample received any formal training for the role. The absence of preparation and training for HoDs can lead to 'a lack of clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as role conflict and stress' (Poteigter et al 2011, p. 82). Indeed, the 'formal job descriptions were not very useful' to HoDs either (Smith, 2002, p. 300).

It is clear from the literature that most HoDs with no prior experience of management assume their role without the benefit or advantage of any leadership or managerial training. Thus, the requirement for appropriate training and induction for HoDs, particularly in the early part of their careers has been highlighted (Inman, 2009; Morris & Laipple, 2015). This training should also include a level of mentoring with opportunities to meet other experienced HoDs to discuss real life issues (Smith, 2007, p. 6). Any training and induction programme should seek to develop the competencies required of a HoD.

Effective Performance in the Role

Some of the recent literature focuses on the competencies and attributes required of a HoD (Scott et al., 2008; Bryman, 2009; Goodall et al. 2013). The most crucial attributes identified for a HoD include good interpersonal and communication skills allied to vision and empathy with staff (Bareham, 2004). Given that many HODs are themselves former academics, their former colleagues may see them as turning their backs on core academic values (Spiller, 2010). This creates an ongoing challenge for a HoD, particularly as Scott et al.'s (2008) Australian study indicates that HoDs rank 'establishing a collegial work environment' as being the most important determinant of effective performance in their role. As Branson et al. (2016) highlights in their New Zealand study of Chairs of Department in one university faculty:

> The building of collegiality, cooperation and teamwork should not be seen as only part of their role but rather be understood as the very essence of leadership. (p. 130)

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From his extensive review of studies of leadership in higher education, Bryman (2009) deciphered thirteen aspects of effective leader behaviour for departmental leaders. Lumby (2012) concluded from this analysis that 'department leaders need to be pretty much good at everything' (p. 10). Poteigeter et al. (2011) concurred that:

> It is evident … that HoDs need an extensive range of management competencies…. to be able to fulfil their roles as academics, administrators, managers and leaders effectively in the 21st century higher education environment. (p. 96)

A recent study in the UK (Peters & Ryan, 2015, pp. 22-24) identified three aspects of behaviour or 'themes' HE staff reported as necessary for effective leadership in their leaders. Theme 1 centred on managers having the right personal characteristics. This links to a number of Bryman's aspects of leadership including a sense of vision, being considerate, having integrity and consideration. Theme 2 was about relating in the right way and maps to Bryman's sense of collegiality participation and communications. Theme 3 was concerned with representing the group and maps to Bryman's representing the department and acting as a role model. The respondents required their leaders to have the 'strength and skill to drive change, accompanied by the social and moral concerns to ensure it can deliver socially good outcomes' (Peters & Ryan, 2015, p. 22).

Both Bryman (2009) and Peters and Ryan (2015) investigate the role of HoD from an internal departmental perspective. Peters and Ryan (2015) study is based on the 'academic staff's view' only, it is limited and fails to take account of take the 'non-staff' roles that the HoDs undertake. Further, the study fails to consider aspects that staff might be adverse to such as feedback on performance and allocating workloads. A study in the Irish context by O'Sullivan (2014) confirmed that Bryman's effective leadership facets were evident in the work of the participants. The study also concluded that leadership in the HoD has elements of behavioural, contingency, transactional and charismatic leadership. None of the above studies considered the impact that the wider socio–political context has on the role. Table 3.2 below compares the key behaviours of effective Heads of Department identified by these two studies.

Table 3. 2 Behaviours of Effective Heads of Department

Behaviours of Effective Heads of Department	
Bryman (2009)	**Peters and Ryan (2015)**
Clear sense of direction/strategic vision	1. Have the right personal characteristics:
Preparing department arrangements to facilitate the direction set	• vision,
	• courage,
	• positive collegiate, management experience,
Being considerate	• solid people skills,
	• respect, integrity and clarity
Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity	2. Relate in the right way:
	• trust staff
Being trustworthy and having personal integrity	• be inclusive
	• support
	• encourage
Allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions/encouraging open communication	• recognition,
	• develop staff
	• fairness
Communicating well about the direction the department is going	3. Represent the group:
	• promote the department,
Acting as a role model/having credibility	• understand and recognise staff contributions,
Creating a positive/collegial work atmosphere in the department	• have the best interests of staff and department at heart.
Advancing the department's cause with respect to constituencies internal and external to the university and being proactive in doing so	
Providing feedback on performance	
Providing resources for and adjusting workloads to stimulate scholarship and research	
Making academic appointments that enhance department's reputation	

Simkins (2005, p. 10) argues that the discourse that effective leadership can be 'identified, prescribed and replicated' is problematic. He observes that 'what works' in one context may be inappropriate and unhelpful in another (Simkins, 2005). As a

result, he proposes the notion of 'making sense of things' which recognises the importance of specific contexts in the study of leadership in educational settings, with a particular focus on 'the interaction between structure and agency… and how this is mediated by individuals' values, personality and personal history' (Simkins, 2005, p. 19). His study focused on how middle leaders interact with the pressures placed upon them. He identifies four types: the manager who buys in fully to the current discourse of the organisation, its values purpose and policies; others find ways of reconstructing policy which allows them to reconcile their own core values with that of the organisation; others still develop coping strategies to survive; or others sink under the pressure. Simkins concluded that the former two show a clear sense of agency while the latter are regarded as unwilling compliers (2005, p. 19).

In addition to the complex demands of the role some research studies suggest that many departmental heads are in temporary positions and did not, in fact, aspire to be managers or leaders (Bryman, 2007; Henkel, 2011; Preston et al, 2012). A number of other studies have highlighted the poor perception of some academics attributed to leadership and management positions. In the UK, evidence suggests that becoming a HoD is not necessarily perceived as step on the career ladder but rather as a hindrance to a research career (Bryman, 2007).

The following section will further synthesise some key research studies on the role of the HoD which provide a background to the present study.

Head of Department Typology

Key research undertaken by Deem et al. (2000) has helped to highlight a number of important issues linked to how manager academics (a term that includes HoDs) experience their roles. Deem's extensive study was undertaken across a range of universities in the UK and involved staff at different management levels, including Heads of Department.

The data identified three typical routes into management for academics based on the factors that motivated managers in undertaking the role. A small minority were career track managers who took an early–career decision. They liked management

and enjoyed institutional politics. They were often in pursuit of higher salaries or fleeing dissatisfaction with teaching or research. The second group was reluctant managers, usually in a temporary role. Some in this group were pressurised or motivated by a fear that someone else might be more incompetent as HoD. Finally, there was the good citizen motivated by 'repaying a perceived debt to the institution' (2000, p. 3).

The study also explored the range of management practices found in higher education. Manager academics reported that their work consisted of:

> Myriads of meetings formal and informal, mountains of emails and paperwork, seeking new resources and most importantly motivating and persuading colleagues. Many saw themselves as change agents but with little time to reflect, think or plan (Deem et al. (2000, p. 13)

When compared to research undertaken by Floyd and Dimmock (2011) these findings suggest little has changed in the area of leadership development for HoDs in the intervening period. Floyd and Dimmock (2011) in their study investigated the experiences of academics who became Department Heads in a UK university. They used a life history approach and conducted interviews with 17 Heads of Department, from a range of disciplines. The findings from this study suggest that academics who become Department Heads not only need the capacity to assume a range of personal and professional identities, but need flexibility to regularly adopt and switch between them. How individual Department Heads balance and manage these often conflicting identities, exerts a major influence on their experiences of being in the role, and ultimately their career progression plans (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011).

In their study, Floyd and Dimmock devised a three-fold typology of the respondents similar to Deem (2000). The typology was based on the respondent's abilities to balance and manage the multiple identities and roles as HoDs. The first group felt they could successfully manage and balance their multiple identities and associated conflicts – these they termed 'the jugglers.' A second group was fully extended by, but could just about 'cope' with, and accept, the identity conflicts and differences – this group they called 'the copers'. Finally, a third group found great difficulty in accepting, balancing and managing their identities and as a consequence, were

reflecting on the possibility of leaving the HoD role. This group could they termed 'the strugglers'. Table 3.3 below encapsulates the typologies identified by Deem (2000) and Floyd and Dimmock (2011).

Table 3. 3 Typologies of Heads of Department

Typologies of Heads of Department			
Deem et al. (2000)	**Early Career** Enjoy management see as career	**Reluctant** Coerced into role	**Good Citizen** Motivated by paying back institute
Floyd and Dimmock (2011)	**Jugglers** Successfully balance and manage multiple identities and conflicts Seek possible promotion	**Copers** Cope with multiple identities and conflicts Determined and able to stay in role	**Strugglers** Unable to accept, balance or manage multiple identities and conflicts Possible role/career change

The above studies, when added to the more recent international studies, (Fitzgerald, 2009; Pepper and Giles, 2015; Preston and Price, 2012) provide an analysis of the complexity of the multifaceted role. These studies highlight the managerial and operational focus of the role at the cost of leadership, and the necessity for collegiality at the department level. This work together with Smith's (2002, 2005, 2007) research in the UK provide a comprehensive overview of the evolution of the HoD role and how it operates within the demands of current higher education. More recently Davis and Jones (2014) argue for a shift in viewing the leadership aspect of the HoD role as a dynamic and flexible concept viewed through three lenses: context, relationships and activity. While research by Branson et al. (2016) concludes that middle leadership in higher education needs to be understood as a 'highly complex relational endeavour, characterised by compromises that are negotiated amidst leadership structures, hierarchies and relations' (p.128).

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter has considered the current issues and key themes related to the role of HoD in contemporary higher education. Indeed, the literature tends to depict the role of HoD as possibly the most important yet underrated position in higher education in that the HoD is in a position of critical influence on academic staff and can contribute to significant organisational change (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p. 20; Qualter & Willis, 2012). Despite this, much of the current research on Heads of Department generally paints a rather pessimistic picture. This chapter has mapped the changing context of higher education in terms of neo-liberalism and managerialism which is part of the context in which HoDs are located. Within this changed HE landscape, HoDs feel poorly prepared, unsupported and under-resourced for the role of HoDs (Inman, 2011). Further, they have high levels of responsibility and a low level of autonomy (Preston & Price, 2012). It has often been a neglected position, poorly defined, and inconsistently enacted (Bryman, 2007a; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003Pepper & Giles, 2014).

One of the key debates that has emerged is whether the HoD is an academic manager or an academic leader. A repeated theme of this debate is the challenge for HoDs in balancing a leadership role with management functions in a neoliberal context (Bryman, 2007a; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Hellawell & Hancock, 2011; Qualter & Willis., 2012; Scott et al, 2008). As Gordon et al. (2010) made clear, managers in HEIs:

> have to walk the tightrope of engaging groups of staff, many of whom think management is designed to make life more difficult, while avoiding the pitfalls of tyranny or time wasting. (p. 66)

While previous research relating to the HoD in higher education includes, *inter alia*, the implementation of neoliberal tenets in management in the higher education sector (Deem, 2008), the development of HoDs (Inmam, 2011), career trajectories (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011), the changing role of the manager-academic (Deem, 2004; Smith, 2005) and collegiality (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001), there has been relatively little research that has examined specifically the role of HoDs in the Institute of Technology sector in Ireland.

Following a wide-ranging evaluation of research in higher education, Tight (2003) argues that further research is required into the experiences of 'specialist academics, such as those pursuing research careers and those exercising managerial functions' (2003, p. 166). Other authors have identified the need for research into leadership roles in general (Bryman, 2009), and into the role of the academic HoD specifically (Smith, 2005; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011).

Lumby (2012), drawing on Becher's metaphor, suggests that in HEIs there is the onstage public view of activity, backstage micro-political manoeuvrings, and under-stage subversive activity. She suggests much of the current research is focused on the onstage public view; more knowledge of the less publicly visible may be helpful. Alveeson and Sveningsson (2012) contend that the discourse-driven nature of leadership is neglected in most of the literature and research. This study may thus be seen as contributing to these calls by exploring the lived experiences of the HoD in an Irish Institute of Technology.

The study considers the socio-cultural, political and economic discourses as highlighted in the literature which shape the IoT sector in a local and global context. The analysis is also informed by theories and research on leadership and management in HE education, especially middle management positions. Foucault claims that it is the practices, or the way someone acts, that allow the analysis of power, and not the study of the actual person that is important. As such, this study focuses on the HoDs micro practices and perceptions of practice as the factors that are relevant. Thus the study takes into account numerous criticisms of research in higher education for failing to explore the day-to-day life of actors at grass-roots level (Smyth 1995; Trowler, 1998; Marshall, 2012; Lumby, 2012). In Giddens's view (1976, p.16) 'to be able to describe a form of life correctly, including its tensions and ambiguities, the social analyst has to learn what it is "going on" in the activities which constitute that form of life'. It is precisely by examining HoDs' experiences that the study seeks to understand what is really happening at the micro-level and the implications thereof.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the aim of the research and poses the research questions. It explicates the research approach and methodology used to answer the research questions. The methods used for collecting and analysing the data are also discussed. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the ethical issues and the limitations of the research scope and chosen methodology.

Research Questions

The literature review has identified the role of an academic HoD as maintaining a complex and essential middle management role in higher education. Although the role of the HoD has always been important, the current policy and culture shifts, as discussed in the previous chapter, have affected the position; with HoDs now taking on much more strategic leadership roles within their institutions (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003). Changes in funding and greater surveillance and accountability for the quality of teaching have also placed the HoD firmly at the centre of higher education leadership and management.

Despite or perhaps because of this, currently HoDs are in a precarious position in the hierarchy of higher education. They are middle managers caught between the wants and needs of academic students and their department staff on the one hand and the demands of senior management on the other. However, they are the cornerstones of academic leadership and management in higher education (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011) and are in contact with management, academic staff and students on a daily basis. From my own experience as HoD, there are conflicting perceptions of the role. Anecdotally some colleagues consider the increasing demands associated with the role offset the advantages of the position. It is viewed that HoDs take on an increasing amount of management and bureaucratic work while forfeiting the advantages of teaching, academic freedom and collegiality.

On the other hand, senior management perceives HoD as operational managers lacking strategic and leadership skills. While the role of the HoD is acknowledged as being complex and difficult, there are academics including myself, who enjoy the diversity of the role. The question arises however as to how HoDs manage their roles of teaching and research on one hand and leadership and management of the department on the other? Why, despite the perceived difficulty of the role, as explained above, do so many academics actively seek out the role and are satisfied to remain in the position for long periods of their working lives? Is it the diversity and multiplicity of the role that attracts them? Are they in the position to make a difference, exercise power and, if so, what is the nature of that power and difference? This study aims to investigate the role of a Head of Department (HoD) as evidenced in their lived experiences in a selected third level Institute of Technology (IoT) in Ireland. It seeks to explore how HoDs at a selected HEI experience their role and understand leadership with a particular focus on how institutional, socio-cultural and political contexts may have shaped their sense-making. With these aims in mind I propose two overarching research questions.

1. How do Heads of Departments experience their role and, in particular, how do they make sense of their leadership and management of an academic department?

2. How do institutional, socio-cultural and political contexts and discourses, where these HoDs are located, shaped their sense-making about their role?

The research aims and questions inform my choice of research approach in combination with the theoretical and conceptual framework of my study. The following section outlines the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework for Project

Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 13) suggest that the net that contains the researcher's ontological, epistemological and methodological premises may be termed 'an interpretative framework, a basic set of beliefs that guide actions'. The theoretical and methodological framework developed for this study draws on a qualitative

approach and, in particular, the methodological work of Crotty (1998), Bryman (2008) and Creswell (2014). In developing a research proposal, Crotty (1998) suggests that two questions need to be answered: 'what methodologies and methods will be employed (and) how do we justify this choice…?' (p. 2) In order to answer these questions he outlines four basic elements of any research process; epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. Based on Crotty's (1998) classification, the theoretical framework for this study is depicted in Table 4.1. Each aspect of the framework is discussed in the following section.

Table 4. 1 Theoretical Framework for the Study

EPISTEMOLOGY	INTERPRETIVISM
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	**Social Constructionism**

METHODS	**Mixed Methods:**
	
	• Case study (instrumental)
	    ➢ In-depth interviews
	    ➢ Focus group
	• Document analysis
	
	• National Survey
	    ➢ Online Questionnaire

 (Source: Adapted from Crotty, 1998)

Interpretive Epistemology

Although there are a range of different paradigms in education research inquiry, two main paradigms have dominated social science research: the positivist paradigm and the interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Cohen et al., 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Each of these paradigms originates in different philosophical perspectives with differing ontological and epistemological positions.

The positivist paradigm, associated with the modernism movement, contends that there is an objective 'reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood' by a

neutral researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 14). This perspective is also known as the scientific approach and has been the dominant paradigm in scientific research enquiry. It is particularly associated with quantitative research methods in the social sciences and works from 'within a realist and critical realist ontology and objective epistemologies (and relies) on experimental, quasi- experimental, surveys and rigorously defined qualitative methodologies' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). The paradigm asserts that objective scientific accounts of the world are a given. The supreme confidence in science stems from a conviction that scientific knowledge is both accurate and certain which, in turn, gives rise to the belief in the objectivity of science (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 36). It is this paradigm which framed my thinking at the outset of this programme and was the premise of my previous research training.

The interpretative paradigm emerged in response to the problems associated with using a positivist approach in researching human behaviour and social reality (Bryman, 2008; Crotty, 1998; Cohen et al., 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This approach is based on the assumption that the social world cannot be viewed as an objective reality but must be understood in relation to and through the subjective interpretations of human behaviour and experiences (Bryman, 2008; Lincoln et al., 2011). As Gall et al. (2007, p. 21) explain interpretivism is based on the assumption that social reality is constructed by the individuals who participate in it. These "constructions" take the form of interpretations, that is, the ascription of meanings to the social environment. Features of the social environment are not considered to have an existence apart from the meanings that individuals construct for them.

The research literature highlights many different perspectives associated with the interpretative paradigm (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2011; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Punch, 2009). in order to answer the research questions, my understandings of social constructionism, with added layers of postmodernism and Foucault's scholarship, provide the theoretical resources that shape the way in which I conceptualise the study. The following section will discuss the social constructionist perspective.

Social Constructionism – Theoretical Perspective

According to Kayrootz and Trevitt (2004, p. 115) 'theoretical perspectives are like super-structures that dictate the selection and use of methods and, ultimately, the shape of any report on the topics under investigation'. This study adopts a social constructionist paradigm (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, Lincoln et al., 2011). Over the last four decades, social constructionism has emerged and become known as a perspective that aligns with postmodern theories (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015; Hacking, 1999). Burr goes so far as to say that postmodernism is 'the cultural backdrop of social constructionism'(2003, p. 15).

Social constructionism has its origins in sociology and the seminal publication of Berger and Luckmann's, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), although the term derives from the philosophical work of Karl Mannheim and can be found in the writings of Hegel and Marx (Burr, 2015). The social constructionist approach is predicated on the assumption that 'the terms by which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people' (Gergen, 2009, p. 267). Hence, in a broad sense, social constructionism attempts to identify taken-for-granted realities constituted by and through human interactions within social and historical contexts (Burr, 2015; Creswell, 2014, Gergen, 2015; Lincoln et al., 2011).

Social constructionists maintain that as human beings we seek understanding and meaning of the world within which we live and work (Burr, 2015). Meanings are varied and multiple and constructed through interaction with others (hence social constructionism). Our constructions are historically and socially located; as highlighted by Creswell (2009, p. 8) 'we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture.' Burr (2003, pp 3-4) has identified four key tenets of social constructionism. First, social constructionists take a critical stance in relation to taken-for-granted ways of understanding the social world including ourselves. It challenges the view that knowledge is based on objective, unbiased observation of the world. Secondly social constructionists uphold the belief that the ways we understand the world are historically and culturally specific. The particular forms of knowledge that exist are a product of a historical and cultural process of

interaction and negotiation between groups. Thirdly knowledge is sustained by social processes whereby people construct shared knowledge through the interactions and practices of everyday life. Fourthly knowledge and social action are linked. Our constructions of the world are bound up with power relations because they have implications for what is 'permissible for different people to do and how they treat others' (Burr, 2003, p.3).

These underlying assumptions of social constructionism form the theoretical basis for the present study. Thus, they shaped the researcher's perceptions in defining the focus and aims of this study, in designing the method, and in analysing the data.

Social Constructionism and the Present Study

Social constructionism is an appropriate framework for this study because it provides a lens through which the experiences of HoDs can be understood in all the complexity of their lived experiences. The focus of social constructionist enquiry is on the process of interaction, multiple perspectives and the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants (Bryman,2012; Cohen et al, 2011; Cresswell, 2009).

Creswell (2009, p. 9) summarising Crotty's (1998) work has identified a number of assumptions of social constructionist research:

- Human beings construct meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting
- Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective – thus, researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally
- The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community.

In addition to Burr's tenets, outlined above, Crotty's assumptions guided the research. Of importance in this research was how HoDs interpret their experiences, and not whether their reports accurately reflect 'reality'. The HoD's world of work cannot be explained in isolation but with reference to context, temporality, interaction with others and individual meaning (Creswell, 2009). Thus,

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participants in this study have their own unique and multiple perspectives, depending on such contexts as gender, discipline, nature of employment and career path. They also have shared perspectives with other participants because of their shared context and work experiences such as the wider educational landscape, institutional context, role and responsibilities for staff and students. Thus, social constructionism provides the researcher with a set of lenses that enforces an awareness of the social, cultural and political contexts where HoDs are located.

In order to explore and understand the meanings that the research participants have constructed, I studied the participants in their (and my own) local work environment. I sought to understand and make sense of the role of HoD through the participants and in this way attempted to co-construct the realities of the role. Thus, this study was conducted in the natural setting of a HEI. As a social constructionist researcher, the intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings and constructions that HoDs have about their world of work. A social constructionist framework therefore, allows the researcher, to remain flexible and open regarding the experiences of both the participants and the researcher. The purpose of this research was not to gather facts, but rather to gain insight into the lived experiences of HoDs. Furthermore, social constructionists recognise the engagement of both research participant and researcher as co-creators of a shared reality. The researcher considers that by constructing a space of understanding, respect and curiosity as a co-participant in the meaning-generating process, he can explore the complex lived reality of a HoD.

Grounded in a social constructionist perspective, I also draw on key concepts from postmodernism and, in particular, Foucault's work, which altogether enable me to examine the role of the HoD as socially constructed and discursive. In the next section, I elaborate on postmodernist conceptions of discourse, power and the subjects which were key guiding concepts throughout this study.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a predominant intellectual movement in social theory in recent years, arising from the work of a number of French philosophers including Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. It is not a perspective that lends itself easily to accurate, clearly articulated theoretical definition. Described as a 'most slippery of terms' (Crotty, 1998, p.183), postmodernism is a 'contested terrain' which is complex and multiform, resisting reductive and simplistic explanation (Usher & Edwards, 1994). Although there is a major problem in trying to find a single definition of postmodernism (Burke, 2000), it can be seen as a movement that developed out of the need to challenge scientific knowledge, empiricism and power structures embedded in modernity (Seidman, 1994). Postmodernism has been described as the move away from the homogeneity, singularity, predictability and objectivist principles so highly valued by modernism towards a social consciousness of multiple belief systems and multiple perspectives (Best & Kellner, 1991; Hicks, 2011; Seidman, 1994; Smart, 1993).

Postmodernism is based on the premise that no one true reality exists and it rejects the belief of an absolute truth (Hicks, 2011; Seidman, 1994). For Lyotard (1979) the grand narrative of modern knowledge has lost its credibility. Thus postmodern knowledge is opposed to metanarratives, "grand schemes of legitimation" and "philosophies of history, and any form of totalizing thought" (p. 10). Postmodernists argue that the grand narratives of emancipation, progress, and human freedom on which modernity was based turned out to be inadequate, misleading, unable to predict the direction of the social world, and did not provide a sense of security and freedom (Best & Kellner, 1991; Hicks, 2011).

Postmodernists dispute the belief that scientific knowledge is value-free and objective. While they recognise that all knowledge claims are partial, local, specific and are always imbued with power and normative interests. As Usher and Edwards (1994) explain 'in postmodernity there is a rejection of universal foundations of knowledge and a heightened awareness of the significance of language, discourse and socio-cultural locatedness in making any knowledge-claim' (p. 10).

Usher and Edwards further argue that, 'a multiplicity of perspectives is what most characterises postmodernism' (p.26). It affirms that as humans we inhabit different 'realities' that are socially constructed and therefore may differ radically across time, context and culture (Best & Kellner, 1991; Smart, 1993). Thus postmodernism suggests that we should be sceptical of any 'truth' claims that proffer a single interpretation, as many alternative accounts or explanations, may be possible. Thus, from a postmodern perspective, all stories or 'realities' do not have equal authenticity.

In postmodern approaches, individual identity is not clearly and unambiguously defined, rather it shifts over time and is generally considered unfixed. According to Usher and Edwards (1994) postmodernists adopt the idea of a self, constructed in relationships. As Gergen (2015, p. 88) explains: 'We play such a variety of roles that the very concept of an authentic self" with knowable characteristics recedes from view'. Consequently a postmodern view describes multiple selves that are socially constructed through increasingly varied and constantly changing relationships and contexts

In terms of research postmodernists have contributed to the understanding that there is no clear 'window into the inner life of an individual. Any gaze is always 'filtered' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). These filters include the lenses of gender, social class, language and culture. Consequently, as a researcher, I cannot objectively observe and come to know 'the truth' of' the world of HoDs. All my observations and analysis are socially situated and constructed between me and the participants which is also consistent with a social constructionist perspective. In addition, participants' accounts produced during the research should be understood as co-constructed accounts between two speakers—the interviewer and interviewee.

Foucault's Concepts of Discourse and Power
Researchers working with a postmodernist lens often draw on the concept of discourse, as developed by Foucault, as a conceptual tool to analyse the production of knowledge and power or certain ways of thinking and being in the world. Throughout his academic career, Foucault studied discourses, including discourses

of mental illness (1965), delinquency (1979), and sexuality (1978), inquiring into how they have been socially and historically produced, sustained and transformed over time. Foucault's project was to find a space beyond traditional scientific or theoretical positions, from which he could subject these positions to critique:

> I tried to explore scientific discourse not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse. (Foucault, 1980, p. 53)

The concept of discourse was introduced by Foucault as an attempt to understand the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. Discourses consist of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organising social institutions and processes. Foucault theorised the concept of discourse as a material practice and a form of knowledge which enables and constrains us to think and act in certain ways (Ball, 2013; McNay, 1994). Numerous discourses surround any event, object or subject and each strives to construct it in a certain way with claims to truth and knowledge (Seidman, 1994). Each discourse constitutes an intelligible way of thinking about social reality—a certain way of being in the world. At the same time, it also undermines and marginalises other ways of thinking, making them unintelligible. Burr (2003, p. 75) notes that discourses are deeply connected to institutional and social practices that have a profound effect on how we live our lives, on what we can do and on what can be done to us.

However, Foucault warns us that:

> To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies… [D]iscourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders its fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 1978, p. 101)

Researchers working with a postmodernist lens use discourse as a conceptual tool to analyse the constitutive production of knowledge, or certain ways of thinking and being in the world. In this process, they foreground the taken-for-granted assumptions often viewed as 'truth' within a particular social and historical context

(Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). Kendall and Wickham (1999, p.42) point to a series of questions that researchers can ask through this analytic process: "How does discourse function? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social effects? These questions enable us to investigate not only dominant discourses and their social processes, but also resistances and other possibilities for thinking, practising and be(com)ing in the world.

Power Relations

As discussed earlier, in Chapter 3, Foucault developed a detailed analysis of the emergence and operations of modern forms of power across a number of specific fields. In contrast to more traditional notions of power, Foucault conceptualises power as not something that is possessed, or that exists as a form of repression or domination. According to Foucault, power is a relation between individuals or groups of individuals, not a thing held or owned by individuals to be used. Power is something that is exercised, or is 'a set of actions upon other actions' (Foucault 2002, p. 341). Power, then is not essentially repressive; it is not possessed. Kendall and Wickham (1999, p.50) suggest we should think of power not as an attribute (and ask 'What is it?') but as an exercise (and ask 'How does it work'?).

Foucault's work analyses the forms of power that are applied in everyday life;

> This form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and have others recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. (Foucault, 1994, p. 331)

Foucault uses the term subject to refer to two things: first, subject to someone else's control and dependence; and second, tied to one's own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. According to Foucault, the subject is constituted and shaped by and through various discourses that are intimately linked to social structures and practices (Foucault, 1994, p. 331). The subject is placed in complex sets of power relations and it is these relations that need analysis. The HoD, for instance, is constituted through intersecting discourses as they subject others (for example, lecturers and students) through their actions and they are also the target of and

subjected to particular leadership, managerialist and disciplinary practices and discourses themselves (Niesche, 2013).

Following this line of thought, Foucault encourages us to look at power as not only negative/oppressive, but also positive/generative (Foucault, 1979). He claims that 'where there is power, there is resistance' and 'consequently this resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power' (Foucault 1981, p. 95). It is in the relational character of power relationships that Foucault highlights a multiplicity or plurality of points of resistance. That is, they are present everywhere in the networks of power. The importance of Foucault's conceptualisation of resistance lies in the idea that resistance operates as a part of power, not in opposition to it or against it. In this way power 'enables certain possibilities to become actualities in a way that excludes other possibilities' (Adler & Gundersen, 2007, p. 129).

However, Foucault's politics of possibility offers us a new way of thinking about, and theorising, how individuals can take up competing discourses and narratives (as discursive resources), through the exercise of power and resistance, to (re)constitute their (version of) realities as well as their identities and subjectivities (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). This way of understanding opens up a new space for investigating, not only dominant discursive resources, but also other competing discourses available to individuals that enable them to exercise power and provide opportunities for resistance.

Postmodernism and the Present Study

Altogether, my understandings of social constructionism, with added layers of postmodernism and Foucault's scholarship, provide theoretical resources that shape the way in which I conceptualise the study. I explore the role of HoDs through their account of their lived experiences using the conceptual tools of discourse and power. I believe that these theoretical resources help me to examine the role of HoDs in their current context. Working with a postmodernist lens in this study, discourse is used as a tool to analyse how knowledge is produced and how HoDs are constituted as subjects within the world of work. This was done through a review at a macro – level of key policy documents in Irish higher education and IoT sector, as well as

analysis of the literature and interviews with participants. In connection with this study key questions arise as to what discourses prevail and why do they prevail about the purpose of higher education. What leadership and management models are dominant in higher education and how do these discourses impact on the way HoDs come to understand and enact their role on a daily basis?

As Foucault claims it is the practices, or the way someone acts, that allow the analysis of power, and not the study of the actual person that is important. As such, this study focuses on the HoDs micro – practices as the factors that are relevant. I understand HoDs are subjects who work within contradictory and complementary discourses, which is reflected in their middle management position. In relaying their experiences of the role, they draw on the competing discourses such as managerialism and collegiality, higher education, management and leadership, to construct their positions in relation to the roles. In this way, their identities are continuously (re)constructed according to what their perception of what is feasible within their specific context and also in relation to me as an inside researcher. Postmodern views on discourse, power and subject enabled me to explore these competing discourses and the impact of power relations on the role.

Research Methodology and Design

The research methodology defines what the activity of the research is, how it proceeds, how progress is measured and what constitutes success. It is a way of thinking about and studying social reality; about how we know the world, or gain knowledge of it (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2009). The justification for the methodology for this study draws from the epistemological and theoretical perspectives previously discussed. Although social constructionism (including postmodernist thinking) does not necessarily suggest a particular methodological practice, most researchers adopting this perspective draw on qualitative methodologies (Burr, 2015; Holstein & Gubrium, 2011). Broadly, qualitative researchers are concerned with people's subjective experiences, how they think and feel about certain phenomena, in specific contexts (Alvesson, 2002; Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2013; Lincoln et al., 2011).

Macdonald et al. (2002) contend that what distinguishes social constructionists (with a postmodernist orientation) from other interpretivist researchers are the types of questions they ask, the ways they collect and interpret data and the conclusions they derive from the analysis. Broadly, this group of researchers do not view data as representing a particular reality; rather, they are interested in 'the discursive resources…the interviewee (and the interviewer) draw on to constitute themselves as subjects and the consequences of this in terms of power and their social and cultural positioning and responses' (Macdonald et al., 2002, p. 143). In this study I am interested in the discursive resources HoDs draw on to constitute themselves as certain kinds of leaders and managers in their professional contexts in the IoT Higher Education landscape.

As Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 4) suggest 'qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand' producing a 'bricolage' of practices. A case study approach is the main method adopted for this research because of the focus of the research. A case study is a well-established research method where the focus is on a real life case of an individual person, a group, a setting, or an organisation (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2009; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). In this research, the case is the institution and also the individual HoDs working within it. The case study approach is effective because it 'investigates and reports the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289), while acknowledging that the researcher has limited control over issues the research questions attempt to explore (Yin, 2009).

A social constructionist approach to case study research supports a transactional method of inquiry, where the researcher has a personal interaction with the case, in this study through interviewing (Hyett et al., 2014, p. 2). As Stake notes the work of the case researcher is to identify "coherence and sequence" (2005, p. 444) of the activities within the boundaries of the case as patterns. The case needs to be organised around issues – complex, situated, problematic relationships – and questions around these issues will help deepen the theme of the case. Stake (2005)

argues that the contexts of the case, whether they are social, economic, political, or ethical, are important to consider, and they "go a long way toward making relationships understandable" (p. 449). Adopting a social constructionist lens Stake contends that "The researcher digs into meanings, working to relate them to contexts and experience. In each instance, the work is reflective" (p. 450). He also rebuffs the notion of generalisability in case study research, "The purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case … the utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience" (1994, p. 245). In summary, a case study method is selected for this study because it can generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue (role of HoDs) in its real-life context (Stake, 2005: Yin, 2009).

Stake (2005) differentiates between two main types of case study, intrinsic and instrumental. An intrinsic case study method is used when the intent is to better understand the case. Research is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in 'all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest' (Stake, 1994 p. 237). In an instrumental case study, the case itself is of secondary importance to understanding a particular phenomenon. This study uses an instrumental case study that seeks to gain insights into the phenomenon of the world of work of HoDs. This is done through exploring the role in a site specific context, my own institute. This is then complemented by the National Survey of HoDs within the IoT sector (as described in the following chapter). The research on the role of HoD is based on my genuine interest to understand the lived experience of HoDs in this type of higher education institute drawing on and acknowledging my own positioning as a practitioner in this setting.

In this study the case institute is confined to one Institute of Technology. As noted earlier, the institution reflects features typical of IoTs within the Irish higher education sector:

- It is essentially a teaching focused institute but wishes to increase its research capacity and reputation in response to policy pressures

- It has a broad range of academic courses on offer, but is attempting to re-focus this academic offer by concentrating on niche areas
- It is going through a period of structural re-organisation aligned to a possible merger with another IoT, subsequent to applying for Technological University status
- There is an increasing emphasis on level 10 (Doctoral) qualifications among the academic staff through a combination of existing staff upskilling and a Level 10 recruitment policy in line with the requirements for Technological University status
- It is a medium sized Institute (approx. 7,200 students) and has a diverse student body, which has increased in recent years
- It has seven departments in place across three academic schools (Science, Engineering and Business & Humanities) and a thriving Life Long Learning section, each with their own unique working culture and practice
- Most HoD appointments across the case institute are permanent, although recently the trend has changed to appointments on a contract basis.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study are Heads of Department at the case institute. At the time of the study, there are seven HoDs, three female and four male. Three HoDs have permanent contracts, three have part-time contracts. One HoD has returned to his teaching post having spent a year in the role. All but two of the participants have spent their working life in academia.

Although seven participants may be viewed as a small sample, it represents 100% of the people in the role in this case institute. Prior to this, I interviewed one HoD from outside of the case institute and completed a National Survey of HoDs (as described later).

All participants were contacted by email inviting them to be involved in the study. The email and letters of consent are in Appendix 2. They follow guidelines put forward by Gall et al. (2007) and were worded in such a way to ensure that the participants were not put under any undue pressure. I attached a participant

information sheet (see Appendix 2) for each participant. An overview of the participants is presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4. 2 Overview of Research Participants

No.	School	Years in Academia	Years as HoD	Professional Background
1	Business	10	6	Academic
2	Science	20	10	Academic
3	Engineering	8	2.5	Academic
4	Science	15	1.5	Academic
5	Engineering	10	1.0	Engineer
6	Business	15	3.5	Academic
7	Engineering	2	0.75	Engineer

Collection of Data

In order to collect the necessary data to answer the research questions the process involved five phases:

1. A documentary analysis of key policy documents from outside of the case institute including the Department of Higher Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority. From inside the case institute, Strategic Plan was reviewed and analysed together with a documentary analysis of policy statements, job specification and guidelines for HoDs in the IoT, tracking the current form and its evolution on an ongoing basis through the study. This approach drew on the discourse analysis of Foucault described earlier.

2. An online based National Survey was designed and emailed to all HoDs in the Irish IOT sector in June 2015. As discussed earlier, surveys have a long history in research in education and in this case are useful for information in representative, sometimes national samples (Desimone and Lefloch, 2004, p. 2). They lend themselves to being online and using software packages as this method is environmentally friendly, cost effective, enables ease of participation and facilitates analysis and interpretation (Gill et al., 2013, p.

1322). Although surveys can provide reliable and valid data, there is a need for careful piloting and design. When combined with a case study, this can increase the quality of the information collected in a study (Desimone & Lefloch, 2004, p. 4; Gill et al., 2013).

3. One semi-structured interview with a HoD outside of the case institute was conducted as a pilot interview in January 2016. This enabled me to pilot the draft interview guide and gather useful insights from a former HoD in the IoT sector (as described below).

4. Face-to-face, one-to-one interviews with seven Heads of Department in the case institute were conducted between April and June 2016. This number is consistent with the recommended number of interviewees, from 5 to 25, needed to understand a phenomenon through the experiences of individuals, such as the world of work of HoDs (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative interviews give insights to the stated perceptions, opinions, experiences and beliefs of interviewees.

5. A focus group with HoDs in the case institute to discuss initial findings of interview and survey data was held in March 2017. Focus groups are often used in this way as a combination with other methods. The most frequent pairing for focus groups is with in-depth interviews as happened in this study (Cohen et al., 2011).

National Survey

The purpose of the survey was to provide a profile of HoD's background and experiences nationally. It also helped inform the case study interviews and acted as an opportunity to compare and contrast the findings across the mixed methods used.

An online National Survey using Survey Monkey was conducted in June 2015 with Heads of Department in 12 of the Institutes of Technology in Ireland. An online survey was used in order to facilitate ease of response amongst busy colleagues. This was done cognisant of the fact that the response rates for online surveys can vary considerably (James, 2007). There are approximately 120 HoDs in the IOT structure in Ireland and 41 HoDs (35%) responded.

The questionnaire was adapted from similar surveys conducted in Australia (Scott et al., 2008) and the United Kingdom (Smith, 2002). Initially an Australian survey (Scott et al, 2008) was reviewed and questions were adapted from those areas relevant to the HoD role in Ireland, such as major areas of focus in the role, effective performance in the role, influences shaping the role, personal capabilities, interpersonal capabilities, skills and knowledge required for the role. Questions were also adopted from a British survey by Smith (2002) on size of department and work load which were deemed appropriate to the Irish context. I reviewed both survey for gaps from an Irish perspective as the surveys were over ten years old. Items such as quality assurance, health and safety were included under aspects of the work. Each section had an open question at the end. The online questionnaire contained 25 questions and took 25-35 minutes to complete. The questionnaire was designed and piloted by a former HoD in the case institute with mainly a 5-point itemised rating scale for collecting responses. In line with a qualitative approach, open–ended questions were also included.

The population of the survey was all Heads of Department in the IoT sector in Ireland. The list of HoDs was compiled by searching the websites of the Institutes of Technology. Where the websites did not yield the email address of the HoD, contact was made with a known person within the Institute. Where this was not possible the researcher contacted a fellow HoD in the relevant Institute who agreed to forward the survey to their colleagues by email. I subsequently followed up with a phone call or a direct email to the HoD concerned.

The survey was forwarded by email to the HoDs in the Institutes nationally on June 8th 2015. This was followed up by further reminders on 16th June and 23rd June 2015. A final reminder was posted in September 2015. Following this, there were no responses from one IoT. Again, I contacted one of the HoDs who I knew in this Institute and asked her/him to circulate the survey. This elicited 3 replies which represented 50% of the HoD cohort in the IoT.

Of the estimated 120 Heads of Department in the Institutes, 41 completed the online survey, giving a response rate of 35%. Of the 41 returned questionnaires, 33 were

completed and 8 were incomplete. With regard to the latter, any questions which were answered are reflected in the survey findings. In the following sections, subheadings from the questionnaire are used to collate the responses to questions. The percentage responses are calculated on the basis of n = 41, unless otherwise stated.

All IoTs contacted responded to the survey. The highest response rate was six HoDs from one Institute and the lowest was one. The largest group, noted above, I contacted directly, the lowest was done through a gatekeeper. However, as previously indicated, in another Institute, I contacted all HoDs directly, received no replies and when I contacted a HoD in the IoT, I received three replies (50%). Hence, direct contact from gatekeepers and those within an Institute seems to prompt the highest response rate. However, the general emails which I disseminated did prompt a good response rate for an online unsolicited survey to a group of busy professionals.

In-depth Interviews in Case Institute

Traditionally, the research interview has been viewed as an unproblematic method for collecting qualitative data (Ezzy, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Researchers working from positivistic and post-positivistic paradigms often take for granted the relational dynamics between interviewer and interviewee (Scheurich, 1995). They tend to understate the complexity and ambiguity of human interaction, which are inevitably present in the research interview. Scheurich (1995) warns us that researchers and their participants usually have different motivations, consciously or unconsciously, to be involved in the study. Their power relations are always at stake and constantly negotiated during the interview session. The language out of which the questions are constructed, he argues, 'is not bounded or stable; it is persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time' (Scheurich, 1995, p. 240).

For that matter, participants' accounts produced during the interviews should be understood as co-constructed accounts between two speakers - the interviewer and interviewee. In the co-construction of narrative accounts, I contributed mainly

through asking questions, clarifying words and sentences and occasionally paraphrasing. I was also central in transcribing and analysing the interviews as research data. My awareness of the relationality of qualitative interviews prompted me to be mindful about what I can claim as individuals' data; and how to (re)present my situatedness within their accounts in a way that recognises the complex and ambiguous conditions of the interview.

A qualitative interview can be applied to diverse topics, research designs, and analytical approaches (Bryman, 2008). For this study, I attempted to understand how HoDs in an Irish HEI make sense of, and talk about, their own experiences in the context of their professional lives. Rather than focusing on what actually happened in 'reality', I was more interested in exploring what made it possible for these HoDs to construct themselves as particular kinds of academic leaders and managers. The interviews in the case study institute followed the process as outlined by Creswell (2013, pp. 163-166) which included deciding on the research questions, the interviewees, the type of interview and the recording procedures; designing the interview protocol, including location, good interview procedures and completion of consent forms; refining questions as appropriate.

Semi-Structured Interview

The interviews were semi-structured covering the key research questions informed by the themes arising in the literature, the feedback from the National Survey of HoDs and the initial semi-structured interviews. The questions were open-ended to allow for reflection and considered responses (see Appendix 1 for the interview schedule). The interviews were sufficiently flexible to allow for unintended consequences and were updated throughout the interviews to reflect areas not originally thought of by the interviewer. Among the issues that arose was the issue of power and how it was interpreted. I had spoken to some of the earlier participants about the issue of power, but was getting a non-committal or indeed a confused response. I changed this in later interviews using the phrase 'what you can control and what you cannot control' and developed the theme from there. Another issue that arose early in the interviews to my surprise was the positive impact that the

processes and systems had on the day-to-day work. In later interviews, I explored this theme at greater length.

Consent

The interviews took place over a couple of months between April and June 2016. I had previously contacted all my colleagues by email in February 2016 asking them would they consent to be interviewed. I followed this up by a conversation with each HoD in relation to the study. All agreed to participate. One HoD had a lot of queries about the nature of the questions, the storage of the information and its confidentiality. All these concerns were allayed and s/he was satisfied to participate in the study. Following these meetings which were completed by early March, I forwarded to each participant, by email, a broad outline of the study together with the overarching theme areas that would give rise to the questions. I started the interviews in late April. I first contacted each participant and looked for a mutually convenient date and looked for them to set aside 60-90 minutes. Once the date and time were agreed, usually one week in advance, I sent the participant a copy of my previous email with the details of my interview. This was appreciated by the participants as it brought to their mind the issues again and it allowed them time to think about the role prior to the interview. Over the next couple of months I interviewed all my internal colleagues, roughly one a week with a couple of breaks. I used three different types of recording devices: a tape recorder, a digital recorder and my phone.

Interview Process

During the interviews I was aware of how participants perceive me as their audience and interviewer, which contributes to the ways in which they construct narrative accounts with, and for, me (Alvesson, 2003; Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Perhaps I could have been seen like an insider (somebody who understands the context of HE and the role of HoD) and/or an outsider (a doctoral research student who was located outside of their department and institute). Acknowledging that I was an 'audience' as well as a 'researcher' enabled me to be more attentive to the issues of voice, representation and interpretive authority that are inseparable from data analysis and research writing (Denzin, 2001).

Several authors suggest different interview techniques to produce good quality data from the interview process (Gibbs, 2008; Kvale, 2008). I attempted to incorporate these techniques into the study by asking one question at a time, probing relevant areas and not interrupting the participants. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The transcribed interviews were reviewed with informants for reliability (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 6). Cohen et al. (2011) caution that at this stage 'there is a potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity' (p. 426). As such, I made notes during the interview and listened to the audio recording repeatedly for tone and inflection and emphasis of the participant together with pauses and silences. As Shopes (2011) states 'sometimes, meaning can be construed from what is not said, from silences in an interview' (p. 458). The interviews took place face-to-face and in an agreed suitable and comfortable space which allowed for informal communication, including body language. Given that these interviews took place in a work setting, I ensured that interactions from outside such as telephone calls were avoided and distractions were minimised.

The structure of the interviews changed during the process whereby some questions or the order of them changed (as described earlier). As previously indicated, I recorded all interviews using an audio machine, which I have used in previous interviews with 100% success. The interviews lasted, with one exception, between 55 and 65 minutes. I used the external interview with a HoD from another IoT to pilot test the questions. Prior to the interview I requested that the participants complete the consent forms.

Focus Group

A follow-up focus group of the HoDs was held almost one year (March 2017) after the original individual interviews, to discuss themes that emerged from the face-to-face interviews. It explored gaps that emerged following the thematic review, together with different views on themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The themes were put together through re-reading the findings chapters, using a process of open and axial coding, extracting the key themes and piloting the themes with critical friends. These key themes were important in that the participants

were focused on the issues when they arrived and it also allowed the group to move easily from one topic to another.

The themes identified included power, influence and collegiality; managing and leading; external drivers of change within the departments; attractions to and affordances and constraints of the role; impact of bureaucracy.

Participants of Focus Group

This focus group was attended by four of the original seven participants in the semi-structured interviews. It was impractical to have all of the original HoDs at the focus group. No date suited all participants, so I picked on a date and time that suited the majority of the HoDs. One HoD had been internally promoted to a Senior Management post and had been replaced. My dilemma was should s/he be part of the focus group as now that s/he was part of Senior Management, how would impact on the discussion with the HoDs? My sense of it and in general conversation with the HoDs was that as s/he was held in very high esteem by them and it wouldn't impact unfavourably on them. In any event s/he was unavailable at the time of the focus group so that solved the dilemma. My follow-on issue with this was should I invite the replacement to the focus group. I decided against this as s/he had not been part of the initial interviews and s/he is very new to the post. This number is at the lower end of what Morgan (1988, p. 43) deems sufficient for a focus group but due to availability less than four would not have worked in this case study.

Consent

The participants had agreed to do the focus group on three separate occasions, first an indicative agreement at the end of the initial semi-structured interviews in 2016, secondly, informed consent three weeks before the date of the focus group and finally, agreeing in a final confirmation the day before the focus group itself. Prior to the focus group, all participants signed a consent form and were given the key themes that were going to be discussed.

Initially, I had intended to run the focus group on a Thursday. However, as one of the four participants had to pull out of the meeting the day before I asked the other participants would they switch the date which they all kindly agreed to do.

Meeting Protocol

Focus groups are not without their drawbacks, particularly with a group as low as four. They may produce little information, the number of topics might be limited, one voice might dominate or there may be major disagreement within the group (Bryman, 2008, p. 489; Cohen et al, 2011, p. 437).

I addressed these issues by ensuring that all the key topics were discussed. No voice dominated and it was more a difference in emphasis rather than disagreement in the group which is not a surprise given that the group know each other so well. In fact, there was an element of the participants feeling the need to explain their positions to each other, giving deeper insights into data (Morgan, 1996, p. 139).

One of the chief concerns I had was whether the participants would be as forthcoming in the focus group as they were in the one-on-one situation. There is a level of vulnerability in exposing your thoughts and ideas among your peers and the level of confidentiality that can be maintained within a group of five (four participants and myself) people. The fact that all the HoDs know each other well and that we have so many meetings in the HoD Forum together, there was a basic comfort within the group and whilst it took a while for the discussion to get going, all participants contributed to the discussion.

This meeting took place in a quiet meeting room in the IoT far away from the main work of the participants. Also, the timing of the meeting was important, 3pm, as this is traditionally a quiet time of the evening and there was less likelihood of the HoDs being called away unexpectedly and if the focus group went beyond one hour it would not be a problem. Recording was done with three devices: my phone, an audio device and a recording device specifically made for recording such groups. Once the recordings were downloaded, they were transcribed and forwarded to the participants for any clarifications they may have had.

Whilst I was confident with the 'richness' or the 'thick description' of the data that was collected in the semi-structured interviews, the focus group with the participants provided the opportunity to discuss my analysis of their first interviews and to seek the participants' views about the themes that had emerged.

Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data is a 'reflexive, reactive interaction between the researcher and the decontextualized data that are already interpretations of a social encounter' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 427). I analysed the data manually to identify key themes. Central to this process as Stake describes, is reflectivity, whereby the researcher is 'committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and recording' (2005, p. 150). This included reducing the data by using coding and thematic techniques as described by Creswell (2014), Gibbs (2008), Miles et al. (2013) and Silverman (2010).

Initial Thoughts and Reflections

Analysis started in the interview process when brief notes were made during the taped conversations. These notes highlighted any particularly interesting details. After each interview, within 24 hours I did a reflective piece on each participant. Likewise, I did a reflective piece on the focus group after 24 hours. These reflections allowed me to look at my review of the interviews, see what went right and wrong and allowed me to improve on my techniques. It also allowed me to look at my colleagues in a different way. As they were very honest in their comments, I recognised that all HoDs brought particular strengths and weaknesses to the role.

Transcription

The interviews were then transcribed. I had tried using Dragon Software to see if it would translate the spoken word to text but this proved too difficult. Because of time constraints, I employed a professional transcriber from a different location to the case study institute to maintain confidentiality. I then checked the transcript against the tape recording to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. Once this process was complete, I forwarded a copy of the transcript to the participant to check for any

errors or personal information that they did not wish to appear in the final transcription. No participant requested a change to any of the transcripts.

Use of Coding Software

Once the necessary changes were made to the data, I printed out the transcript and began to analyse the data. The data was analysed using a software package. Nvivo was the software tool of choice for the following reasons:

1. It is the software package of choice in the case institute.
2. Other researchers in my institute had used Nvivo and there were training seminars on its use.
3. The college was offering ongoing support for the system.
4. It was quite similar to the software package used in Maynooth University, MAXqda, and the learning there was very positive.

One of the key advantages of using a software programme was the ability to manage, code and retrieve texts with sophisticated searching (Gibbs, 2007, p. 106). By continually referring back to the transcript interviews, I was able to remain close to the data and avoid becoming too reliant on the coding structure through the software, as outlined by Gibbs (2007, p. 106). This involved making sense of the words and what implications the words had in relation to the research topic. Using two screens on the computer, I was able to move between the transcripts and the Nvivo software coding as I went. The data was systematically analysed, question by question, and participant by participant. I waited until all the interviews had been transcribed before commencing this analysis. This allowed all responses to be considered equally and treated fairly. Each transcript was read through twice during this process.

Coding

The initial coding gave rise to 100 separate nodes. This initial coding process had two advantages. It helped to deeply familiarise me with the interviews again as I had not engaged with some of earlier ones in over two months. It also helped me to get a broad feel for the key themes as expressed by the participants across all the interviews. In coding subsequent interviews, I was able to recall similar comments

on previous interviews. Where this happened I noted it on the transcript hard copy to return to the initial interview at a later stage. While coding from the screen, I retained the hard copy for making notes and linking themes by other participants during the coding process.

Having completed my initial coding, I then proceeded to review the nodes, node by node theme by theme. There were a number of reasons for this, the two key ones being:

1.   Searching for inappropriate references.
2.   Searching for themes, areas or nodes that were incomplete.

Emerging Themes

Where possible I started to group the nodes into overarching themes. While this required further refinement, I was also able to look at linking the areas. Establishing the hierarchy of themes proved difficult and required more thought and work, for example, the boundaries, relationships and influences between issues of strategy, research and the TU process. There was no doubt that they are linked but the aspect of what becomes the key issue took more time and consideration to resolve. The concept of TU is key but it is in so many areas. I made it a subset of Strategic areas, but it could as easily be related to Political, Economic or Social Issues. This process enabled me to reduce my key nodes by 51, which were now subsets of nodes higher up the hierarchy of nodes (Gibbs, 2008).

I reread the interviews again to ensure that the comments had been reflected properly in the emerging themes and to ensure that all relevant comments in relation to the themes were included. This reflected the iterative nature of the coding process.

I then commenced looking for gaps and weaknesses in the emerging themes. I identified gaps or weaknesses in themes, initially within the software package as analyses and subsequently, I reviewed the individual interviews again to ensure that their comments on the emerging themes were properly reflected.

Findings

Once this work was completed, I commenced writing my first draft of the 'Findings' Chapter. As part of this process I drew on the work of Creswell (2014), Gibbs (2008) and Miles et al. (2013) to guide me in managing the themes. My initial findings draft was one chapter. It is now four, based on themes and within a rough chronological format. After my initial draft, I made many revisions. The continuation of developing key themes resumed. A key lens I used was 'positionality and power'. Looking for aspects of power were difficult to find as it is a complex and diffuse concept. Again, I went back to Nvivo and re-examined the quotes under various headings, to ensure that I had represented the comments accurately and had not missed anything significant. I noticed a few things and included them. For instance, I might have included a quote from Participant A but a quote from Participant B was more relevant or made the point more explicitly.

There are also natural overlaps between some of the themes and this meant deciding where to insert the quote or the idea. An example of this is the whole area of power, control and autonomy, which infiltrates practically all aspects of the findings although well masked. I reviewed these key words through the Nvivo tree (See Appendix 4) to ensure that I picked up all aspects of key themes and words.

Use of Participants

Some participants were being used much more than others. This created an initial dilemma for me as I thought that I should give roughly the same amount of say to all participants. However, it was clear from the transcripts that some interviews were more relevant than others to my emerging themes and as such this was a natural consequence. This is acknowledged throughout the findings chapter in relevant sections. Two of the participants are used sparingly throughout the process, one having left the role and the other was strong on generalisations but not on specifics despite my probing.

National Survey

I then weaved the results of the National Survey into the Findings. However, this proved to be problematic. A lot of the rich findings from the National Survey

appeared to get lost. I revised the Findings and presented a separate chapter (Chapter 5) on the survey. This was then used to contrast and compare with the case study interviews in the Discussion chapter (Chapter 10).

Focus Group

The results from the focus group were then weaved into the Findings bringing new views to bear on existing themes and expanding in some cases themes that were only marginal in the semi-structured interviews.

Themes Emerging from Research

The themes identified drew on the theoretical resources afforded by social constructionism and postmodernist concepts. I was aware that my use of 'theme' may invoke a reductionist attempt to fit all the individuals' accounts into a neat thematic category, assuming that the reader will make sense of it the same way – this was not my intention. Rather, I use themes in this study as a helpful tool to organise my interpretations of participants' accounts. In so doing, I acknowledge that each theme is open to multiple interpretations by different readers and also consists of attributes that may overlap with one another.

As signalled earlier, my own positioning inevitably influenced how, and what sense, I made of the accounts. Through this ongoing and iterative process I looked for not only commonalities but also disjunctions and contradictions within and across participants' talk (Gibbs, 2008; Miles et al., 2013.) The categorisation of themes was derived from overarching patterns in relation to how participants constructed their accounts of their experiences as well as my understandings from the literature I reviewed.

Limitations of the Research

The main limitations of the research were the small sample of seven participants in the study and the limitations imposed as a result of my insider position.

Although the seven participants represented 100% of HoDs working in the case institute at the time, it is difficult to generalise either across other IoTs or indeed for

other middle management positions in other education sectors, either nationally or internationally. However, although the sample cannot be deemed representative of other HoDs employed in higher education, the data collected should not be regarded as unimportant. The findings represent an in-depth study of an instrumental case of HoDs in Irish higher education whose accounts are often akin to those detailed in the literature. The questionnaire of the HoDs nationally and the focus group of the case study of HoDs helped to supplement the rich descriptions.

While there were advantages to being an insider in this study such as access and a pre-understanding of the role, it has been argued that:

> Insider researchers are native to the setting and…are perceived to be prone to charges of being too close and thereby not attaining the distance and objectivity necessary for valid research. (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 72)

It is possible that the questions, as framed in the semi-structured interviews, may have inhibited the participants from illuminating other areas of interest to the role. Also, as an insider and a colleague, they may have felt less free to be open with me, as they might with a disinterested outsider. It is also possible that as an insider, I may have been inhibited in some of the analysis, conclusions or recommendations made as it might have a negative impact on the participants or myself. I have tried to reveal and analyse this through a process of constant critical reflection in all stages of the research.

Ethical Considerations

According to Stake (2005, p. 460) 'Qualitative researchers are guests in private spaces in the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict'. Hence there are a number of ethical issues which had to be considered when undertaking educational research. These issues included minimising potential harm (psychological or emotional), ensuring that informed consent was gained from the participants before commencing the research and ensuring confidentiality of the participants throughout the process (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2010). Methodological consideration influence this process, as interviews, which were my main method of data collection, have 'an ethical dimension; they concern

interpersonal interaction and produce information about the human condition' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 442) and so raise particular types of ethical considerations. For qualitative research where the participants are seen as co-researchers, where the nature of the data can be very personal and where self-reflection is a crucial feature of involvement, these issues are even more critical. In addition, in this study the participants were colleagues, some on part- time contracts, which make these issues even more pertinent.

As a researcher who worked within the case institute, I was acutely aware of the many ethical and political issues that were potentially at play. As Floyd and Arthur (2012) argue:

> While external ethical engagement is relatively straightforward, if perhaps overly bureaucratic…. insider researchers are faced with much murkier waters involving ongoing relationships, privileged knowledge and tensions between their professional and research roles. (p. 177)

In order to meet these ethical considerations, I followed the following steps. As indicated earlier in the chapter, the purpose of the study was explained and written consent sought from the participants. As Cohen et al., (2011) suggest 'informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical behaviour' (p. 77). The outline question schedule was forwarded to them in advance so that if there were any issues with the topics they could be resolved. This process was also followed for the focus group.

I ensured that the participants' views are reflected in the study by sending transcribed interviews to them for corrections and comments on the data. Anonymity could not be guaranteed as there was a small number of participants, seven, and a limited number of Institutes of Technology (IoTs), fourteen, and it is clearly stated that I work in the case institute. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 77) highlight 'there is no absolute guarantee of total anonymity'. Therefore, it is important that the participants' views were reflected fairly. While participants gave their consent, they had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any stage. Also, given the difficulty of achieving confidentiality and the fact that not all the participants are permanent in their positions, there will be a request for the thesis to be placed on restricted library access for a period of three years after completion.

There are two aspects of confidentiality, internal and external, to be considered also. 'External confidentiality' refers to ensuring participants cannot be identified from outside the case study group and 'internal confidentiality' pertains to a participant's ability to recognise another participant as they will be colleagues. This raises issues of trust and confidentiality for the researcher-participant relationship. I had already completed a Master's research with a similar group of HoD as participants. Thus, I drew on this previous experience of trust and power dynamics evoked in the Master's research project. The maintenance of confidentiality throughout the research and subsequently has meant that I have developed a reputation of trust as a researcher. Being an insider researcher one has:

> Valuable knowledge about cultures and informal structures of your own organisation…difficult to stand back from it in order to assess and critique it. You need to be in tune with your own feelings as an organisation member. (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 133)

As part of the interviews with the participants, I wrote a reflective piece on each interview within 24 hours. On receipt of the transcribed interview, I read through it again before forwarding it to the participant. I again reflected on the interview, to check for any preconceived ideas that I may have had and how this impacted on the interview process. I then brought this information into the following interviews, if appropriate. Overall, my assessment was that my own biases were not reflected through this process. The participants articulated their views and experiences that were at variance to mine right throughout the process. One of the other issues that arose, albeit infrequently, through the interviews was the need to probe a bit as I was acutely aware that 'when interviewing, you may assume too much and so not probe as much as if you were an outsider' (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p, 134). With one participant where s/he spoke in generalisations, I had to probe more deeply to ensure that the text spoke for itself.

Achieving the balance between my role as a HoD and a researcher has been challenging. During an interview it was apparent that one of the participants was encountering high levels of stress within the role and was struggling to keep her/his head above water. As a colleague, I was very concerned, but as a researcher, I wanted to get the information and remain disinterested. I used my reflective piece the

following day to tease out the issues. I went over the transcript and was satisfied that I had maintained sufficient control of the process. I kept sufficient professional distance between the researcher and interviewee. As a colleague, subsequently, I was aware and was able to support her/him when possible. No words were ever exchanged afterwards about the interview. As part of the process, I did not come upon any information that has been compromising either in terms of the participants, myself or the case institute. I am also aware that I will have an ongoing professional relationship with the participants. We meet at least weekly on an unofficial basis and we work in a very collegiate way, sharing ideas and discussing issues of concern on a one-to-one basis. I needed to ensure that issues raised by some participants did not seep into conversations with other participants.

However, this study was undertaken in part as a desire to influence and change the role. As such, some of the conclusions and discussion may not be universally welcomed within the case institute. As I am close to retirement, and restricted access to the study has been sought, this will have little, if any, impact on the participants and me.

The two main strategies that I used to retain confidentiality were to remove any personal details and generalise identifiable information reflected in the transcript which would make identification easy (such as departments, disciplines etc.) and to retain very strict control over hard and soft copies of the interview material. The names allocated to the participants were gender neutral. Although it may be impossible to achieve this, I endeavoured to do my best in this regard and will ensure that participants are satisfied with the details included from their transcripts. All copies of transcripts were and are kept in my home and all soft copies kept on my personal computer.

In relation to the online National Survey, the principles of confidentiality and consent were adhered to. A covering letter explaining the purpose of the study was forwarded on email. On opening the survey, the respondents were made aware that commencing the survey implied consent to participate. They could answer as few or as many questions as they wished and no personal details, name, age etc. were

included. The use of the information within the study was general in nature and where quotes were used, they have been anonymised.

Prior to collecting the data, I sought approval from the ethics committees both in Maynooth University and my own IoT. The ethics form included details such as research objectives, methodology, participants, possible risks, informed consent and confidentiality of the data.

In summary, the main challenges from an ethical perspective were consent, accuracy and confidentiality. Consent was achieved through the various consents oral and written (See Appendix 2) received through the process of the study. Accuracy was achieved in having the participants check their transcripts for errors. Given that I was an inside researcher, confidentiality was extremely important. Data management was ensured as all interviews, hard and soft copies were maintained in secure location. All personal data, departments, names and gender were removed from the study to ensure that the participants could not be identified.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the research approach adopted and the epistemological and theoretical framework of the research. The research design and methods are justified in light of the theoretical framework. The social constructionist stance forms the epistemological backbone of this research. It is of immense importance as it guided and informed the manner in which this research was approached, conducted and interpreted. The roots of social constructionism are founded in the larger postmodern epistemology and the concepts of discourse and power are borrowed from this perspective to further inform the study. However, the review of the concepts in this chapter should be regarded as the researcher's individual punctuation and not as the only way of describing them. The perspective of the researcher is just one possible construction of 'reality' and will facilitate further dialogue with the reader. Nevertheless, readers will no doubt consider the ideas of the researcher and create new ideas in his or her own process of co-construction.

In explaining how the data was analysed and acknowledging the study's limitations, this chapter has aimed to show the potential of the chosen methodology for research into the experiences of Heads of Department.

CHAPTER 5

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the National Survey conducted with Heads of Department in the IoT sector in Ireland. The aim of the survey was to gain a profile and insight into the role of HoDs at a national level. The survey also helped to inform the semi-structured questions for the case study interviews.

Method

The methodology is reviewed in Chapter 4. A total of 41 Heads of Department from 12 of Ireland's 14 Institutes of Technology (IoT) responded to the survey with a total response rate of 35%. The two IoTs not included in the survey were the case Institute and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). DIT was omitted as their structures and systems are very different from the other institutes. This response rate offers some assurance as to the representativeness and hence generalisability of the data. As outlined in the methodology chapter, respondents completed an online questionnaire seeking information on a range of characteristics that prior research indicated were relevant to management and leadership in higher education. These factors included: gender, academic background, type of institution at which the leader works, role, previous leadership experience, period of time in the current role and experience outside higher education (see Appendix 7 for a copy of the questionnaire).

Background of Respondents

Almost two thirds of the respondents (65.85%) were male and most were aged between 50 to 59 years (42.9%) and 40 to 49 years of age (35.7%). The largest proportion of respondents had a business background (28.6%), followed by those with an engineering (16.7%) or humanities background (11.9%). Of the HoDs appointed in the last three years (7), 6 were female, which suggests that more female HoDs are being appointed to the role in the recent past than heretofore. This pattern is also reflected in the case Institute.

The majority of respondents (71.4%) had a Master's degree, while a third had obtained a doctorate. In addition, one in four possessed a professional qualification in their discipline area in addition to their academic qualification e.g. an Engineering or Accountancy qualification.

To build a picture of the HoD's employment trajectories, information was sought on respondents' experiences prior to taking up their current roles and their motivation for undertaking the role. Before their current position, respondents had most commonly held a lecturing (70%) or a senior lecturer (17.5%) post in higher education. Interestingly, only a small minority (7.5%) had worked in a management /leadership position in industry or the professions. There was no transfer from the professional (non-academic) departments within the IoTs to the academic area.

Figure 5.1 below shows the number of years that HoDs were in their current role. Over a third were in the position for 7 – 10 years while one in six were less than 3 years in the role.
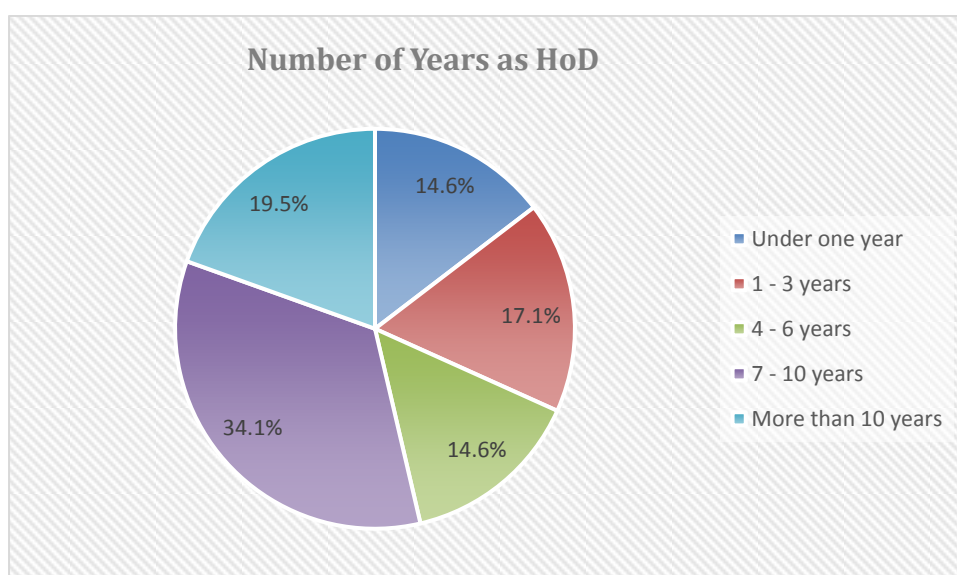
Figure 5. 1 Number of years as a HoD

The number of staff reporting to the HoDs varied. Most (41.5%) had between 20 – 29 people reporting to them. Almost one in five (19.5%) had responsibility for 30 – 39 staff and a further fifth (22%) had 40 – 49 staff. A small minority (5%) had over 50 staff in their department.
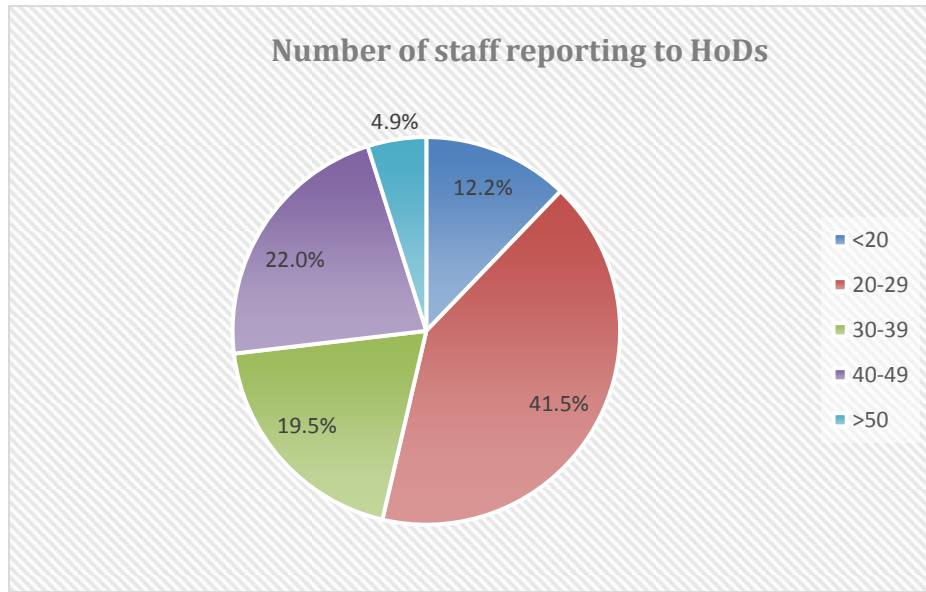
Figure 5. 2 Number of staff reporting to HoDs

Just over a third of HoDs (34.2%) had over 600 students in their department. One in five (22%) had responsibility for 501–600 students and over a third (34%) had oversight of between 201–400 students.

The vast majority (71%) of the respondents had permanent contracts (29), a further three were on an [5]'acting' contract, one after 7 years. Two were on a temporary contract, two on secondment and a further five were on a Specific Time contract.
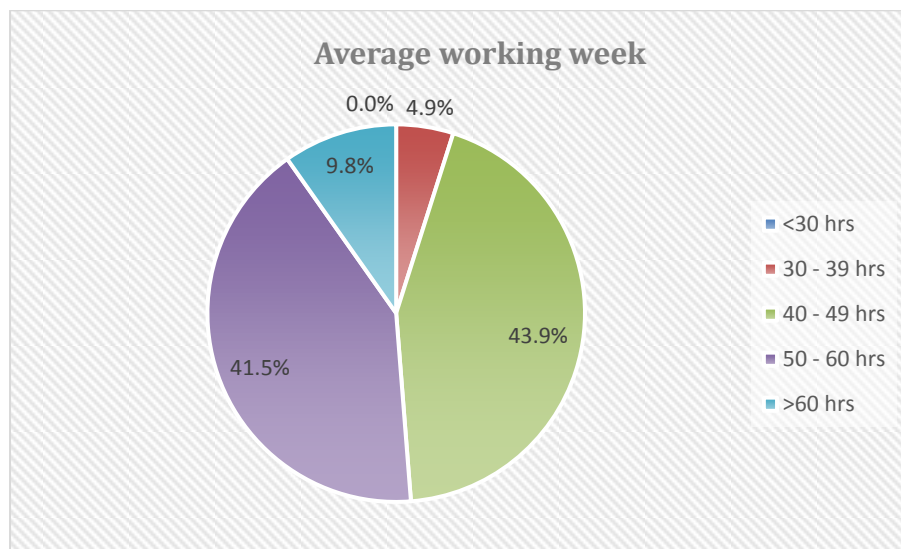
Figure 5. 3 Average working week of HoD

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[5] Acting contract means that the contract is not permanent. It is usually reviewed on an annual basis
A Temporary Contract is time limited and is not permanent
A Specific Time Contract ends on a specified date

The average working hours per week varied but as is apparent in Figure 5.3, most (44%) HoDs work 50–60 hours per week, while another 42% work 40–49 hours per week.

Overall, the number of hours worked did not affect males and females differently in these measures. The most interesting aspect of the data is the correlation between the length of time in the role and hours worked per week. The number of hours worked per week tended to reduce the longer the HoD was in the role. This may be explained by knowledge and know–how of the job gained from experience.

Reason for Undertaking the Role

When asked to rank a range of motivating factors for undertaking the role of HoD, respondents indicated a range of factors as summarised in Table 5.1 below. (1 being the most important, 4 being least important). *'Wanting to make a difference'* and *'a desire to change role'* were the key motivators highlighted.

Table 5. 1 Motivating factors for undertakimg role of HoD

Role of Heads of Department						
Rank (1, being the most important, 4, being least important) which of the following factors motivated you most to undertake the role of Head of Department?						
Answer Options	1	2	3	4	Rating Average	Response Count
Wanted to make a difference	19	10	9	3	1.90	41
Change of job / role	10	22	9	0	1.98	41
Career Promotion	10	5	17	9	2.61	41
Other	2	3	6	29	3.55	40

Major Areas of Focus in the Role- What do Heads of Department do?

In order to gain insight into the world of work of HoDs, respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of a pre-ordained range of work activities. The activities and areas of focus were identified from the literature (see Literature Review Chapter 3) and an analysis of job descriptions. The areas included staff-related areas, management, leadership and day-to-day activities.

These work focus scales generally align with Ramsden's (1998, p. 125) domains of academic management and leadership: academic people, academic management, academic work and academic leadership. Like Ramsden, I see activity in each area as interacting with the others.

Staff Related Areas

Figure 5.4 below reflects the staff related areas and activities. Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of HoDs view managing academic staff as the most important aspect of their role. Development and reviewing teaching activities are also perceived as key areas. Staff research was rated as less important which reflects the overall traditional mission of the Institutes of Technology. In addition, in the current industrial relations climate, encouraging staff research is extremely difficult which may also explain its low score with 26 respondents considering it important rather than very important (7).
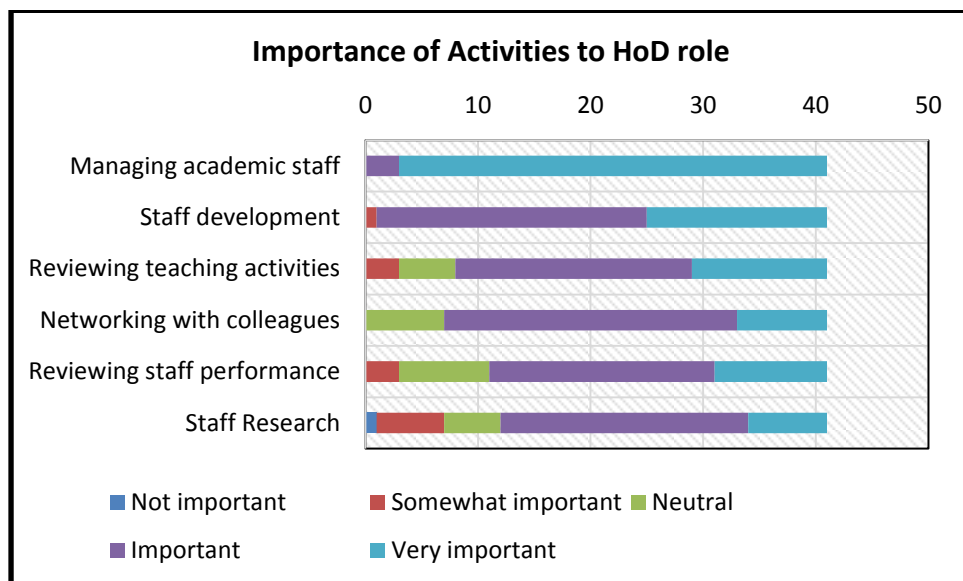
Figure 5. 4 Importance of work activities to HoD role

In the open-ended comments, HoDs highlighted that quality, staff support and managing external relationships with professional/industry bodies were also very important. These factors reflect a key mission of the IoTs, as specified in the Hunt Report (DES, 2011), to collaborate with industry and professional bodies.

Strategic Management Aspects of Role

Figure 5.5 encapsulates HoDs perception of the strategic management aspects of their role. Developing academic programmes and managing relationships with senior management were identified as key strategic areas. Managing budgets and strategic planning were viewed as less important which may reflect the managerialist approach in most institutes whereby HoDs often do not have responsibility for the budget for their Department or do not have a significant input into the strategic development of the overall School or Institute.

Figure 5. 5 Strategic aspects of HoD role

Day-to-Day Activities

Figure 5.6 captures the wide range of operational and administrative tasks that occupy HoDs on a daily basis and which they deem important.
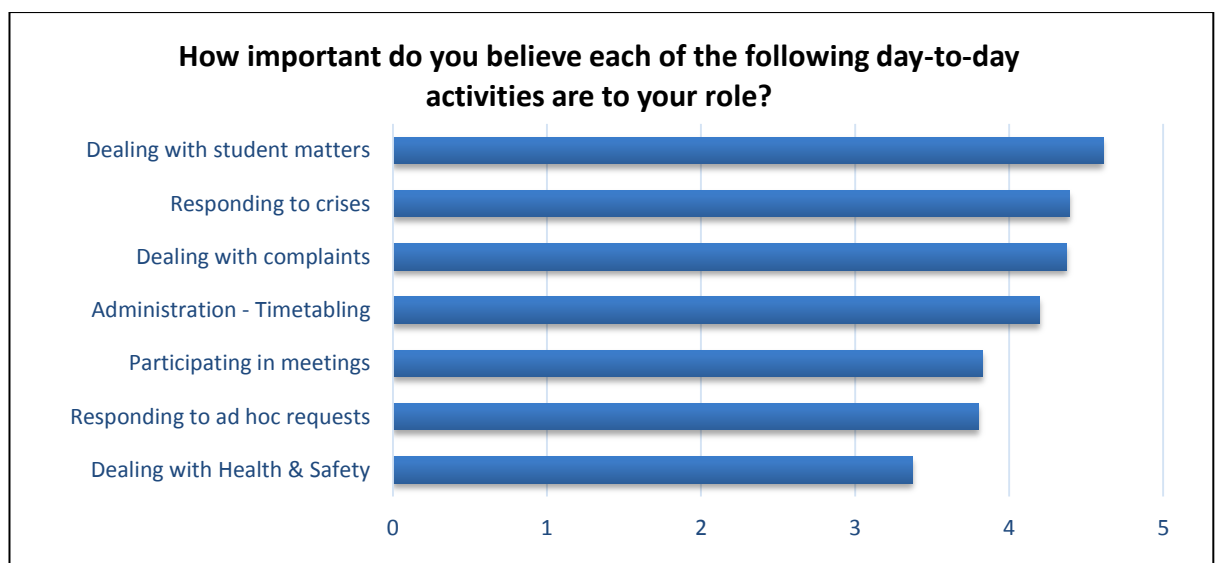
Figure 5. 6 Relative importance of day-to-day activities

Dealing with student matters, complaints and reacting to crises are rated highly. The least important are administrative tasks such as dealing with health and safety issues.

Satisfying and Challenging Aspects of being HoD

Respondents to the survey were invited to comment on what are the most satisfying and challenging/unsatisfying aspects of their role. Overwhelmingly, HoDs reported that dealing with students, staff development and programme development were the most satisfying aspects. Typical comments were 'staff contentment and student achievement', 'interaction with staff and students', 'student support', 'student/staff achieving success'.

Other areas that HoDs found satisfying include 'clearing the desk', 'the variety', 'trouble shooting', 'interacting with external bodies and national committees' and 'making that difference'. These areas correlate with the factors that attracted the respondents to apply for the role in the first place.

One HoD (Business) succinctly summarised the satisfying aspects of the role as follows:

> *Supporting the department students and staff achieve a positive Teaching and Learning environment. Ensuring students and staff are supported correctly through the myriad of policies and procedures. Ensuring that integrity of quality assurance system is maintained throughout the year. Supporting changing industry needs with new programmes.*

There is a considerable overlap here with the responses from HoDs when asked what they liked about the role. Not surprisingly there was also a wide variety of views expressed through the open question (29 respondents) under this heading, but the diversity and the challenge of the role were the key aspects. Programme development, whether developing new or existing ones, was important. Having the freedom to follow and influence specific projects and goals was also important. All of the foregoing were predicated on making their respective departments a better place for both students and staff. The interaction with these groups was also mentioned. As one respondent (HoD Business) put it 'the ability to provide an excellent service to students and society'.

Challenges

On the other hand the least satisfying aspects of the role elicited a number of issues which are well encapsulated by a HoD (Engineering) in the following quote:

> *Mind numbing administration, dealing with bureaucracy. Trying to maintain educational quality in the face of constant cuts, intrusive and overbearing QA processes. Banner or CAP or whatever name it now has. The demands being placed on staff to try to develop their research activities, new programmes, teaching styles and achieve further qualification to progress while constantly being denigrated by the press and disregarded by the HR policies of the IoT sector. The complete unwillingness of the IoT senior management to deal with situations where there are staff members who are not performing and unwilling to make an effort to improve. (Rant over)*

The key issues which generate dissatisfaction are too much administration and paperwork allied to bureaucracy and centralised decision-making. Devising class timetables was also a major problem. It should be noted that not all HoDs devise timetables, but where they do, it is viewed as an administrative task which is time consuming. Too many 'endless' meetings, and firefighting 'on issues that should be handled correctly initially' were also bugbears.

One HoD (Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts) succinctly describes the bureaucracy and the lack of autonomy in the role:

> *Administration and constantly having to justify decisions and choices to senior management.*

The difficulty of managing staff was a constant theme in the responses. In particular, managing poor performance and the HoDs lack of authority 'to tackle those who do not do their job'. Other examples given were listening to 'whining' and 'ego stroking.'

An unsatisfactory relationship with senior management was an issue mentioned by several HoDs. Issues identified by respondents included: a lack of acknowledgement or appreciation of the workload and challenges of HoD role, poor communication or exclusion from decision making and having constantly to justify decisions or defend their position.

The challenges identified above indicate that when trying to respond to the change forces outlined in Chapter 2, the HoDs in this study have little time or opportunity to lead, that they have time consuming and unproductive meetings, dysfunctional systems, unnecessary bureaucracy, excessive reporting and a culture of lack of trust prevails. The study reveals that the department context puts HoDs at the interface of different responsibilities that have accountabilities. The role is insufficiently supported, acknowledged and developed.

As one HoD summarises the challenges:

> *Responding to requests repeatedly for the same information under different guises. Constant battles for adequate people resources each term. Lack of a fair acknowledgement of HoD workload by senior management.*

How Heads of Department judge their effectiveness

Bryman (2007), in a review of the higher education literature on leadership in the UK, US and Australia, notes that little research in higher education is concerned with the issue of effectiveness in leadership. A review of the limited literature on leadership effectiveness in higher education (Scott et al., 2008) identified 25 key indicators, each phrased as a specific form of achievement or outcome. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of preordained indictors in assessing the effective performance of the role under four discrete leadership effectiveness headings of strategic leadership and vision, creating a quality workforce, operational efficiency and student focus. As Scott et al.,(2008) suggested they focus more on indicators concerning positive implementation and impact than on indicators concerned with the quality of inputs like plans produced, reviews held, and resources allocated, which are seen as being necessary but not sufficient to indicate effective performance as an academic leader.

Table 5. 2 Indicators of performance of role as HoD

Scale	Item
Strategic Leadership	1. Giving a clear sense of direction/strategic vision 2. Implementing strategic objectives 3. Bringing innovative policies and practices into action 4. Improving the research profile of the Department
Managing and Leading Staff	1. Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity 2. Establishing a collegial and trusting work environment 3. Mentoring and leading staff 4. Providing staff feedback on performance
Student focus	1. Student - centred approach in Department 2. Delivering high quality programmes 3. Increasing student throughput
Efficiency	1. Managing the day-to-day operation of the Department 2. Implementing quality assurance systems 3. Timetabling 4. Managing Health and Safety

Reviewing the five least important indicators, managing health and safety and timetabling, are bottom of the list. This perhaps indicates that although HoDs spend a lot of time in these areas, they do not consider that they should be looked at as indicators and by extension, whether they should be doing these areas of work.

Despite the emphasis on increasing the research profile in all IoTs, it is interesting to note that only five respondents considered 'improving the research profile of the Department' to be 'very important' and it lags third last in the list. This is consistent with the finding in Figure 5.4 which ranked staff research the least important of staff related areas.

When respondents, in an open ended question, were asked for additional indictors of effective performance they mentioned staff engagement, student feedback and engagement, graduate recruitment, external engagement and building external networks, conflict resolution and efficiency in use of resources.
One respondent had an interesting view on the tone of the questions:

> *Your questions seem to expect that we are the operations managers in the*
> *department as distinct from the academic leaders - which is what I think was*

the job I applied for. Very few of the questions seem to focus on how well we (sic) teach - which many forget is actually the role we undertake and the role which indirectly or coincidentally leads to financial stability. I would worry about the phrase 'a quality workforce' - how about ' a cohesive team?

This in itself raises the question of academic leadership versus academic management versus academic administration within the role which is addressed in the final chapters.

Impact of Wider Political and Social Context of HE on role of Head of Department

In order to ascertain the impact of the local context, in addition to the wider social and political context on the world of work of HoDs, respondents were asked to rank the impact of 19 preordained factors on their world of work. Table 5.3 below captures the main factors identified.

Table 5. 3 Impact on daily work of HoD

Please tick any of the following that impact on your daily work as Head of Department.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Decreased government funding	83.3%	30
Growing competition in HE	58.3%	21
Proposed changes in IOTI sector e.g. mergers	50.0%	18
Increased student complaints	33.3%	12
Greater government reporting and scrutiny	22.2%	8
Complying with and implementing Quality Assurance	72.2%	26
Increasing student attrition	61.1%	22
Rapid changes in technology	33.3%	12
Declining status of academic work	36.1%	13
Focus on filling enrolment targets	38.9%	14
Increased student diversity	61.1%	22
Increasing responsibility to external groups and agencies	33.3%	12
Managing pressures for continuous change	58.3%	21
Handling unexpected events	86.1%	31
Clarifying strategic objectives	22.2%	8
Slow administrative processes	75.0%	27
Lack of decision - making by Senior Management	69.4%	25
Lack of power in your role	69.4%	25
Growing risk of litigation	47.2%	17

For the majority (86.1%) *handling unexpected events* in the local context was a major factor   which highlights the reactive nature of the role. The major external impacts on the role appear to be the lack of Government funding and the increased level of auditing and surveillance as expressed in the complying and implementation of quality assurance. Not surprisingly, decreased government funding was also a major issue as it impacts on all resources at departmental level, be it human or financial. Bureaucracy is an issue as is the lack of autonomy and power in the role which in turn adds to the problem of decision making at senior management level.

In an open-ended question, HoDs also highlighted the role of internal politics and constant negotiating for resources and inadequate administrative support. As one respondent indicated earlier the least satisfying aspect of the role is 'the constant battle for resources'.

Skills and Knowledge for the Role

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of preordained indictors (12) to ascertain their perceptions of the skills and knowledge required for the role. Figure 5.7 below shows that being able to lead and motivate staff, understanding the institute system and effective work practices were all rated highly important skills.

Advocating on behalf of the department was also deemed important in the role. Interestingly, being able to manage staff performance and helping staff deliver change were in the bottom half of the skills and knowledge arc. Perhaps this is to do with the powerlessness felt by HoDs in dealing with staff, particularly those underperforming. Administrative skills such as Health and Safety and HR processes were viewed as less important skills.
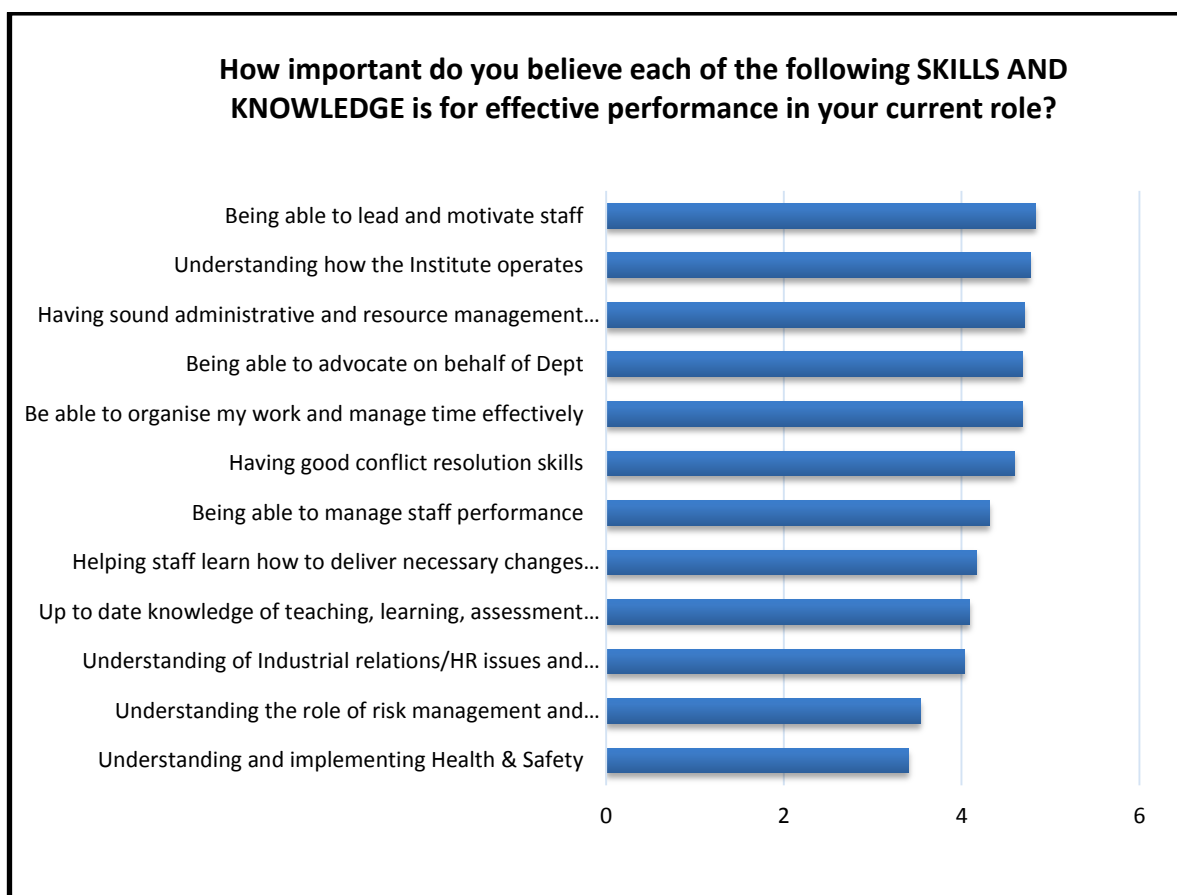
Figure 5. 7 Skills and knowledge for role

Personal Capabilities

HoDs indicated their agreement with practically all the personal qualities required for the role of HoD. As one respondent noted 'these are all characteristics that one would hope for in a HoD'. Table 5.4 shows the capability to 'remain calm under pressure' and 'making the hard decision' were rated the highest score whilst 'bouncing back from adversity' was perceived as the least important.

Table 5. 4 Personal capabilities for effective performance in the role of HoD

Tick any of the following PERSONAL CAPABILITIES you feel are needed for the effective performance in your role as Head of Department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Admitting and learning from my errors	88.2%	30
Understanding my personal strengths and limitations	88.2%	30
Remaining calm under pressure or when things take an unexpected turn	97.1%	33
Deferring judgement and not jumping in too quickly to	79.4%	27

resolve a problem		
Having energy, passion and enthusiasm for teaching and learning	79.4%	27
Persevering when things are not working out	76.5%	26
Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible	76.5%	26
Taking responsibility for programme activities and outcomes	73.5%	25
Being willing to take a hard decision	94.1%	32
Pitching in and undertaking menial tasks when needed	76.5%	26
Maintaining a good work/life balance and keeping things in perspective	73.5%	25
Bouncing back from adversity	58.8%	20
Tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty	64.7%	22
Being true to one's personal value and ethics	79.4%	27
Other (please specify)		3

When asked what top three personal capabilities were considered important for the role the HoDs (30 respondents) gave a very wide list including in order:

1. Being persistently calm
2. True to one's own values
3. Ability to make hard decisions
4. Achieve a work/life balance.

Persistence, positivity, commitment, organisational and communication skills are also seen as important. Among the more interesting comments in this area were from a HoD in Business who ranked his top three personal capabilities as:

1. Dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty
2. Being able to step away and not worry about things
3. Accepting that I won't always get my way.

These personal qualities would appear to be the ideal in a HoD, the ability to compartmentalise your work and the pragmatism to accept your situation all help in working in a role that has many shades of grey and no white or black. They reflect the need for a healthy work/life balance. Indeed, all of the above abilities reflect the requirement for HoDs to be flexible to be able to deal with uncertainty and to be aware of the powerlessness of the position.

Interpersonal Capabilities

Respondents were asked to indicate from a pre–ordained list the interpersonal capabilities they deemed necessary for the role. As Table 5.5 shows, transparency and honesty, motivation and influencing skills, listening skills, being empathetic and networking skills are also see as very important. It is interesting to note how many of these capabilities are valued by Institutes as key attributes for HoDs as evidenced in interviews or job specifications.

Table 5. 5 Interpersonal capabilities required for effective performance

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Listening to different points of view before coming to a decision	94.3%	33
Being transparent and honest in dealings with others	94.3%	33
Working with senior management without being intimidated	88.6%	31
Motivating others to achieve positive outcomes	88.6%	31
Giving and receiving constructive feedback from staff and others	85.7%	30
Influencing people's behaviour and decisions in effective ways	82.9%	29
Understanding how various groups that make up the Institute operate and influence decisions	80.0%	28
Empathising and working productively with students from diverse backgrounds	77.1%	27
Developing and using networks of colleagues	77.1%	27
Developing and contributing positively to team based projects	77.1%	27
Working constructively with people who are 'resistors' or are 'over enthusiastic'	77.1%	27
Empathising and working productively with staff and others from diverse backgrounds	71.4%	25

Key Challenges in the Role

In replying to an open question, the most challenging aspects of the role as answered by 30 respondents were identified as based on the level of workload and bureaucracy. Excessive bureaucracy and overly hierarchical approval processes indicate a lack of trust and an inability to identify appropriate levels of accountability and responsibility for the role. As one HoD indicated there is a 'lack of fair acknowledgement of HoD workload by senior management'.

Managing and leading staff is also a key challenge, particularly in the current HR context of higher education in Ireland. An additional aspect is the inability to recruit staff given the Employment Control Framework.

Resources including finance are also a major issue. Budgets are falling and student numbers are growing. Dealing with senior management is also a challenge for HoDs, whether there is a perception of lack of leadership or lack of support or the issuing of directives. As one HoD put it 'we are not the HoS's PA'.

Activities that have been Effective in Developing Capabilities as HoDs

Respondents were asked how effective pre- determined (12) activities had been in developing their capabilities in the role. There were 34 respondents to this question.

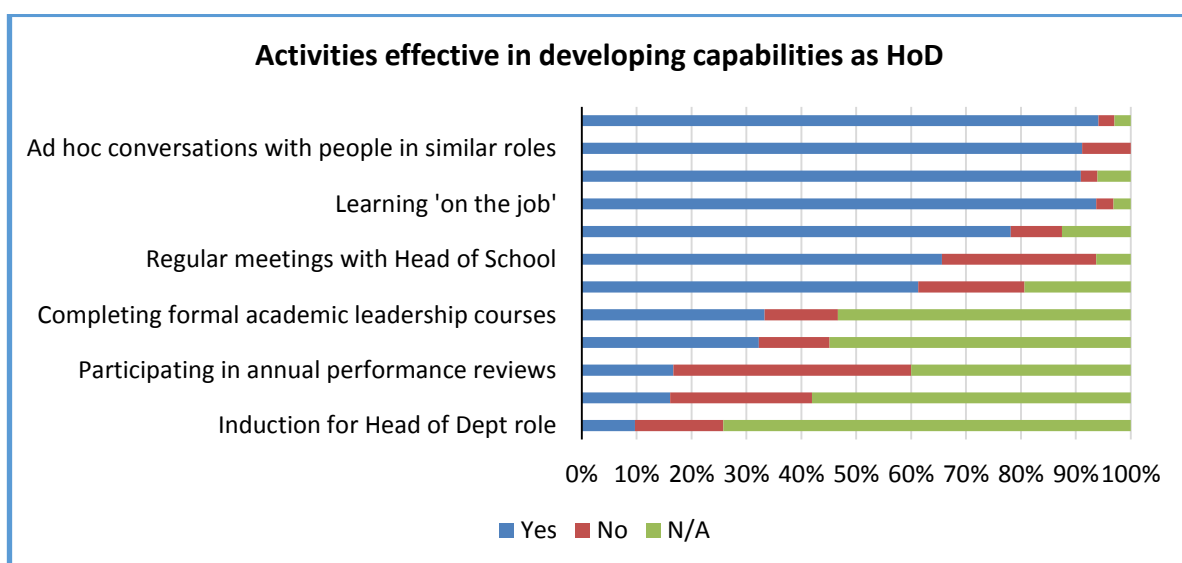**Figure 5. 8 Developing capabilities in role**

As Figure 5.8 demonstrates the four key areas are: feedback from staff, ad hoc conversations with people in similar roles, undertaking visits to other institutions or agencies (30), learning on the job (30).

 Induction for HoD role, being involved in formal mentoring programmes, and participating in annual performance reviews were deemed the least significant

activities either because they were seen as ineffective or they did not occur. With regard to the induction process, 23 respondents did not receive any induction. Of the eight who did receive induction for the role, five did not find it useful. In the case of formal mentor programmes, 18 did not receive any mentoring and of the 13 HoDs who participated in them 4 thought them useful and 9 felt that they were not useful.

In terms of formal programmes on leadership, the situation is similar. 17 HoDs had not completed any formal programme of study on leadership and of the 14 who did, 10 found it useful. This has very serious implications for the various Institutes. How is a HoD to know what s/he is to do when commencing the role? The Institutes seem to be satisfied to let HoDs get involved in the role and learn either from their peers or learn on the job as indicated above.

It is also interesting to note that liaising with staff or peers is far more important than 'regular meetings with HoS' (21). More worryingly from a HoS viewpoint, 8 HoDs (26%) felt that it wasn't useful and 2 HoDs (6%) did not have these meetings at all.

Support for the Role

The most significant group in terms of support for the role was fellow HoDs with 17 out of 33 respondents giving them a ranking of 1-7 with 1 being most important. This is not surprising given that 29 respondents indicated that 'ad-hoc conversations with people in similar roles' and 23 'participating in peer networks within the institute' helped them in developing their capabilities as HoDs. HoSs come next (6), followed by school administration staff (3), academic staff (3) and family and friends (3). This would suggest that support does not equate with developing capabilities in the role. As academic staff is not as highly regarded as fellow HoDs in terms of support for the role they are regarded as more important than HoDs in developing capabilities for the role. Family and friends rank lower than HoDs, HoSs, Academic Staff and School Administration staff and just above students.

Improving the Development and Role of HoDs

In response to an open question, the overarching theme in the development of the role for HoDs (28 respondents) is the establishment of a proper induction process

and a training programme that is fit for purpose. A mentoring programme was also mentioned by one respondent. Other areas identified as improving support for the role are: increased administration support plus the appointment of assistant HoDs and formal academic leaders. Worryingly, in one case HoD (Engineering), appointing course leaders was not allowed. This was neatly summed up by a respondent (HoD Business) who stated:

> *Provision of mentoring support and actual support to carry out duties viz. programme co-ordinators and better administration.*

Maintaining a HoD Forum and supporting it whether formal or informal was considered important for the development of HoDs in their respective Institutes. Networking outside of the Institute and attending conferences were mentioned as useful resources for development of the role.

An appropriate job description is required which specifies management and leadership functions. One HoD (Business) commented:

> *Would like to see the Institute take a look at the role as opposed to an 'individual task orientation' approach which makes the HOD role a 'dumping ground'.*

More autonomy would be of benefit particularly in giving more control over budgets, staffing and resourcing the role properly. The relationship with senior management could be improved with 'greater appreciation of work load by senior managers' (HoD Marketing). Giving the HoDs more autonomy and having proper consultation would help in this regard.

One comment reflected that it would be a good idea to have the position as a rolling five year position to avoid stagnation in the role. This is a situation which exists in the Germany Fachenschule sector and within the University sector in Ireland.

> *Induction, training, resourcing. Allow for the development of rolling positions, 5 years in and then step to SL. allows for development of body of knowledge in the department and avoids stagnation. Stop trying to make IoTs into cut price Universities. The roles are different (HoD Engineering)*

Summary

Background

41 HoDs responded to the survey across a wide variety of ages, (30-65), length of service (1-15+), number of staff and students under their care and across a range of disciplines. Almost two thirds were male. Over two thirds were on permanent contracts and almost a third had Level 10 qualifications. Working hours tended to be long with over half of the respondents working in excess of 50 hours per week. The main factors influencing them in taking up the role were a combination of wanting to make a difference and the need for a change of role.

Major Areas of Focus in the Role

Programme development and managing relationships with senior management were seen as important in the role. In relation to staffing, management of the staff was considered most important. In relation to the day-to-day activities, they indicated dealing with student issues and dealing with complaints and responding to crises followed by administration tasks. There is a lack of focus in the areas of strategy, policy and research. HoDs may view that strategy and policy are areas that either are the responsibility of Senior Management or something in which they have little input. The lack of focus on research may be due to IR factors and the increasing workload on academic staff which makes it difficult to grow this area at departmental level.

They found satisfaction in dealing with staff and students to the betterment of both. They also found that too much administration, bureaucracy and centralised decision-making gave rise to dissatisfaction. Dealing with staff and senior management could also be difficult.

Effective Performance and Impact on HoD

HoDs in general felt student focus should be their top priority. In terms of staff they felt that treating academic staff fairly and with integrity was most important. Operationally, 'managing the day-to-day operations' was considered key. Other areas considered important included external engagement.

The areas that impacted most on the role were handling unexpected items and decreased government funding, a micro and a macro item. Lack of power in the role and implementing quality assurance systems also had an impact on the role.

However, on a day-to-day basis the main issues that impacted on the role were overwhelmingly staff and student related. Again, strategic planning and policy making ranked below the day-to-day operations which had a large staff and student influence together with the large workload associated with administration and bureaucracy.

Skills Knowledge and Capabilities required for the Role

The ability to motivate staff, understanding how the Institute worked and advocating for their department were seen as key skills. However, given the nature of the role it was clear that there was a lot of skills and knowledge, including motivational administrative and people skills required to carry out the role.

Remaining calm under pressure, being willing to make hard decisions and understanding one's own personal strengths and weaknesses were considered important personal characteristics. Interpersonal capabilities outlined included being transparent and honest in dealings with others and listening to others' views. Working with senior management without being intimidated was also considered important.

Challenges and Developing Capabilities and Support for Role

Managing the workload was the main challenge especially given the difficult work environment such as the National Wage Agreements as expressed in the Public Service Agreements. Dealing with staff, senior management and lack of resources were also challenging for HoDs.

HoDs rely on feedback from staff, conversations with their peers and learning on the job to enhance their ability to do the job but rely mostly on their fellow HoDs for support. Interestingly, very few HoDs had an induction for the position and mentoring was regarded as poorly done, if at all. There was very little formal training

for the position. This suggests that HoDs by and large were let get on with the job and learn through that.

Improving and Developing the Role

The HoDs felt the need for a proper induction for HoDs on commencement of the role and an ongoing training programme process throughout their tenure. A clear job description would also help. There is a need for more support for the role to reduce the level of administration tasks. There is also need for more networking inside and outside the Institute.

There is a lack of autonomy, authority and power within the position. This clearly comes out in the lack of support that HoDs feel from Senior Management and the fact that they do not see strategic planning, policy making and research as key aspects of their role. Powerlessness also comes from the lack of control over resources, human and financial. The relationship with senior management could be improved and being given more support, autonomy and authority in these areas.

Conclusion

The key theme emanating from the survey is reflected in the powerlessness experienced by the HoDs in the role. Other key themes include the strategic/management role, the management of staff and students, the relationship with senior management and training/induction for the role.

Powerlessness

HoDs by and large have very little input into the creation of strategy and policy. This is reflected in the answers to the questions in this area and the priority that they give to them. Likewise they have little control over the human and financial resources and are caught in the dilemma of more students and less staff and budgets.

Strategic/Management Role

The nature of the day-to-day work of HoDs is very strongly skewed to the operational side of the role and very much a reactive role as indicated by the most important impact on their work is handling unexpected items. There is too much

administration, paperwork and bureaucracy associated with the role. Endless meetings, firefighting and trying to sort out problems that should have been sorted out elsewhere are constant bugbears.

The knock-on impact of this is that there is little time to devote to strategic matters. The main strategic area that HoDs focus on is the implementation and creation of high quality programmes. Research, although regarded as very important within the IoTs, scores very low in all areas of the survey which may be an issue for the respective Senior Management teams.

Management of Staff

HoDs are very cognisant of the workload on academic members of staff and are conscious of creating a good collegiate environment for them whereby they can achieve their goals and potential by treating them fairly and with integrity. They also see representing staff and the department as important in their role. That said, dealing with staff is difficult and takes time between the 'whining' and 'ego stroking' on the one hand and trying to deal with under-performing staff on the other.

Students

There is a high degree of agreement among HoDs that their respective departments should be student centred. Delivering high quality programmes also links into putting the student at the heart of the department. HoDs indicated that it gave them great satisfaction to see how well the students do at examination time and seeing them achieving their potential.

Senior Management

Lack of power in the role and lack of decision-making by senior management have a big impact on the role of HoD. This is particularly relevant in the area of resources, human and financial. This allied to the lack of acknowledgement of and the lack of administrative support allocated to the role does not make for a good relationship with the senior management team.

Training and Induction

There was very little official training, mentoring or induction for the role. The main way that HoDs learned the role was through conversations with their peers and on-the-job learning. One of the difficulties encountered was the lack of a formal job description which meant that everything filtered through to the HoD role. A proper job description detailing the management and strategic roles would help in this regard.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS 1. BECOMING A HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND SUPPORTS

Introduction

The findings from the interviews undertaken with seven heads of department (HoDs) and the focus group with four of these HoDs within the IoT sector are presented in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. The findings are discussed under themes relating to the research questions and are supported by quotations and tables.

This chapter is analysed under the following headings:

- Profile of Participants.
- Becoming a HoD.
- Initial challenges in the role.
- Professional Development and Training
- Support in the role
- Impact of Political Social and Economic Discourses on the role

Profile of Participants

In total, seven HoDs participated in the study. A profile of the participants, using pseudonyms, is presented below in Table 6.1

In order to ensure anonymity for participants, discipline areas are grouped under the following three headings:

- Science
- Engineering
- Business and Humanities

Of the seven participants, three work in the School of Engineering, two in the School of Science and two in the School of Business and Humanities. Within the School of

Engineering, two of the participants are currently HoDs and one completed a one year's stint in the role in the academic year 2014/15. Four of the participants are male and three female. Table 6.1 below summarises the details of the participants interviewed for the study.

Table 6. 1 Profile of Participants as of June 2016

Name	Discipline	PhD	Years in role
1. **Pat**	Business	In progress	6
2. **Sam**	Science	In progress	1.5
3. **Chris**	Business	Yes	3.5
4. **Gay**	Science	No	10
5. **Jordan**	Engineering	Yes	2.5
6. **Hilary**	Engineering	No	1
7. **Ber**	Engineering	Commencing	.75

Becoming a Head of Department – Career Path

The following section summarises the participants' experience of becoming a HoD. The responses of the participants are presented thematically based on the overarching themes that emerged which include the following:

- Education background and early career
- Reasons for entering academia
- Becoming HoD
- Early career impact on HoD
- Professional development and training

Education Background and Early Career

All of the participants had a third level qualification in the discipline area of which they are now HoD. Five of the HoDs had a Masters' degree in their discipline. However, as Pat noted, given the diversity of disciplines within departments, it is not possible to be qualified in all areas and this can cause anxiety about one's competence:

> *'Hetting to know the other discipline areas, because you know obviously I came from one discipline within that. But I've been trying to broaden that out to get to know what other people were doing. And you know not to feel like a fraud when you went to a meeting or something like that, and they were discussing (Name) policy, or something to do with (Name) and (Name).'* (Pat)

At the beginning of the study, two participant HoDs had PhDs and two others were undertaking doctorates of whom one completed her/his Level 10 during the study. The pursuit of doctorate programmes indicates the emphasis being placed by the case institute in order to meet the TU status. In addition, three HoDs (Engineering) have professional qualifications in their discipline.

After graduation from higher education, the initial career paths of the participants diverged. Four HoDs came directly from higher education into academia, two of whom worked initially in second level education. Sam started teaching at second level for a short period and worked in a University as a teaching assistant before commencing as a lecturer in the case institute. Chris also commenced teaching at second level before obtaining a lecturing appointment in a University where s/he remained until her/his current appointment as HoD to the case institute. Pat and Gay started lecturing in the case institute immediately after completing their Masters degrees in university.

Three HoDs from one School had both industrial and academic experience prior to commencing their roles. Jordan, having completed post-doctoral work in the USA, worked in start-up companies before joining an IoT to lecture. S/he was headhunted to work in industry, but was constantly drawn back to academia and subsequently took up her/his current post. Likewise, Hilary had worked in the USA prior to returning to Ireland to work in industry. S/he also did some teaching part time in a HEI and then started as a lecturer in the case institute before working, for a year, as HoD. S/he has returned to lecturing in the case institute. Ber worked in industry for over 25 years in the UK and Ireland. S/he subsequently undertook a lecturing post, on a year contract in the case institute, before returning to industry. S/he was then appointed to his current role as HoD.

HoDs in the School of Engineering have prior industrial and professional experience.

They had established themselves in their profession in a variety of jobs prior to applying for the HoD role. In the other two schools, Science and Business and Humanities, the HoDs were promoted from academia.

Reasons for Entering Academia

Whether the participants came into academia directly from higher education or after a period of working in industry/professional background, all had an aspiration and an interest to work in education.

Some always wanted to teach and these went directly from completing their own studies into academia:

> *'that's where I would have set my… stall out from an early stage, it was educational, then I wanted to move into, I was in second level and then move into third level…It was just where I knew that I wanted to go, but that realisation … I suppose in college I knew that look I wanted to head this direction.'* (Chris)

Meanwhile, others experimented with industry and were drawn back to teaching and an academic career. Jordan was a teacher who initially worked in industry and then returned to teach in higher education:

> *'I always had a grá (love) for an academic career and a post came up in (an IoT), I applied for it and got it. I was there for nearly two years and…I was headhunted to be a director of (an industrial) group… that was probably the most difficult decision in my life…to give up teaching…'* (Jordan)

Some gravitated to higher education after a realisation that they enjoyed educating others. While they had initially worked in industry they moved into higher education from an interest in education or staff development:

> *'I've been involved in training, developing, mentoring staff and I suppose I've enjoyed that aspect of what I've done …. in terms of professional development, I completed a Masters, a part-time Masters during it, so I've always been sort of interested in the whole area of development, training, and that kind of linked in to academia.'* (Ber)

Reasons for Becoming a Head of Department

The participants became HoDs through two main routes, internal promotion from within the case institute and external appointment. Four HoDs were working as lecturers in the case institute and were promoted from within the department. One (Pat), had also worked in other management positions in an acting capacity over a period of time, before commencing her/his current role:

> *'I came here straight after I finished my Masters, I'm one of those unusual people, but back in that day you probably could. And I started in an assistant lecturing role, and which I was in that for seven years, and then I moved to a senior lecturing role. And from there I got an acting department, HoD role.'* (Pat)

Three HoDs were appointed from outside the case institute. One (Chris) had worked as a lecturer in a university. The other two HoDs, both of whom were appointed in Engineering, came directly from industry.

While the motivations for undertaking the role of HoD were varied, six main reasons emerged which are encapsulated in Table 6.2 below:

Table 6. 2 Reasons for Becoming Head of Department

Reasons for Becoming Head of Department
1. Time for change
2.   Career progression
3. Encouraged by Head of School or colleagues
4. Empowerment - to be more in control of the environment
5. Serendipity – opportunity presented
6. Desire to work in education

Time for Change and Career Progression

Some academics, after a number of years teaching, felt it was time for a change and the HoD position presented an opportunity for career progression. This was particularly the motivation for those who had been appointed from within the case institute.

Typical comments were:

> *'I was sort of looking for something different, now I have to say over the previous ten years or so, I had considered other changes, and I had looked at other job opportunities outside of IT (Name of Institute). for a number of different reasons, so I was looking for something that made me a little bit different.'* (Sam)

> *'I just saw it as the next kind of step for progression. ... I just found that I was reaching a point where I wanted to do something else, then I think it was time that you know I moved on a little bit.'* (Pat)

Support and Encouragement

In addition, encouragement from colleagues or management provided the incentive for these participants to apply for the position. For Sam, the support of colleagues was a key factor in his/her decision to apply:

> *'And the second reason was I did receive a lot of encouragement from colleagues to go for the job, and I suppose the combination of those two said sure I'll see how I get on.'* (Sam)

For Pat, the encouragement and support of the HoD helped her/him realise that s/he could do the job:

> *'My HoD at that stage ...said it to me, why don't you apply for it, you know you would be good. And so ...to have somebody else say it to you, that they thought you would be good at it. ... I hadn't really thought that much about it before then, and then I kind of thought about it a bit and said sure look I might as well apply and see what it was like.'* (Pat)

Empowerment

For some participants there was an element of gaining power, self-protection and safeguarding the department in their motivation to apply for the position. Two academics applied for the role of HoD in order to ensure they were not managed by people they considered were not capable of filling the role. Hilary did not plan to become a manager, but s/he felt that someone with the knowledge of the culture of the department should 'step up'. S/he explained that there was much upheaval in the School over the previous year and a number of colleagues came together and agreed who should apply for the role from within the department:

> *'In all honesty somebody had to do it and it had to be, we felt, the group of lecturers felt, that it had to be somebody from inside, so we kind of drew straws and it was decided that three of us would apply for it… So we went for the interviews and surprise, surprise I got the job.' (Hilary)*

Gay, in consultation with her/his colleagues, felt that the department needed stability having successfully negotiated a bullying case within, but there was also an element of self–empowerment and self-protection in her/his application:

> *'there was some of the thinking at the time was to have the department in a safe pair of hands, because there was other people who expressed interest… somebody had taken a bullying case against me which was one of the things that encouraged me to actually go for the role in the first case, just to almost put it up to the Institute to see were they just saying …I wasn't found guilty of bullying, that did go on for quite a few months, possibly four or five months at the time. But I did say to myself well I'll put it up to them now and see, that was another reason why I went for it.' (Gay)*

There also appeared to be a wish for more autonomy and flexibility. Sam believed the position would facilitate her/his research:

> *'I thought it would kind of have a little bit of flexibility particularly because I was studying at the time, and I'm still studying that in order to build my research around my day it might be a little bit easier.'* (Sam)

Some were motivated by a desire to make a difference and contribute at a higher level, to have greater influence on the institute or drive the department:

> *'I thought the role of HoD would make a difference in that I could make the position for the lecturers better so that they can do their job better.' (Hilary)*

Serendipity

Fourthly, serendipity seemed to play a part in the move to the HoD position. Chris, having read the job description, felt that s/he was doing the role without the title in another Higher Education Institute (HEI). The case institute was closer to her/his home and the discipline areas fitted – thus it was the right place and the right time:

> *'It was a combination of things, it was proximity to home base, it was the actual remit of the job description, …The discipline areas I had experience across a number of the areas, so it just it seemed like a very good fit. I didn't*

expect to get offered the position, I said I'd throw my hat in the ring and see how it went.' (Chris)

The complexity of decision-making was also evident in Chris's reasoning where s/he explained that s/he did not have an explicit intention or desire to become a manager:

'(I) was always on the lookout for something that I felt that I could be, wasn't essentially a management role that I was looking for. But when I read the job spec, I thought look I'm doing a lot of these in my current role without having the formal title of HoD.' (Chris)

Work in Education

Jordan and Ber both had some knowledge of the work of the case institute prior to applying for the role. Jordan had worked in various roles in academia and industry over a considerable period of time. S/he felt that his skill set and background would be suitable for the role. S/he had also acted as an external examiner in the case institute and formed a positive view of the institute:

'I was here as external examiner, and I had a very favourable impression of the department and my predecessor actually… I kind of thought you know with their skill-set and my background, I thought it would be a very exciting thing, and it is actually.' (Jordan)

Ber worked mainly in industry. S/he had done some part time lecturing in the case institute over a number of years:

'The part-time lecturing that I got involved in was in that context. I enjoyed my time here, enjoyed working with the team here, and thereafter when the opportunity came up to get involved full-time I thought well why not' (Ber)

In conclusion, career progression, interest in education, interest in the role and a good impression of the case institute seem to be the most significant factors. For those promoted internally, support from colleagues within the case institute was a key factor in applying for the role. There also seemed to be a timing element as to when the transition from teaching to management became a viable option for those internally promoted as both Chris and Sam were teaching for roughly eight years each before taking up the role of HoD.

Early Career Influence on Head of Department Role

Most of the participants had worked as academics prior to becoming a HoD. Three had been lecturers in the case institute. They considered that their prior experiences as academics provided valuable knowledge for their current role. Two participants worked for a considerable time as lecturers and reported they knew *'the department…the courses…the people'* (Pat) and the *'politics'* (Gay):

> *'I came from within the department definitely helped because you were aware of the politics, you were aware of some of the various bodies, you were aware of the dynamics of groups and so that certainly helped. You could predict where road blocks or problems or issues could come up. Having some awareness of some of the more senior people, some awareness of their…where they stand as well was certainly beneficial,.'* (Gay)

They had also undertaken 'informal leadership' positions within their departments. Gay, Sam and Pat had been programme directors within their respective departments which meant that they were responsible for the day-to-day running of these programmes in cooperation with their HoD. All three were also elected representatives of their departments on Academic Council where they were active members. In Chris's case s/he was doing a HoD role without the title in another HEI.

Teaching appeared to be a good preparation for taking on the role of HoD as Sam, Gay and Pat also spent eight years plus teaching prior to being appointed to the position.

Previous Management Experience

It is very clear that having previous management experience outside of academia was regarded as a help by Jordan and Ber as they had faced many challenges. While these HoDs felt anxiety about the role, Jordan and Ber saw the issues as challenges to be solved and that their previous experience was an advantage. As Ber and Jordan stated:

> *'There wasn't too many surprises. I suppose the hope would be ... I came in with recent industry experience and feeling that I could potentially influence programme development to align with what I felt were needs of industry. So in*

that sense I felt that I had some management leadership experience from industry and I thought well ally that to my previous academic experience,' (Ber)

'I knew I'd be challenged, but I wasn't overly concerned by it you know, because I had solved those challenges elsewhere.' (Jordan)

Learning on the Job

Notwithstanding the induction and early training, HoDs experienced many challenges on commencing their roles and for some it was a difficult process. There is a sense of isolation and lack of support and mentoring at the very important early transition into the role.

Ber reflected that:

'there was a sense of a personal responsibility to get up to speed on what needed to be done…there's an element of sink or swim …it's very much down to the individual to find their way through that one.' (Ber)

Similarly, Pat described it as *'just trying to find your own way'*. For Chris it was all about surviving which s/he described as her/his *'greatest learning curve'*. Hilary decided after one year to return to lecturing, describing the role as *'the least enjoyable job I ever had'*.

Other key challenges highlighted in this initial stage were HR and Trade Union issues, who to consult, timetabling and people-management. There was also a keen sense lack of preparation for the role and a sense of inadequacy and deskilling in the role:

'It was a baptism of fire…. There was a huge amount of information thrown at me and there was an awful lot to get my head around." (Chris)

'I don't think I really had a clue what I was doing, or what I was going to be doing to be honest with you. I think it was, I knew I would have to timetable and manage classes, but outside of that I think I was very naïve about what the role actually entailed. I wouldn't have had much experience.' (Pat)

Despite their initial challenges in the role, HoDs still felt highly motivated. This was confirmed by the focus group when asked what attracted them to the role. Making a

difference and making small but significant changes over a period of time helps to keep them motivated. In addition to improving the department and working as a team the mission of the institute was important, in particular, access of education to the wider community. As Pat (FG) indicated;

> *'You can see things that you want to do or that can be done better or that, you know, you want to kind of improve the area that you work in or the department that you work in. So I suppose it does allow you like the opportunity to do that, not always in huge strategic ways, but you can make a difference, you know.*
>
> *I'd have a certain amount of pride in your department and your staff and you're trying to do the best with what you have and to, ...instil that sense of pride and passion for what we do into our own staff as well like. '* (Pat, FG)

Professional Development and Training

Given the initial challenges that they faced HoDs reflected on the supports that they received on commencement of the role. This was explored under the following themes; handover; induction; mentoring; formal training. The sense of isolation and lack of support is most evident in the lack of impact that professional development and training had as they commenced the role. The opportunity for SM to build a relationship at this vital stage was lost.

Handover

HoDs had varied experiences of a formal induction for the role. Two HoDs had experienced a handover process from the previous incumbent. In Jordan's case the process consisted of eight hours but s/he found it extremely useful. As s/he recalled:

> *'I only had was it one or two days with my predecessor, he was kind enough to come in and give me a handover, and I still reflect on those conversations, and some of the questions I asked him, he didn't verbally answer, but he answered with a smile. And now looking back, look I've only in total I probably only talked to my predecessor for most eight hours if you were to add it all up....'* (Jordan)

Sam was in the fortunate position that the previous HoD was still working in the institute and s/he *'had a very good (prior) relationship'* with her/him. Thus s/he could consult her/him at any stage. Pat had no opportunity for a formal handover:

'it would have been good if it had have been some element of crossover with who I would have worked with beforehand, do you know what I mean? So if the HoD I was replacing had have been there even for a couple of weeks. .' (Pat)

Induction

Only one of the HoDs, the most recently appointed, received a generic induction programme which was delivered through the HR department to all new staff:

'Now, there was the initial induction which was very high level and I would say probably took round about half an hour/forty minutes…, just some very high level outlines of different you know, for example, the organisational structure… But in terms of kind of a structured approach to induction, not really… it was more ... I suppose …a sense of a personal responsibility to get up to speed on what needed to be done.' (Ber)

Heads of School (HoS) were felt to be useful but not so much on the running of day-to-day activities. They would give *'guidance'* (Ber) rather than information on the day-to-day activities.

Mentoring

Although a formal mentoring scheme was provided to recently appointed HoDs, this did not appear to impact greatly. The mentoring was undertaken by members of the senior management team and it is clear that the informal mentoring by their peers or former colleagues was much more beneficial:

'Now in fairness, a mentor was assigned to me and I've had a couple of meetings with the mentor and they've been very positive but you know everybody is very busy so finding time for something like mentoring is always going to be a challenge. So I think just more of a structured approach, identifying where the gaps are in terms of what needs you know ... give a good appreciation of what's involved rather than you know kind of stumbling through each step in the process.' (Ber)

Chris felt the lack of a formal mentoring system within the Institute:

'Because the training that I had to come into the role, it was way above my head, and I didn't realise operationally how it was going to… but I think there needs to be a kind of a mentoring system.' (Chris)

Formal Management Training Programme

Five HoDs attended a formal management training programme delivered by the Leadership Foundation, United Kingdom. They thought that the programme was worthwhile. Pat found the people management side of things very useful. However, the timing of it was an issue. Jordan, who was in the role for a period before going on the programme, found that most of the role-playing exercises had already happened in her/his department prior to going on the programme. In Chris's case s/he found that s/he did not have sufficient understanding of the role when s/he went on the programme. Sam found it applicable in some areas but not in others and had difficulty in *'finding the time…to implement all the things you learn on something like that'*. On reflection, Chris considered that the training programme would have been of greater benefit if it had been given on a phased basis for new and long-standing HoDs, perhaps *'a half day workshop once a month'*.

Support in the Role

Formal Support

Despite the initial challenges HoDs were generally very positive in relation to the organisation structure and the support given by senior management. Where the system had not been supportive it is down to individuals rather than the system. The 'open door policy' was commented on favourably by all HoDs. This was seen as equally important by HoDs coming from within the system and outside the system. Typical comments are reflected below from Jordan, Ber and Sam:

> *'Actually to be honest I think it's surpassed my expectations to be very fair on the amount of support that I've got. I've got it from senior management, but also from the team that are there established lecturers and people that started with me at the same time.'* (Jordan)

> *'The environment is … quite structured in terms of the processes and the provisions …there are a lot of checks and balances in the system,… I haven't been let down by the system per se… But so far my experience would be that I think the systems do work.'* (Ber)

> *'Everybody within the institution that I have ever gone to with a query or a concern, or looking for help, you know almost everyone has been extremely supportive. So whether you are dealing with HR, or whether you are dealing with finance, or whether you are dealing with international office, you know*

people are willing to kind of help you, inform you, guide you, oh definitely you know admissions, student services.' (Sam)

Chris contrasted working in the case institute with that of her/his former HE:

> *'So I do think the structure where here does very much facilitate. I've come from where access to the registrar, or access to admissions, you are several steps removed, and you don't have direct access to the person who can deal with your problem. So certainly I think the structure here does facilitate in comparison to my previous experience. And then there are aspects of the current structure which don't facilitate, so and I think it's more down to individuals in the role, as opposed to the divisional functionalities.'* (Chris)

This level of formal supports allied to the informal open door policy helped HoDs as they came to terms with their role in the initial stages.

Collegiality and Common Goals

HoDs generally had a very positive outlook to the case institute. They were very aware that the student was the centre of their work and that this led to a sense of community and common purpose among the staff. As Sam stated:

> *'they all really want to see the best thing for [name of IoT] , and for the students of [name of IoT]. So that in itself, sharing that kind of common goal or approach makes it easier.'* (Sam)

Jordan suggested that this has led to a sense of community within the institute:

> *'for all our challenges and difficulties, I think that sense of community, whether it's because we are in a community, or it just is the system because it was the same way in another place, I kind of think that's kind of one of the key strengths.'* (Jordan)

Hilary reflected on how this impacted on the professionalism of the staff:

> *'everywhere I went the people in this Institute work really, really hard and it's for the better of the placement and this is senior management, middle management, all of the staff, technicians, everybody that I came across worked really, really hard for the students and for the Institute'* (Hilary)

This can be seen as a positive aspect of managerialism where everyone appears to be buying into the same vision and mission.

Informal Support

HoD Forum

The HoD Forum is a key source of support, influence and power for HoDs. HoDs meet as peers informally on a weekly basis for a cup of tea and about once a month for issues of concern. This was identified as a key informal networking support. It was initially formed by HoDs as an informal grouping in order to discuss and try to sort out issues of common concern and deal with the increasing level of managerialism experienced in the role. HoDs were also experiencing a sense of isolation and a lack of support in the position. This Forum, although still informal, has grown to a more structured Forum. It is especially important to new HoDs as they were trying to establish themselves. HoDs also informally supported each other on a one on one basis on such tasks as timetables. Sam was conscious of the isolation of the role and the need for the support system provided by her/his peers:

> *'One of the things that I found was the other heads of department were there, so you could always at meetings or outside of meetings, you could always ask somebody what are you doing about this, or what should I be doing…heads of department are sort of unique in, you know they are sandwiched between your lecturing staff and your senior management, and really that small group of heads of department become that support system that you need to kind of get through it. …my first bit of advice to use and lean on (them) and help out then when your own turn comes…'* (Sam)

Jordan found the Forum beneficial to bounce issues off the more experienced HoDs in the organisation:

> *'The HoD Forum, when issues arose, it was really beneficial to get the experienced HoDs' feedback and some of it was quite good humoured.'* (Jordan)

Pat indicated the ability to tap into HoDs with expertise in certain areas such as timetabling:

'The other heads of department would have been really helpful like so, you know you would say like what am I meant to do with this or I have this spreadsheet of hours to fill out, or it can help with the timetabling. And so that would have been a big help…' (Pat)

Chris reflected on the support which helped her/him to integrate into the Institute and its systems:

'I have to say if it wasn't for my counterparts, my colleagues at HoD level, I would have found the transition extremely difficult...I depended a lot on my colleagues to give me guidance.' (Chris)

Hilary found the support comforting even if did not always lead to getting things sorted out:

'Lot of the help came from sitting down with the other heads of department, it was in some way comforting to know that everybody was going through the same issues but there didn't seem to be the … the frustrating thing was that everybody was going through the same issues but nobody was really … they weren't being solved.' (Hilary)

In the focus group (FG), the HoDs reflected on the role from two aspects over and above the foregoing. The first was the creation of good working relationships among the group with the consequence of reduced rivalries and disagreements:

'But I think like we're lucky here in that because we have the HoD meetings and we have good working relationships, and that makes it so much easier because like I know colleagues in other institutions where that isn't necessarily always the case….And there can be fierce rivalries and disagreements.' (Pat FG)

'Yes, I was going to make that point because you mentioned isolation there and I was 'going to mention the heads of department meetings because I think there is that sense of shared issues,' (Ber FG).

The second issue was based on the aspect of the isolation without the Forum and Pat's previous experience in a previous management role:

'Like I was (Position) for a couple of years and like you're kind of a head of department, but you're not a head. You don't know what you are really, but anyway, that's another day's work. But like you are isolated there' (Pat FG)

What is notable is the lack of an informal network outside of the HoD Forum within the case institute. Only Gay seemed to be linked into an outside network of fellow academics and industrialists:

> *'There is a forum for in my area where all the heads of department from both universities. IT's meet and that would include representatives from Enterprise Ireland, IDA, HEA, the bigger ones, the (Name) the (Name) they would all have representatives at that. That's a good forum…'* (Gay)

This is certainly a weakness, given that in the National Survey 30 out of 33 respondents found '*undertaking visits to other institutions or agencies*' to be beneficial in developing their capabilities.

Alone within the management structure, HoDs do not have a national forum. HoSs have a national forum as do Registrars, Secretary/Financial Controllers, HR Managers, Student Services Managers etc. As such, HoDs have no official forum through which they can network. Most of the networking is very much ad hoc, through meeting other HoDs at interviews or programmatic reviews etc. This makes the HoD Forum within the case institute all the more important especially given the isolation of the role as previously identified. This, in turn, can make HoDs or indeed the Forum, more inward looking than they/it would otherwise be.

Further there is no sense from the HoDs that they should be using the Forum strategically to initiate change and influence strategy at an institute and school basis. They do not see that the Forum can be used to build the relationships with SM and gradually achieve more empowerment and authority in their role.

Impact of Political, Social and Economic Discourses on the Role of HoD

The following section presents a summary of the data collected from the participants in relation to the study's research question:

> *'How do institutional, socio-cultural and political contexts and discourses where those HoDs are located have shaped their sense-making about the role?'*

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The themes that emerged included the impact of; audit culture; demographics; engagement; Technological University and government organisations. Although HoDs may not be aware of the terms neoliberalism and managerialism, this section clearly reflects the HoDs' awareness of these discourses and how they impact upon them.

Political, social and economic factors impact in many ways on the role of HoD, particularly at the macro and strategic levels but also on the day-to-day basis. Not alone are these factors impacting on the role currently, but HoDs believe that they will also impact on the role in the future. Although HoDs may not describe these issues in neoliberal or managerial terms, it is quite clear that they are fully aware of the impact that they have in the running of the case institute and their respective departments.

The impacts are multifaceted such as the audit culture pervading HEI's, demographic issues in terms of more and larger classes, and the more specific requirement of engaging with the community and industry. Last but by no means least, is the impact of the political agenda including the Technological University project. It is quite clear that neoliberalism and its organisational arm, managerialism is operating in the case institute.

Economic/Financial

The one area that all HoDs commented on was the impact of finance both at a macro level and at an operational level. HoDs are aware of the need for efficiencies within the system and the need to keep control on finances at all time as finance has an impact on all aspects of the HoDs work. This includes among others giving an increased emphasis to research, affecting the staff student ratio and the impact of staffing. Jordan reflected on the importance that finance can have on the core mission of the institute:

> *'if you look at the universities twenty years ago, they were ... core grant funded in their entirety. But now a huge proportion of their budget, it's still state-funded, but it's coming from another pot, it's kind of research money so to speak. ...I'd like to hope that our core mission of .... teaching and research,*

and our identity of working with the local needs of the region and the community won't get significantly eroded.' (Jordan)

This point is reiterated by Hilary:

'a lot of this is driven financially, we don't seem to be changing our emphasis in education, it's all to do with you know everything follows the money.' (Hilary)

Ber observed the ongoing problem of funding within the public sector at large:

'The financial constraints in the overall system you know, I suppose the financial climate across the public sector is difficult, somewhat difficult at the moment.' (Ber)

Sam, while conscious of the difficult financial environment, indicated that finance will not be a barrier to good ideas and programmes:

'Financial, obviously the recession will have had an impact on the role, I'm coming into it from kind of nearly coming out of the recession would have been my experience. Although I have to say when I've had looked for resources for new programmes, I haven't been declined on my requests. So I have to say the senior management have been quite favourable, but that's not always the case. But they do tend to try and support where they can.' (Sam)

Pat indicated the strain of increasing student numbers without a corresponding increase in resources:

'Obviously, economic climate, resources that's been a huge strain, and that I suppose our numbers have gone up and we haven't anywhere near the resources (needed). I mean we are managing, we are doing quite well, but ...when you look at say the staff, student ratios across the Institute or whatever. It's you know it's shocking really, and it's nobody's fault.' (Pat)

The impact of the Public Sector Agreements was noted by Chris:

'I would find that the employment control framework is very, very tight, and I would see your 20 and your 18 hours is putting huge pressures on the staff.' (Chris)

The impact of the Employment Framework was a matter of much discussion in the focus group and the negative impact it had. As Jordan stated:

> *'what's quite brutal as well, and it goes back to your point on the resources, is the contractual obligations. Like it's extremely, you know, 19 and 17 hours and everybody's hour kind of has to be utterly accounted for and that in some respects, you know, is an external type of thing, but it has a major shape on the day-to-day job for all concerned.* (Jordan, FG)

Audit Culture

Managerialism is reflected in how the audit culture operates in the case institute. Although not specifically mentioned, the impact of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is manifested through the HoDs' comments. The *'over self- regulated'* nature of the work was commented on by a number of HoDs. This is surveillance (including self-surveillance) in operation. Departments have to go through two different types of review, school programmatic reviews and reviews by professional bodies for accreditation purposes. The school programmatic reviews are done through the quality assurance system which is an internal self-evaluation by each department undertaken every five years. The programme reviews by professional bodies reflects the need for the case institute to gain accreditation from professional bodies such as Engineering, Aviation, Accounting and Law. This accreditation process is outside of the control of the case institute. The level of scrutiny to achieve this accreditation varies depending on the professional body concerned but is onerous. This double level of audit and scrutiny is very time consuming and difficult. Jordan indicated the level of audits that her/his department had to go through since her/his taking up the role:

> *'the system in my mind could potentially be kind of become an over self-regulated, so in my own area we have like been through, by the time I'm two years here, it will be through two [professional body] audits, an [professional body] audit, so that's three audits in one area, accreditation by two different professional bodies, and across three of the programmes. A strategic review, a programmatic review across all the programmes, and next year there will be an institutional review. So there's almost like an insane bureaucratic overhead, I do admit it adds some quality to the process, but I'm not so convinced that it adds quality efficiently to the thing.'* (Jordan)

Hilary reflected that the level of auditing and reviewing was interfering with other aspects of the role:

> *'the year that was in it was difficult because we had accreditations from [professional body] and [professional body] so there wasn't a whole lot of time for that but I suppose driving backwards and forwards (from the Institute) would have been my time to think about things and the biggest thing was students, we need students and how do we get students.'* (Hilary)

Pat wondered when reflecting on the Programmatic Review process about the need for so much emphasis on reviews:

> *'I still think there's an element of us going over the top with our kind of QA and audit stuff anyway, and I think it's part of our history of being an IoT, and maybe we always felt a little bit that we had to. And we did have to defend ourselves and prove ourselves for a long time, but I think that we are at a point now, where we just need to start becoming more autonomous and take more responsibility and trust ourselves and our departments and our staff.'* (Pat)

Demand for Higher Education

Demographics are having, and will continue to have, an impact on the case institute. Given the location of the case institute, the increase in student numbers experienced in the last five years is likely to continue into the foreseeable future, as indicated in Chapter 2. This is recognised by all the HoDs. It impacts differently on all departments and indeed within different programmes within the departments. On the one hand there is an impact on the staff student ratio and on the other hand it can ensure the viability of some programmes. This is reflective of the 'human capital' approach for HE, whereby HEIs are being put under pressure to facilitate growing numbers entering third level. This when added to the lack of extra staff appointed increases the staff student ratio and reflects the tentacles of managerialism in increasing efficiencies through 'doing more for less'

Gay indicated the continuing increase in student numbers in her/his department since his appointment:

> *'The numbers have increased definitely yeah, we are possibly, where are we? We could be 30 per cent, more than 30 per cent higher than we would have been seven years ago, at least 30 per cent higher….we would have been sort of*

330'ish I suppose at one point, and then we went towards 400, and it's more recently we are sort of in the 500 mark.' (Gay)

Sam saw the increasing numbers as a positive challenge:

'We've a couple of programmes that are really struggling, and decisions need to be made about that. On the other hand then, there's a big influx of students coming into third level in the future, so trying to get a cut of that pie obviously is going to be very important for heads of department as well .... whether it's expanding programmes or developing new programmes, or trying to get some of those students in to build [name of IoT] ' (Sam)

In contrast Pat, whose department has the highest number of students, saw the negative impact in terms of staff student ratio and staff morale:

'It's an historic thing, and then obviously the numbers went in one direction at a certain point in time, and the resources went in the other direction. And so I think that's been a big, that's had a big impact, it's had an impact on not so much in terms of what I do every day. But it's had a big impact on morale in the department and staff morale, and it's harder to get people to do things and bring people on board.' (Pat)

Engagement with External Stakeholder and Community

Even though HoDs feel that due to lack of time and workload they are not doing enough of liaising with the community and with industry, they were very conscious of the need to continue doing this and do more of it as indicated in the comments below:

'There's some sort of senior levels of engagement with third parties that need to be established and maintained, with problem development, it's engagement with industry to see where that's ... you know industry liaison.' (Ber)
'one area I think I don't do enough in is engagement with kind of industry and community. That's a definite area that I want to work more on.' (Pat)

Gay described how s/he engaged with industry:

'There's possibly more engagement with the local community, for me it tends to be with industry because we've a work placement on every programme in third year. So it would be unusual for me almost not to meet some industry representative almost every week, you know some of that happens inside. Some of it doesn't, some of it happens at centralised meetings, there is a forum

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for in my area where all the heads of department from both universities…IT's meet' (Gay)

Technological University

One of the key discourses in the case institute surrounds the aim of amalgamating with another IoT and becoming a Technological University (TU). The TU project has been embraced by the case institute Governing Body and SM. It has potentially long term implications for the institute such as loss of independence, rationalisation of its staff and programmes and changing the way in which the case institute has operated. The impact on the application for Technological University (TU) by the case institute has also been important in setting parameters and key performance indicators as set out by the DES to be achieved across the Institute and by extension each department. Although HoDs feel that it does not have an impact on them on a day-to-day basis, it does have an impact on the priorities that they set within their work, in particular the role of research and the increasing level of qualifications among the staff. This is reflected in the privileging of research over teaching. It is also manifested in the emphasis on the appointment of new staff with level 10 qualifications. Just one HoD (Pat) saw a potential impact on the structure of the organisation in terms of new departments and faculties and new roles within the TU. Although they are kept up-to-date on the progress of the TU project they feel isolated and remote from it. This remoteness is also reflected in the HoDs view of the academic staff's perception as expressed in the focus group:

> *'I think they're not very aware. Well, these people have gone through that. You could do a lifecycle of people's interests in it. It started out like… We could do like fear and then it was kind of like acceptance and now it's just like they're totally fed up… Indifferent, yes. It doesn't matter. It's never going to happen'* (Pat, FG)

In the case of HoDs, Gay felt that as the TU status was not imminent there was no impact on his role. However, s/he did see an impact on the Institute as a whole:

> *'Fundamentally I don't see the role changing hugely….we have as an Institute we have changed substantially from five years ago. So I think the whole setting of benchmarks that have to be achieved I think has been good for us. You know like I was told in the past forget about post-graduate stuff, you know*

don't worry about that stuff, don't go there was the instruction. Whereas now it's quite the opposite,' (Gay)

Chris felt that s/he was very much on the periphery of and did not have an opportunity to input into the process:

'I would say that while we are being updated regularly on the happenings of the TU, I haven't been involved in any cluster meetings. I haven't been involved in any meetings regarding the kind of departments. It hasn't really come down to HoD level from my experience. ... I'm very much on the periphery of it.' (Chris)

Sam concurred with this view but indicated the impact that the TU process has on research:

'TU status is probably something that will affect the HoD's role, but I don't know how it's going to affect it,...one of the big things that probably the whole TU status affects our department and my department in particular maybe is the whole research area as well, you know trying to build because (name of discipline) is typically you know a big research area. So trying to drive that and ... increase our numbers, increase our funding ... that's a big thing.' (Sam)

Pat also saw the impact of research and the improving levels of qualification among the staff:

'There's a big shift, you know and people kind of see that this is what's going to happen. And even the research culture is definitely (a) slow burner, in some areas it's doing better than in others.... we've got these new staff in, because they see us as being on a trajectory towards the TU and maybe... there's a lot of people in my department now who are doing PhD's, myself included, who probably wouldn't have' (Pat)

Jordan recognised the support for the research process:

'The president really has been really supportive from the organisational point of view of the broad research agenda that I've tried to develop in the department...they put ... research directors or core leaders as we call them here in the institute in effectively to help drive those agendas.' (Jordan)

HoDs are keenly aware of the emphasis on research and the knock on effect on finance and the fact that this is being driven both from inside and outside the case

institution. At the same time HoDs are conscious that more students will be registering for programmes and they have to be provided for. In some cases this increase in student numbers will be of enormous help to the departments while in other departments it will lead to further strain on resources. This can reflect the ongoing dilemma for a HoD trying align the strategic direction of her/his department. They also mentioned about the possibility of changes in the organisational structure to reflect TU status but were unsure how this would be manifested.

The focus group captured the impact of the TU process in the following comment from Ber:

> *'It still influences in the sense that the metrics to achieve TU status tends to kind of drive us in terms of progress, in terms of, you know, the likes of Level 10 qualifications and the ratio that we're driving towards. Like the actual engagement to create the TU seems like it's really on the slow train to China, but in the background, there's a strategy to kind of continue to move forward towards TU designation compliance, I suppose, in terms of the different metrics…. for those that are research active …the TU may possibly have …a larger resonance.'* (Ber, FG)

The focus group also highlighted how the proposed change to TU status is fostering a climate of uncertainty and suspicion that SM will use the TU process to get other things done. As Sam and Jordan discussed:

> *'The other thing you might hear discussed lately in relation to the TU is you know the restructuring of departments and schools and so on that's been mooted a few times. Staff have kind of got wind of that too. They're wondering, you know, what is this TU influence? What's the impact it's going to have on departments?'* (Sam, FG)

> *'But is that TU-driven or is it just kind of healthy organisation root and branch pruning-driven, if you know what I mean?'* (Jordan, FG)

Government Agencies/ Surveillance and Metrics

The other major outside influences identified by the HoDs through the focus group was the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the benchmarking and ranking tables. The HEA is perceived as the government watchdog, slightly removed from the case institute but its influence is very much felt. As Ber stated:

'I think there's a lot of indirect influences, if you look at the HEA and the likes of CAO footprints and that kind of. There's a lot of that kind of stuff that permeates down from outside through the organisation that influences us in terms of the whole drive towards creating common pathways on the CAO, you know, which has quite impacted on us in terms of programme offers. And that's kind of coming through indirectly. Then you have the whole benchmarking and how we're ranked and how our performance is analysed as an institute in terms of student numbers and programme streams, which can have an impact on whether a programme is retained or axed. You know, it can be quite brutal.' (Ber, FG)

Conclusion

Becoming a HoD

The participants were all qualified in the discipline area of their respective departments with two having Level 10 qualifications and a further two studying for them**.** Three were appointed from outside the case Institute with the rest promoted from lecturing positions within. The participants who were promoted from within felt that it was useful to know the people, the systems and the politics. They had held informal leadership positions within their respective departments. The two HoDs appointed with an industry background had enough experience from their other positions to cope with all aspects of the role. Both also had previous academic experience, one in the case of the Institute.

Reasons for Becoming a HoD

Many reasons were given for becoming a HoD, the key ones being, making a difference as well as time for a change or promotion and empowerment. They are still attracted to the role and the main areas that keep them motivated include the ability to initiate change albeit slowly and also the mission of the case institute and the widening of access to the third level system. This was predicated to make a difference to the students in giving the best education and opportunities possible.

Professional Development and Training

Initially when coming into the role, HoDs received various different types of training and induction. The induction was very 'high level' and did not really help with the day-to-day running of the department. Mentoring by a member of the SM team, a

recently introduced concept, was also felt to be of limited value as it was very ad-hoc, given the workloads of the senior managers.

The recently appointed HoDs had participated in an Academic Leadership programme in the UK. The programme was useful to the HoDs in some areas and not in others. They felt that it would be better having this type of training over a longer period of time. The most important help in the initial stages was the opportunity for a handover from the previous incumbent in the role. In one case the previous HoD had retired and came in to give an overview and in the second case the previous incumbent was still working in the case institute and the HoD was able to contact him/her about different issues.

There is a need to look at how HoDs are inducted into the role of HoD as the current situation leaves a lot to be desired, with only the help of a previous incumbent being regarded as useful to incoming HoDs. This process should reflect the difficulties that HoDs encountered on commencement of their roles. Given this, HoDs found settling into the role challenging. They had '*no clue*' about how to run the timetabling system. The interface with the unions was a challenge to those who came to the role from industry.

The sense of isolation within the role is keenly experienced by HoDs during their transition into the role. They experienced a sense of being left on their own and get on with it. This lack of formal support particularly from SM indicates a lack of interest in forging a collegial relationship and reflects the top down approach managerialist approach to leadership. This is perhaps an area which the HoD Forum, see below, could prioritise in their discussions with SM.

Support

The key support in the role is the HoD Forum. This is particularly true for new HoDs as they can bounce issues off fellow HoDs. It also allows for a good working relationship within the group and reduced rivalries and disagreements. However, the Forum is not used sufficiently in a strategic manner to impact both on the strategy of the institute and improving the relationship with SM. Another help in the role is the

'open door policy' within the institute whereby you can call into practically anyone, SM included.

Political Social and Economic Factors

It is very clear that HoDs are cognisant of the neoliberalist and managerialist discourses in their day to day work although they may not recognise the titles.

They are fully aware of the way in which the government, through the DES, controls the running of the institute, through the overall political impact such as the Public Service Agreements and the increasing level of surveillance, through the Quality Assurance systems, and increasing levels of transparency and efficiencies. This is experienced most keenly within the human and financial resourcing. Further the increasing level of metrics is most important as the case institute applies for TU status.

Economic and financial factors impact on the role at a macro and micro level. At a macro level it is impacted by the money, such as the impact of increasing the research focus within the different departments. On the micro level, HoDs have to deal with increasing student numbers and reduced resources, be they human or financial. Managerialism is very much in evidence here through surveillance, accountability and efficiency.

The Public Service Agreements in particular have had a major impact on the day-to-day running of the departments in that they have reduced the flexibility of the staff in doing non-teaching duties within an increasing non-teaching load.

There is a sense of being over audited. Whether it is professional accreditation or School Programme Reviews, there is a sense of over regulation and exhaustion leaving little time to for leading and developing the department and the Institute. It is also felt that the level and depth of the audits are related to the risk-averse nature of the organisation.

Demographics play and will continue to play a key role in the growth of the organisation. Being in a fast growing population area, it is inevitable that more

students will attend the institute. This has a mixed impact on the departments. For those departments with larger numbers, the impact will be higher student staff ratios and further pressure (doing more for less). For the departments with smaller numbers, this will mean a new lease of life and the strengthening of existing programmes.

The metric requirements of the TU status are also putting pressure on the HoDs with an increased emphasis on academic qualifications and research outputs. HoDs feel on the periphery of the process and believe that the academic staff, with notable exceptions (research groups), are disinterested in the process. HoDs also have a sense that the TU process is sometimes used to push through policies and procedures that have little to do with the process, such as an organisational restructuring. The increasing influence of the HEA is keenly felt by HoDs whether it be bench marking, league tables or initiating change such as the transitions system.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS 2. LEADING AND MANAGING AN ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT

Introduction

Having set the context for the role, this chapter presents the micro –practices of the role, as experienced by the HoDs in the case institute. The findings illustrate the impact of managerialism and bureaucracy on the role. In particular the chapter focuses on the management and leadership practices that HoDs enact on a daily basis and identifies the challenges and constraints in the role.

Being a Head of Department

The following section presents a summary of the data collected from the seven participants to the research question:

> *How do Heads of Department experience their role and in particular how do they make sense of their leadership and management of an academic department?*

The response to this question is analysed under the following headings:

- Day-to-day activities
- Management and leadership
- In-between nature of the role
- Unseen aspects of the role

The participants identified a wide range of activities and time consuming aspects of the role. Some of these activities were common to all HoDs while others were department-specific. The key attributes required for the role emerged and HoD's perceptions of staff views of role were explored.

To give an indication of the size of each department, Table 7.1 gives some basic statistics on each department. As can be seen, the number of students and staff vary,

with the highest students/staff area in the Business and Humanities School. In comparison with the figures from the National Survey, student numbers are smaller and staffing is higher.

Table 7. 1 Profile of Departments

Head of Department	School	Student Numbers	Staff Reporting
Pat	Business & Humanities	650	30
Sam	Science	680	50
Chris	Business & Humanities	400	24
Gay	Science	500	35
Jordan	Engineering	520	51
Hilary	Engineering	520	51
Ber	Engineering	350	34

Multifaceted Role

The diverse nature of HoD work and its centrality to the core business of the organisation's teaching is reflected in the responses from the participants. The variety of functions HoDs enact on a daily basis highlight the complexity of the work.

Jordan succinctly captured the chameleon nature of the role requiring a wide range of competencies from counselling to accountancy:

> *'The day to day aspects of the role are huge, I mean they go from mind-boggling admin type stuff, you know you can almost be an accountant one minute, a HR manager another minute, a psychologist the next minute and you are talking to …a student.'* (Jordan)

Ber described a wide ranging role in dealing with bureaucracy, managing staff and students to leading a new development both in the one to one interview and the focus group:

'It can be anything from …a lecturer ringing in sick and therefore having to deal with that, to….student complaints…it could be something like timetabling, it can be staff meetings….then it could be leading a new potential collaboration partnership and anything that goes with that…it's just quite a wide ranging role… There's a lot in it.' (Ber)

'And the frustration. The feeling at times that you haven't got enough time to do anything 100%, that you're kind of multi-tasking and moving from one thing to another, just to keep all the plates spinning.' (Ber, FG)

That said, Ber found that there was a nice sense of 'rhythm' to the year from one year to the next. Pat observed that the nature of the work varies throughout the year:

'We are very cyclical in how we work…at the start of the year it's running around, getting the classes, looking at numbers, registering signing off on offers, getting the timetables up and running, making the hours add up for staff…..around exams when you know you are dealing with a lot of student queries, students who have missed exams, problems that arose during the year, getting results in, externs, dealing with all of that.' (Pat)

Gay concurred with this and indicates that certain times of the year lend themselves to strategising over others. It should be noted that Gay is the only HoD who does not do his own timetables and as such has more time for other activities including leadership and strategy:

'But so that means a lot of the strategy is really left up, so I'd say it's more a 35:65 and it depends on certain times a year. September tends to be very much let's get the show on the road and get it up and going.' (Gay)

Despite the many challenges within the role HoDs still felt very motivated and were positively disposed towards the role. They enjoyed the variety in the role with the proviso that it was not overly burdening**.** Jordan's, Pat's and Ber's comments are typical:

'It's so varied actually and that's one of the things I suppose I like about the job, no two days are ever the same.' (Jordan)

'love the diversity, I love that there's never two days the same, there's never two weeks the same, two months the same….' (Pat)

'I enjoy the variety…there's a nice sense of a kind of a rhythm to the year that you kind of go through from the first years coming in and developing and the final years going out the other end and having displayed their work.' (Ber)

The flip side of variety was articulated by Sam and Pat:

'There's probably too much variety, you feel, I feel I'm kind of pulled in a million different directions sometimes.' (Sam)

'We are sometimes seen as the do all, catch all.' (Pat)

Operational and Administrative Functions

In describing the day-to-day activities, the participants both individually and in the focus group highlighted the operational and administrative focus of the role with the demands of time consuming tasks and the relentless pressure of 'paper work': It further highlights the tension within the role as HoDs try to balance the operational and strategic aspects of the role.

'There's an awful lot of micro-administration that you are involved in. So you spend your time you know answering emails, sorting out forms, signing off things, requisition forms, small bits of paper work that accumulates so much that it's a massive part of the job, which probably is not the best use of a HoD's time.' (Sam)

Timetabling, meetings and health and safety issues were areas which HoDs find both time-consuming and tedious. Typical comments were:

'The booking rooms, the timetabling…the doing other people's work for them…drives me crazy sometimes'. (Pat)

'We get this forum for the school, head of school and HoD will be responsible for updating and changing the date on health and safety and then eleven other items will be the responsibility of the HoD'. (Gay)

As Chris observed:

'I would think that everything is landed on HoDs. If there isn't a clear path to something else then the heads will do it.' (Chris)

Crisis Management and Firefighting

For many of the participants the operational demands and short term crises management led to frustration and tensions within the role and prevented them from becoming involved in strategic responsibilities. Thus, HoDs ended up being *'very reactionary rather than ...proactive'* (Pat). Underlying all of this is the amount of time being taken up:

> *'There's a lot of firefighting and it's really kind of getting through each day, there's very little time for...taking a more global view.'* (Chris)

> *'Like September, you could spend the whole day firefighting just while things are trying to settle down.'* (Gay)

> *'Just put that fire out. Leave it smouldering and move on to the next... You'll have to learn good is good enough.'* (Jordan, FG)

Dealing with *'other people's agendas'* and deadlines within the organisation with little recognition of HoD's own deadlines was also part of the role as highlighted by Pat, Chris and Hilary:

> *'because it's so operational a lot of the time and then it's firefighting other times and then you are being dragged off on other people's agenda at other times.'* (Pat)

> *'whatever else is going around the heads of department are dragged into it, everybody is calling on you and everybody is making demands on you...you are at everyone's beck and call, ...like you get there are deadlines come down with regards to the promotion material.'* (Chris)
>   *'Trying to get time, there wasn't enough time to do things because you had to respond to things that even though you felt they were unimportant other people who were senior to you felt they were important so you had to respond to them... checking whether toilet seats were secure in the toilets.'* (Hilary)

Impact of Managerialism and Bureaucracy

The key ongoing challenges as identified by the HoDs in the focus group are indicative of an organisation run on managerialist lines. These included time and increasing bureaucracy as compared to other similar IoTs. The lack of time was related to the level of bureaucracy encountered by the HoDs. The bureaucracy is associated with the increasing level of controls implemented by the case institute and

by the lack of autonomy afforded in the role to HoDs. This level of bureaucracy also reflects the level of powerlessness in the role, the level of surveillance and gaze under which they work and the relationship with the professional departments.

Bureaucracy

The focus group reflected on the impact of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is felt at all levels of the organisation whether it be research, student administration, recruitment or other general processes and they all took time. There is an overreliance on signing off by multiple layers within the organisation structure and it was felt in a lot of cases that there is no need for it. HoDs experienced that the case institute was risk averse leading to this over rigidity within the system. As Pat indicated:

> *'we a're incredibly, incredibly risk-averse and we're incredibly, incredibly compliant… It has advantages and disadvantages and that's the culture that's here, but like it does kind of militate against finding a way round something or a shortcut or an easy solution,'* (Pat, FG)

Requiring an extra level of approval was a challenge. As Sam stated:

> *'So we'll triple-sign things and we'll, you know, put in an extra layer of approval for everything to make sure that there's nothing there that is going to be problematic.'* (Sam, FG)

Jordan reiterated this point:

> *'No disrespect to anyone at all involved, or the things in estates. I get a work-order, I sign it saying it's good to go. If it's health and safety, what do you call it, the head of faculty has to sign it. Then it goes over to another manager in another area. That in effect can veto the whole thing and I'm here going, "Well, why should my signature almost be there in the first place?"'* (Jordan, FG)

Ber indicated the frustration that this causes:

> *'And if nothing else, it's more bureaucracy. You know, somebody having to read something to countersign it. Like if you look at it, I was kind of shocked that the sum total of my signature authority in terms of financial was €500. You know, that kind of speaks volumes, I think, because, you know, we're relatively senior people and you know, we've a number of years' experience and yet we're not trusted to sign off more than €500 worth.'* (Ber, FG)

Interacting with Students

Engaging with student issues was considered a key aspect of the role. Whereas dealing with student issues was not an on-going activity, when it occurred it took up a lot of time and could be quite challenging. As Chris reflected:

> *'Dealing with student issues ...you can have a quiet week or a quiet month and then you can have a tsunami hit you when students come under pressure. And that can be very time consuming... So I actually find that quite challenging and there have been a number of challenging students. And it's kind of knowing how to deal with that and having the right support to deal with that.'* (Chris)

Examples of this were given by Gay and Pat:

> *'one phone call from a colleague around four o'clock to say ...they had a phone call Friday from a parent of a student who tried to commit suicide last week....the chap always had these (SEN) waivers and had not got his status upgraded, so which means he falls outside Institute policy and trying to see if we can sort out a separate exam for him... So that's just ...yesterday morning.'* (Gay)

> *'We had a court case this year that was two years or three years actually in the making ...a student threatening to ...well they did sue us because he failed his placement. And even though you know you are right and you know you haven't done anything wrong, you are still being hauled over the fire and in the end it was settled and he is never coming back.'* (Pat)

Chris also indicated the difficulty of dealing with staff student conflicts:

> *'One (of the challenges) would (be)... managing the staff student relationship, where I've had in the last two years I've had a couple of issues, and have found myself in the middle of conflict. And that's an area that I'm not comfortable with, I don't have the skillset, it's an area that I need training on, and I find that quite challenging'.* (Chris)

The view of HoDs as to the perception of the student view was pretty unanimous. They were more or less unaware of the role until they got into some kind of trouble. As Ber stated:

> *'they would only be aware of it potentially when there's something needing actioning...they would see the role as if something has gone amiss that you need the intervention of that level of management structure'.* (Ber)

Sam recognised that as a HoD s/he was a remote figure from the students:

> *'I don't think they have a huge opinion really...and I see that now since I started the HoD role ...you are one step now removed from the students... if they get called to a meeting with the HoD they are in trouble'*. (Sam)

Despite this, working with and for students and seeing their progress gave a number of HoDs satisfaction. In particular, the access agenda was a source of pride.

> *'I'm really proud of our access agenda and, you know, the number of first generation learners we have in and people from different socioeconomic backgrounds and mature students. So I think, you know, like all of that would motivate you to provide the best experience you can for your students and, you know, to give people that opportunity that they mightn't always get. '*. (Pat, FG)

Jordan indicated the positive impact that /s/he can make on students' lives:

> *'The students, yeah I mean when you see a student like for argument sake do something that they thought they weren't capable of doing, when they reach beyond themselves, that's really, really rewarding to me...meet the parents of students at graduation, or the siblings. When you hear some of the personal stories, like you realise that everybody here be it from the receptionist to the cleaner, the whole way up to you know the president, we fundamentally I think all have the betterment of people in mind. So when you see the kind of positive return from that, yeah to me it's very, very rewarding.'* (Jordan)

Seeing the performance of the students gave Ber satisfaction:

> *'I enjoy the students, being around the students, ultimately that's the name of the game, is the learning experience that they get from it and seeing the likes of ... we had an exhibition recently for the [subject name] students, I guess seeing their work at the end of the day and seeing the output.'* (Ber)

Ber also sees the engagement with students as being very important and hopes to have *'a little more engagement with the students'* going forward so that they '*can put more of a face to the name and not necessarily end up in the office when something has gone wrong'*.

Helping students, where possible, gave Hilary satisfaction as it was the closest s/he got to the work s/he enjoyed in the classroom:

'I did enjoy dealing with students who had problems when I could help them but a lot of times my hands were tied as to what I could do…there's parts of it that are very enjoyable and very satisfying but you really have to search. You have to identify your little wins and you have to take your satisfaction from them and that's difficult because you're comparing … at least me, I'm comparing it to being a lecturer, when I can go into class and I can see in their eyes that they understand something or their enthusiasm, it's harder. ' (Hilary)

Making a difference in students' lives was important to Gay:

'we can make a difference that's the other thing, I think definitely with respect to and it's not just the Institute, but with respect to the students and the students coming through and going out.' (Gay)

It is interesting to note the divergence of views within the cohort. Whereas one group of HoDs enjoyed the interaction with students, other HoDs did not mention this aspect as being enjoyable but rather used engagement with students as challenges and points of critical incidence.

In summary, the participants portray the range and complexity of activities undertaken by HoDs and also indicate the variety of skills required to deal competently and professionally with the various tasks. The crises intervention and 'fire brigade' aspects of the role were highlighted. Also, whereas no two days are alike, the cyclical nature of the academic year means that various activities happen and diverse skills are required at different times of the year. What is ever present though is the bureaucracy and paperwork. It is interesting to note that the emphasis in the responses was on the operational aspects of the role rather than the strategic aspects. The impact of managerialism is reflected in the 'mundane practices' of the day to day work of the HoDs in dealing with the professional departments such as HR. Estates or Finance. It also reflects the increasing surveillance within which the HoDs operate. Dealing with students did not happen very often but when it did it tended to take up time and could be a challenge. However, HoDs were very conscious that the students were at the centre of all their activities.

Management and Leadership

HoDs experienced the role as a hybrid mix of, often conflicting, management and leadership demands. These demands were of three main kinds: those of academic leadership and administrative work; the stream of crises contending with strategic responsibilities and the desire to develop individuals and teams as opposed to the need to lead and change their departments.

Most participants viewed the role as involving more management and administration than leadership:

> *'I would have thought going into the job it was kind of a leader/management job. Now I see it less leading and more managing, so I'm…more of a manager than a leader.'* (Sam)

> *'I would see it really as a manager/administrator, as for being a leader there are occasions where you take the ball and run with it… the appointment is that you are a leader in the discipline area. But the reality on the ground is that you are administering and managing, because of all of the tasks that are under your brief.'* (Chris)

> *'It should be a leader first and a manger second. But you're really neither, you're an administrator, that's the way I felt it was.'* (Hilary)

> *'It's a bit of both…it's …a 35/65 (split) and it depends on certain times of the year.* (Gay)

Leading and Managing Staff

All participants see managing and leading people as the main activity. The span of control varies from department to department with 24 people reporting to Chris and 51, including technical staff, reporting to Jordan and Hilary. The other three departments have 30-35 reporting including academic and technical staff (see Table 7.1). HoDs indicate that despite the numbers, they enjoy working with the staff and reflect on the level of collegiality that exists within their departments. Typical comments included:

> *'I really like coming into work every day. I enjoy dealing with people, I like the people I work with, so that I like the kind of that side of it.'* (Sam)
> *'(I enjoy) interacting with people, my colleagues, all my colleagues both in the Department and in the institute.'* (Jordan)

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'I enjoy the interaction with people. I actually enjoy managing people and I like that team, that sense of collective team responsibility for achieving things.' (Ber*)*

HoDs have a high level of respect for the academic staff within their department. Some HoDs new to the case institute found that they got and continue to get enormous support from the academic staff. Jordan stated that:

'I'd really have to acknowledge too, the support of you know the staff … in the department. I mean they knew they had someone kind of coming in off the street who didn't know how the place worked. There was an awful lot of patience from their side, and understanding and they've always kind of worked with me… I'm quite lucky with my team that you know 95 per cent of them are excellent.' (Jordan)

It is interesting to note the phrasing of Jordan's sentence '*they've always …worked with me'* rather than '*for me'* which indicates the collegiality of the role.

Ber indicated that:

'I…try…to lead …by positive influence, try and bring the team along. So it would be more consensus…' (Ber)

However, managing staff has many layers. On the one hand, HoDs have to be seen to manage and take control of their respective departments. This can lead to a level of isolation in the role, particularly those who have been promoted from within their own department. On the other hand they have to work with their staff in a collegiate way in order to get things done as delegation of non-academic tasks is difficult. The concepts of 'power over' and 'power with' are very much in evidence here. In order to work in a collegiate way, academic staff must have trust in their HoD. This manifests itself in the way the HoD represents the department. This can often lead to a dilemma on the HoD's behalf given the in-between nature of the role as s/he negotiates between the SM team and the academic staff. This indicates the duality of the role in and is the consequent tensions.

Sam stressed the importance of managing the staff and the need for them to have trust in their HoD:

'really day to day it comes down to managing people…how you manage your people influences everything else that's going to happen… a lot of staff see the HoD as the person who brings all their issues to senior management, that you are the middle person…If they genuinely feel that you are representing them, they do have good faith in you as HoD. But, saying that, they also expect you to kind of solve their little day to day issues as well (be it) a problem with their timetable…with another member of staff and they just expect you to be able to solve all their problems.' (Sam)

This perhaps is indicative of the transfer from colleague to manager, although Ber coming from outside the case institute reflected the representative nature of the role:

'They may well see the role as a kind of buffer between them and senior management.' (Ber)

In contrast, Gay, who has been in the role for over eight years, felt that:

'they basically see you as a problem solver, where there's an issue that's ok HoD will solve that for us…it could be a broken handle to a projector not working to students not showing up to mummy coming in with little Jimmy.' (Gay)

Isolation and Separation - Collegiality and Managing

A common theme among the seven participants was a sense of separation from staff. For some, this was felt to be somewhat necessary. As Jordan stated, a HoD has to be prepared for this:

'be prepared to be maybe isolated is the wrong word, but I think you've to be prepared to be very, very independent.' (Jordan)

Ber concurred with this view:

'you've got to be seen to be …in control and managing…there is an element of a kind of separation here.' (Ber)

Hilary also viewed the separation as a necessary part of the role as a leader:

' you're trying to be a leader, but with the role of leader there has to be two sides, you have to be able to reward people and you also have to be able to discipline them.' (Hilary)

Participants who had progressed to become leaders from inside the institution commented on the change in relationships that they had previously experienced with their colleagues. Sam felt a sense of isolation and loss of collegiality:

> *'Being a HoD, you do find yourself removed maybe from people a lot of the time compared to when you were teaching. Now you know because I'm coming from the same place, I see less of the colleagues that I would have been teaching with…I still see them, but often they come to me now when there's a problem to be solved or there's an issue about something.'* (Sam)

Chris shared her/his experience of a critical incident where s/he learned you cannot be 'everyone's friend':

> *'There was one incident …to do… with line management…one particular meeting where I was fleeced. And …you are here …to do a purpose, you are not here to be everyone's friend and that was I suppose was the one thing that…I found hard to adjust (to)… here in a particular role you are set apart and while I get on very well with the staff there is this line that really is drawn in the sand. And I think that day it was very clear to me where I was and where the rest of them were.'* (Chris)

Leading Staff – Collegiality and Relationship Building

Given the issues with academic staff it is no surprise that HoDs believe that hierarchical methods of leading and managing do not work in an academic setting. Collegiality was felt to be much more appropriate as a mechanism for running a department. In any event, the span of control within the role made it difficult to work with staff in any other way. As Jordan indicated in the focus group:

> *'I kind of think it's like the way it was said, that there was a collegiate spirit with the head of faculty. I'd say there's kind of a mirroring of that with staff. Like it's more of a team effort than…any kind of authoritarian…Yes. Could you suppose you work in an academic environment in an authoritarian manner?....if you look at the ratio of managers to staff from the president down, it's roughly one is to five until it gets to the HoD and then it's near one is to 50, you know, depending on where you are. And if that was a company, you'd have a cascade of managers below, and I think one of the reasons, with respect, not that you necessarily want to do it, but you couldn't say, you know, 'Go do this and I'm going to check up on you'. Because if you had to do it for 50 people, you just physically don't have the time, whereas if it was a company with much more, you know, rigid goals and stuff cascaded the whole way down.'* (Jordan, FG)

The HoDs who were promoted to the role from within saw that the collegiality was a natural extension of their continuing to work with colleagues. As indicated in focus group, it is the only way that it would work:

> *'I wonder as well is it any different for you two compared to us two because we've come from the lecturing staff straight up? So I would see it as very collegiate. I don't know. You know, you've come into something, so you're new to everyone when you came in. Whereas, you know, our colleagues would have known us as teaching staff… So I would see the gap being quite narrow.'* (Sam, FG)

> *'Just in general, it probably is quite narrow. And I think it is collegiate, as you say. I think it kind of has to be to make it work.'* (Ber, FG)

HoDs were aware of working within a collegiate system. Pat explained that this is related to the knowledge and expertise of staff:

> *'You have to be …careful how you can get people to do what you want….whether its new programme development or research group that you are trying to start up…you have to think more strategically about how you are going to do that… because we are leading or we are working with academics as opposed to administrators, it's almost by its nature a different type of role…in a different type of structure…workplace,'* (Pat)

Ber reiterated this point. S/he sees the need for more 'subtle' ways of managing staff than would have been her/his experience in the private sector:

> *'You need more subtle ways of trying to manage staff in so far as you don't have the carrot or the big stick …adjusting styles and finding techniques that work in that context.'* (Ber)

Pat indicated that whereas you don't have control over the teaching hours a member of staff has s/he believed that s/he can use more subtle methods in helping staff such as facilitating staff through the timetabling of staff hours or facilitating requests that are within her/his power:

> *'There are other more subtle things you can do, you know you can give somebody who's doing research, you can give them more thesis supervision time. You can nudge them a certain way you know and that's what you can do, it's not easy though.'* (Pat)

Gay spoke about leveraging staff's respect and using her/his knowledge of the staff to lead and influence them:

> '(you have) *got to have the respect of your colleagues .... Because you are not giving orders, you are really you are trying to lead, lead the horse to water so to speak....need(s) to be political astute and have common sense ....to get things done... you need to have a plan in your head of what's the best way to take it on... you need awareness of ...who's in what camp and who's likely to cause problems. So you can minimise the bottlenecks as much as possible.'* (Gay)

The focus group believed that leading and managing staff require a relational approach building goodwill, developing trust, persuading and influencing:

> *'You're back to that persuade and influence. I'd like to think I am, but at the same time, you're reliant on the team. So you're back to the goodwill and engagement and involvement in terms of, you know, but then at the same time, there's an element of trying to kind of lead the charge and bring the team along with you and not look over your shoulder and find out nobody's following...'* (Ber, FG)

> *'I find now maybe people are coming to me and saying, 'Maybe we should do this'. And that's when you step in. I don't find any person coming along with the ideas or, you know, because I have the time, but people come to me with an idea and then I can kind of bring it along....'* (Sam, FG)

> *you're trying to get the key people on board and then hopefully they'll bring a few others with them and you know, you'll always have a few that won't be totally enamoured with it, but yes, I would have done. You know, if you can get people to see the wins in it for them like. That's the most basic type of change management. You can convince people that there's something in it for them or it's going to be good for them in the long term, then they'll probably go with you like. '* (Pat, FG)

That said, HoDs were very complementary about the staff reporting to them in their Department. However there is a difficulty when dealing with *'non performers'*.

Jordan stated:

> *'I'm quite lucky with my team ...95% of them are excellent. But there isn't much really, I feel, you can do with people that aren't performing.'* (Jordan)

It is clear that when it comes to leading and managing staff, HoDs were very conscious of the challenges involved.

Delegation, Staff Contracts and Workload

The workload on staff is having a marked impact on the extra work required in the department and the ability to delegate. Currently a lecturer has to teach 17 hours per week and an assistant lecturer 19 hours per week. This is an increase of 1 hour's teaching per week (reduced from 2 hours per week) in each category as a result of the Public Sector Agreements (Haddington Road and Croke Park). Managing and leading staff in this challenging Human Resources environment is something that the HoDs are very cognisant of. Hence, they try to spread the non- teaching tasks as fairly as possible across their staff. This is a particular issue for the HoDs who came from the private sector. Within the National Survey dealing with and managing staff *'whining'* and *'ego stroking'* was a constant theme and is reflected in the HoDs difficulty in delegating.

As Gay indicated, getting staff to 'volunteer' more and more is a difficult task:

> *'trying to get people to volunteer to do stuff at the moment is very difficult and the amount of things that we do when we require volunteers is not decreasing… mature student interviews…showcase…summer camps…besides the whole stuff… throughout the year'…* (Gay)

They are reliant on the goodwill and professionalism of the academic staff, particularly as the span of control ensures that it is not feasible to keep tabs on all staff under their control:

> *'You are reliant on goodwill, yes, very much so like to get anyone to do anything, bar the actual teaching hours, then you really are relying on the kind of informal power structure, I think.... your influence is diluted, so unless you can bring people with you in a collegiate manner, .. with one or two people and you know, waste your time really,.'* (Jordan, FG)

HoDs experienced less control in relation to allocating non-teaching duties and in dealing with poor performing staff. In relation to delegating tasks Sam indicated that:

'I felt I was imposing on somebody else maybe is not the right descriptor, but that people are busy, you know people are busy. And that you feel by asking them to do something else, are you asking to do something that's over and above what their job entails, or there's always kind of the internal politics, are you asking the same people all the time, and do they feel they are being landed on, and that you are not being fair to other people. And you know is there an equal distribution of your delegation and that type of thing, so it's not easy.' (Sam)

Ber reckoned that:

'Delegating in the context of role definitions at times can be a little frustrating. Generally you'll find a way around it but it's ... there's an element of tiptoeing around issues I guess.' (Ber)

Although Jordan indicated that s/he was satisfied with 95% of the staff s/he stated that:

'There isn't much really ...you can do with people who aren't performing or it becomes bang(ing) your head sometimes.' (Jordan)

This can lead to a certain level of frustration for the HoD as Ber indicated:

'Maybe it comes back to the private/public sector and some of the challenges where there may well be an activity or a task that I would perceive as being relatively straight forward and not too taxing and it can be challenging to assign it and have it just taken on and delivered on and that ...can be a little frustrating.' (Ber)

As Hilary indicated the difficulty in trying to lead and manage:

'You're looking for favours and you're asking people or begging people for help with things'. (Hilary)

The impact of the Public Sector Agreement, mentioned earlier in Chapter 6, has made the ability to delegate non-teaching tasks much more difficult for HoDs. When HoDs speak about delegating non-teaching tasks to academic staff, the phrases volunteering, begging, and being fair are constants indicating their sense of powerlessness or lack of control that HoDs have over the staff reporting to them. So, although HoDs have some control and power over academic staff, it is very limited

and there is unanimity on the collegiate style of leadership whether by choice or by necessity.

Motivating Staff

Within this environment HoDs consider that a key aspect of their role is keeping staff motivated. This matter was addressed by the focus group who indicated the difficulty given the limited things that they can do. The impact of responsibility without authority is manifest here:

> *'We have a slight problem in enabling it because of resourcing, with me, anyway. So you have people who are maybe, you know, interested in doing something or sitting on a project or engaging more in research or whatever it is, but in terms of how…. they're teaching full hours. …. And even though I'm going looking for them, I don't necessarily get the resource to do it, so I think like to enable the change, there has to be something... I think they just want some sort of recognition that there's a value in what they're doing and they equate that with, you know, whether it's an hour off a timetable or whatever it is. I think that's important.'* (Pat, FG)

The HoDs had to use a number of different ways to motivate staff such as 'leading by example', recognising the work of staff and instilling a sense of pride in their department and work. However they were mindful of the importance of the goodwill and professionalism of the staff.

> *'That's where you can talk about the subtle part of managing or managing change. You know, people say that they can't force things down, so you have to work in different ways.'* (Ber, FG)

As Pat stated:

> *'You have to motivate people and inspire people and keep people together…or try to create a sense of pride in what you are doing and in your department and try to get a collegiate culture.'* (Pat)

Ber believed that giving due recognition to staff was important:

> *'Recognising everyone as an individual with a contribution to make and trying to bring all along to the best that we can'.* (Ber)

Jordan indicated that leading by example is a productive way to motivate staff but believed the system runs on goodwill:

'I see myself as a colleague...and I think you have to adapt your managerial style to the constraints you are in. I would never consider myself dictatorial, I would always lead by example, but inherently I feel the system runs on goodwill'. (Jordan)

This theme was picked up by Ber who experienced:

'A sense of personal responsibility to lead by example and I am now in the process of ...commencing a level 10 qualification programme in September.' (Ber)

In summary, HoDs use their leadership and relational skills to balance the directions of SM with the wants and needs of academic staff. They are caught in this duality dilemma leading to tensions in the role. They are working within a command and control hierarchical structure but know that in order to implement policies, such an approach will fail. Hence they rely on a relational approach to running their department using their agency through subtle ways of managing to keep staff motivated particularly in undertaking additional work.

Academic Leadership and Leading Change

Within leadership, academic leadership is seen as key. Gay would see her/himself as the senior person in his discipline within her/his school executive. As such, s/he drives all the programmatic aspects of the department including programme delivery, programme development and allocation of appropriate staff. An example of this would be the introduction of work placement in the department which was resisted by academic staff. Despite this, Gay implemented the change through an examination of student needs and discussions with industry representatives:

'That was a challenge because there were certain people dug in and didn't want it ...So you have to get over that, but when you look at the students and talk to the industry people and they've taken them and they come back from the work placements, they are just a different person that really benefits them no end.' (Gay)

The implementation of work placement was also mentioned in the focus group and the use of a 'softly softly' approach:

> *'With the programmatic review…we brought in work placement and a couple of things we didn't have and stuff like that and, you know, not everybody would have been jumping up and down with enthusiasm initially, so there kind of is a role to, you know, kind of put it out there. But like it probably took about two years because I had been flagging it so far in advance, you know what I mean. So it's a softly, softly. It's almost a long term, I find, approach to get change through.'* (Pat, FG)

Programme delivery and student academic experience were identified as a key aspect of the role even if it led to a certain amount of conflict:

> *'Academic leadership is the key…ensuring that the programmes are delivered in accordance with the validated frameworks and ensuring that they are resourced correctly, that the student experience is as it should be…it would be (done) more consensus but at the same time there's a time where decisions have to be taken and things have to be done …we can't all be friends all the time.'* (Ber)

Chris also considered academic leadership to be important. Indeed, one of the reasons for applying for the position in the first place was that s/he felt s/he had an expertise in the programme areas and as part of her/his work, s/he is *'dealing with programme development (and) …the Institute Strategic Plan'*. Indeed, since commencing the role Chris has led the development of a number of programmes including two Master degrees within her/his department.

In Chris's case, s/he initiated the programme development but in other cases programme development or good ideas came from the academic staff, so a combination of methods in this area is apparent.

Academic Leadership and Research

Improving the research profile and by extension improving the qualifications of the academic staff is a key strategic aim of the Institute as it works to achieve the criteria required to become a Technological University. This required shift in status is one of the key distinguishing features of the IoT sector currently and presents many challenges for HoDs. This reflects the changing context within which HoDs operate

and work. Improving the research metrics is one of the key goals within the case institute whereby research has been increasingly privileged over teaching.

They have taken on leadership roles in their departments in order to achieve the required benchmarks. Within the focus group the HoDs felt that although TU status was important in order to improve the research profile but they felt that it would be happening in any event:

> *'If the TU wasn't there and (Name) was the president, I would still like to think, and I'm pretty convinced, that research would still be an agenda… two things that, do you know, are somewhat entwined, but I think if the TU wasn't there, I think that clear message and that clear drive toward research would still be there. … And a lot of it comes from, again, new people coming in, you know…. Because so many new members of staff have come in with research backgrounds or research interests. That drives that anyway, regardless of a TU influence.'* (Jordan, FG)

Gay has worked on developing *'a broad research agenda…in the department'* and that despite the fact that it is increasingly more difficult to hold onto the students given the buoyancy of the job market, the department is more *'proactive in encouraging students to stay on and do some research now'*. Other HoDs have also prioritised research activity. Sam Pat and Hilary explained that they are trying to build up the research profile in their respective departments:

> *'Trying to drive that and push that (by) increasing the numbers, increase the funding.'* (Sam)

> *'We are starting to build up the research side and …some people are going to be interested in working that.'* (Pat)

> *'One of the things would be the push for research…I think that's one of the issues that we have that we're trying to get more of.'* (Hilary)

Leading academic change is manifested through ensuring the development of new programmes, the delivery of programmes within a quality assurance framework and driving the research agenda. This has been helped by the recruitment policy which was established by SM in response the TU criteria in relation to Level 10 qualifications, whereby the institute is required to have in excess of 45% of academic

staff with Level 10 (PhD) qualifications.   Internally, growth in the level of qualifications within the existing staff was also promoted. This is again reflective of the 'power through' operation of power. That said, HoDs are cognisant of having to continually work on the research area. As Ber indicates:

> *'From the point of view of heading towards TU status and the implications for that, in terms of staffing mix, levels of qualifications of staff, certainly from a personal department perspective there's a lot of ground that we've got to make up in that area in terms of if we just take level 10 qualifications as an example, that would be one area that we'd certainly need to work on. So I think there are some improvements in the whole area of research and research provision. ' (Ber)*

This is re-emphasised by the focus group:

> *'Over the last maybe four or five years and they tend to be the ones who are maybe more research active or you know, would have come in maybe with the Level 10 already, rather than, you know, in the past, obviously, if you're coming in, you didn't have maybe so many people coming in at that level. Oh, it changes the goalposts for everybody.' (Pat, FG)*

HoDs view the recruitment of new staff with Level 10 qualifications has had a significant impact on the culture of the departments. This has an impact of the individual HoDs and other staff in the departments:

> *'And it's interesting. Like you could have an initial like resistance, if you see what I'm saying, but then it's like the green shoots leading out. And you can see people that would never have said that they were researchers really kind of coming in on the background and, you know, I would say in some respects, it wasn't dictated, you know, when we're talking about power. It was bring people in, enable them and like (the President) was hugely helpful there. But then these people were enabled, kind of becomes infectious in the room, rather than, you know, you must do this part of your contact…. it's interesting. It's like the green shoots leading out. The whole thing kind of becomes organic then, which is I think kind of the way you want it, you know, rather than pushing. (Jordan, FG)*

Overall there has been an increase in the emphasis in research right across the institute through a combination of TU criteria and the emphasis of the President. This has led to an increase in HoDs and academic staff with Level 10 qualifications

and a resulting increase in research activity. The difficulty for HoDs doing their own research will be addressed later.

Unseen Aspects of the Role

The unseen nature of the work was highlighted by HoDs. Both Sam and Ber noted the volume of work that is *'floating across the desk'* on a daily basis. As Ber notes it's not that any one thing takes a lot of time in itself but it is the sheer variety that produces the volume:

> *'Everything needs time. If you just take the likes of Erasmus applications and like without knowing what's involved and to do that right there's a few steps involved in checking, cross checking, diving down through what the experience is to date, etc., etc. ...but there is any number of those activities that just on a daily basis cross one's desk.'* (Ber)

Sam reinforces this point and also indicates that as it is unseen it is not acknowledged:

> *'And I wouldn't have known that either about my HoD when I was a lecturer, you know you kind of know that heads of department are busy people, but I wouldn't have known you know typically what they did on a day to day basis, the volume of work that they do.'* (Sam)

This view coincides with HoD's view of Senior Management's perception:

> *'I'm not sure...whether they would have a full appreciation of how busy the role is and how much is involved in it currently.'* (Ber)

> *'They mightn't realise how busy it's got, because some of them are probably ...removed from it a bit for a number of years...I don't know if they actually realise what we do.'* (Pat)

The recent review of staffing levels with the HoDs whereby everyone asked was teaching three hours per week, as per their contract, on top of their workload, reinforced the HoD view. Whatever the view from outside the role, HoDs work long hours:

> *'I would say my average week would be in and around 50 hours , sometimes*

higher, sometimes a little lower, sometimes weekend work sometimes not, I'll be here until about six o'clock. Lunch breaks sometimes are a bit of a luxury, sometimes it's a sandwich at the desk.' (Ber)

Sam reinforces this point and indicates how s/he has had to reinvent her/himself in this role as opposed to her former teaching role and assuming personal responsibility for the long hours she had to work:

'it would have to be more than 60 hours, it's probably more like 70 hours, you know if I get up early every morning, work late every night, there could be weeks that I don't even take a lunch break. Now maybe that's my fault…but you know sometimes I think an hour spent in the office catching up on emails is more productive than taking an hour's lunch break.' (Sam)

Chris observes that weekends are not safe either:

'I would find that it's not a nine to five job…for me it tends to be a half five to seven, a nine to five and then it could be a nine to ten in the evening and then also weekends.' (Chris)

This, in turn, leads to stress and the whole question of life/work balance which is not helped by the lack of acknowledgement of the workload. As Gay states:

'it's not an endless resource the HoD, you can't just keep throwing more stuff at them, and because certain wheels will come off the wagons at certain points if you keep doing that….they (senior management) need to realise well I haven't worked in that area for ten or twelve years. I don't really know what's going on, I might have a high-level view.' (Gay)

This lack of understanding of the role is not confined to senior management. As one HoD acknowledges in the focus group:

'And my predecessor would have been a very busy HoD, but yet I would have always thought, 'God, you know, he has a nice job there'. How naïve was I?' (Sam, FG)

In summary, HoD's experience is that there is a lot of work done that is unseen and therefore, unacknowledged. This in turn has led to a distancing between HoDs and SM as reflected in their view that SM do not have a 'full appreciation' of the workload. The long hours and the complexity of the workload meant that the HoDs

who were promoted from within had to reinvent themselves. They internalised the workload as the norm and felt that being able to manage all aspects of the work was 'their fault'.

Life Work Balance

The role can be stressful and combined with the workload can lead to life/work issues. Stress can take many forms. As Pat relates, given the multifaceted nature of the role and dealing with staff, students and outside agencies, it does take its toll:

> *'You go home and you are going, oh Jesus if I have to listen to this anymore or this happened today…maybe no more than other jobs but I do think it can be stressful…there are good days and there are bad days…some of the bad days…there is quite a lot on the line…you can be dealing with professional bodies, you can be dealing with difficult students… or if staff saying you are bullying them or people complaining…that can be difficult and dealing with difficult staff is not easy either.'* (Pat)

Chris recalled her/his experience during her first summer and her/his forlorn hope that things would improve after that:

> *'The first summer where effectively HoDs are off from the 20th of June, I wouldn't say I took off three days that I didn't switch off all summer, because I was fretting over the timetabling…you say well I got through the first year, it will be easier the next year. But there's another something new always lands on your desk…there's a lot of complications in the role, it's difficult, its multi-functional, you're multi-tasking. You are dealing across a gambit of different issues and some of them can be quite stressful.'* (Chris)

This point was reiterated by Sam who compared her/his new role unfavourably with his/her former teaching role with a negative impact on his/her quality of life:

> *'I do find since I took on this job, my work has spilled into my home life far more than I would ever have anticipated that it would. Now whether that's a reflection on me or the role I don't know, I think it's a reflection on the role. … I never anticipated that would encroach so much on my free time. And that's one of the things that I dislike about the job,… it's the impact it has on my personal life without a doubt.'* (Sam)

Ber describes her/his view of how s/he intends to keep the balance:

'it's trying to keep that in control so that it just doesn't completely dominate one's life…There's got to be a work life balance too you know…I've been used to working pretty long hours in industry, but I guess I'd like to think that it will settle into some form of slightly less impact as I …get more used to the role.' (Ber)

This view is supported by Gay whose advice to an incoming HoD is:

'it's going to be very busy for the first while as you get bedded in for the first year or year and a half.' (Gay)

As part of the focus group, Sam relays how s/he was in a position to return to her/his previous role as a lecturer or continue in her/his current role:

'I thought long and hard about it. It wasn't signed straight away or anything. You know, I did think long and hard about it because I'm sure most people will find that apart from the time you put in at work, you can bring a lot home with you and it does then have an effect on your life outside of here, more so than the teaching job. Even though when you're teaching, you'd always bring work home to prepare or mark, but this, it's different. So you're looking at the balance.' (Sam, FG)

In contrast, other HoDs, who were appointed from outside the organisation and hadn't an opportunity to transfer within the case Institute suggested:

'I suppose, you see, we're in a different situation. We in effect have no option, but you know, my colleague after a year did go back …. And like if I had the option at that point in time, I definitely would have given it serious consideration, you know.' (Jordan, FG)

This reflects one of the advantages of having been appointed on a casual basis within the case institute. The HoD can return to her/his former position. This is not an option for externally appointed HoDs.

The life/work balance may be affected by the commute to and from the case institute. One participant is in the position eighteen months, s/he is married with two children in primary school and her/his commute to work is 40 minutes. Another participant also has two children just commencing primary school and has a commute of 60 minutes and has been in the role just over three years. Another

participant, who has been in the role on and off for over five years has no children. Interestingly, the participant who has the longest commute (75 minutes each way) also has two young children and has been in the position for two years did not mention the topic of work/life stress. S/he came from a very stressful position in industry and relatively the life work balance may be better than previously. However, s/he has requested and received a career break in order to look after her/his children at home. Another HoD who comments is working on the basis that things will improve as s/he gets more experience in the role. Her/his experience suggests that there is no certainty that this will be the case. S/he has two teenagers and has a commute of over 70 minutes each way per day.

The impact of the life work balance is also reflected in Sam's and Chris's advice not to jump in to the position but to think carefully before taking up the role:

> *'think carefully, because it has a major impact on your life…how you live your life, the quality of your life…you have to decide whether what's involved in the job can match with …your expectations for your life are.'* (Sam)

> *'I'd be slow to…jump in to be honest…I would be saying to anybody who is on a lecturing contract, I'd be slow to give up the benefits. I know Monday to Friday you are on a heavy schedule …but I would think they have a better balance than what a HoD has.'* (Chris)

Pat indicated the need to compartmentalise your life *'If you can separate yourself from the job then great.'*

Academic Research

The other major impact that the workload has had on HoDs has been the inability to work on their own research. This is particularly the situation with the more recent HoDs. One of the reasons Sam went for the position of HoD was that it would give:

> *'More flexibility that I wouldn't have had in my teaching job, because you know you are very structured around timetables and so on. So I thought it would kind of have a little bit of flexibility particularly because I was studying at the time, and I'm still studying that in order to build my research around my day it might be a little bit easier'.* (Sam)

However, s/he found that:

'If you are involved in research or if you are involved in working with industry that should be a positive thing about your job…I've turned down opportunities to go to conferences because of the knock-on effect it's going to have on the workload when I come back which is completely wrong'. (Sam)

Likewise, in Jordan's case the day-to-day workload in the department has got in the way of doing research:

'One reason I wanted to come back to academia was to push my own personal research agenda …I'd always put … the department ahead of my own personal agenda and I will continue to do that … but…I don't think there's anything wrong with saying what one would like to do either. ' (Jordan)

Pat, who has been in the role a lot longer than either Jordan or Sam indicated that s/he would like to have more time to pursue research:

'doing my own research helps me to keep in (touch with my discipline) … I would like to have a bit more time to do research and to do the academic kind of pursuit as well as the HoD. I just think that probably given the demands of the role, given the size of the department, the number of staff we have, it's probably wishful thinking.' (Pat)

However, her/his experience in doing her/his doctorate is difficult. S/he has to use all her/his free time to complete it and this leaves her/him with little or no downtime:

'I use all my holidays …But that's the only time that I have to do anything really, this time of the year it's not too bad, but like I will use all of most of June that I can. I'll use all of July and all of August, like I'm three years now into my PhD this year. And like the longest I've taken off is about ten days I'd say, and then I use my summers, I use Christmas holidays. I use Easter holidays and just do my own research in that time, so it's not easy.' (Pat)

Chris, who has a PhD, three separate Masters and a significant research profile is very clear on trying to pursue research in her/his current role:

'It's just the load that you are carrying, and at different times, and particularly for somebody who wants to have some bit of a research output… you can't do it in the role has been my experience.' (Chris)

So, despite the fact that HoDs would like to pursue their research and by extension drive it within their own department's research agenda, the role as currently

structured makes this an all but impossible task.

In summary, the workload is very high with a myriad of unseen and unacknowledged tasks completed on a daily basis. This leads to a work/life imbalance and makes personal research all but impossible. This is an issue given the emphasis on research within the case institute and the need for HoDs to lead by example.

The driving aspects of the role and power in operation by HoDs were neatly summarised in the focus group:

> *'Wanting to improve, improve the learning experience and, you know, in that sense, being involved in the learning environment is rewarding in itself, but also I think whilst there are obviously downsides to the role, there also is, you know, the upside of you actually are in a position that you can implement change and make things better, improve things. You know, I tend to agree that's a big motivating factor is to be in a position to be able to do that, you know.'* (Ber, FG)

Conclusion

Being a HoD

Although the departments vary in size, the role is similar for all participants. It is a multifaceted role with an emphasis on the operational and administrative functions. Micro administration, meetings, emails and bureaucracy all add to the day-to-day work load. Firefighting and crisis management makes the role reactive rather than proactive Ongoing challenges include the bureaucracy of the system be it in dealing with Finance, HR etc.. The increasing level of bureaucracy was put down to the nature of the case Institute being so risk averse. Having to get everything triple signed is a major bugbear, leading to a feeling of disempowerment and deskilling within the role. However, the HoDs carry out these tasks efficiently reflecting their good organisation skills. They are the victim of their own success

Time is the key constraint on them. The impact of the discourse of managerialism is reflected in the 'micro practices' of the day to day work of the HoDs in dealing with the professional departments such as HR. Estates or Finance. It also reflects the

increasing surveillance within which the HoDs operate. As indicated in Tables 2.3 and 2.4, the increasing level of the professional departments with which HoDs have to work with and reflects the changing context and complexity within which they work.

Dealing directly with students, whilst not an on-going issue tends to take up a lot of time when there were issues to be dealt with.

Management and Leadership

The role is a hybrid mix of management and leadership with the emphasis on management due to the level of operational tasks to be done on a daily basis.

Leading and Managing Staff

Leading and manging staff in their departments is a key aspect of the role. In managing staff one of the key constraints is the span of control which expands from 24-51, depending on the department. HoDs feel powerless in the 'go between' role between the academic staff and SM due to their lack of authority. They have to walk the line between carrying out the instructions of SM on the one hand and keeping the academic staff on board and motivated on the other. They have to achieve a balance between working collegially with and managing the academic staff. This can lead to a sense of isolation, particularly for HoDs promoted from within their own departments. This can also lead to increasing tensions in the role

HoDs have very little authority over the academic staff in allocating non-teaching tasks. This has not been helped by the implementation of various government directives, particularly the Public Service Agreements, which have led to an extra teaching load on academic staff. They are very conscious of trying to allocate these tasks fairly across their departments. This can lead to a sense of frustration, particularly for those HoDs who have come from industry and who were used to delegating tasks and expecting them to be done.

All of this has meant that HoDs have to be use collegial and relational leadership skills. This is done through a combination of methods, including building trust,

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influencing, persuading in addition to personal example, timetabling in a staff friendly way, inspiring a love of their department, knowing your staff and what motivates them, knowing the key people in your department and getting them on board with changes and new ideas. Appointing new people in the department has also helped as it has brought in fresh ideas and enthusiasm to the academic role and has by extension reignited existing members of staff. This has been very evident in progressing the case Institute's research agenda. For all of the issues in relation to managing staff, HoDs are very conscious of and appreciative of the professionalism that the vast majority of the academic staff bring to their work. However, they have little power to deal with the small amount of underperforming staff.

Academic Leadership

HoDs see themselves as having a key role in leading the academic performance within their department. They ensure the quality of the programmes are maintained. They ensure that programmes are kept current and 'fit for purpose'. They see that new programmes are brought on stream where appropriate whether this be at their own instigation or by encouraging their staff when new ideas are brought forward.

Leading Research

All HoDs have worked at increasing the research profile within their own departments. This emphasis is as a result of both the TU process and the President's clear articulation of its need. This reflects the changing context and the changing discourses within which the HoDs operate. Previously teaching has been the main focus of the institute. A different discourse, increasingly privileging research, has emerged. This is manifest operationally through a recruitment policy that has ensured new appointees have Level 10 (Doctorate) qualifications. This has helped drive the process. HoDs have given a personal example also in going forward for Level 10 qualifications.

Unseen Aspects of the Role

Given the volume of work coming across the desk of a HoD on a daily basis, time is again the great unseen. This, in turn, adds to difficulties in creating a life/work balance. HoDs work long hours. With one exception 50+ hours work is the norm,

plus weekends and holidays. This is particularly an issue where the HoD is the main carer and is exacerbated by long commutes to work. This has made some HoDs reconsider about whether to continue in their current role. Some HoDs who came into their role regretted not having the choice. As a result, it is interesting to note that within the case Institute, no HoD has completed the role to retirement age. This lack of acknowledgement of the role and the attendant lack of support has a negative impact on the trust and relationship building between SM and HoDs..

The HoDs' own personal research interests have been impacted upon in a major way. They simply have not been able to reach it. This is an issue given that they are trying to promote research within their own departments as indicated above.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS 3. POSITIONALITY AND POWER

Introduction

This chapter follows on from Chapter 7 and discusses the findings in relation to the positionality of HoDs as middle managers. This chapter examines the network of power relations that HoDs navigate up, down and across the organisation. The HoDs' positional power was examined with regard to their relationship with senior management, academic staff, students, their peer groups and government institutions.

Senior Management (SM)

In relation to SM, HoDs are very clear that although the HoS is part of the Senior Management Executive, they felt that the HoS was in a different position in relation to them. In the interviews and further discussions in the focus group, HoDs were very clear that there were two layers within SM. One included HoS's and one did not. When the participants were describing Senior Management they were referring to the internal Senior Management group that included the President, Secretary/Financial Controller, Registrar and Head of Development and in that order. In terms of power position they would see SM as '*always one to influence*' (Jordan) and even the influence would be '*different within different people in SM*' (Jordan) depending on what you are trying to do. This layering is articulated in the focus group:

> '*We're referring to senior management and it sounds flat, and yet (Name) is saying there's a hierarchy*' (Jordan, FG).

> '*That's an informal hierarchy that we're perceiving as opposed to having sort of a formalised hierarchy*' (Ber, FG)

Head of School

The HoDs felt that their interaction with their HoS's was collegial and supportive and did not require much managing.

Pat indicated as an example the importance s/he attached to the back-up her/his HoS gave when difficult issues had to be sorted out:

> *'I suppose (Name) would have been very supportive as well in fairness…as I said to you the only worry I would have had would have been kind of higher up the chain…our head of school … lets us off and trusts us. And in fairness like I would always say (Name) if you ever, you know we've all done things where you go oh Jesus I shouldn't have done that, or I've made a mistake… in fairness if you tell (Name), s/he's always first to back you up and we will sort you out, … it's very good like that'* (Pat)

Jordan described her/his HoS '*as very, very good'* with *'an awful lot of experience'* but s/he still had the various functional roles to sort out her/himself:

> *'I wouldn't hands off would be the wrong description. But I mean s/he's there if I need him/her, and s/he kind of lets me kind of you know in some respects, in a lot of respects get on with stuff and make my own decisions and that appeals to the way you know I like to work. .'* (Jordan)

As Gay's HoS had no expertise in the discipline's within the department, the HoS let her/him get on with it and that meant that a lot of the strategic side of running the department was left to her/him and s/he was also used by Gay as *'a good sounding board'*:

> *'Certainly the head of school, definitely a good sounding board, so anything that you weren't sure of or which was a new challenge or a new issue, you had a good sounding board to bounce things off.'* (Gay)

The HoDs in the focus group would see their HoSs as being far more collegial than the inner layer of SM due to their commonality of goals and purpose:

> *'From a personal point of view, my immediate line manager I would see as being closer to me than other people at the same level. So I think my head of school I'd have, I won't say I'd see her/him as a par, but… And again, much more of a collegiate relationship than with the other members of senior management. And I don't know if that's just because of the…I think it's a common purpose…..'* (Sam, FG)

> *'And I think it comes back to the point of the common purpose within a faculty that you are working in that way. A lot of times, you've got a joint interest, whatever the issue might be, so therefore within the faculty, that relationship*

might be more collegiate in terms of that common purpose and achieving that common purpose, whatever that might be.' (Ber, FG)

In summary, there is a lot of respect for the HoSs and a good working relationship with them. The nature of the relationship leans very strongly towards collegiality with the HoS, allowing the HoDs a free rein in their role. The National Survey would suggest that this relationship with the HoS is not universal. Out of 32 respondents, nine did not have regular meetings with their HoS with a further two saying meetings with their HoSs was non-applicable.

Senior Management

HoDs in the focus group see Senior Management (SM) operating from a hierarchical line management. There is very little input from HoDs in the decision making process. This is consistent with a managerialist approach:

> *'But then, you know, as an organisation in general, senior management would be quite hierarchical….'* (Pat, FG)

> *'And it is very obvious.'* (Sam, FG)

This is particularly keenly felt by those HoDs who have been in their positions the longest. Gay reflected on the reality rather than the perception:

> *'There's certainly the perception that the strategy is really kept with one very small group and then it's pushed down, although there is as I had said earlier there certainly is the perception that we are more included and involved.'* (Gay)

Pat also reflected on the reducing autonomy in the role:

> *'You definitely had a little bit more autonomy in your role. I would have thought, you know that I think again you just had a bit more time, it was a bit more relaxed, you could kind of I think definitely HoDs then had a bit more freedom to kind of you know to choose what projects to work on or to.'* (Pat)

The focus group's view was that they had limited input into strategic matters. Indeed, it is unclear to them what is expected of them from SM despite the fact that some of the SM team have been HoDs previously:

'I know from my own experience where you might look for guidance from senior management and it's pushed straight back to you, and other times you make a decision and then you're nearly told you shouldn't have done that. You know, it's like this tugging and pushing and pulling.' (Sam, FG)

'I think it's unclear sometimes as to how much strategic management is expected and how much of it is more to do with day-to-day administration management of the function to make sure that everything just rolls ahead. I think whilst in theory, there is some strategic involvement in the role, I don't know how much of that would be perceived by senior management as what we do as being strategic as opposed to the day-to-day functional management...' (Ber, FG)

Dealing with mundane tasks on an ongoing basis means that there is less time for strategic work which is not attended to as it should be. Sam believed that this work is unseen and therefore unacknowledged by SM and within the Institute. Her/his colleagues from outside of the public sector are very surprised at the aspects of work that have to be done in her/his role:

'I speak to colleagues who work in other places not necessarily public sector now, they are quite amazed at what I do as a HoD, as a manager, that you know it surprises them, they are shocked to think that you are dealing, you are doing menial administrative work, and yet supposedly in this you know strategic management position.' (Sam)

Recent examples of such tasks in the role of HoDs are to check for commas and punctuation in the reviewing of the Prospectus and typing up the summaries of Employment Applications prior to shortlisting. These tasks are very time consuming and have the impact of disempowering HoDs. The time spent on these tasks takes away from strategic and leadership roles.

This, when added to the lack of control over the key resources of staffing and finance and more control over academic affairs, adds to their sense of disempowerment. It also reflects the level of managerialism that is part of the case institute.

Academic Affairs

SM would appear to have taken a more procative role in managing academic affairs in relation to what programmes should be initiated, what the programmes are named,

how they should be run on a day-by-day basis. This disempowers the HoD and the programme boards who are tasked with running the programmes.

Gay's perception on this over many years was:

> *'I think more recently there's more and more perception that senior management are deciding on just about everything, you know from which programmes we will develop to which ones we won't develop. To what we will call those programmes, to we need a programme in this area...'* (Gay)

Pat indicated the lack of academic autonomy and more control being exercised from SM:

> *'I think control is kind of if you were to draw a little diagram, and you were saying lecturer, programme board, HoDs, school, Institute, like there's definitely going in that direction do you know what I mean? Maybe you know, I remember when I started, the programme board seemed to have way more you know kind of control and input. But then it kind of has gone back a little bit HoD probably and I'd say it's kind of gone back up that way... whether that's to do with resources or culture of people who are leading, I don't know'.* (Pat)

Sam, although relatively new to the role, is a long time academic within the case institute who also experienced powerlessness in the academic area:

> *'I think it should be in the control of the HoD, and that's with regard to I think you know how programmes maybe are best delivered. And I do believe that the people who know best are the people who are actually delivering them, so you know in fairness 99 per cent of the time, the lecturers know best about what they should be doing with their students, and how they should be doing it. And yet sometimes when you try to make a change.... You know that you just don't have that overall control about what you do. '.* (Sam)

Aside from the reduced role in the provision of academic programmes, Jordan indicated that HoDs *'don't really have control over class sizes and small class sizes and these types of things'.*

Pat reiterated this and the difficulties that arise when changes are made to pre-agreed numbers of students:

'We do our projections for next year, and we go by the numbers, and then you can come back in September to get a nasty surprise of an extra 20 or 30 in a group. That happened to me this year for example, so even though you know you project for 90, you get 120 or something and you haven't been resourced for it'. (Pat)

Finance

Very tight control is exercised over the finance function. Although requisitions and requests are initiated in the academic departments and forwarded to the finance section, many queries may come back before approval is given. This leads to frustration and time wasting.

Sam indicated the frustration around this process:

'I don't feel that's in my control even though we've justified why we might want to have something. We have a budget there you know, and surely Heads of Department should have control over deciding what their budget should be spent on or shouldn't be. ... And it just feels you put in the work orders, and then you nearly have to go around yourself to check you know was that plug fixed.' (Sam)

Gay gave an example of how this impacts on running programmes in her/his department:

'We are a (Name) department, so yes they need to develop stuff for iPads for example. However the Institute don't like to buy anything that's a tablet, and so anything that was a tablet on it that just wasn't signed off, that I suppose was a frustration. We are not signing off on those, and so you have to make the case, so I suppose going back I suppose to my point was the budget where it would have been possibly something like €15,000, which might seem a lot in comparison to (Name) Department. ' (Gay)

Human Resources

Flexibility in the use of staff is strictly controlled by SM[6]. Each year every HoD has to report to SM on the usage of the academic staff within the department. Control is exercised by a review of each academic member of staff to ensure that all staff is teaching the maximum amount of hours. Any change to this has to be agreed with

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[6]Agreements on numbers of hours staff can teach are nationally negotiated and agreed between the Government and Trade Unions

and approved by SM. This inevitably leads to constraints for HoDs. Pat indicated that this inhibits any opportunity for flexibility and agility to react to change within the department. This is reiterated by the focus group. They indicated that they cannot adjust workloads of staff except within very strict limits:

> *'There's no formal kind of power structure that enables us to do that because we're not in a position to say, like we don't have the autonomy to say to staff, Well, I can give you hours off your timetable to do this or we've balanced your workload to do X, Y, Z'.* (Pat, FG)

Although HoDs are aware of the managerialist discourses in relation to the need for efficiencies, it impacts on them most directly in relation to finance and HR. Their experience suggests that although controls are necessary, the level of that control is inhibiting them in carrying out their role in an effective manner.

In summary, HoDs feel disempowered in the role. Following the with the managerialist discourse, the SM team have increased their power at the expense of the academic departments through increasing control over academic, financial and staffing affairs. They have little if any input into strategy development and any input that they provide is ignored. Their experience is that everything gets funnelled down to the HoD role, the 'do all' person.

As Sam and Gay stated about the SM perception of the HoD role:

> *'Senior management this is my perception, perhaps see the HoDs as the "do all" person. So everything that comes up at a higher level gets moved on to the HoD, yeah you know I don't want to say we are a dumping ground for getting work done, but sometimes it feels like the HoD are they will look after that. Anything new that comes up, oh Heads of Department will look after.'* (Sam)

> *'They see it as not quite a serf class but along those lines.'* (Gay)

There appears to be an acceptance of this with no HoD indicating any resistance to the status quo. However, they are aware of the power structure within the case institute and their need to relate to the people further up in the hierarchy. As the focus group indicated:

> *'Well, then if you rephrase it influence to power, then what power do we have? It's all dependent on the people above us.'* (Sam, FG)

Leading and Managing Academic Staff

'Academics have been traditionally hard to manage' (Kolsaker, 2008, p. 515). They 'recognise no boss, choosing to see themselves as individual entrepreneurs, albeit on a steady salary…as they grumble about the demands…(made) on their time and the problem of parking' (Dearlove, 2002, p.267). Indeed Deem (2004) has described managing academics as equivalent to 'herding cats'.

Unlike the command and control approach exercised by Senior Management, HoDs did not or could not use the same approach working with academic staff. As indicated in the previous chapter, Chapter 7, HoDs felt that a collegiate approach was more appropriate and outside teaching duties they felt that they could not impose any 'other duties' academic staff.

They had to use relational methods to engage the academic staff. So, although they could exercise some power over academic staff, it was limited and there was little value in a command and control approach to them.

HoDs do have some power over their academic staffing in relation to the allocation of teaching duties and the creation of their timetables. As Pat put it:

> *'We have control over who does what, so that's one of our only little things. Like so and in terms of timetabling, you know we can control, so who's going to teach what. We can control who is getting hours for thesis supervision, or who's getting hours for placement, or who's taking the big groups or the small groups or, you know but we do have control over who does what. We don't have control over how much they have to do, and that's I find that really frustrating.'* (Pat)

The focus group picked up on this theme of the power relations in that you can help staff in this way as a quid pro quo with a new initiative:

> *'But so much of what I would do is, you know, you're trying to get people to buy into a new initiative or a change or a project, and like we can't do that.'* (Pat, FG)

The In-Between Staff and Management - Powerlessness

A key dilemma for HoDs is that they are caught between implementing the policies and procedures of SM and the needs of academic staff to be allowed to do their work in a professional and unencumbered way. When reflecting on how their staff construct the role, most of the participants said staff see the HoD as a conduit to SM. HoDs themselves experienced their role as the go-between with little power or authority. They feel inhibited by power and conflict.

Ber was very clear on the powerlessness of the position:

> *'You're ...in that sort of potentially go-between role where you don't have the authority to grant a request but at the same time you're seen as the keeper and the owner of it until such time as a request is granted and if it's not granted then ...you're (laughs) the bearer of bad news ultimately back to the originator'.* (Ber)

Hilary gave an example of the powerlessness of the in-between position and the potential for conflict:

> *'Lecturers understand that you ...are in a very invidious position but you are compromised the whole time because they are asking for things ...that's in direct conflict with what senior management want'.* (Hilary)

Sam shared a sense of being in the middle "*sandwiched between your lecturing staff and your senior management*", while Pat also described being caught between senior management, staff and students:

> *'We are stuck in the middle ...between the students and the staff and the rest of ...the senior management of the Institute. So you are always going to get staff flying in both directions and you are going to be caught in the middle of it'.* (Pat)

Chris also indicated the difficulty of trying to resolve issues in the middle position in the organisation:

> *'It became more evident as I was in the role that you really are the sandwich in the middle. You are the filling in the sandwich in the middle that you have to resolve the issues coming up the way at you, and coming down the way at you. And you are the intermediary, and that has been difficult at times.' (Chris)*

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Gay gave two examples of being caught in this dilemma and the sense of frustration and powerlessness emanating from this:

> *'We were one of the first to develop a taught Master's programme … we did get that through but I suppose I spent two years going around as the go between academic staff and the senior management team with respect to the resourcing of running this and what allowance academic staff could claim'.* (Gay)

Pat gave an example of the in-between role whereby s/he was implementing the National Framework Agreement (Croke Park)- adding hours to the teaching load- and getting grief from both Senior Management and academic staff. It was a bitter lesson for him/her:

> *'But yeah I remember doing that, and … the staff didn't thank me for that either you know putting the Croke Park hours on.'* (Pat)

Chris gives another example of the School Programmatic Review process where s/he constantly found him/herself in between the (undelivered) promises of Senior Management and the work to be carried out on the ground by the academic staff. S/he found managing the process between the ambitious requirements of SM in relation to the programmatic review while keeping the staff on board to deliver a successful outcome very stressful:

> *'So I would say that there was a huge staff period, which caused a lot of frustration, frustration with the staff. But a lot of frustration and stress on the HoDs. And there were many issues then on the higher levels with regards to the resourcing of it, the lack of I suppose delegation. … So while one tier of the process met all the deadlines, the next tier didn't'.* (Chris)

Indeed, Sam articulated this dilemma very well when discussing what the qualities and attributes required of a successful HoD:

> *'That depends on whether you see a HoD, okay a successful HoD is perceived by your staff, or a successful HoD as perceived by your senior management, because it's probably different.'* (Sam)

These quotes indicate that the HoD has to resolve issues horizontally (for the

department) and vertically (for the institution). This in-between status raises questions and uncertainties about how HoDs should act and function in their roles. At departmental level they operate in a collegial environment and in the wider institution in a hierarchical context.

Peer Groups

There are two separate types of peer groups here, fellow HoDs and managers of professional services within the case institute. Whereas there is a great sense of collegiality within the HoD group articulated through the HoD Forum, they do not see the professional managers in the same way. As indicated in Chapter 6, the instigation of the informal HoD Forum has meant that HoDs see themselves among equals and can try to resolve issues in a collegiate manner and deal with items of mutual concern by having a consensus view when presenting issues to SM.

However, the focus group see the professional managers as services to their departments for example HR, Estates, Academic Administration, Computing Services etc. This can lead to tensions between the two groups with regard to allocation of tasks. There is also a difference in the nature with which both groups work; whereas the HoDs work within a collegiate framework from HoS down, the professional managers work in a bureaucratic manner. There is a lot of interaction with the professional departments:

> *'There's so much stuff that we have to cover. You have to have a bit of a HR hat, a bit of an estates hat, a bit of a student support hat, a bit of a research hat, a bit of a strategic hat'.* (Jordan, FG)

This can also lead to tensions. In relation to the interaction with the estates department, one of the HoDs had to do what s/he considered was a task that should have been performed by the Estates department:

> *'The best example I ever saw, at my first HoD meeting, you landed in late because you had some student with compulsive obsessive hand cleaning or something, and because of a complaint. So I had to go round and check that all the hand sanitisers had lotion and he came in and he said, 'I am now in the vaunted position of hand sanitiser'.* (Jordan, FG)

As part of the shortlisting process, the HoDs have to type in the details of each applicant prior to making a decision as to whether the candidate can be shortlisted and even then this can be second guessed by the HR department:

> *'You get second-guessing a lot of our shortlisting. I think they're quite… Now, I know that they want to check that, you know, everything's been done in accordance with everything else, but sometimes just I would say they would have maybe more power in the equation than we would have'.* (Pat, FG,)

It is clear to the focus group that the finance function is the key to power in the case institute:

> *'Finance is a kind of underlying power and influence over a lot of the different areas, you know. If we're looking at interfacing estates, it's often a financial decision related and therefore there's a kind of a background tier behind that in terms of the power behind whether that does or doesn't gain traction, which is the financial decision making process…. And I think we would have little power in influencing at that level.'* (Ber, FG)

Whilst the professional managers' group might be viewed as nominally at the same level as themselves, they have greater access to Senior Management, particularly those in charge of the finance function.

Students

Although all HoDs were in agreement that their work was predicated in ensuring that the students receive the best possible service, they were in agreement that students were not part of their day-to-day work. Their interaction with students usually revolved around matters of discipline or academia and the power that they had over them was hierarchical. They set their timetables and they allocated their lecturers. Student power was usually manifested through the Students Union Executive but individual students had very little influence on the role of HoD. As Ber stated:

> *'So I think from their perspective I would say that they would just potentially see the role as if something has gone amiss that you need the intervention of that level of management structure'.* (Ber)

Sam agreed and added:

> *'Students know there's a HoD there. They know that the HoD ranks above their lecturers, they know if they get called to a meeting with the HoD, they are in trouble.'* (Sam)

Gay's view was also that of disciplining students:

> *'They still appear to have a respect and slightly concern, mind you I would have, I wouldn't have threatened them, but I would have made it quite clear to them that you know they are on a slippery wicket, let's put it that way.'* (Gay)

The focus group confirmed this view:

> *'So I do think the students are afraid of us, but like they recognise for them, I think coming to the HoD is a bigger thing that we realise sometimes, you know.'* (Pat, FG)

Students, as such, were seen as having little power vis-a–vis the HoD role.

School Administration Staff

Even though this group reports to the HoS, school administration staff plays a significant role in the day-to-day working life of a HoD. Their role and from that their power is very significant in the early days of a HoDs appointment and the HoD depends on them while getting to grips with the role. HoDs were unanimous in their praise of them. As Pat stated:

> *'Your school administrator kind of knows how everything operates. I kind of learned the most maybe from her about what I should be doing, and when I should be doing it, and how it should be done, who I need to talk to, and all the things like that'.* (Pat)

Chris was of the view that *'we have fantastic staff within the school office'* and Gay acknowledged that they *'would be aware of the day to day, (and) be quite pragmatic'*.

This places the school administration staff in a very powerful position when added to the fact that the school administration staff, like the HoD, report to the HoS and in some cases form part of the School Executive Group. That said, HoDs do delegate tasks to them and to that extent there is an informal reporting to the HoDs.

HoDs are very aware of the power that senior administrators have, not alone in the schools, but also within the professional sections also. HoDs often use this power to speed up the bureaucratic process whereby the internal administration contact can work far better that its official equivalent. As the focus group indicated:

'I kind of think the school administrators, from my experience, absolutely. They don't have the power directly, but yet they're the support structure behind the bit of power that we might have in some cases, not in every case.' (Sam, FG)

'When I want recs signed off, whenever I (don't want to) tackle the person head on, I ask an admin to ask another admin and stuff seriously gets signed then.' (Jordan, FG)

'Definitely there is an informal network, a power kind of network there of the administrators, especially those who've been here for a period of time and who might be administrators to certain key people in the organisation.
(Pat, FG)

Other Stakeholders – Government Agencies

The other internal stakeholder who is a source of influence on the HoDs, as indicated by the focus group, is the trade union representing staff in the sector, the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI[7]). The focus group's view is that you have to work around them and ensure that they don't allow issues to arise which might incur their wrath and have an impact on the day-to-day work:

'I think the other side of the union I think is an underlying influence. I mean it's in the background. It's always there, so there are times I would feel I have to kind of tiptoe around it to a certain extent. But then after a while, it almost becomes second nature because you know where the landmines are.' (Ber, FG)

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[7] The Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) is the representative union, nationally and locally, of the academic staff within the IoT sector. www.tui.ie

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Other stakeholders who impact on the role of the HoD include the government through the Minister of Education and Skills, and onwards to the Higher Education Authority. Also included under this heading is the Technological University status and the community at large both economic and social, which was discussed previously.

The government's key impact revolves around financing as the key monetary provider of HEI services and the implementation of the Employment Framework[8] on all public sector organisations.

The reduction in the budget when added to the increase in student numbers has put extreme pressure on each HEI and within each Department.

 As Ber summarised:

> *'Perhaps understandably, there are quite tight financial constraints and decision making processes, so there's a sense that you really have to fight tooth and nail to get support, financial support, be it literally resources or activities.'* (Ber)

And although clearly an issue for the HoDs, the Employment Framework adds to the government impact upon them. As Chris stated:

> *'Resourcing I would find that the employment control framework is very, very tight, and I would see your 20 and your 18 hours is putting huge pressures on the staff. … trying to organise any kind of programme development or programme meetings, the staff are just, they really are under a lot of pressure in their day to day teaching'* (Chris)

Conclusion

The positionality and relations of power of the HoD were explored in relation to SM, academic and other staff, Managers of Professional Service, students and others. The most significant factor for HoDs was the relationship with SM. Within SM there are

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[8] The Employment Framework is a national agreement imposed on all public sector organisations whereby additional staff recruitment was frozen and all appointments had to be approved through the appropriate government authority.

two layers: the President and the Vice Presidents and then this group with the HoSs.

Senior Management

The relationship with the HoS is key for HoDs. They see the role as collegial given the common purpose and goals of both. HoSs give HoDs their head and are used by HoDs as sounding boards but are left to deal with the day-to-day issues themselves. Although considered collegial, HoDs are in no doubt that they report to the HoS and are conscious of ensuring that their working relationship is a good one. If the relationship is poor it could be a 'nightmare'.

HoDs see the 'inner' SM team as operating with in a managerialist discourse, and command-and-control system. Their experience is that SM makes all the strategic decisions with little, if any, opportunity for input.

They experience less and less autonomy on micro practices, be it academic matters, finance matters, HR matters etc. There is little flexibility. Controls are in place on all aspects of their work and they are closely monitored from above. At the same time they are expected to be agile and flexible. This leads to a level of frustration and tension, particularly when decision making is slow and bureaucracy prevails.

The HoDs feel disempowered and deskilled within their role. They feel that they are seen to be there to do everything, including mundane administrative tasks, which are time consuming. This leaves little time for the leadership and strategic aspects of the role and even if they did have time they are not clear as to whether SM would want them to take up that role. This discourse of managerialism has led to a distancing between SM and HoDs (who view that the collegial way of managing is more appropriate).

Academic Staff

In relation to academic staff, HoDs believe that there is more of a collegial aspect to the relationship, not least because it could not work otherwise. For those HoDs who were promoted within the organisation, they feel that their role is a continuation of their pre-existing role as a colleague. They are clear though that they are accountable

and have limited control over staff as they set their timetable and allocate modules. HoDs try to resolve difficulties or issues but they are very much aware that they are reliant on their goodwill, good relationships and professionalism to lead their departments. Also, they feel powerless in dealing with the small minority of non-performing staff within the Institute.

HoDs are in the middle between SM on the one hand and academic staff on the other dealing with the competing demands of both. This indicates the duality of the role, exacerbated by the low levels of authority and the tensions emanating from it.

Professional Services

The professional management teams (HR, Estates, Computing Services, Academic Administration, etc.) are located at the same level as HoDs within the organisation structure. However, HoDs do not see them in a collegiate role, particularly the areas of Finance, HR and Estates. They see them more as a technique of surveillance, checking on their work in so far as it impacts on their departments such as rechecking the shortlisting for interviewing potential staff. This can create tension. Finance is viewed as the key function as it permeates right through the organisation and many of the decisions a HoD makes has a financial aspect to it, whether it is recruiting staff or ordering department supplies. The reporting structure also gives rise to difficulty. The professional departments hierarchical in nature and if there is an issue the managers go directly to their senior manager and come back with a decision, without any consultation with the HoD. HoDs perceive that the Professional Managers have easier access to SM than they do. This is seen as another mechanism of control and use of power. So while the professional maangers are on the same level within the organisational chart, they do not regard them as colleagues as they do fellow HoDs. The impact of professional services on the role has been reflected in the comparison between Tables 2.3 and 2.4. This shows how the power and influence that academic departments had has been eroded by the growth of the professional departments. It reflects the changing context within which HoDs operate and in particular how they have to negotiate across the organisation as well as up and down.

School Administration

School administration staff plays a key role in the running of the organisation and is an important power broker within the system. Although technically reporting to the HoS', they perform tasks allocated to them by HoDs. School Administrators have invaluable insights into their role, particularly in the early days in the position as HoD. At this key time, the School Administrators are most important and helpful at assisting in settling them into the role. HoDs also lever this knowledge base and their connection with their peers in the professional departments in order to ensure the smooth operation of their department. School Administrators will ensure purchase requisitions are moved through the system and will alert the HoDs to any difficulties. All HoDs acknowledge the key role that the School Administrators play in the organisation.

Students

Although their work is about ensuring a high quality service for the students under their care, HoDs believe that students have little or no power within the system vis-a-vis them. They are given their timetables and allocated their lecturers. The usual interaction with students is one of discipline or academic matters.

Other stakeholders have an impact on the HoDs. The TUI has an impact in that they can disrupt the smooth operation of the department's activities. HoDs try to ensure that they avoid as best they can any likely pitfalls in relation to the TUI.

Although external and very much removed from the day-to-day work, HoDs are aware that the government play a key role in the organisation. Whether indirectly or directly through the HEA, it has enormous power over the HEIs, and by extension the individual academic department. Whether it is funding which is a key aspect, the employment framework imposed or the TU criteria, everything filters down to and impacts on each HoD.

In summary a managerialist discourse has placed HoDs in a middle level position within a hierarchical structure where they relate up, down and across the institution through a network of power relations.

CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS 4. ATTRIBUTES FOR THE ROLE AND IMPROVEMENTS

Introduction

This chapter looks at what the HoDs believe to be the key attributes necessary to carry out their role. This is also seen in light of what qualities they themselves bring to the role. Finally, the chapter looks at what aspects of the role of HoD could be improved or changed in order to make it more effective

Key Attributes and Qualities required for the Role

The role, being such an all-encompassing one, requires many skills and qualities. These attributes and qualities are reflected in Table 9.1 based on the responses of the participants.

Table 9. 1 Attributes and Qualities Needed for a Head of Department

Attributes and Qualities needed for a Head of Department
1. People Skills
2. Sense of Judgement
3. Personal qualities – patience, calmness and good humour
4. Time Management
5.   Administrative Skills
6. Working with Uncertainty
7. Compartmentalisation
8. Political skills

Jordan was very conscious of her/his responsibilities and of the impact of her/his decisions on the staff and students in her/his department:

> *'Patience I definitely think, determination, sense of humour, an ability not to take oneself too seriously, an ability to listen, to understand , to empathise with everyone you come into contact with. Because an understanding too of the responsibilities you bear not to feel overburdened by them, but be very*

cognisant that some decisions you make can actually, while they seem small, have a huge impact potentially on someone's life for better or for worse'. (Jordan)

Ber stressed calmness, good judgement and the ability to deal with issues:

'you need to have a good sense of judgement, being able to look at issues with a bit of perspective and not to be reactive…a calming influence…if there's some bad news to be borne at least share it and come up with a resolution that works in the longer term as opposed to burying the problem'. (Ber)

Sam stressed at the interpersonal and relationship aspects of the role:

'you have to have those listening qualities, supportive qualities …it's mostly about managing your people...bridging the gap between the staff and senior management'. (Sam)

Pat highlighted the ability to compartmentalise and be able to work in the grey areas:

'you have to have a thick skin and you can't take things personally…patience, good time management, good organisational skills and I think you have to be very comfortable with uncertainty and the grey areas…because that's where we spend a lot of our time dealing with problem cases, the things that fall between the cracks…you have to be good at being able to compartmentalise or separate yourself from the role'. (Pat)

Chris emphasised organisational skills and the ability to empathise and share the load:

'You need to be a good administrator, you need to be organised ... You need to be of a disposition where you have empathy but you can make the call. You need to be disengaged also… you need to be a co-worker and step into the leadership role…manage your time'. (Chris)

The political side of the role was noted by Gay:

'You need to be calm and pragmatic fundamentally…have fairly good social skills and try to win people…you need to be political…astute and have common sense'. (Gay)

When these qualities are compared with the HoDs descriptions of themselves, there

is, not surprisingly, a certain amount of overlap. For instance, Jordan's consciousness of the decisions s/he makes on staff and students was reflected in his/her view of his/her own qualities:

> *'energetic and driven by challenge…but very interested in applying …that energy for the betterment of others'.* (Jordan)

Likewise, Ber identified being upfront with staff as being an important quality as HoD and s/he felt that s/he has integrity which allows her/him do this:

> *'I think I have integrity…what you see is what you get and I think I'm honest and straight forward with people'.* (Ber)

Managing your staff was seen as a key quality for Sam who sees the *'positive in people'*:

> *'I'm comfortably relaxed about things but yet I do like to be very organised …I like doing things myself which is problematic …and I tend to see the positive in people'.* (Sam)

Time management is a key quality for Chris who saw her/himself as someone who meets deadlines:

> *'Conscientious is an underlying one. I would…take my role very seriously…I'm quite professional, the work is done to whatever deadlines are set'.* (Chris)

Gay gave an example of how s/he manages one aspect of her/his time management skills in relation to meeting staff and students:

> *'I make myself available for two hours every morning between ten and twelve open door policy, after that please don't disturb me unless you really need to which gives me the afternoons to sit down and do stuff. '* (Gay)

Gay saw one of the qualities needed for the role as pragmatism, something s/he feels *'would be fairly easy going, pragmatic generally calm'* (Gay)

The skills as such are many and reflect the multifaceted nature of the role and HoDs

by and large consider that they have the skills and competencies for the role.

Given the strong emphasis on the operational nature of the day-to-day role as reflected in Chapter 7, it is not surprising that their need for good time management and administrative skills is reflected in all HoD's comments. The go-between aspect of the role as discussed in Chapter 8 is evident in the need for people, political and interpersonal skills. HoDs have to work up and down and across the organisation and these skills are key to being effective in the role. These skills are especially important given the little power and influence the HoDs perceive they have in their role. Given the many demands in this complex role, the inevitable high workload and stress levels as expressed in Chapter 7, the ability to compartmentalise the job is key in achieving a life/work balance. Finding a balance between the management and leadership and the operational and strategic aspects of the role is also important. Achieving these balances also requires a good sense of judgement.

In summary, the attributes and qualities that HoDs believe are required in the role is reflective of their experiences in the role and the context within which they operate, as indicated in the preceding chapters.

Making the Role more Effective

This topic was explored in two ways, through exploring reducing the constraints in the role and the structures that could be put in place to support the role. The findings reflect three overlapping themes: more autonomy and control over their respective departments, a reduction in the level of mundane tasks and inefficient processes and a formal induction programme allied to an up-to-date job description.

Autonomy and Control

More autonomy and control over resources, human and financial, is important to the HoDs. Finance appears to be a specific issue as previously indicated in Chapter 8. Sam, whose department is a high spending one, articulated her/his frustration on this:

> *'From a financial point of thing you know, it should all be very efficient, it should be within my control, we need this piece of equipment. This is how*

much it costs, there's the quotation, we signed it off, and the piece of equipment should arrive, and that doesn't happen. ' (Sam)

This point was reiterated by Pat:

'I think like we should definitely be given a little bit more autonomy in terms of being able to sign off on up to at least €500, and not having to go through all the houses. I think we are professional enough to be able to say, we need this and justify it and sign off on that. So I think budgets, I mean I would like us to have control over staff workload, but we don't.' (Pat)

As Hilary stated:

'Empower them. Give them more responsibility. Give them more authority…Give them a little bit more independence and partly it's simple things like a budget, you know being able to sign off on certain amounts of money.' (Hilary)

Early in each academic year the HoDs have to do a spreadsheet ensuring that all members of academic staff are teaching to their allocated role of 18/20 hours and get this validated and approved by the President, Registrar and Secretary /Financial Controller. This leads to less flexibility in how the academic work is done. As Pat stated:

'I'd like to see us have autonomy in terms of workload allocation, in terms of budget you know things like that I think, there's a lot more we could do that's more imaginative, innovative things we could do if we were freed up from the shackles of having to have everybody teaching the 18, 20 hours'. (Pat)

Gay indicated that as well as finance, there was also a need for more academic autonomy:

'If people have autonomy to do certain things, let them do it. … If it's you are given the autonomy to spend up to €1,000 within the school without looking for signatures elsewhere, let them go ahead and do it. Don't be oh there's something for €380, oh it's a tablet, or it's a phone, okay we need to counter sign off on that.' (Gay)

The lack of autonomy in relation to academic matters has been covered in Chapter 8.

The foregoing when added to the comments in Chapter 8 gives an indication of the lack of autonomy and power that HoDs have. The control exercised over the role and, in particular, over two key resources, human and financial, have led to a degree of frustration. As previously indicated, HoDs have little, if any, control over these resources. Finance, in particular, was a bugbear especially in the departments that have a high financial requirement and where the 'spend' is on the day-to-day running of the programmes under their care.

Hilary's views that more disempowerment will continue into the future:

> *'I think more and more authority will go upwards and less authority will go downwards.'* (Hilary)

Indeed two of the HoDs in the focus group indicate that they had more autonomy in their role as lecturer than as HoD:

> *'I definitely think like as a lecturer, I had more autonomy in one way, like not as much influence or not as much, you know, ability to change things or try to bring in new initiatives and things like that, but definitely you were more autonomous. You had more flexibility in your work and what you did.'* (Sam, FG)

> *'I lectured, like yourself, I kind of lectured for about eight years here. Now, you definitely have more autonomy as a lecturer than you do as a HoD. ... I would have had much more autonomy then than I have now in a lot of ways and it's not even that there's someone telling me what to do now, but it's just you're pulled in so many different directions, do you know, and you have students with a complaint and you've staff with a complaint.'* (Pat, FG)

Inefficient Processes, Needless Tasks and Delegation

Too much bureaucracy and processes that are inefficient or tasks that are inappropriate to the role are seen as the main hindrances. In relation to some processes, Sam explained the lack of efficiency associated with inefficient processes and doing needless tasks that keep a HoD away from attending to more important matters:

> *'There are some processes in the college that are just not efficient, and you spend so much time then following up on these things, it just takes away from time you could be spending doing other things ... aspects of the job are a*

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hindrance to doing the job well, and that is that administrative work, whether it's spending hours on timetabling, or whether it's those administrative things. … It's a bad use of a HoD's time I think, and there's things like that I think that could be shifted in the organisation to other departments or other areas, that would free up a HoD then to work on the things that are more important. ' (Sam)

Pat spoke of doing tasks that were inappropriate to the role and how this time could be used more productively in engaging with the local community and economy:

'I always wonder why we are asked to go to these careers days in the RDS and everywhere else around the country. I don't know what the value of having Heads of Department there. I don't see any other place that sends out their HoDs … I think we will be much better off to go down to you know an IBEC forum, or a community day, or whatever it is…get rid of a lot of the admin stuff, that like really we don't need to be doing you know. ' (Pat)

Within these administrative tasks, timetabling is seen as a tedious chore and one that would benefit from delegation (centralisation) to an expert in the area. At present, all HoDs bar one do their own timetabling. HoDs have been attempting to get timetabling centralised within the case institute over the past two years with little success.

Sam, Ber and Pat reflected the views of the HoDs:

'Now I'd actually see that in actual fact for HoDs to be managers, there needs to be nearly more administrative type support for them. I think to take the responsibility of things like, for example, the classic example timetabling, I mean there should be a centralised timetabling system….So I think there needs to be much better spreading of workload to where the expertise is.' (Sam)

'Timetabling is the one that jumps out straight off. I think that's one that's definitely just so appropriate for delegating'. (Ber)

'You know they are paying us to be academic HoDs, and then we are spending, I could spend an hour a day looking at emails and on the system trying to find rooms for people and I'm kind of going the system is really my job now'. (Pat)

This would in turn allow HoDs to delegate more administrative tasks and allow them spend more time on strategic matters. As Jordan stated:

> *'There isn't an organisation structure below me which I would see as a weakness in the system…the benefit if there was kind of an org structure even like that, then it would enable more strategic thinking at my level, rather than be constantly stuck in you know what I would call day to day operational stuff.'* (Jordan)

Pat and Chris indicated that this would free up time to be more strategic and give more time for leadership:

> *'I'd like an assistant HoD who I could get to do things like the timetabling and you know organising meetings and doing bits and lots of stuff I could get them to do. And to free up my time to do something that's a bit more strategic.'* (Pat)

> *'I'm aware that other HoDs (in other IoTs) would have admin support directly assigned to them. Be it on a full-time or part-time basis, there is there's plenty of admin type work that could be done by anybody else, and that would free up (time) to take more of a leadership role and being more…looking at taking a more of a strategic view with regards to what's happening within the department.'* (Chris)

One of the HoDs who is going on leave has had a replacement put in place and over the last few weeks s/he had been delegating tasks to her/his replacement. It gave her/him a good idea of what it would be like to have someone reporting to you:

> *'I've had (Name), my successor. I am empowering her/him to do as much as s/he likes in the meantime…. And s/he's mad keen to get going and do you know, just so s/he knows what's involved in the role and that…So s/he keeps kind of saying, 'Let me know if you want me to do something'. So for the last few weeks, I've been delegating things to her/him. Like s/he went to meetings for me today. S/he was at a programme board yesterday. You know, I said, 'Off you go now' kind of thing.'* (Pat, FG)

Role Definition and Induction

A proper role description together with a proper induction process would help. This is especially important to those who have recently commenced the role. Ber reflected on the need for a comprehensive induction process for both internal and external entrants to the role:

> *'There would be a lot to be said for a more kind of rigorous induction process for people coming in from outside. It's one thing if you're stepping up from having been in a department, you might have some familiarity with a lot of the*

different aspects of the role but even then I think the induction process in terms of like, for example, somebody stepping up from a lecturing role to a HoD role there's a big step up in terms of management responsibility because I'm managing people and I think there could be a more structured approach to creating a more natural pathway towards taking on the role and fulfilling the role'. (Ber)

Hilary and Sam indicated the need for a proper definition of the role:

'I think a defined role would be good, if the HoD's role was properly defined. The role seems to be, well, if we can't find anybody else to do it let's give it the HoD.' (Hilary)

'The role of HoD needs to be more clearly defined... you are provided with a job description, you know which is you know an all-encompassing job description, but really doesn't tell you what you are going to be doing on a day-to-day basis.' (Sam)

Chris not alone thought that there should be a proper definition of the role but that it should emphasise the academic element rather than the administration element of the role:

'I think you do need somebody with whatever the title will be to look after, to manage the academic programmes. And that's essentially, be it a HoD, or be it another role with a different title. There could be aspects of the HoD role that could be taken away and done by an admin person, fed the information and let them go off and do it.' (Chris)

Consequences

When discussing how the role would change if there was a more appropriate organisation structure, less bureaucracy and more autonomy, the focus group suggested a number of possibilities, including more engagement with industry and the community, which will feed into programme development.

This echoed in the focus group comments:

'My big thing is getting out of here. I can't get away, do you know. If you're trying to go and meet like any kind of external stakeholders, people from other institutions...I just find it incredibly difficult and you know, you get pulled off to all these committees and regional things and this and that and the other, you know, but you can't' (Pat, FG)

'And that idea of kind of meeting the needs of the region is a key part of what we ought to be doing… You know, and that should be influencing probably new programme development and new areas to explore.' (Ber, FG)

'I think we're isolated actually from the region… I mean we know we should be going out there and meeting with industry and you know, creating relationships and collaborations, but I don't do any of that.' (Sam, FG)

Continuing Learning

HoDs, particularly the newer ones, find the role was a continuing learning process. As Jordan indicated:

'Is it evolving, I would say I'm still learning my job if that makes sense. I think to be honest with you, is the type of job that you could spend your career doing and still be learning things. It always throws up something new every day nearly'. (Jordan)

When replying to how the role had evolved since starting, Sam noted how s/he her/himself has changed in how s/he interacts with staff:

'the role hasn't since I started, I probably have… I'm learning to say no when I started you know every meeting that was called I went to every single meeting. Every staff member who wanted to talk to me, I was available to them, you know every problem that happened I tried to deal with it there and then, whereas now I kind of you know I try to prioritise things way more.' (Sam)

In relation to the programmatic review, Sam would approach the process differently in delegating tasks and roles. S/he would be more prescriptive and delegate more:

'There is some things I would do differently …I'd be far more prescriptive. I kind of went with an approach to kind of having very open, I won't say free for all, but that everyone feel that they had a voice and that was important. But I think when it comes down to making changes, I'd be far more prescriptive in not telling people what to do, but telling giving you need to consider this, this and this, and make your decision. And then delegating much better…' (Sam)

Ber felt, although less than a year in the position is *'gradually becoming more familiar with the different elements of the role'* whereas Chris although three plus years in the post *'is still getting to grips with the role'*.

As Jordan described it:

> *'If someone hasn't spent time in a HoD role …they don't fully appreciate the challenges and constraints that they are working on…I would be guilty of this myself, my previous HoD, he was a real gentleman, I was never openly critical of him but I always felt that he should have done more and having walked in his shoes now for a while, I can actually see the wisdom in an awful lot of decisions he made at times.'* (Jordan)

Conclusion

Attributes and Qualities required for the Role

Given the multi-faceted nature of the role, HoDs identified many skills required for the role. The key skill identified was the relational side of the role including; ability to relate, people management and interpersonal skills, political skills. Personal qualities included patience, determination, conscientiousness, judgement and an ability to compartmentalise the job. There was a clear link between the attributes identified as necessary for the role and the personal qualities that HoDs brought to the table. It is noteworthy that the above qualities emphasis on the management side of the role rather than the strategic side. However academic leadership skills are also important as recognised through managing and building relationships with her/his staff.

Making the Role more Effective

Linking into the comments made in the previous chapter in relation to positional power, HoDs believe they have to do needless tasks and have to negotiate bureaucracy and inefficient processes. Further, the lack of an organisational structure and greater administrative support means that few, if any, tasks can be delegated. They are at the end of the funnel.

HoDs indicated that in order to do their jobs properly they required greater autonomy and control, particularly over resources, human and financial. They also require more autonomy over the academic decisions within their respective departments. HoDs longer in the role suggest that there is less autonomy now than heretofore, particularly in the academic area. In line with the previous chapter, more power is

being appropriated by senior management and there is less autonomy at the local level. This is further exacerbated by the view of those HoDs who were internally promoted that they had more autonomy as lecturers than HoDs. The lack of autonomy and the overwhelming nature of the role as previously described have led to HoDs experiencing a lack of support from SM in the role. This in turn has led to a distancing in the relationship between them.

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CHAPTER 10

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapters analysed under the key themes which have emerged from the study. The six key themes are: managerialism discourse; positionality and power relations; being a HoD; academic leader and manager; support for role; professional development.

The themes are discussed in the light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 3. Considering the nature of qualitative analysis and interpretation, this discussion of major findings was directed by a social constructionist approach and Patton's recommendation that 'there is no absolutely 'right' way of stating what emerges from the analysis. There are more or less useful ways of expressing what the data reveal' (2002, p. 476).

The analysis has been framed by my own experiences as a lecturer and HoD in the IoT sector for over 25 years which has informed and shaped my research interest in this topic. The broader educational landscape is influential in terms of the socio-cultural, political and economic discourses discussed earlier which formed and continue to shape the IoT sector in a local and global context. The analysis is also informed by theories and research on leadership and management in higher education, especially middle management positions. One of the key conceptual lenses that I have brought to the study is that of power relations, especially the nature of the positional power held by HoDs.

The case study sought to answer two main research questions:

1. How do Heads of Departments experience their role and in particular how do they make sense of their leadership and management of an academic department?
2. How do institutional, socio–cultural and political contexts and discourses, where these HODs are located, shape their sense-making about their role?

The influence of Neo liberalism and Managerialism in Irish Higher Education

The IoT sector, including the case institute, has been influenced by the changes to Irish higher education in terms of neo-liberalism and managerialism which were discussed in Chapter 3. Despite the differences of view expressed by HoDs interviewed, the research findings do suggest that all of them were aware of the neoliberal discourse in higher education at the macro-level and experience the impact of its outcome, in the form of managerialism at the micro–level, in the case institute.

All HoDs interviewed spoke of current government policy to rationalise the higher education system through a series of mergers, resulting in the development of a new entity, 'The Technological University' (DES, 2011). This reconfiguration will fundamentally change the discourse within which the IoT sector operates. The literature highlights how a neoliberal context has enabled the recasting of the purpose of higher education to meet the requirements of the global economy with a consequent emphasis on rationalisation, efficiency and accountability (Davis et al. 2016; Deem 2004; Lynch, 2012).

HoDs were also cognisant of the TU project at local level which proposes the merger of the case institute with a larger IoT in the region. The HoDs view such a merger may have potentially long term implications for the institute such as loss of independence, rationalisation of staff and programmes and changing the way in which the case institute has operated. All participants in the study reported that the application for Technological University (TU) status by the case institute and the consequent key performance indicators established by the DES have a direct impact on the priorities they set within their work. In particular there is pressure on departments to intensify research outputs, augment the doctorate qualifications of academic staff and increase student numbers. As Sam said:

> This is an one of the big things that probably the whole TU status affects our department is the whole research area as well, you know trying to build because (name of discipline) is typically you know a big research area. So trying to drive that and … increase our numbers, increase our funding … that's a big thing

This is an example of what Davis and Bansel (2007, p. 250) describe as 'calculated tactics of power' through which neoliberal forms of governability have been established by each institution inventing the processes for itself, 'voluntarily adopting neoliberal strategies in the interests of competing in both the local and global market as well as competing for increasingly scarce government funding'. Only one HoD (Pat) saw a potential impact on the structure of the organisation in terms of new departments and faculties and new roles within the TU.

Hood (2000) and Deem (2003a, 2004) have identified the key characteristics of managerialism as including; enhanced competition; increased emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness; casualisation of staff; more hands-on management; imposed external accountability, including performance indicators, league tables, target-setting, benchmarking and attempts to control according to pre-set output measures. A key finding of the study is that all of these factors have been identified by HoDs as impacting on their experience of managing at the case institute. In particular HoDs are aware of the 'culture of performativity' as Chris indicated the case institute is 'fixated on being best in class.'

The majority of respondents (83%) to the National Survey identified 'decreased government funding' as a factor in the wider socio-political context which had a major impact on their role. The HoDs interviewed highlighted how government policies on staff recruitment and in particular the implementation of the Employment Framework meant that they could not recruit new academic staff as required. As one respondent indicated when asked about the least satisfying aspect of the role it was 'the constant battle for human resources'.

These findings are consistent with Deem's (2000) research which examined the extent to which 'New Managerialism', was perceived to have permeated the management of UK universities. In the study respondents perceived the UK higher education system to be much more managed and bureaucratic than previously but also managed in a way consistent with ideas about efficiency, performance monitoring, target-setting and private-sector models of running organisations.

HoDs who had been in the role for some time noted that there is less autonomy in the role than previously, which indicates a deepening of the impact of a managerialism culture. They described how a hierarchical, command and control structure is tightening as a consequence of performance measurement, regulation and shifting control structures.   In the academic area, many decisions that traditionally were made at departmental level are now made by senior management (SM), such as types of academic programmes, size of class groups etc. Internal controls operate to ensure academic staff teach 17/19 hours per week with no autonomy for flexibility or innovation at department level.   In the financial area, strict controls are in place which prevent HoDs signing requisitions over €500. These controls are justified in terms of conformance to government guidelines and regulations and in the drive for achieving efficiency and value for money.   The participants' descriptions confirmed Davis et al.'s (2016) findings, which showed that in a managerialist culture major decisions are made by management who then impose those decisions on the organisation and monitor them through elaborate planning, budgeting and control systems (p. 1485).

So overall the experience of HoDs in this study is that the SM team have increased the techniques of power at the expense of the departments through an increasing control over academic, financial and staffing affairs. Again this resonates with Deem et al. (2000) who found that a decline in trust and discretion placed in academics was frequently mentioned as evidence of managerialism in their study. Thus 'the sinews of power are embedded in mundane practices' (Ball, 2013, p. 6) which impact on the day to day work of HoDs who feel powerless to change the trend. The following section explores this further.

Positionality and Relations of Power

The HoDs in this study experienced their role as being uniquely related to their middle management position in the structure of the organisation. A key finding of this study is that there is a fundamental dilemma of purpose and role in the identity of HoDs. Their identity and power as HoDs is defined in terms of their middle or in-between position in the hierarchy; expressed and defined by their relationships with those above and those below. They are interleaved between senior management to

whom they are accountable and academic staff whom they describe as colleagues and subordinates. They are concerned with reconciling both top-level perspectives with lower-level implementation issues. As one participant Chris noted: 'You are the filling in the sandwich, in the middle'. This leads to an operational focus on the role, within an institutional culture of managerialism but often HoDs are powerless to implement the policies and procedures required by the institute. This fundamental dilemma of purpose and role causes many of the tensions which HoDs expressed throughout this research.

The dilemma experienced by the HoDs in reconciling the duality of their role is accentuated by the low level of authority that they possess in order to get things done. HoDs described feelings of disempowerment and deskilling within the role which is one consequence of their in-between position in the organisation. Their sense is that they are at the end of a funnel with no one to delegate to or to support them. These descriptions confirmed Davis et al.'s (2016) findings which showed that middle managers are given responsibilities but not empowered by senior management and are 'often held accountable for decisions they had not made and needed to solve problems others had created' (p. 1486).

This finding also aligns with Bryman and Lilley's (2009) research where a distinctive theme in their study is that middle managers are stuck in the middle, while Blackmore and Sachs (2000) suggest that middle managers as leaders are institutionally powerless. Preston and Price (2012) describe mid-level leaders as entangled in operational issues rather than being involved in influencing strategy and developing policy. In their study the perceived lack of opportunity to contribute to strategy at faculty level and the reality of having responsibility but no authority were recurrent themes in the interviews. Pepper and Giles (2015) also found that academic middle managers perceive their role as overwhelming, with a sense of huge responsibility and little power. This description is similar to comments made by several of the participants in this study

The broader context also impacts on the HoDs' sense of powerlessness. In particular changing employment contracts with a lack of tenure and permanency within the

case institute at this level is crucial. In September 2017, two of the seven HoDs interviewed in the case institute were in permanent positions. The lack of tenure lessens the perceived and real authority, decision-making capacity and power of the HoDs. As a result HoDs feel vulnerable and consequently less inclined to challenge issues that may negatively impact on their department or indeed themselves. This reflects the broader impact of the rise of casualisation and temporary contracts in HEIs (Courtois et al., 2015) in relation to staff's perceptions of decreased authority, decision making and level of responsibility in their roles.

The HoDs interviewed and surveyed as part of this study experienced a particular form or expression of power in their role. Rather than a total lack of authority, they described a diffused sense of power where they have little if any input into strategic matters but are central in implementing strategic change at department level. This is achieved through using their key source of influence as HoDs – their capacity to manage departmental matters and to relate to and influence academic staff. Hence HoDs enact a contradictory and diffused type of power, lacking the authority to get things done but essential in the implementation and management of getting things done. Thus the power exercised by HoDs is primarily in terms of their organising abilities (to manage programmes, implement strategies) and their interpersonal relationships (to motivate and influence academic staff, manage students). These two expressions of power are diffuse in nature, reliant on weak levels of authority (based on their in-between positon in the institutional hierarchy) with their relational capabilities to negotiate, persuade, influence, organise and implement becoming their primary strengths in the role. The diffuse and ephemeral nature of power, experienced by HoDs in this study, echoes Branson et al.'s (2016) finding in their study who argue:

> The relationships that characterise middle leadership are multi-faceted and multi-directional, with middle leaders challenged to work up, down and across structures and networks. (p.129)

Heads of Department are challenged with a difficult and complex role which they enact in various capacities; being a subordinate to those in senior management, an equal amongst other HoDs holding comparable positions and a superior in relation to

those they are assigned to lead and manage. Thus the participants in this study navigate and negotiate a network of relationships which are structural and multi-dimensional: upward, horizontal, and downward. The key actors in this network are senior management; academic staff; administrators; students. Figure 10.1 below maps the network of power relations which the HoD engages with on an almost daily basis.
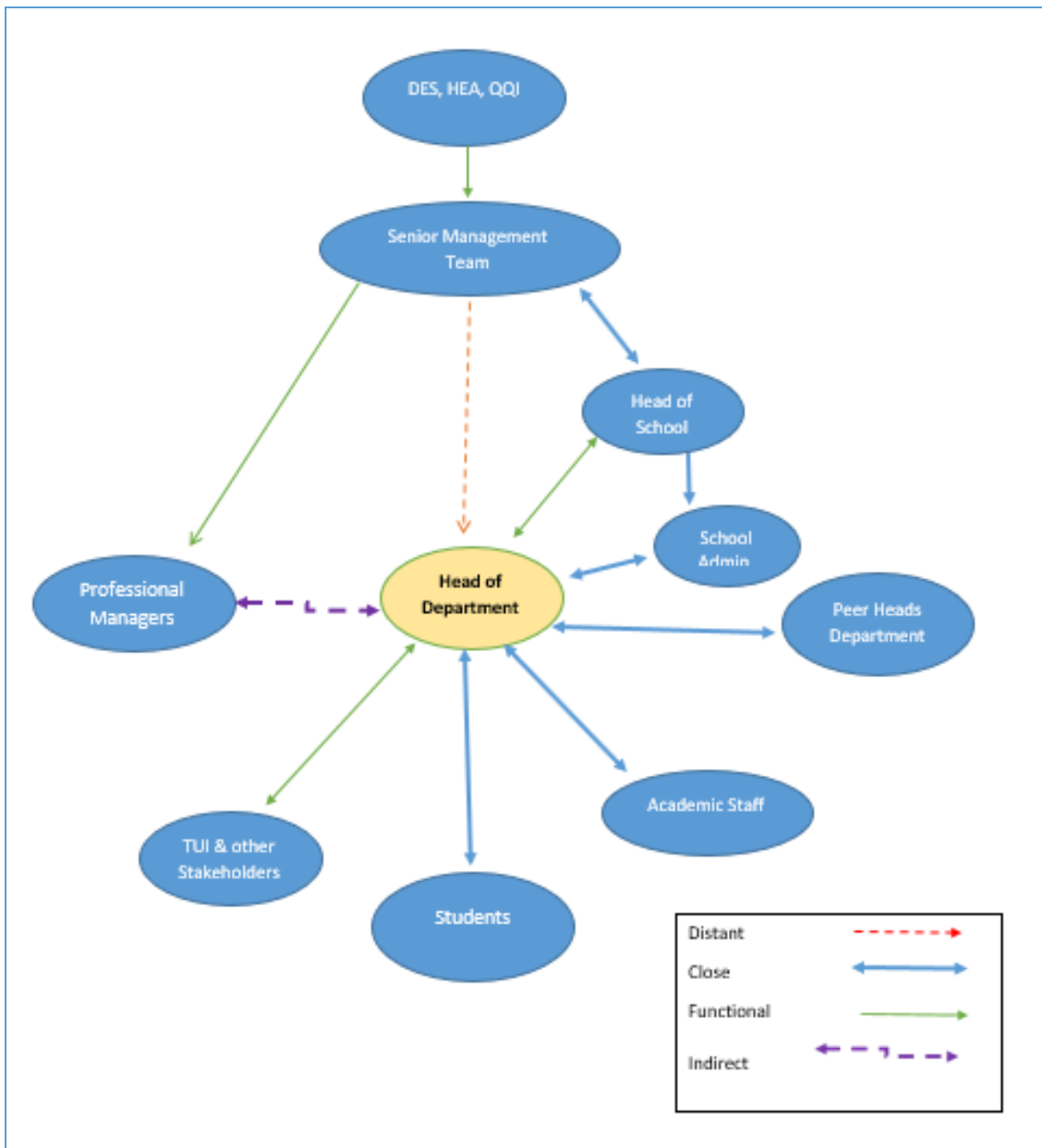

Figure 10. 1 Head of Department: Network of Power Relations

As indicated in the findings in Chapters 7 and 8 the relationship between HoDs and those above them are distant (in the case of the HEA) or sometimes problematic as in

the case of senior management (excluding HoSs), although this is not related to the role per se but to the individual concerned and the issue at hand. The HoSs, peer HoDs and administrative staff are important resources and support for HoDs, especially in the initial stages when learning about the role. The HoDs' relationship with academic staff is based on a professional need for cooperation and collegiality and they are very reliant on relational aspects of staff goodwill and the 'power of persuasion' to achieve results. As described earlier HoD's relationship with their peer professional services managers is generally not collaborative and underpinned by tensions and conflicts. Their relationship with trade unions (TUI in this case) and other key stakeholders (such as industry, community etc.) are professional. As the network of power relations shows HoDs are constantly managing, adapting, negotiating, defending, and justifying their positions at multiple levels within the organisation.

Academic Leader and Manager

There is evidence in the study that Heads of Department are challenged by a difficult and complex role which is enacted as both manager and leader. All participants in this study experienced the role as a hybrid mix of operational /management and strategic/ leadership with a distinct emphasis on the operational. As the literature indicates (Davis et al., 2016; Deem, 2004; Gronn, 2003; Qualter & Lillis, 2012; Waring, 2017), one of the outcomes of the managerialist discourse is the increased demand for middle managers in higher education to balance the operational aspects of running a department with the requirement to provide strategic leadership. The findings from this study support these views. The study also concurs with Floyd (2012), Inman (2009); Knight and Trowler (2001) and Smith (2002, 2005, 2007) who have demonstrated how the job is becoming more and more complex and multi-faceted.

Managing and leading academic staff is central to the role of a HoD. As one participant, Sam, said: 'it comes down to managing people'. HoDs in this study perceived that organisational structures influenced leadership and management processes and power relations. The majority of the participants described the organisation as functioning as a hierarchical structure at senior management level

while at department level a more inter- relational or collegial approach applies. This is consistent with Alvesson and Blom's (2015) analysis of leadership as a multi-level phenomena, where organisational discourses are key elements, producing 'regulatory ideals' for doing leadership — which individuals and groups interpret, adapt, vary and improvise. Thus in relating up the organisation HoDs are aware of a command-and-control hierarchy (one truth) while relating down and across they are aware of a flatter organisation structure where relations of cooperation and collegiality (an alternative truth) apply.

Organisational structures themselves were seen as possible barriers to HoDs, as middle managers, because authority did not necessarily follow where the responsibility rests. HoDs lack the authority to reward or discipline staff and can only delegate within a limited frame of reference. As one interviewee Ber said: 'You don't have a carrot or a big stick'. This is a significant finding in terms of the constraints on the HoD role. They do not have access to the established methods (bonuses, promotions) to motivate staff. In addition HoDs are aware that they need to position themselves amidst a flatter set of relationships than in the traditional hierarchical structure. As Pat commented: 'it's almost by its nature a different type of role …in a different structure… there are people working with us that are obviously more qualified (in their discipline) than I am'. The case institute can be viewed as a 'professional bureaucracy' as defined by Mintzberg (1989, p. 355) which recognises the authority of the professionals in other words 'the power of expertise'.

All respondents in this study experienced being caught between an institute discourse of managerialism and the professional need for cooperation and collegiality within their department. This dichotomy is also evident in the literature (Deem, 2003a; Inman, 2011; Jones, 2011; Middlehurst, 1993). Motivation of staff in the current environment is difficult and delegation of non-teaching duties is very dependent on goodwill. HoDs value working with academic staff and developing collective ownership of the department, as Ber indicated 'a sense of collective team responsibility for achieving things'. It is within this context that relationships and collegiality are essential to HoDs whereby interpersonal skills such as negotiation, persuasion and influence are used to get things done. The respondents in the

National Survey also reported that good relationships, trust and collegiality are critical in managing staff within HEI structures. They regarded 'Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity' and 'Establishing a collegial and trusting work environment' as significant indicators of effective performance as a HoD. So HoDs seeking to win the hearts and minds of staff through collegially is consistent across the sector and internationally as evident in previous studies by Floyd (2012), Hellawell and Hancock (2001) and Inman (2011).

Consequently, when leading and managing staff, HoDs exercise agency by using a relational rather than a command and control approach. All of the participants viewed fostering a culture of trust, collegiality and empowering staff were pivotal to their role. In order to do this HoDs are reliant on good relationships and building goodwill. Indeed, the study shows that HoDs have trust and respect for the staff, and therefore collegiality comes as a natural consequence. This outlook aligns with the literature (Bryman, 1996; Ladkin, 2010) which views leadership as being symbolic and concerned with what people are thinking and feeling and how they are to be linked to the environment, and to the task. It also corroborates the ideas of Branson et al. (2016) who suggest that that the power of HoDs is 'largely psychological and is made manifest relationally' (p.130).

Managing academic staff also presents challenges for HoDs. Key factors highlighted by the study include the extended span of control for HoDs, operating under Public Sector Agreements, resolving staff personnel issues and conflicts between staff. An additional challenge is the inability to recruit extra staff when required under the Employment Control Framework. However, the HoDs experience the greatest challenge and sense of powerlessness in dealing with the few poor performers and difficult people. The lack of authority or 'levers' to deal with underperformance or to delegate work is a source of frustration to HoDs. This accords with Hellawell and Hancock's (2001) research which highlights the vulnerability of middle managers who have few sanctions available to them when dealing with permanent academic staff nominally under their control.

HoDs perception of departmental staffs' view of the role is that of a problem solver and resource provider. Academic staff also view HoDs act as a buffer against and a

conduit to and from SM and the wider institute, often protecting them so that they can get on with their jobs. There is no sense of envy by colleagues rather as Bryman (2007a) suggests HoDs 'are often perceived as people in the middle, hemmed in by a pincer movement of senior management and academic staff' (p. 7).

HoDs felt that the workload on academics is extensive and it would be unfair to burden staff with extra duties. Hence, the HoD can be seen as having a crucial role in supporting academic colleagues to retain autonomy. These descriptions coincide with the research of Winter (2009) who depicted academics as managed employees and Deem (2000) who found that academics are working harder, teaching larger classes and doing more administration tasks. The participants were caught in the dilemma of encouraging staff to become more engaged and undertake more leadership roles, while recognising their increased workload.

All the participants agreed that their role involved a balance of collegiality and 'separation' from staff with an emphasis on the former. However a common theme among those participants who had progressed to become HoDs from inside the institution was the change in relationships that they experienced with their colleagues, which some described as 'difficult'. For others there was a sense that there may be a developing position of 'us' and 'them'. As one interviewee Sam said; 'There was a sense of 'I am now "them" and not "us".' This reflects an awareness of a changing identity that a HoD has on assumption of the role having been a member of the academic staff heretofore. In the 'Foucauldian tradition….individuals are constantly engaged in restructuring themselves in relation to their environment' (Preston & Price, 2012)

For HoDs in this study leadership and management were seen as complementary to each other and co-existed in the daily enactment of their role. In this way the participants in their practice are congruent with Kotter's (1996) view that people can use both leading and managing behaviours. However for the HoDs the role that they play in the case institute is broader than any agreed construction of either 'leader' or 'manager', with some suggesting that 'problem-solver', 'counsellor', 'conflict-manager' and even 'accountant' needed to be included. In this the HoDs aligned themselves more closely to Branson et al.'s (2016, p. 142) view that the 'essence' of

HoD leadership is 'the building of collegiality, cooperation and teamwork'. The experience of HoDs is also consistent with Davis and Jones (2014) notion of leadership as a dynamic and flexible concept viewed through the lenses of context, relationships and activity.. Such a notion privileges the relational nature of leadership in any context and 'opens up spaces to consider more creative, shared and collaborative approaches to the field' (p. 367).

Figure 10.2 below summarises the diverse leitmotifs and themes, which have emerged from the analysis regarding the nature of management and leadership for HoDs in the case institute. The vertical axis illustrates the tensions that exist between meeting the expectations of academic staff and those of senior management and other stakeholders. The horizontal axis illustrates the tensions of balancing the day-to-day operational management that the HoD role demands with the need to focus, and deliver on, strategic leadership. The way these tensions are enacted within the role of the HoD are specified in each quadrant.
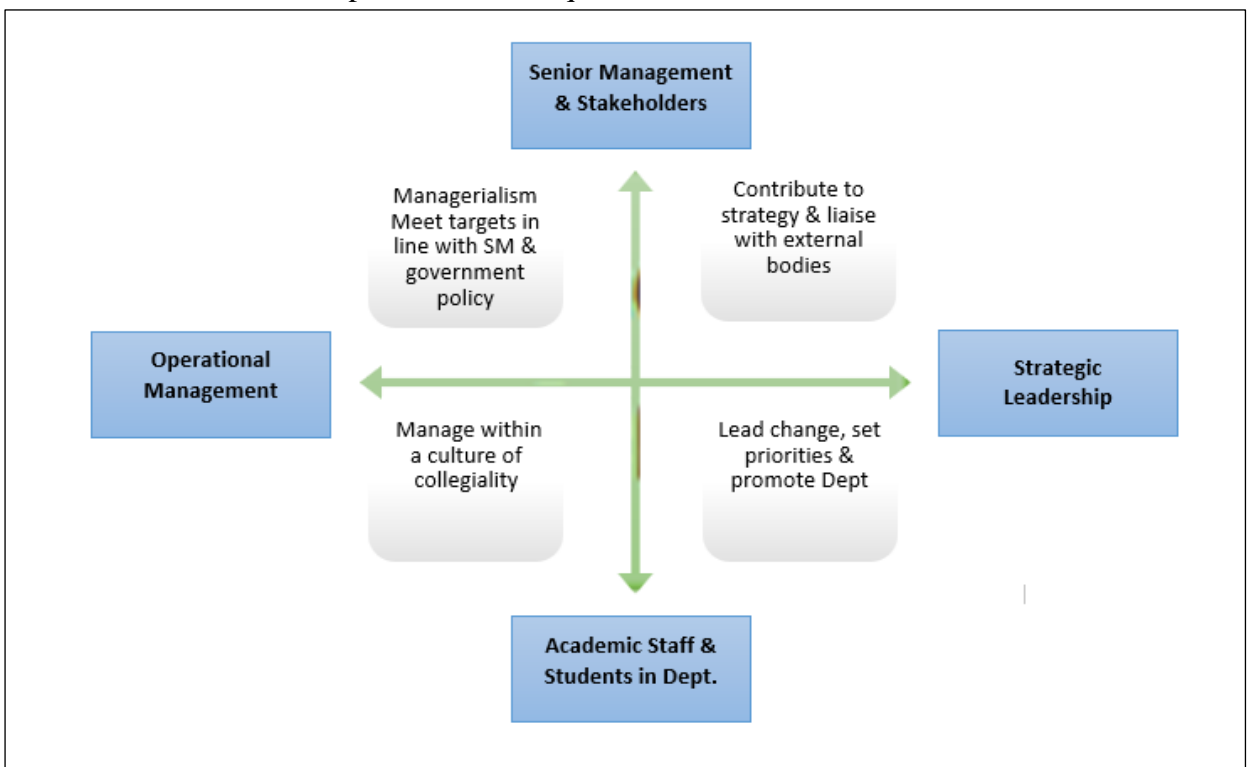
Source: Adapted from Inman (2007)

Figure 10. 2 The Exigencies of the Head of Department Role

Operational Management and Senior Management / Stakeholders

HoDs are accountable to SM for operating their respective departments effectively and efficiently. They are required to meet targets and key performance indicators as outlined by SM and external agencies such as the HEA and professional associations. Within this culture HoDs position themselves within a command-and-control framework when they relate upwards to SM.

Operational Management and Academic Staff/Students

Management of staff is a key irresponsibility for HoDs and absorbs significant amounts of time. It gives rise to tensions and pressures in the role. In managing and leading staff, HoDs use a relational and collegial approach based on trust and transparency. HoDs were cognisant that, without leading in a collegial manner, they have little influence on staff.

Strategic Leadership and Department

HoDs are responsible for leading change and setting priorities in their departments. Despite the need for relational leadership and a collegiate culture within the department HoDs were mindful that the responsibility of the department rested with them. Developing the department and leading change was fundamentally dependent on the leadership and strategic direction that they were in a position to and allowed to provide.

Strategic Leadership and Institute / Stakeholders

Given their relationship with SM and outside stakeholders, HoDs have a key role in contributing to and implementing the strategy and vision of the institution. The tensions arise from HoDs experiences of having little input into the development of strategy and little power or authority to implement it.

Span of Control – too wide to manage and lead

A key finding of the study is that the size of an academic department had a significant impact on the HoD's ability to manage and lead.   The span of control and the amount of direct line management that HoDs were responsible for in this study was too wide to lead and manage. On average HoDs had 35 academic staff reporting to them.   Overall the HoD span of control is higher than any other level of

management within the case institute (See Appendix 3). In addition most professional managers have an assistant to support their role. For example the Computing Services manager has two assistants to whom s/he can delegate duties. Likewise the managers in Finance, Library and HR have an assistant to whom they can assign work.

Throughout the case institute from the President down, the average span of control for managers, in the non–academic departments, is one to five people. The HoD's who had previously worked in the private sector, suggested that the span of control is much higher than other organisations in their experiences. Wallin et al. (2014) confirm that the higher the span of control, the higher the demands on the manager and the less time available to interact within teams. This outcome is contrary to that of Smith (2002) who found that the size of the departments was not an issue for HoDs but this was predicated on a system whereby duties could be delegated, which is not the situation in the case institute. While Preston and Price (2012, p. 416) also found that the breadth of each HoD's portfolio and the amount of direct line management they were responsible for impacted on their engagement with the role. In addition they concluded that the amount of administrative support HoDs received was a significant factor in their ability to carry out the role.

Not alone does a HoD have a large span of control in relation to staff but the student cohort of 500 + students is also a concern. Ultimately HoDs are responsible for ensuring that students have a quality experience in teaching and learning and are successful in their studies. Obviously the number of students, and in particular the number of class groups, in a department has a considerable impact on the workload of a HoD. The span of control and the lack of adequate administrative support, particularly in light of the difficulty of delegating work, places immeasurable pressure and responsibility on a HoD as s/he has to rely on a combination of goodwill, collegiality and trust to get things done. As one interviewee Gay said: 'you're back to that persuade and influence'. And Hilary: 'you're looking for favours and you're asking people or begging people for help with things'.

Being a Head of Department – Lived Experiences

A picture emerges from the study of HoDs with a myriad of responsibilities and duties which they have to constantly 'juggle'. They described their work lives as full with meetings, timetabling, organising programmes, student issues, seeking resources and most importantly, motivating and persuading staff. They feel that they are seen to be there to do everything. As Sam said: 'I did not realise the sheer volume of work until I entered the role'. HoDs believe that SM constructs them as the 'do all person' and 'a dumping ground' for all operational and administrative duties that will not fit elsewhere in the organisation.

Whereas the literature indicates that the HoD is at a 'crucial position in the organisation, (Kallenberg, 2007) and 'central to the effectiveness of higher education', (Marshall, 2012) the HoDs in this study experienced a sense of being overwhelmed in the role due to excessive workload and role overload – too many duties. Instead of engaging with the institution at a strategic level HoDs found themselves entangled in routine administrative work, for example timetabling, which was both time-consuming and tedious and 'not the best use of a HoDs time'. One HoD described it in the National Survey as 'mind numbing administration (and) dealing with bureaucracy'. Even if the work pressures were reduced, HoDs were not convinced that SM would encourage their involvement in strategic matters. This finding is consistent with Fitzgerald's (2009) New Zealand study where she reported 'management tasks and activities dominate…. (the) work and…there is consequently little or no time for leadership' (p.51). Similarly Deem's (2000) study described the role as involving 'long hours packed with meetings, mountains of paperwork and emails and the search for additional resources with research marginalised and little time for reflection'. (p.4)

Crisis management emerged as a key aspect of the role with HoDs reacting to problems and crisis on a daily basis. As one interviewee, Jordan portrayed: 'Just put that fire out. Leave it smouldering and move on to the next'. In the National Survey 86% of the respondents indicated that 'handling unexpected items' had an important impact on the role. The reactive nature of the role has been highlighted in the

literature (Deem, 2000; Pepper & Giles, 2015) which differs from middle manager roles in other organisations and also differs from other management levels within the case institute. However the HoDs appear to accept the volume of work. One participant in the focus group suggested HoDs are the victims of their own success. The volume of work requires HoDs to work long hours, in excess of sixty to seventy hours per week in addition to weekends and holiday time. The fact that the majority of HoDs interviewed were on temporary contracts maybe a factor in their acquiescence. As Kolsaker (2008) indicates from a Foucauldian perspective 'little resistance implies tacit approval.' (p. 518). Perhaps, 'it may be simply that… (they) know no other way' (p.522).

For some participants there was a clear divergence between what they anticipated the job would be like and the actualities of the day–to-day experiences of being a HoD. The job description for the role of HoD has been agreed nationally by all IoTs in the sector (see Appendix 5). It particularly highlights management of the department and the staff within it. The implementation of policies, such as the quality assurance, institute and school policies is central. There is also an emphasis on leadership through developing strategic plans, quality assurance, and providing academic leadership. The job specification also specifies HoDs' responsibility in recruitment, managing and evaluating. The role also requires engagement with external bodies and marketing of the institute. Allied to this HoDs are expected to teach 3 hours per week. However the lived reality of the role is somewhat different. HoDs in this study have limited opportunities for leadership, they lack the power to direct and control staff and they have little input into strategic and policy matters. They do not have time to teach or engage with industry. They have to cope with an increased emphasis on research and in relation to their own qualifications either must have or be pursuing Level 10 qualifications. This finding concurs with Smith (2002) who recommended that transparent job descriptions are needed for the role, as job descriptions were not always present for HoDs in both pre and post-1992 universities in his study in the UK.

Possibilities of Resistance as Head of Department

The research shows that the middle or in-between position holds possibilities as well as challenges for HoDs. Their structural position provides multiple vantage points, whereby HoDs have unique insights and tacit knowledge of the system to choose activities they can prioritise and privilege. However this is subject to the level of autonomy that the HoD perceives they have in the role.

The freedom to follow and influence specific projects and goals was identified by HoDs in the National Survey and the interviews in the case institute. These innovations can also be viewed as an example of what Foucault (1997, p. 292) termed possibilities of resistance to top down compliance procedures for HoDs. For example, in Gay's situation s/he was able to set out the agenda in relation to the overall strategy for the Department as s/he was the only discipline expert in the School Executive and the HoS allowed Gay to delegate timetabling to an academic member of staff. Chris decided to introduce two new Master's programmes in his/her department, one of which related very strongly to her/his expertise. Given her/his personal interest in research, Jordan was able to drive research in her/his department and also ensure that projects in the programmes of study reflected the research element in a clearer way. In Pat's case, s/he was able to organise her/his work around the completion of her/his Level 10 studies. This finding is consistent with Kallenberg's (2007, p. 29) research which found that every HoD ' has – to some extent - the freedom to colour his own role' and 'he is a master at playing simultaneously at different levels which makes his an excellent position to also promote his own interests and to bend innovations slightly to fit his own purposes better'.

Unseen aspects of the role   - Invisible Leader Manager

HoDs work long hours, experience life work imbalance and do not have enough time for personal research. HoDs indicated two aspects of the work that are unseen, the sheer volume of the work, the length of time that it takes to do things and by extension the long working hours. As Sam said s/he did not realise the volume of work until s/he entered the role

The nature of the job ensures that the HoDs work long hours, in excess of sixty to seventy hours per week and sometimes longer. This work feeds into weekends and holiday time. These hours would appear to be in excess of the hours worked across the sector. The National Survey participants indicated that the vast majority (86%) worked between 40 and 60 hours per week with a small minority (10%) working over 60 hours per week. In Smith's (2002) study the majority of HoDs worked in excess of 50 hours per week with 40% working in excess of 60 hours per week. In a more recent UK Survey on academic leaders (Peters & Ryan, 2015) between 82% and 85% of those surveyed worked in excess of 48 hours per week. So it would appear that the role brings with it long working hours, irrespective of the length of time that a HoD is in the role. This in turn has led to stress and a poor life work balance. As Pat related in any day you could be dealing with professional bodies, staff and student difficulties which is not easy. Chris and Sam stated that their work life balance has deteriorated in the role. Indeed both were of the view that they would be reluctant to recommend the role of HoD to anyone. This accords with Kallenberg (2007) who notes:

> The academic middle manager always balances somewhere between burnout and ambition… are permanently subjected to stress as a result of continuously increasing workload and their in-between position. (p.30)

The long hours, impact on life/work balance is an issue for SM. They have a responsibility and a duty of care to this layer of management. Reflecting the 'overwhelming nature' of the role that Pepper and Giles (2015) identified, HoDs in this study describe how they do not have time to pursue their own personal research. Two HoDs who have Level 10 qualifications cannot build on their research and those doing research for their doctorates have to spend all their 'off time' trying to meet their deadlines. This would be consistent with HoDs in the traditional universities whereby research has to be shelved in order to do the job of HoD. As Floyd (2012) points out the increasing amount of management and bureaucratic work is at the expense of teaching and research.

Formal and Informal Support for the Role

Participants in the study perceived that senior management fail to recognise the complexity, the contribution and the workload of the HoD role. The role is constructed as an operational one; the main function is to carry out the directions of senior management. HoDs expressed frustration at the lack of recognition of the role and the lost opportunity to become involved at a higher strategic level. The references to the relationships with SM team were fraught with difficulty and tension, as indicated by Pat who described how having to manage up the line could be a 'nightmare'.

The respondents in the National Survey reported a similar poor relationship with senior management. Whether this is a lack of acknowledgement or appreciation of the workload and challenges, a lack of communication or decision making, having constantly justifying decisions and dealing with them which is reflected in this observation (HOD, Business):

> Volume of paperwork and administrative activities. Responding to requests repeatedly for the same information under different guises. Lack of a fair acknowledgement of HOD workload by senior management

These descriptions confirmed Westley's (1990) findings, which showed that middle managers' exclusion from strategy-related conversations led to alienation, lack of motivation to implement strategies and intra-organisational conflict.

The increasingly managerialist approach to the role of HoD has a number of consequences. It has led to a disconnection between SM and HoDs and by extension the academic staff. This concurs with Smith's (2007, p. 5) finding that HoDs felt 'they are unsupported by senior management'. They lack the opportunity to influence strategy (Preston and Price, 2012, p.417) and they see themselves as mere 'functionaries' carrying out orders from above (Davis et al., 2016, p.1491). Given that they have a 'crucial place of leadership' (Jones, 2011, p.281) in the implementation of strategy and change, this is hardly a good outcome. Also the cost of the role surely makes it incumbent on SM to use this personnel resource in the most effective way possible. As Jones, (2011) states:

Their core leadership role ...has to be recognised and celebrated by senior managers, without which HoDs will see themselves as managers but not leaders. (p.281)

HoDs perceived that within the SM team 'an informal hierarchy' exists that has to be negotiated. Thus there is an 'inner group' within the senior management team who are very powerful in the organisation and make all the key strategic decisions. HoDs view this 'inner' SM layer to be very hierarchical with a command–and-control approach, allowing little if any input into the decision making process, despite the appearance of some consultation and inclusion. HoDs are uncertain about what is expected of them in terms of policy implementation by SM which is related to the lack of a clear job description and the fact that HoDs feel that SM do not have a clear grasp of what the role entails in terms of policy implementation. This is consistent with Davis et al. (2016) who report that:

Despite many requests from top management for input on policies and processes, the participants described their perception that when they (middle managers) do provide input, their input is discarded by top management. (p.1486)

On the other hand, HoDs view the HoS as a bridge between the school and the institute, who act in a collegiate manner and is supportive of the HoD. Generally HoS allowed the HoDs the autonomy to get on with the job. The 'local logics' (Grummell et al., 2009) developed within the case institute of regular (monthly) meetings for each school executive (HoS and HoDs) allied to the 'open door' policy helps HoDs to maintain good communications and relationships with the HoS. This finding is in marked contrast to the findings of the National Survey whereby one third of the respondents reported having little contact with their HoS, locating them as part of the senior management team.

The HoDs relationship with senior management is a key issue for the organisation. There is a need for middle management to be involved in the creation of strategy given that it is these managers who will have to implement the strategies and know the nuances of the institutional practices and cultures. This concurs with Kallenberg's study (2007, p. 21) which concluded that when the middle manager

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role does not function well then policies and strategies will not be translated effectively into concrete action.

Professional Services

HoDs do not view managers in the professional service departments as colleagues in the same way as their peer HoDs. There is a tension in the relationship between the HoDs and professional services managers in respect of areas of responsibility and crossovers of activity, for example HR and Estates. The professional services operate within a strict hierarchical line management structure which accords with the managerialist culture of the case institute.

In addition, in this study HoDs feel that they are controlled indirectly by SM through these departments. As discussed earlier, the span of control of the professional services is smaller than the academic department, which causes discontent in perceptions of the scope and type of work required of each position. HoDs report that they do not have clear lines of communication or interrelationships with the service departments, with SM as a power force in the background of both. This potential conflict between the role of HoDs and professional services is supported by the literature in the work of Whitchurch and Gordon (2010) who suggest that a critical issue for institutions is to create the conditions through which tensions might be used creatively. Maintaining this delicate balance might be described as the key challenge for 'professionals' and 'academic managers' alike.

Students

HoDs viewed the students as central to their role as HoD. For many HoDs the students are the 'raison d'etre' for the department. The education of students was cited by HoDs as a primary motive in applying for the positon in the first place. Also the success of students was the reward for being in the position by many.

However in their day to day interactions the HoD relationship to students was at one remove. The power position is very unequal given that HoDs' interaction with students tends to relate to discipline matters or to help resolve personal or academic

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issues. In general, students deal more directly with academic staff and administrative staff rather than HoDs.

School Administration

The School Administrative staff is an important informal source of power within the case institute. They are particularly useful to new HoDs as they act as an unofficial mentor on the administrative aspects of the role. In their own right, given the administrative network, they are a very powerful group and HoDs use this informal network to circumvent or speed up the bureaucratic process. Branson et al. (2016, p. 138) also found that administrative assistants were a crucial support and Jones (2011, p. 280) recommends that many routine tasks could be delegated to non–academic administrators and thus free up valuable time for HoDs.

Head of Department Forum – Collegial Support

The key support for the HoD role was an informal one, that of the HoDs Forum. This group meets on a monthly basis and discuss issues of mutual concern in leading and managing departments. This Forum can be viewed as performing a key collegiate role. New HoDs in particular found it a very useful source of support and networking and the Forum provided an unofficial mentoring role.

This Forum evolved in the absence of other support mechanisms within and outside the case institute. The Forum has become particularly important for HoDs on temporary contracts who needed a safe place to voice their concerns. A key impact of the Forum was that it provided a space where the HoDs as a group could develop a strategic approach to common issues. It also builds a level of trust, lateral relations and collegiality among the group (Branson et al. 2016, p.137).

The Forum has also fostered a good working relationship within the group. This is consistent with Pepper and Giles' (2015, p.50) study which showed associate deans found that meetings with others in similar roles 'enabled them to better understand the many facets of their role, to share ideas and discuss alternative solutions to issues they faced'. The interaction with peers in the Forum facilitated 'on the job' learning' for HoDs. The National Survey also indicated that 'ad hoc conversations with people

in similar roles' were effective in developing their competencies as HoDs, although there is no sense in the survey that these meetings happen in any co-ordinated fashion in most IoTs.

These findings concur with Davis et al. (2016) who found in the absence of a formal forum, middle managers 'formed their own communicative channels, such as informal meetings, ad hoc sessions and alternative communication media' (p.1489). Branson et al. (2016) also view that a forum offers many possibilities:

> A professional learning community …draw(ing)on the expertise of each other to create new knowledge and to contest old ways of knowing…fundamental to enhancing the CoDs sense of agency as a group (and ensured that the) group increasingly convened meetings with a specific focus on establishing a collective position and a way forward on particular issues. (p. 139)

Others mentioned the value of networking outside the organisation. Similarly Johnson (2002) found, that by developing and being involved in collegial networks, academic heads had a prospect of looking at new ideas and opportunities.

Professional Development and Training

None of the HoDs in this study received any initial formal leadership or management development for the role. It is clear that leaning by 'trial and error' and 'on the job 'was how all of the HoDs developed their leadership and management skills. Only two of the department heads interviewed spoke about experiences that could be categorised as leadership/ management development. The need for training, preparation and support was particularly needed in the transition to the role of HoD. Most HoDs experienced a sense of isolation, lack of support and uncertainty when they started in the position. This was most acute for the HoD who joined the organisation from outside. For HoDs who came directly from industry, the management skills were not an issue as they were able to transfer developed skills to the academic environment. However getting to know the organisational culture took time particularly the differences between managing in the public versus the private sector. The level of bureaucracy and the cultural unquestioning of practices and processes were also differences to be learned.

The HoDs who were promoted from within the organisation, from lecturing positions, viewed their knowledge of the people, the politics and the systems as an advantage in the role, but in general they were novices in the management skills required for the role especially staff management. They had to acquire knowledge of the operational aspects of the role for which they received no training. They also had to develop a working knowledge of the discipline areas where they lacked expertise. HoDs felt that they were left to their own devices in this regard. As one interviewee Ber put it 'there was a kind of personal responsibility to get up to speed on what needed to be done'. Although appointed as the academic leader within the department, the nature of the day to day operations is very managerial/administrative orientated requiring little if any of the skills learned from their disciplinary background.

These findings have been replicated internationally. In the UK Johnston's (2002 p. 42) research highlighted that at the time of appointment the majority of HoDs had received little formal training or orientation. This is also supported by Deem (2004) who reported that academics who become HoDs have little if any training while the role is becoming much more complex. Benoit and Graham (2005) in their US study found that 'no one explained what was expected of them (HoDs)'. Wolverton et al. (2005, p. 231) also noted that virtually every HoD in their study 'wished they had known more about the complexity of the position and the sheer variety of roles they would need to balance'. While Morris and Laipple (2015, p.241) highlighted that insufficient funding was put into training given the 'critical importance of leadership and management mentoring'

A key area HoDs identified for development was leading and managing staff. Managing, and leading academic staff is a continuing theme throughout the findings of this study where HoDs have to rely on 'subtle' relational ways including collegiality to achieve results. This concurs with research by Preston and Price which found 'of all the managerial skills that HoDs felt they lacked, interpersonal skills, such as having difficult conversations were by far the most often cited' (2012, p. 418). Deem (2000) indicates that as managing academic work is unique to higher education, blanket management training approaches are not the most appropriate to

the role. While Scott et al. (2008) strongly suggest that support should be responsive, problem-based and with a just-in-time, just-for-me component.

Transition to Role

HoDs found the transition into the role very difficult leading to stress and anxiety. HoDs indicated that it was a 'baptism of fire'. Coping was difficult and it was either 'sink or swim' or 'surviving'. They had to 'learn by doing', by trial and error as it was a 'case of finding your own way' to do the job. HoDs felt unsupported and isolated, they had to 'lock themselves away' to get on top of various aspects of the role. Although all HoDs appointed were academically qualified for the role, they lacked the management competencies for a HEI environment. This was especially true of the internally appointed HoDs and one externally appointed HoD who had never worked outside a teaching role. This suggests that there is an assumption that pre–training and induction for the role is not necessary: it can be learned 'on the job'. As Waring (2017, p.550) noted it is a strange phenomenon for a HEI as a learning organisation to assume that competence in one area is thought automatically to qualify 'someone for another'.

In the National Survey respondents indicated that important skills for a HoD are: being able to lead and motivate staff; knowledge of the institute system and management skills. While administrative skills such as Health and Safety and HR processes were viewed as less important skills. In terms of interpersonal capabilities respondents indicated that: transparency and honesty; motivation and influencing skills; listening skills; being empathetic and networking skills are very important. It is interesting to note how many of these capabilities are valued by institutes as key attributes for HoDs, as evidenced in interviews or job specifications.

It is evident that while HoDs are beginning to receive more education and training that it needs to be formalised, customised and appropriate to the role. HoDs have highlighted the need for continuing professional development. During the interviews all HoDs expressed at one time or another frustration and uncertainty with and in their job. Several cited the lack of preparation as an influencing factor. All expressed a need for leadership and in particular of staff management training.

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Middlehurst (2008) has warned that leadership enhancement should not be based upon competency frameworks but on 'tailored processes that recognise the contingent, relational, and negotiated reality of higher education leadership' (p. 337).

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the lived experiences of HoDs in an Irish higher education institute. The case study following Foucault's (1980) advice on the necessity of studying the actual operations of power at the level of micro-politics, reveal the micro-practices of leadership and management at HoD level in an IoT. This chapter presented the six key themes that emerged from the findings as follows: managerialism discourse; positionality and power relations; academic leader and manager; being a HoD; supports for role; and professional development.

Managerialism has been put forward as a useful ideological framework and culture to manage higher education, but my findings provide evidence that the culture of managerialism increasingly constrains the work of HoDs rather than providing affordances. This is not new as the in between role of HoD as middle management in a hierarchical organisation has always been difficult. In this case, it was found that Heads of Department are challenged with a difficult and complex role which they enact in various capacities in a changing IoT landscape; being a subordinate to those in senior management, an equal amongst other HoDs and a superior/colleague in relation to those they are assigned to lead and manage. Their identity and power as HoDs is defined in terms of their middle position in the hierarchy; expressed and defined by their relationships with those above and those below. Hence the participants in this study navigate and negotiate a network of relationships which are structural and multi-dimensional: upward, horizontal and downward across the organisation.

As the literature suggests and this study has confirmed HoDs are faced with dual roles of being a leader and a manager accountable to the department, institute and other stakeholders. This requires an awareness of the both the internal environment and also a knowledge of the wider socio–political context. It also requires an understanding that relationships is at the heart of the HoDs role where building

collegiality, cooperation and trust are the essence of leadership. The complexity and challenges of the role needs to be recognised by those aspiring to the role and those who are responsible for supporting and developing the role.

The final chapter will summarise the main conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis. It will also provide some recommendations and suggest future areas for possible research.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This thesis set out to investigate the role of HoDs as evidenced in their lived experiences in an Institute of Technology in Ireland. The study explores the socio–political and cultural discourses that shape Irish higher education and the IoT sector; the context in which HoDs are located. The case study reveals the micro-practices of leadership and management at HoD level in an IoT. Hence the case study follows Foucault's (1980) advice on the necessity of studying the actual relations of power at the level of micro-politics. Six key themes emerge from the findings as discussed in the previous chapter; managerialism discourse; positionality and power relations; academic leader and manager; being a head of department; supports for role and professional development.

This chapter considers a number of key issues emanating from the themes. These issues begin to define an understanding of the role of HoD which has been built through the research process and results from the combined activities of literature review, data collection and analysis. Arising from these key issues, as a practitioner–based researcher, I draw a number of implications for practice. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Impact of Neoliberalism and Managerialism in Irish Higher Education

While this study cannot be generalised to other institutions, it does serve to validate and add further weight to the evidence in the literature of the impact of the discourses of neoliberalism and managerialism on Irish higher education at the macro, meso and micro–levels. It traces, at the macro-level, a fundamental shift in higher education from a public service to a market-driven service where its purpose has been recast to meet the requirements of the economy (DES, 2011; Lynch & Grummell in press; Lynch et al., 2015). In particular since the 2008 economic crash, the IoT sector has been impacted by neoliberal discourses of performativity aimed at

providing technical education, up-skilling the workforce and labour activation (Clancy, 2015a; DES, 2011; Walsh, 2014b).

The study reveals that managerialism, the organisational arm of neoliberalism, is clearly evident in the IoT sector which has prioritised; corporate style management, efficiencies, rationalisation, enhanced competition, casualised employment, increased surveillance and accountabilities. In addition the proposed Technological University project and the accompanying KPIs have created an impending sense of change and uncertainty in the sector (Clancy, 2015a; Hazelkorn & Moynihan, 2011; Walsh, 2014b). For HoDs in this study the discourse of managerialism, at the meso–level, entails less autonomy and a more regulated, monitored and managed regime than in the past. Managerialism and, with it, accountabilities to government and other stakeholders outside of the institute has changed the context and increased the complexity of the role of the HoD Floyd and Dimmock (2011), Hellawell and Hancock (2001), Inman (2011) and Smith (2002, 2005, 2007), all discuss the many demands and dilemmas facing HoDs in the current higher education context. This study has confirmed that the issues identified in their studies remain, certainly in this case institute. The impact of managerialism and the changing context of the role of HoD are illustrated in the case institute's organisational charts in Figures 2.2 and 2.3 in Chapter 2. These charts clearly depict the layers of bureaucracy and the exponential growth in professional management roles over a twenty five year period. Despite student numbers increasing three fold in this time, HoD appointments increased from six to seven. Thus the study confirms a shift from an academic focus to an operational focus within the IoTs in recent years.

The study also highlights how HoDs are constructing and reconstructing their identities as the context changes and is appropriated by managerialist practices. How the subject of the HoD is constituted can be illustrated in the analogy of riding two horses. The white horse view (one 'truth') is that HoDs are academic leaders, professionals using relationships, dialogue and creativity to lead and develop the department and staff. The black horse view (an alternative 'truth') constructs HoDs as operatives, applying 'best practice' packaged for them by others, subject to strong line management, and often driven by fear of being removed from the post. The

ground between these competing truths, where most HoDs walk, is fraught with contradictions.

Making Sense of Being a Head of Department – Positionality and Leading from the Middle

The study reveals that the managerialist discourse positions HoDs as middle managers in the IoT sector where their identity and role is constructed in terms of their middle or in-between position in the hierarchy; expressed and defined by their relationships with those above and those below. This positioning is disempowering for HoDs as they have key responsibilities in relation to staff and students but have low levels of authority and power. They are at the end of a funnel with no one to delegate to or support them. This is highlighted in the duality of their role whereby they have to reconcile top level perspectives with lower level implementation issues. In addition, the discourse of managerialism increasingly constrains the work of HoDs at micro–level rather than providing affordances. However, the significance of managerialism for HoDs lies not so much in the structures of authority but in the erosion of relational, team-based and collegial aspects of leadership. This erosion is particularly felt in the disconnection between senior management and HoD levels which suggests that collegial forms of governance are under threat. This has led to a distancing in the relationship between SM and HoDs as indicated in Chapter 10, Figure 10.1. The gap between senior management and HoDs appears to be widening while at the same time the techniques of power, through increasing control of resources and staffing, are being appropriated by senior management. In this case it was found that HoDs are becoming more disempowered and are being constructed as merely operators and implementers in a hierarchical structure plagued with bureaucracy and a command-and-control style of management.

The literature highlights, in recent decades, an increasing sense of powerlessness in the HoD role particularly in relation to managing staff (Branson et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2012; Lumby, 2012; Simkins, 2005; Smith, 2007). It has even been suggested that in a manageralist age there is an inherent 'degree of impotence' in the role (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p.26). However, this case study reveals the power exercised by HoDs is primarily in terms of their relational leadership (to influence

and motivate academic staff, manage students) and their organising abilities (to manage programmes, implement strategies). These two expressions of power are diffuse in nature, reliant on weak levels of authority (based on their in-between positon in the institutional hierarchy) with their relational capabilities to negotiate, persuade, influence, organise and implement becoming their primary strengths in the role.

The study proposes that the use of relational leadership is the principal means of working with academic staff and gaining cooperation, influence and authority within an academic department. The lack of traditional methods to manage and lead staff practically become inconsequential as many HoDs in this study spoke of the unfeasibility of their role if they had to resort to such power 'over' methods. Using methods associated with 'relatedness', relational leadership or 'power with' was how they envisaged leading a vibrant department.

There is an inherent contradiction in this change: if the pressures from the discourse of managerialism continue apace to diminish collegiality in higher education, as indicated by many of the HoDs in this study, then the use of relational leadership manifested through collegiality may disappear as a practice. In addition, in terms of the operation of power, the expanding span of control of HoDs, as illustrated in Table 7.1, means there is no time or opportunity for them to engage in team work and collegiality.

Adopting a Foucauldian lens, if power is conceptualised not as a *thing* exploited by a one over another but as a *process* circulating across a network of power relations, then there exists a degree of interrelatedness and interdependency that needs to be acknowledged across the many levels of higher education management. An implication of the study is that a command and control model is not the only or best way to run a HEI, especially for middle management positions such as HoDs.

Head of Department – Academic Leader and Manager

While some of the literature draws a dichotomy between the discourses of HoD as academic leader or manager, what emerges from this study is how melded the two are in practice. HoDs, although at middle management level, have a distinctive leadership role while also carrying out management functions. It is evident in this study that HoDs, while not at the executive level of the institute, are indeed leaders. Although they may not construct themselves as 'strategic' leaders, their day to day leadership practices are closely aligned to inter-relational and collegial approaches as described in the literature (Alvesson & Blom, 2015; Branson et al., 2016; Davis & Jones 2014; Rayner, 2010). However, these qualities are under attack and pressure.

The study shows how HoDs are spending the majority of their time juggling multiple operational and sometimes routine tasks, instead of being allowed the space and time to lead and develop the department. By paying attention to the practices of leadership and management at HoD level, the study shows that HoDs have little opportunity to construct themselves or to be constructed as strategic or relational leaders.

This study suggests that the dominant leadership discourse in the case institute is centred on managerialism. Consequently, a lack of other leadership models results in a valorisation of the managerialist approach with an emphasis on a command and control approach. While the relational leadership, collegial approach of HoDs is critiqued by senior management (Alvesson & Blom, 2015). In addition a managerialist culture positions strategising as primarily a senior management activity where strategies are not for open consultation. This is the antithesis of what is expected from HEIs where a culture of open debate, critique, diverse ideas and knowledge creation ought to be nurtured and reflects the changing context within which the HoDs work.

Despite the constraining effects of managerialism, the study identified enabling practices and agency introduced by HoDs to deal with the constraints of managerialism. Central to the practice of HoD as leaders is how they exercise agency through privileging traditional command and control approaches with SM while adopting relational and collegial approaches with staff. This study argues for a shift

to constructing HoD leadership as a relational, dynamic and flexible practice viewed through the lenses of context and relations of power.

An implication of the above is that the role of HoD should most certainly be reframed in terms of leadership, if there is to be a sensible and proactive consideration of the structure and agency of the academic in the middle management of an Irish IoT. This study highlights the need for structural and role clarity, appropriate support and an acknowledgement of the tension and emotionality of holding a dual role as an academic leader and manager.

Professional Development, Training and Supports

The research reported in this study is limited to a small sample size and it would be inappropriate to generalise or extrapolate from its findings. However, it has been found that the essence of leadership for HoDs in higher education is complex and multi-faceted requiring a combination of management and leadership competencies; particularly relational skills. Most HoDs had acquired their knowledge of the role mainly through day to day experiences in the job. Their personal, departmental and peer networks were more effective than formal institutional processes in preparing and supporting them for the role.

While HoDs are beginning to receive training, this is not formalised or sufficient. This study has highlighted the need for professional preparation and on-going development for the role of HoDs. It also makes the case for the explicit acknowledgement and space for informal training and support processes. HoDs learn throughout their careers in higher education, have in-depth understanding of academic cultures and work but experience an initial steep learning curve. A programme focusing on managerial and leadership development would greatly enhance the performance of HoDs. Relational leadership including team building, influencing and motivating staff, would be central to such a programme.

Finally, the study shows how a lack of clarity – both for the individual and the institute – about the role of the HoD can lead to an under-utilisation of a group of committed and experienced individuals in the development of higher education. The

HoD role is often unscripted and unacknowledged. Whilst training and development opportunities are being developed, I believe that the 'lived experiences' of HoDs doing the job ought to provide vital input into the design of such programmes. Any training should also create an awareness of the changing landscape within which higher education operates. It should incorporate discussion of neoliberal and managerialist discourses in HEIs and how they impact on practices at all levels of the organisation.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this research have specific relevance in higher education contexts and in particular for the Irish IoT sector, in which HoDs are highly represented.

Recommendation One

HEIs should reframe the role of HoD by reviewing the managerialist approach with a view to strengthening collegial forms of governance

Even in an age of managerialism, all levels of HEI managers need to go beyond hierarchical, command-and-control management and search actively for more democratic and collegial approaches, appropriate to the higher education context. The value of the HoD role in higher education could be reasserted if they are empowered to operate outside the institutional constraints marooned in many hierarchical layers, bureaucratic systems and inherited public sector managerialism.

Recommendation Two

Senior institutional management need to understand, harness and support the potential of the role of HoD in order to mitigate the divide between them.

The manageralist discourse has positioned HoDs as middle managers and created a distant relationship between SM and HoDs. There is a lack of flow of empathy between both groups as each does not consider the others' 'truth' and lived experience within the organisation. Further this has implications for how relations of power flow through the case institute and opportunities for resistance and agency are exercised. This would require building trust and relationships across the organisation. SM need to empower HoDs and appreciate the relational leadership inherent in the role of HoD. Harnessing the potential of HoDs would include SM

delegating more responsibility over human, financial and physical resources and academic affairs – the techniques of power. This was a strong recommendation from all the participants in the case institute as it would enhance their ability to lead and manage their departments.

Recommendation Three

Senior Institutional Management need to acknowledge the high workload and bureaucracy associated with enacting the HoD role and provide additional support.

The study clearly shows that HoDs work excessive hours, experience poor work life balance and are overburdened with many unimportant and non-strategic tasks. Given the nature of the role as task driven and reactive, HoDs have little time to lead or become involved in strategic activity. All HoDs agreed that extra support was necessary to fulfil the many demands of the role. As such, there is a need for the role of Assistant HoD. As indicated in the study, their counterparts in the professional services have support from at least one assistant. This would enable HoDs to delegate tasks and to spend more time leading their departments and becoming more involved in strategic areas. Further it would facilitate succession planning. This is very important in the case institute given the large turnover of HoDs. It would also allow HoDs an opportunity to pursue their own research and show leadership in what is a very significant strategic area for the case institute.

Recommendation Four

Provide a targeted formal and informal leadership and management training programme for HoDs to include relational leadership.

It is clear from the study that the current system of training and development for HoDs is inadequate. HoDs found the initial transition to the role stressful, experiencing a lack of support and isolation. They had to 'learn by doing', by trial and error as it was a 'case of finding your own way' to do the job.

A review of the induction, mentoring and training system within the case institute is required. Whilst training and development opportunities are being developed, I believe that the 'lived experiences' of HoDs doing the job ought to provide vital

input into the design of such programmes As such any training programmes should include relational, negotiating and networking skills in formal and informal realms. Leading and managing staff including dealing with conflict would also be vital. It is important that training is ongoing, reflecting the needs not only of the new HoDs but also existing HoDs.

Recommendation Five

HoDs utilise the HoD Forum in a strategic way both in terms of exercising agency and contributing to the creation and implementation of institute strategy. The Forum should also be used as a channel for networking inside and outside the organisation.

HoDs need to network inside and outside of the organisation. At present internally the key networking platform is the HoD Forum. The role of this Forum should be enhanced and provide HoDs with a greater sense of agency in influencing the strategic development of the IoT. Also it should be used to improve the relationship with SM through taking on explicit functions and specific strategic issues such as; development work, benchmarking best practice and organisation reconfiguration.

Further HoDs should actively network outside of the institute through greater engagement with the local community, other IoTs and the various disciplines within the sector. They have identified the lack of engagement as a key aspect of the role that they would like to improve. Such networking will inform them, expose them to new ideas and form alliances allowing them to lead their departments more effectively and contribute to strategy development within the institute.

Contribution and Further Research

As previous studies indicate, HoDs are the corner stone of academic leadership and management in higher education, in direct contact with management, academic staff, and students on a daily basis (Floyd et al. 2011). Although there are studies on the role of HoDs in third level institutions internationally, in New Zealand (Branson et al., 2016), South Africa (Davis et al., 2016), Australia, (Pepper and Giles, 2015, Ramsden, 1998), USA (Hecht, 2004; Wolverton et al., 2005) and the UK (Deem, 2008; Floyd et al., 2011), there are little studies on the role within an Irish context.

These international studies highlight a number of issues linked to how HoDs (or middle managers or Chairpersons of Departments as they are also termed) experience their roles across a range of HEIs. This, when added to the earlier studies undertaken by Deem (2000), Smith (2002, 2005, 2007) and Branson et al. (2016), give an overview of the role and how it has evolved over the last twenty years. This research builds on these studies within an Irish context and within the specific context of an IoT to give a detailed and nuanced sense of the experiences of middle managers, 'the filling in the sandwich' in an organisational hierarchy of an education sector in transition. The findings from this research:

- Provide insights into the impact of discourses of neoliberalism and managerialism on the role of HoD in higher education

- Identify the influence of wider political, social and economic contexts within which the HoD operates in the IoT sector

- Reveal the multi-dimensional nature of HoD role in a complex network of power flow

- Explicate the micro practices of how HoDs enact leadership and management

- Highlight the importance of relational leadership for HoDs in leading and managing staff

- Reveal the constraints and affordances in the role of HoD

- Identify the types of continuous professional development that would benefit HoDs, in particular the importance of networking and mentoring

- Highlight the contribution of practitioner research built on experience-based insights and trusted relationships

How the Contribution Can Be Applied

The contribution made by this research can be applied in the following ways:

- To develop awareness in current and potential academic leaders of the impact of socio-political discourses on the role of HoD in order to alert them to the complexity of the role.

- To support HoDs in sustaining relational leadership and exercising agency by highlighting how best to attain the necessary knowledge and experience required for the role.
- To assist senior management and institutions in understanding the experiences of leadership as a HoD and inform them as to how best to empower HoDs in the light of managerialism, organisational structures and constraints
- To aid those responsible for devising meaningful and continuous education and training programmes for HoDs, including early induction. This process must be viewed as a long term investment, in the ongoing development of academic leaders.
- To help further inform the research agenda regarding middle–level academic leadership in higher education.

Areas for Future Research

There are two main areas for future research. The first is to investigate the experiences of HoDs across a wider range of institutions in Ireland to see whether the findings of this study are indicative of experiences of HoDs across the sector as a whole. Further research could involve a more in-depth study by comparing and contrasting the experiences of HoDs across different institutions particularly Universities and Institutes of Technology.

Another area for future research is to investigate the role of HoD from both the individual and the institutional senior management perspectives, as the findings from this study suggests there is a mismatch in this area. Such a study would provide a deeper analysis and therefore enhanced understanding of the HoD role in higher education.

Final Word

This study investigated the experiences of HoDs in higher education. The findings offer insight into what it feels like to be a HoD, the micro-practices of the role and the main constraints and affordances in the role. The study also sought to identify what supports were most useful to HoDs.

The rationale for the study emanated from my desire to develop a deeper understanding of the actual world of work of academic HoDs, as a practicing department head. Completing this study has not only developed my competencies as a researcher but also my own leadership and management practice. This has been achieved through what Brookfield (1995, p. 29) calls the three lenses of critical reflective practice; review of the literature, research of colleagues' leadership and management approaches and reflection on my own practice.

As someone who was a reluctant academic and arrived in the case institute in 1990 to put in time while looking for a 'proper job', I swiftly came to love teaching and realised the importance of higher education in empowering our students to make their way through life. As I now enter the final phase of my professional career, this thesis is a contribution to enhance the role of Heads of Department and by extension ensure that the students who come under our care are provided with the best possible education. As I finish this doctorate journey and my exploration I am reminded of T. S. Eliot's words:

> *We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our*
> *exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for*
> *the first time.*

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APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE SEMI-STRUCTURED
INTERVIEWS**

Semi-structured Interview Questions: March 1st 2016

How do Heads of Department experience the role and how do their previous careers and professional influence them in their current role?

1. *How do Heads of Departments experience their role and in particular how do they make sense of their leadership and management of an academic department*
2. *How do institutional, socio – cultural and political contexts and discourses where these HODs are located have shaped their sense - making about their role*

Research Question	Interview Themes/Questions	Time Allocated
Introduction	**Study Background and aims** Are you happy to be recorded I would like to reiterate that this interview will be confidential and is bound by the Maynooth University's ethical policy. If you are unhappy with any of the questions please indicate and we can stop and move into other areas. The interview will take about 60-90 minutes. Please also be aware that this thesis will not be available to the public for a period of five years after publication.	3 mins
What is the 'life journey' of Heads of department in coming to their current role?	**Academic background** How would you describe yourself professionally – in a sentence. **Career History** General work History, changes of jobs, types of jobs etc. Academic Experience **Reason for career decisions** Any particular personal or professional reasons for the changes **Reasons for becoming a Head of Department** What **influenced your decision** to apply for Head of Dept post? What were your **expectations, hopes** for the role on appointment? What socio cultural and political contexts influenced you in these expectations What was your greatest **anxieties / fears** about the role? How did you come to be a HOD? **Impact on Head of Department position** Do you think your former roles helped you in your current role? **Career in the Future** Where do you see yourself and the institute in five years time.	12 mins
Preparation/ training for the role	How did you know **what to do** on the job? **Who and what helped** you most in the first few months? Looking back what was the greatest **learning curve** for you? What would **have helped** you? Was there a **critical incident** that influenced how you engaged with the role?	5 mins

Research Question	Interview Themes/Questions	Time Allocated
	What **advice** would you give to someone starting in the role	
What are the day to day experiences of being a Head of Department?	What are **key aspects** of your role as Head of Department? How do you think the role has **evolved**? How do you **see yourself** as a leader, a manager or something else? What are the **main challenges** facing you as a Head of Department? Administrative tasks, staff management student issues, Strategy implementation, quality What do you most **enjoy a**bout the role? E.g leadership aspects , influencing staff, senior management shaping policy What **annoys or frustrates** you most about the role? How do people, Senior Management, Students and staff **perceive the role.** Any particular experiences that indicate this to you. What areas or activities do you feel **are within your control and not within your control.** What do you think are the **qualities required** of a head of department?	20 mins
Institutional, socio – cultural and political contexts and discourses **Broader context**	How has **the role changed** over the last number of years? Why or what **has influenced** this change? Any particular **changes** in society or higher education that have affected your role e.g. TU status, Hunt, Demographics, competition, Economy, finance. Research Do you see your role changing in next five years & why	10 mins
What helps and hinders a Head of Department in carrying out his/her role?	**Does the working environment help or support your role ?** **Are there any barriers or hindrances in the working environment to supporting or developing your role?** **Does the Institute or your school expect any kind of leadership from you?** • In what way? How would you advise Senior Management regarding what would improve the function of your role? What remains unsaid or unknown about the role?	12 mins
Conclusion	Any other Comment?	5 mins

Research Question	Interview Themes/Questions	Time Allocated
	What will happen to the data Validation Process Focus group? Thanks	

| Department Details | How many staff report to you
How many students under your care
Length of time in the position
Average working week | **2 mins** |

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORMS/PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEETS

Appendix 2.1

Consent – National Survey Questionnaire form

A chara,

This survey is undertaken as part of doctorate research I am undertaking in Maynooth University. It aims to explore the role of Heads of Departments in the IOT sector. In particular it aims to investigate the major areas of responsibility, factors which impact on the role, the range of knowledge and skills required for the role, the personal and interpersonal capabilities needed for the role and the constraints and affordances attached to the role. The survey is 37 questions long and should take about 20-25 minutes to complete online.

Your identity will be kept completely confidential and the survey is governed by the Ethics Policies of both Maynooth University and the Institute of Technology Carlow.

I understand that your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any point during the survey or skip any question you prefer not to answer.
It is my intention to distribute a summary of the anonymised and generalised results of the survey to the Heads of the Department in our sector which may be of benefit to you in your institution or indeed across the sector in creating a greater understanding of the role.

Many thanks for your assistance with this survey. I am aware of the time pressures of a very busy work schedule and am especially grateful for your participation.
To access the survey please click on the following link;
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3RCWB2T

By completing and submitting this survey, you are indicating your consent to participate in the study

Le meas,
Martin Meagher
Head of Department of Business, IT Carlow

Appendix 2.2
Consent Form for Semi Structures Interviews – Case Study Institute
Title of study: The Role of Heads of Department in a third level institute of Technology
Researcher: Martin Meagher

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I understand the contents of the information sheet

2. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions

3. I consent to participate in this study

4. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason

5. I understand that the findings from this study will be made public but I will not be identifiable from these findings

6. I understand that the audio recording and transcript of this interview will be retained in a secure location for ten years following completion of the research project in accordance with the requirements of Maynooth University.

7. I understand that in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances Maynooth University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.

8. If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Signatures:

_____ _____ _____
Participant   Print name   Date

_____ _____ _____
Researcher   Print name

Appendix 2.3

Consent Form – Focus Group

Title of study: The Role of Heads of Department in a Third Level Institute of Technology
Researcher: Martin Meagher

		Please initial box
1.	I confirm that I understand the contents of the information sheet	
2.	I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions	
3.	I consent to participate in this study	
4.	I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason	
5.	I understand that the findings from this study will be made public but I will not be identifiable from these findings	
6.	I will not share outside the group any information shared by other participants about themselves, or their identity.	
7.	I understand that in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances Maynooth University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.	
8.	If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.	

Signatures:

_____   _____   _____
Participant   Print name   Date

_____   _____   _____
Researcher   Print name   Date

Appendix 2.4

Participation Information Sheet
Semi-Structured Interview Invitation – Case study Institute

DHAE Research Study
The Role of Heads of Department in Third Level Institutes of Technology

You are being invited to take part in a further part of the research study described below. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This aim of this study is to understand and explain the role of Heads of Department in the Institute of Technology sector. It aims to explore how HoDs describe and understand their experiences in this higher education context. The IoT occupies a particular position in Irish higher education, driven by very different economic, social and political imperatives that the university sector. This study will examine why HoDs undertook the role and their lived experiences as leader and manager. One of the key objectives will be to find out what are the main constraints, affordance and challenges they experience in the role.

This will be done by undertaking interviews with my fellow academic HoDs, from a variety of disciplines, at different Institutes of Technology. Additional insights are also being sought with all HoDs in the IoT sector nationally (through an online survey) and individual interviews with HoDs in a single IoT. . This research is being undertaken as part of a professional doctorate in education (DHAE) study based at Maynooth University's Dept for Adult and Community Education under the supervision of Dr. Bernie Grummell. It is proposed to submit the final thesis towards the end of 2017.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been identified as someone who is an academic head of department in the casestudy Institute of Technology, in line with the specific research questions of the study.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be invited to take part in an individual interview based on your role as Head of Department to discuss how you experience this role, in particular, in your position as manager and leader in the current context of Irish higher education. At a later stage, you will be interviewed to participate in a focus group to discuss the initial findings of the research.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in either or both stages of the research. If you do decide to take part in this individual interview, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason. You will be invited separately at a later stage to participate in the focus group.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

In agreeing to take part in this study there will be a time commitment to consider and due to the nature of this type of research the interview is likely to last one hour. You are, of course, able to withdraw at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The main benefit for the individual will be an opportunity to reflect in detail on your role as Head of Department. Whilst there will be a time commitment required from participants and there may be difficulties in preserving complete anonymity due to the small numbers involved (especially in this institute), it is felt that the benefits of involvement will outweigh the costs.

This study will also help in furthering the academic community's understanding of the academic HoD's role. A more thorough understanding of the HoD's role is important for policy-makers, managers and researchers in the leadership and management of third level institutions. Such research, for example, could help in the potential selection process of new HoDs, could help predict and address the possible future supply and demand imbalance in the profession, could allow for more informed career advice for HoDs (potential and in post), and could help tailor specific training, development and support for them while in post and in their future.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). In order to protect the anonymity of each participant, pseudonyms will be used to ensure participants cannot be identified. All Institute of Technology names and identifying features will also be changed. It must be stated that as sample group of HoDs is relatively small, this may have implications for full anonymity and you are asked to respect the trust and maintain the confidentiality of your colleagues.

All electronic data will be held securely in password protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be held in locked cabinets in a locked office.

Data generated by the study must be retained in accordance with Maynooth University's and Institute of Technology, Carlow's policies on Academic Integrity and therefore will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project.

What will happen to the results of the research?

All interview data will be transcribed and subjected to respondent validation where each participant will be provided with the transcription and account of the findings in order to check that the participant agrees with the researcher's interpretation of their role.

This data will then be used in a DHAE submission. All participants will be able to have access to a copy of the research submission on request.

Who has reviewed the study?

The case Institute of Technology and Maynooth University's Research Ethics Committee has approved this research.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:
Martin Meagher
Head of Department of Business
IT Carlow, Kilkenny Rd., Carlow

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Secretary of Maynooth University Ethics Committee at <u>research.ethics@nuim.ie</u> or on +353(0)17086019.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet, please contact me if you require any further information.

Martin Meagher

Appendix 2.5

Participation Information Sheet

Semi-structured Invitation Sheet – External

DHAE Research Study
The Role of Heads of Department in Third Level Institutes of Technology

You are being invited to take part in a further part of the research study described below. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This aim of this study is to understand and explain the role of Heads of Department in the Institute of Technology sector. It aims to explore how HoDs describe and understand their experiences in this higher education context. The IoT occupies a particular position in Irish higher education, driven by very different economic, social and political imperatives that the university sector. This study will examine why HoDs undertook the role and their lived experiences as leader and manager. One of the key objectives will be to find out what are the main constraints, affordance and challenges they experience in the role.

This will be done by undertaking interviews with my fellow academic HoDs, from a variety of disciplines, at different Institutes of Technology. Additional insights are also being sought with all HoDs in the IoT sector nationally (through an online survey) and individual interviews with HoDs in a single IoT. This research is being undertaken as part of a professional doctorate in education (DHAE) study based at Maynooth University's Dept. for Adult and Community Education under the supervision of Dr. Bernie Grummell. It is proposed to submit the final thesis towards the end of 2017.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been identified as someone who is an academic head of department in the Institute of Technology sector, in line with the specific research questions of the study.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be invited to take part in an individual interview based on your role as Head of Department to discuss how you experience this role, in particular, in your position as manager and leader in the current context of Irish higher education

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

In agreeing to take part in this study there will be a time commitment to consider and due to the nature of this type of research the interview is likely to last one hour. You are, of course, able to withdraw at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The main benefit for the individual will be an opportunity to reflect in detail on your role as Head of Department. Whilst there will be a time commitment required from participants and there may be difficulties in preserving complete anonymity due to the small numbers involved, it is felt that the benefits of involvement will outweigh the costs.

This study will also help in furthering the academic community's understanding of the academic HoD's role. A more thorough understanding of the HoD's role is important for policy-makers, managers and researchers in the leadership and management of third level institutions. Such research, for example, could help in the potential selection process of new HoDs, could help predict and address the possible future supply and demand imbalance in the profession, could allow for more informed career advice for HoDs (potential and in post), and could help tailor specific training, development and support for them while in post and in their future.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). In order to protect the anonymity of each participant, pseudonyms will be used to ensure participants cannot be identified. All Institutes of Technology names and identifying features will also be changed. It must be stated that as sample group of HoDs is relatively small, this may have implications for full anonymity.

All electronic data will be held securely in password protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be held in locked cabinets in a locked office.

Data generated by the study must be retained in accordance with Maynooth University's and Institute of Technology, Carlow's policies on Academic Integrity and therefore will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project.

What will happen to the results of the research?

All interview data will be transcribed and subjected to respondent validation where each participant will be provided with the transcription and account of the findings in order to check that the participant agrees with the researcher's interpretation of their role.

This data will then be used in a DHAE submission. All participants will be able to have access to a copy of the research submission on request.

Who has reviewed the study?

The case Institute of Technology and Maynooth University's Research Ethics Committee has approved this research.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:
Martin Meagher

Head of Department of Business

IT Carlow, Kilkenny Rd., Carlow

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Secretary of Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or on +353(0)17086019.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet, please contact me if you require any further information.

Martin Meagher

Appendix 2. 6

Participation Information Sheet

Focus Group Invitation

DHAE Research Study
The Role of Heads of Department in Third Level Institutes of Technology

You are being invited to take part in a further part of the research study described below. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This aim of this study is to understand and explain the role of Heads of Department in the Institute of Technology sector. It aims to explore how HoDs describe and understand their experiences in this higher education context. The IoT occupy a particular position in Irish higher education, driven by very different economic, social and political imperatives that the university sector. This study will examine why HoDs undertook the role and their lived experiences as leader and manager. One of the key objectives will be to find out what are the main constraints, affordance and challenges they experience in the role.

This will be done by undertaking interviews with my fellow academic HoDs, from a variety of disciplines, at this Institute which forms the casestudy at the heart of this research project. Additional insights are also being sought with all HoDs in the IoT sector nationally (through an online survey) and individual interviews with a small number of HoDs in other institutes. . This research is being undertaken as part of a professional doctorate in education (DHAE) study based at Maynooth University's Dept. for Adult and Community Education under the supervision of Dr. Bernie Grummell. It is proposed to submit the final thesis towards the end of 2017.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have previously participated in an earlier section of the study through an in-depth interview having been identified from the case Institute of Technology Site as someone who is an academic head of department, in line with the specific research questions of the study.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be invited to take part in a focus group based on your role as Head of Department to give feedback about the initial findings of the survey and interview stages of this research.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

In agreeing to take part in this study there will be a time commitment to consider and due to the nature of this type of research it is impossible to determine what that might be at the outset but the focus group is likely to last between 1 and 1.5 hours. You are, of course, able to withdraw at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The main benefit for the individual will be an opportunity to reflect in detail on your role as Head of Department. Whilst there will be a time commitment required from participants and there may be difficulties in preserving complete anonymity due to the small numbers involved (especially within the case study institute), it is felt that the benefits of involvement will outweigh the costs.

This study will also help in furthering the academic community's understanding of the academic HoD's role. A more thorough understanding of the HoD's role is important for policy-makers, managers and researchers in the leadership and management of third level institutions. Such research, for example, could help in the potential selection process of new HoDs, could help predict and address the possible future supply and demand imbalance in the profession, could allow for more informed career advice for HoDs (potential and in post), and could help tailor specific training, development and support for them while in post and in their future.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). In order to protect the anonymity of each participant, pseudonyms will be used to ensure participants cannot be identified. The Institute of Technology name will also be changed. It must be stated that as the focus group will be relatively small (7/8) this may have implications for anonymity. You are requested not to share outside the group any information shared by other participants about themselves, or their identity. However, there is no guarantee that others might share this information.

All electronic data will be held securely in password protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be held in locked cabinets in a locked office.

Data generated by the study must be retained in accordance with Maynooth University's and Institute of Technology, Carlow's policies on Academic Integrity and therefore will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project.

What will happen to the results of the research?

All interview data will be transcribed and subjected to respondent validation where each participant will be provided with the transcription and account of the findings in order to check that the participant agrees with the researcher's interpretation of their role.

This data will then be used in a DHAE submission. All participants will be able to have access to a copy of the research submission on request.

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Name, position and contact address of Researcher:
Martin Meagher
Head of Department of Business
IT Carlow, Kilkenny Rd., Carlow

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Secretary of Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or on +353(0)17086019.
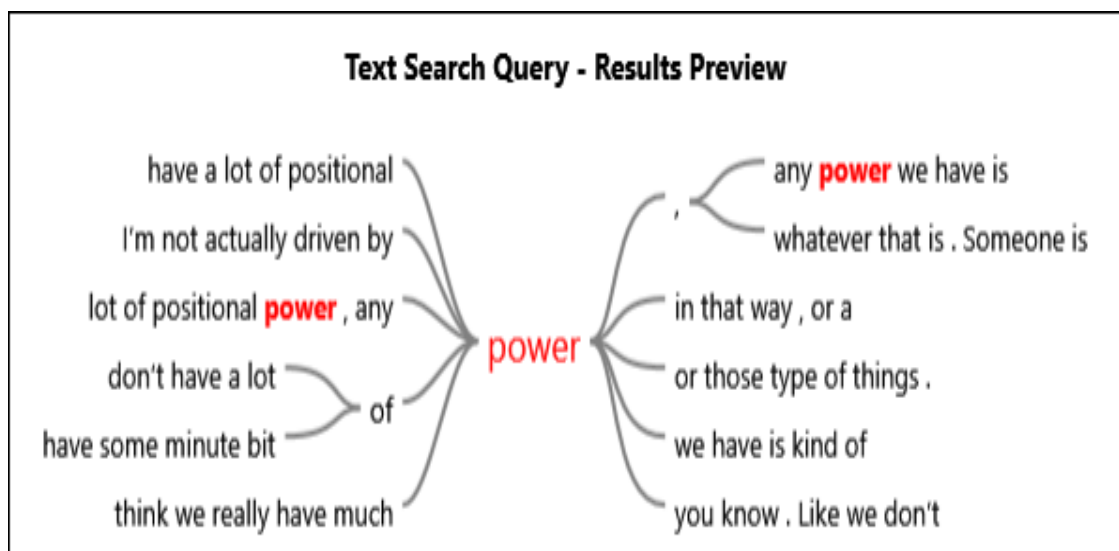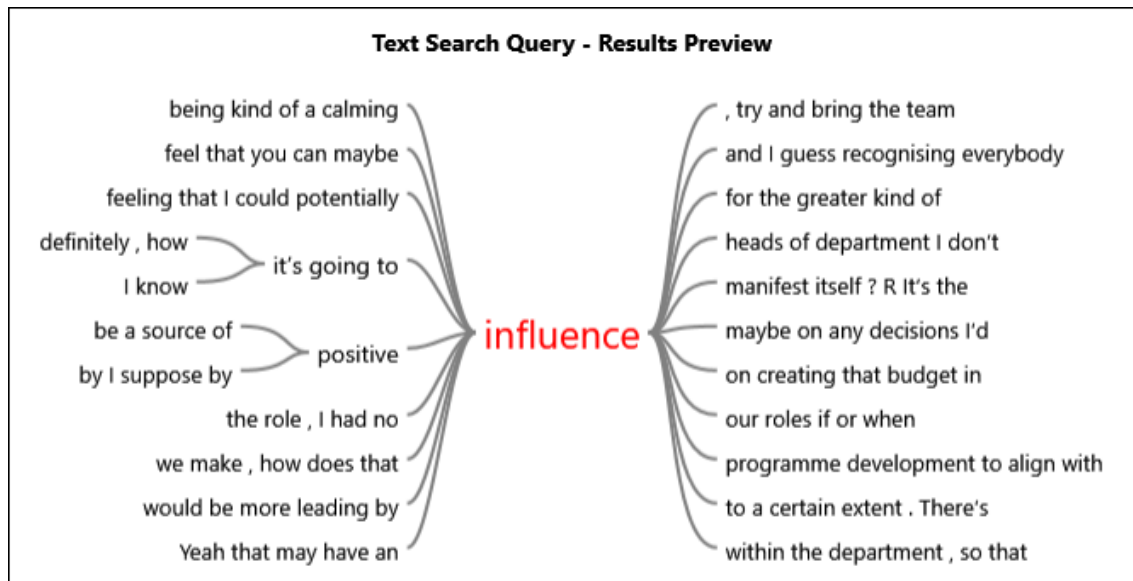
Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet, please contact me if you require any further information.
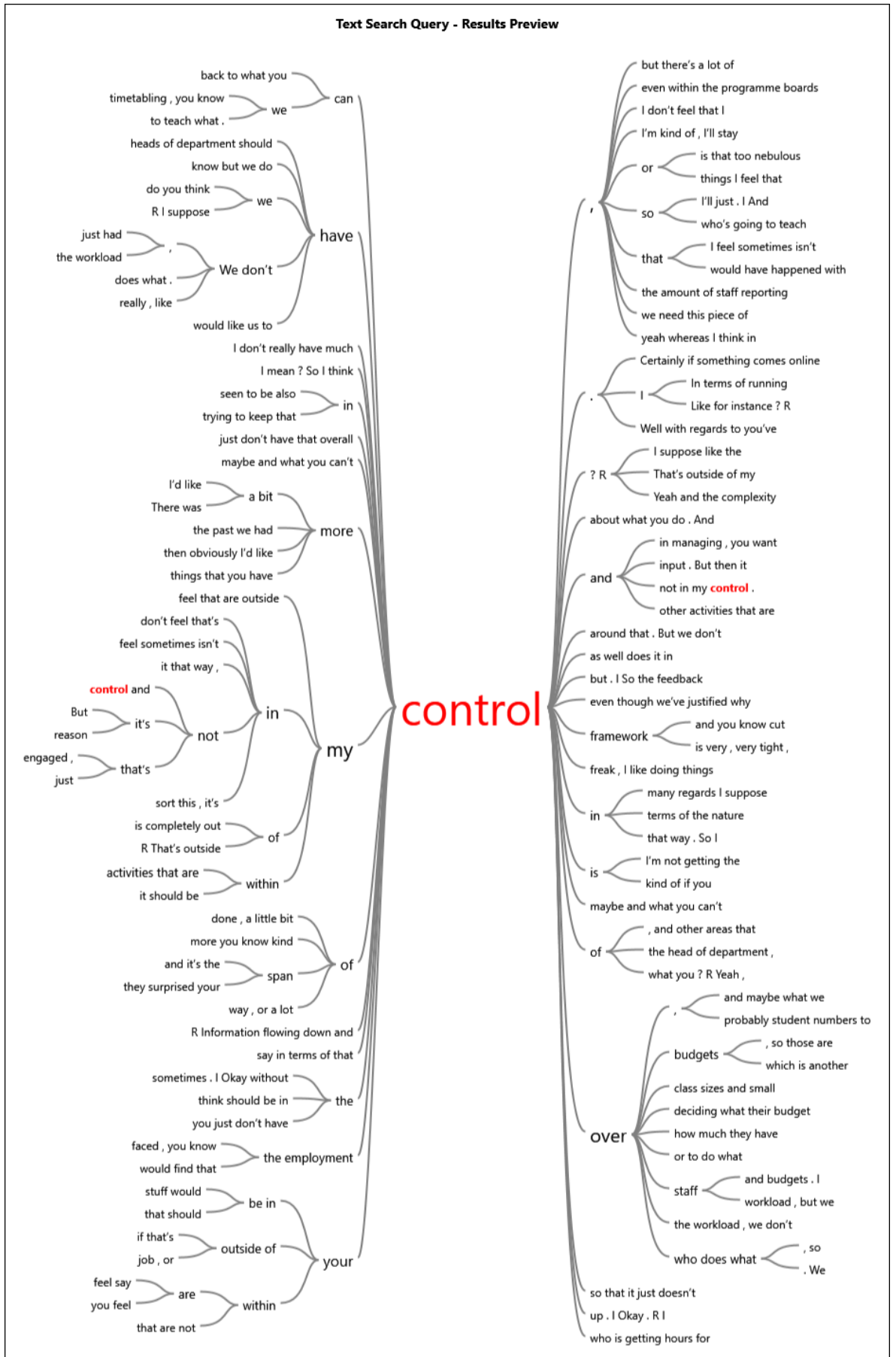
Martin Meagher

APPENDIX 3: PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MANAGER' SPAN OF CONTROL

Professional Services Managerial Area	Span of Control
Computing Services	11
Estates	3
Academic Administration	7
Human Resources	7
Student Services	5
Sports Services	3
Assistant Registrar	0
Finance	14
Library	10

APPENDIX 4: NVIVO WORD TREE

Text Search Query - Results Preview

being kind of a calming
feel that you can maybe
feeling that I could potentially
definitely , how → it's going to
I know
be a source of → positive
by I suppose by
the role , I had no
we make , how does that
would be more leading by
Yeah that may have an

influence

, try and bring the team
and I guess recognising everybody
for the greater kind of
heads of department I don't
manifest itself ? R It's the
maybe on any decisions I'd
on creating that budget in
our roles if or when
programme development to align with
to a certain extent . There's
within the department , so that

Text Search Query - Results Preview

have a lot of positional
I'm not actually driven by
lot of positional **power** , any
don't have a lot → of
have some minute bit
think we really have much

power

, → any **power** we have is
whatever that is . Someone is
in that way , or a
or those type of things .
we have is kind of
you know . Like we don't

control

Left side (leading to "control"):

back to what you → can
timetabling , you know → we → can
to teach what .

heads of department should
know but we do
do you think → we
R I suppose

just had → ,
the workload → , → We don't → have
does what .
really , like

would like us to

I don't really have much
I mean ? So I think
seen to be also → in
trying to keep that
just don't have that overall
maybe and what you can't

I'd like → a bit
There was
the past we had → more
then obviously I'd like
things that you have

feel that are outside
don't feel that's
feel sometimes isn't
it that way ,
control and
But → it's
reason → not → in
engaged , → that's
just

sort this , it's
is completely out → of
R That's outside

activities that are → within
it should be

done , a little bit
more you know kind
and it's the → span → of
they surprised your
way , or a lot

R Information flowing down and
say in terms of that

sometimes . I Okay without
think should be in → the
you just don't have

faced , you know → the employment
would find that

stuff would → be in
that should

if that's → outside of
job , or

feel say → are → within
you feel
that are not → your

Right side (from "control"):

but there's a lot of
even within the programme boards
I don't feel that I
I'm kind of , I'll stay

is that too nebulous
or → things I feel that

, → so → I'll just . I And
who's going to teach

that → I feel sometimes isn't
would have happened with

the amount of staff reporting
we need this piece of
yeah whereas I think in

Certainly if something comes online
. → I → In terms of running
Like for instance ? R
Well with regards to you've

I suppose like the
? R → That's outside of my
Yeah and the complexity

about what you do . And

in managing , you want
and → input . But then it
not in my control .
other activities that are

around that . But we don't
as well does it in
but . I So the feedback
even though we've justified why

framework → and you know cut
is very , very tight ,

freak , I like doing things

many regards I suppose
in → terms of the nature
that way . So I

is → I'm not getting the
kind of if you

maybe and what you can't

, and other areas that
of → the head of department ,
what you ? R Yeah ,

, → and maybe what we
probably student numbers to

budgets → , so those are
which is another

over → class sizes and small
deciding what their budget
how much they have
or to do what

staff → and budgets . I
workload , but we

the workload , we don't

who does what → , so
. We

so that it just doesn't
up . I Okay . R I
who is getting hours for

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APPENDIX 5: JOB DESCRIPTION

Institute of Technology X

CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

1. **Title of Post:**   Head of Department of -

2. **Name of Employer:**   Institute of Technology, X

3. **Name of Employee:**

4. **Place of Work:**   You are employed to work at Institute of
    Technology   X or at any other site where the work of Institute of
    Technology X or its   associated enterprises are carried out.

5. **Date of Commencement:**

6. **Nature of Position**

    This is a permanent pensionable appointment, subject to satisfactory service during the probationary period, and to this contract of employment.

    The provisions of the Institutes of Technology Acts, 1992 to 2006 and any subsequent Acts replacing or amending these Acts and any orders and regulations made under this Act will apply. The Education Sector Superannuation Scheme will apply where appropriate having regard to the provisions of the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act 2001.

7. **Duties**

    The appointee will report to the Head of School.

    The appointee will be responsible through the Head of School to the President for the efficient and effective management and control of the assigned Department, and for its development in accordance with Institute policy and plans.

    The appointee will lead, direct and manage the academic programmes at Department level including teaching, research, programme development and design, academic assessment and academic administration.

    The appointee will act as advisor and leader in quality assurance issues and will implement agreed quality assurance procedures and other procedures including progression, complaints processing, grievance and disciplinary, etc.

    The appointee will manage and direct the staff of the Department including timetabling and evaluating staff performance.

    The appointee will work with the Head of School and develop, agree, implement and manage School and Department policy.

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The appointee will carry out such duties as are assigned by the President/Head of School as appropriate, including but not limited to:-

- Developing a rolling strategic and operational plan for the Department consistent with School and Institute objectives and ensuring the staff are continuously advised on plans, policy and other necessary matters.

- Providing overall management and administration of the Department, including managing the Department budget and maintaining appropriate records and making available information as required by senior management

- Playing a leading role in the development, implementation and maintenance of academic quality assurance arrangements

- Providing academic leadership and scholarship on existing and new courses, in course development and in course coordination

- Directing and supervising the work of members of staff of the Department, including evaluating staff performance and acting in an advisory capacity and as a professional support in academic matters to colleagues

- Advising on and participating in recruiting suitably qualified staff and managing in consultation with the Head of School and other relevant members of Institute management the development and implementation of a staff development programme for the Department

- Participating in appropriate activities, including external activities, necessary to the development and promotion of the Department, School and the Institute; advising on and participating in the promotion and marketing of the Department, School and Institute, its research, and its courses including the preparation of marketing literature and brochures and advising on student intake

- Teaching classes for up to 105 hours per annum and carrying out assessment, monitoring and evaluation of examination work and providing an academic and consultative support to students in their learning activities; directing and supervising the work of Tutor/Demonstrators and taking academic responsibility for the academic standards of this work.

- Working with the central management team [e.g. Registrar, Head of Development, Secretary/Financial Controller] and other Heads of School and Department as required and participating in committees as required from time to time

- Liaising with awarding bodies, trade and professional organizations, government agencies etc. as required

- Advising on equipment and physical requirements

- Participating in committees and meetings as required

- Carrying out such other appropriate duties as may be assigned by the Head of School from time to time.

The appointee will carry out the lawful instructions of the President and comply with the requirements and regulations of the Minister for Education and Science.

The performance of this work will require regular attendance at the Institute in addition to class contact hours during the normal working week.

8. Professional Development

The professional standards expected of the appointee will require a continuing attention to scholarship and to the updating of knowledge. The Institute will as far as possible facilitate the appointee in this regard.

9. Probationary Period

A probationary period of at least one year will apply to this post. At the end of that year the appointee may be confirmed in his/her appointment, continued on probation for a further period or at any time during the probationary period the appointment may be terminated. Termination of employment will be in accordance with the provisions of the Institutes of Technology Act, 1992 to 2006 and any subsequent Acts replacing or amending these Acts.

The appointee will be advised on his/her performance during the probationary period and will be given not less than one month's notice of any extension or termination.

10. Resignation/Retirement

The appointee may terminate this appointment on not less than three months' notice in writing to the HR Office of the Institute.

11. Suspension/Discipline/Dismissal

The Institute shall have the power to suspend the appointee, to impose disciplinary sanctions on the appointee and to terminate the appointment in accordance with such disciplinary/dismissal procedures as are in force from time to time and subject to the Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992 to 1999 and any other applicable employment legislation.

12. External Activity

Any external activity engaged in by the appointee must not be such as to interfere with the fulfilling of the appointee's duties and responsibilities to the Institute.

Any external employment, self-employment, working partnerships or consultancy work entered into by the appointee must not conflict with the interest of the Institute and must have the prior written approval of the President of the Institute. Approval may be given where the activity is deemed by the Institute not to interfere with the fulfilling of the appointee's duties and responsibilities to the Institute and/or where the activity is deemed not to interfere with the interests of the Institute.

Any approval/refusal will be subject to ongoing review by the Institute.

APPENDIX 6: MAP OF IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES

Map of Irish Higher Education Institutions

Letterkenny IT

IT Sligo

Dundalk IT

NUI Maynooth

Athlone IT

Blanchardstown IT

Mater Dei Institute

St. Patrick's, Drumcondra

Dublin City University

Trinity College Dublin

Royal College of Surgeons

University College Dublin

IADT

NUI Galway

Galway-Mayo IT

University of Limerick

Limerick IT

IT Tallaght

Dublin Institute of Technology

Mary Immaculate College

Carlow IT

IT Tralee

Waterford IT

Cork IT

University College Cork

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APPENDIX 7: NATIONAL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Welcome to the Survey

This survey is undertaken as part of Doctoral research. It aims to explore the Role of Head of Department in the Irish Institute of Technology Sector.

The survey should take about 35-40 minutes to complete online. The responses are confidential. Many thanks for your assistance with this survey. I am aware of the time pressures of a very   busy work schedule and am especially grateful for your participation

Background

1. Gender

⬜ Female

⬜ Male

2. Age

⬜ 25-29

⬜ 30-39

◯ 40-49

◯ 50-59

⬜ 60-65

3. **The name of my Institution is** (only to be used for statistical purposes and will not be referred to by name in the results)

[⬍]

4. I am a student of

◯ Business   ◯ Science

◯ Humanities   ◯ Computing

⬜ Engineering

⬜ Other (please specify)

[   ]

5. Why did you return to higher education?

⬜ Explain in your own words

Background

6. I am Head of Dept for

◯ Under one year

◯ 1 - 3 years

◯ 4 - 6 years

◯ 7 - 10 years

◯ More than 10 years

7. The number of staff reporting to me is

◯ <20　　　　　　　　　　　◯ 40-49

◯ 20-29　　　　　　　　　　◯ >50

◯ 30-39

8. My role immediately prior to my current one was

◯ Lecturer

◯ Senior Lecturer

◯ Academic Manager

◯ Non Academic manager in Higher Education

◯ Manager in Industry/Profession

◯ Working in Industry/profession

Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. The number of students in my department is

◯ <200　　　　　　　　　　　◯ 401-500

◯ 201-300　　　　　　　　　◯ 501-600

◯ 301-400　　　　　　　　　◯ >600

Background

10. My contract is

○ Permanent ○ Specific Time Contract

○ Temporary ○ Secondment

○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

11. My average working week is

○ <30 hrs ○ 50 - 60 hrs

○ 30 - 39 hrs ○ >60 hrs

○ 40 - 49 hrs

12. My main disciplinary background is

○ Engineering

○ Science

○ Business

○ Social science

○ Humanities

○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

13. Rank (I, being the most important, 4, being least important)which of the following factors motivated you most to undertake the role of Head of Department?

⁞	[⬍]	Career Promotion
⁞	[⬍]	Change of job / role
⁞	[⬍]	Wanted to make a difference
⁞	[⬍]	Other

Major areas of focus in your role as Head of Department

14.   How important do you believe each of the following strategic/management areas or activities are to your role

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Managing relationships with senior management	◯	▢	▢	◯	◯
Developing policy	◯	▢	▢	◯	◯
Developing programmes	◯	▢	▢	◯	◯
Budget management	◯	▢	▢	◯	◯
Strategic planning	◯	▢	▢	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

15.   How important do you believe each of the following staff related areas or activities are to your role

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral Very	Important	important
Managing academic staff	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Staff development	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Reviewing staff performance	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Reviewing teaching activities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Networking with colleagues	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Staff Research	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

16. How important do you believe each of the following day to day areas or activities are to your role

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Dealing with student matters	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with complaints	○	○	○	○	○
Administration - Timetabling	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with Health & Safety	○	○	○	○	○
Responding to crises	○	○	○	○	○
Responding to ad hoc requests	○	○	○	○	○
Participating in meetings	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

17. What aspects of your current role do you find MOST satisfying

18. What aspects of your role do you find LEAST satisfying?

Effective Performance as Head of Department

19. Rank (I, being most important and 5 being least important) , in your opinion, the relative importance of the following indicators are in judging effective performance in your role

⋮⋮	[↕]	Strategic leadership and vision
⋮⋮	[↕]	Creating a quality workforce
⋮⋮	[↕]	Operationally efficient
⋮⋮	[↕]	Student focused
⋮⋮	[↕]	Other

20. In your opinion how important should each of the following strategic leadership and vision indicators be for judging effective performance in your role

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Giving a clear sense of direction/strategic vision	○	○	○	○	○
Implementing strategic objectives	○	○	○	○	○
Bringing innovative policies and practices into action	○	○	○	○	○
Improving the research profile of the Dept.	○	○	○	○	○

21. In your opinion how important should each of the following staffing indicators be for judging effective performance in your role

	Not important	Somewhat important	Very Neutral	Important	Important
Establishing a collegial and trusting work environment	○	○	○	○	○
Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity	○	○	○	○	○
Providing staff feedback on performance	○	○	○	○	○
Mentoring and leading staff	○	○	○	○	○

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22. In your opinion how important should each of the f   ollowing e fficiency ind cators be for judging effective performance in your role

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Managing the day to day operation of the Department.	○	☐	☐	○	○
Implementing quality assurance systems	○	○	○	○	○
Managing Health & Safety	○	☐	☐	○	○
Timetabling	○	○	○	○	○

23.   In your opinion how important should each of the following student indicators be for judging effective performance in your role

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Delivering high quality programmes	○	☐	☐	○	○
Increased student throughput	○	○	○	○	○
Student - centred approach in Dept.	○	☐	☐	○	○

24.   in your opinion are there any other indicators which should be used for judging effective performance in your role

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Impact on Role as Head of Department

25. Please tick any of the following that have an impact on your daily work as Head of Department.

☐ Decreased government funding	☐ Increased student diversity
☐ Growing competition in HE	☐ Increasing responsibility to external groups and agencie
☐ Proposed changes in IOTI sector e.g. mergers	☐ Managing pressures for continuous change
☐ Increased student complaints	☐ Handling unexpected events
☐ Greater government reporting and scrutiny	☐ Clarifying strategic objectives
☐ Complying with and implementing Quality Assurance	☐ Slow administrative processes
☐ Increasing student attrition	☐ Lack of decision - making by Senior Management
☐ Rapid changes in technology	☐ Lack of power in your role
☐ Declining status of academic work	☐ Growing risk of litigation
☐ Focus on filling enrolment targets	

Other (please specify)

26. Indicate the top three activities that impact on your daily work as Head of Deprtment

1.

2.

3.

Skills and Knowledge in the role of Head of Department

27. How important do you believe each of the following SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE is for effective performance in your current role?

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Highly important
Understanding how the Institute operates	○	○	○	○	○
Up to date knowledge of teaching, learning, assessment & curriculum design in HE	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in my work	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding of Industrial relations/HR issues and processes in the sector	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding and implementing Health & Safety	○	○	○	○	○
Being able to manage staff performance	○	○	○	○	○
Helping staff learn how to deliver necessary changes effectively	○	○	○	○	○
Being able to lead and motivate staff	○	○	○	○	○
Having good conflict resolution skills	○	○	○	○	○
Be able to organise my work and manage time effectively	○	○	○	○	○
Having sound administrative and resource management skills	○	○	○	○	○
Being able to advocate on behalf of Dept	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

Personal Capabilities

28. Tick any of the following PERSONAL CAPABILITIES you feel are needed for the effective performance in your role as Head of Department?

☐ Admitting and learning from my errors

☐ Understanding my personal strengths and limitations

☐ Remaining calm under pressure or when things take an unexpected turn

☐ Deferring judgementand not jumping in too quickly to resolve a problem

☐ Having energy, passion and enthusiasm for teaching and learning

☐ Persevering when things are not working out as anticipated

☐ Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible

☐ Taking responsibility for programme activities and outcomes

☐ Being willing to take a hard decision

☐ Pitching in and undertaking menial tasks when needed

☐ Maintaining a good work/life balance and keeping things i perspective

☐ Bouncing back from adversity

☐ Tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty

☐ Being true to one's personal value and ethics

Other (please specify)

_____

29. Indicate the top three personal capabilities that you consider most important in your role

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Interpersonal Capabilities

30. Tick any of the following INTERPERSONAL CAPABILITIES you feel are needed for effective performance in your role.

☐ Empathising and working productively with staff and being intimidated from diverse backgrounds

☐

Influencing people's behaviour and decisions in effectiveothers ways

☐ Empathising and working productively with students from

☐ diverse backgroundsDeveloping and contributing positively

☐ Listening to different points of view before coming to a decisionWorking constructively with people who are

☐ Developing and using networks of colleagues

Understanding how various groups that make up the Institute operate and influence decisions

☐ othersWorking with senior management without

☐ Giving and receiving constructive feedback from staff and

☐

☐ Motivating others to achieve positive outcomes

☐ to team based
projects

☐ 'resistors' or are
'over enthusiastic'

Being transparent and honest in dealings with others

31. Please indicate three interpersonal capabilities that you consider most important in your role.

1. [   ]

2. [   ]

3. [   ]

Key Challenges in your role

32. Briefly, what are the three most challenging aspects of your current role

1 [   ]

2 [   ]

3 [   ]

33. The following activies have been effective in developing your capabilities as a Head of Department

	Yes	No	N/A
Completing a higher education qualification relevant to leadership	◯	◯	◯
Attending teaching and learning training/conferences	◯	◯	◯
Completing formal academic leadership courses	◯	◯	◯
Induction for Head of Dept role	◯	◯	◯
Learning 'on the job'	◯	◯	◯
Participating in peer networks within your institute	◯	◯	◯
Ad hoc conversations with people in similar roles	◯	◯	◯
Being involved in formal mentoring programmes	◯	◯	◯
Undertaking visits to other institutions or agencies	◯	◯	◯
Participating in annual performance reviews	◯	◯	◯
Regular meetings with Head of School	◯	◯	◯
Feedback from staff	◯	◯	◯

34. Rank (with 1, being most important and 5 being least important)in order who do you think is themost important support in your role

	Head of School
	Fellow Heads of Department
	Academic Staff
	School Administration Staff
	Students
	Family and Friends
	Other

35. What do you like most about working in your current role?

36. What is one key step you could take to improve the development of Heads of Dept in your institute

37. What is one key step your Institute could take to improve the development of Heads of Dept for the role?